

# One night in Cali

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Fiction

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Original title:  
Une nuit à Cali

Translated by the author

History is a novel that was, a novel is history that could have been.

Jules and Edmont de Goncourt

The liberty is not an exchange, it is the liberty.

André Malraux

The human condition

Libertad y orden (Liberty and order)

Slogan of Colombia

## Preamble

Colombia is the only country of America of the south that has coasts on the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean Sea. Its natural resources are numerous; oil, gas, nickel, however and emeralds. Unfortunately, a big part of its agriculture is underground and dedicated to the culture of the poppy and the coke, what makes the supplier of it to 90% of USA in cocaine.

The population is forty millions of inhabitants, in majority half-caste, a quarter of white and of mulattos and a minority of Amerindian.

Cali is the third city of Colombia after Medellin and the Bogota capital, she is situated to 100 km from the harbour of Buenaventura on the Pacific coast and to 300 km of the border with Ecuador. Cali is known for its cartel of the drug that doesn't have anything to envy to the one of Medellin.

Life himself unwinds there under a tropical climate favourable to all excesses; the present has more importance than the past or that a very hypothetical old age. The life expectancy for men is of 65 years.

Life of is marked every day by events that would shock under all other latitude but that finished with time by making part of the landscape of inhabitants of Cali.

The rapt of child or personality is there a so rife and auspicious activity that it is considered like a risk natural of life of every day.

Twenty thousand people are victims by year of the insecurity.

This country is advised against strongly by the foreign affairs ministry for all displacement not indispensable. The local police is one of most active of the planet because it fills roles of guard of the law and bandit in the same time according to the most lucrative activity. Its jails have the particularity to be so dangerous that guards don't enter there and let the armed convicts make themselves reign their law.

## One night in Cali

Cali, 24 th December 1978, 6 PM,

The small room was not far from their hotel and this only reason had oriented their choice. They were broken, ground, emptied by this journey in bus that should have last six hours and that had set free them finally in Cali after fifteen hours of adventures. The driveshaft of the elder US recycled school bus had finally decided to stop turning in circle and had bitten the track without warning. The breakdown had occurred to the middle of nowhere but the repair had been nevertheless achieved with means of the side by the driver and his help that had started with folding back on the rum before all things following their inspection of damages. Will and Hiro had, as the other travellers, makes proof of fatalism and follow-up in spectators the local method of resolution of a mechanical order problem. The bus transported about forty people and nobody seemed surprised by the situation, the state of the bus was directly in report with its age and it probably had already makes at least twenty times the tour of the planet, it knew surely each stone of the path and its blades of spring offered themselves to the approach of ruts that gave back the completely incompatible journey with a repairing sleep. The landscape was lush and didn't encourage the sleep. Will was close to celebrate his twenty-two years birthday and had met Hiro two weeks earlier in Medellin in a hotel of *routards*, they had decided to make a tip of path together to facilitate themselves the lodging that was especially offered in double rooms. Will was French and had decided to make a big journey initially to USA, but he filled all *criteria* to have its visa refused. He had turned then toward the pure and simple immigration and had aimed the country of people that live the head in bottom: Australia.

He had filled his file of immigration with the conviction that his inexperience in all domains would not be an obstacle to his

project, after two weeks of waiting, he was called back at the embassy to meet a responsible of immigration that disassembled his project in less than one hour, his file didn't absolutely interest hunters of kangaroos, to this time, they had already made the full of vagabonds and they didn't send any more full boats of convicts and prostitutes to populate this continent. He took out again the embassy therefore with a beautiful tampon: REJECTED that made good impression on the first page of his passport. He had been disappointed enough by this wall that stood facing his project of discovering the eaters of hamburgers, the Californian and Australian blond beauties but the need for space had been the strongest and he reconsidered his journey while making it begin rightly under the States at Mexico City. His sociological survey would interest itself to devourers of tacos and the incendiary brunettes. He wanted to make a big adventurous journey that would leave it of the small French roads that he had furrowed in itch-hiking the last two years.

During his adolescence, he had devoured novels of Jack London and Kerouac and he saw himself in *hoboe*, to cross continents by all means of locomotion that the luck would offer him. To catch to the flight, during night, a wagon of goods that would go in an unknown direction was one of his dreams. He said himself that, maybe, in South America, the railway modernism or rather its absence would permit him to catch up a train that starts by means of running. He didn't have pre-established road but he had realized that the coming down of the Pan-American was a big classic for the *routards* that had chosen the Central and South America, he had disembarked on this continent without speaking a Spanish word but two months of road and varied contacts had composed him a small vocabulary that permitted him to manage in most situations. He liked the heat, the natural niceness of descendants of the Mayas and he excused their tendency to consider him like a wallet with paws. Hiro was

Japanese and student at Osaka and was one year older than Will, he had decided to make a break in his studies of international trade, he had finally chosen the career of cook, he wished to first work as trainee to be then able to open his own restaurant that would respect principles of the yoga while differentiating foods *yin* of foods *yang*. He didn't want to make a *den* of *yogis* that are only satisfied with *sattvik* aliments but would offer all possible combinations offered by foods *rajassik* and *tamasik*.

This place would be a place of peace and rest where the vibratory qualities of dishes would be enhanced. He had discovered this Indian philosophy two years earlier and his life was adjusted henceforth by the yoga, the controlled breathing, *yantras*, *mantras* and the harmony.

He had arrived in Bogota two months ago, he wanted to descend to the Peru snack their famous *ceviche* (delicious dish of raw fish marinated in the juice of lemon and herbs), he wanted to see also the Incas ruins of the Machu Pichu as well as the drawings only visible from the sky that one found in the near plain of Lima. He was persuaded that he would recover some common shapes there to *yantras*, these geometric combinations of squares, circles and triangles that are a support and a help to the meditation. He wanted to make a meditative stay there and already saw himself in this desolate plain chanting *mantras* and arrive to open his seventh *chakra*, stadium to which he had not yet arrived.

All two had not stopped a date of return so they decided their path according to the geographical possibilities and opportunities that it happened to them to cross.

During his passage in Ecuador, one had offered to Will to participate in a con that would take place during the world soccer cup in Argentina; it was about making the accomplice in a bribes to cards called *bonneteau* that exercise itself in all places where goes the idler, the project was to hit stronger and to interest themselves to the cream of the *pigeon*.

The bright inventor of this idea was a true star, a German who had specialized in the repair of boat radio in the Balearic while concentrating on the German tourists. His adventurer character pushed it "to bring up strokes ". He tried to gather a team of shock in Ecuador, for, that once driven, could make a success in Argentina. This brave boy was in a hotel of *routards* in Quito since more than one month because of bankruptcy of its *martingales* to the roulette. Will had found a room in the same hotel and had known that he waited for a mandate to take out of this unpleasant situation. This hotel was an important passage place on the way to Peru, Will had met there another Frenchman who travelled also alone, they decided to share the room for reasons of economy. The time flowed out slowly in Quito, rhythmic by visits to market where one could drink excellent juices of cool *naranjas* and long dawdling on the *Plaza centrale* where the only inconvenience was to get rid of the roguish shoe shiners who turned around *gringos* as flies. Will had found the parade once to this problem for all while carrying of the Mexican sandals every time that the time permitted it.

This German had become a permanent figure of the hotel because he had a true difficulty to leave Quito; he was addict to the game and had slapped his last mandate already on the green carpet three weeks earlier. While bringing in one afternoon following his daily dawdling, Will had noticed an atmosphere of feast in the hotel, the reception hall was decorated with a superb bouquet of flowers and the German went and came while offering strokes to drink to all those that he crossed. Will was not forgotten, the so much waited money had finally arrived and the German set himself free after three weeks of slow-motion life. Everybody was happy for him and expected to see him leaving after having adjusted his debts. He wanted to leave in beauty and had foreseen for the same evening a last visit to the casino of the city. He dragged the two French in a tour dedicated to the celebration of the hops

flower macerated, then, more and more in shape, the German proposed them to come with him to the casino where he went, it was certain, to make jump the bank.

Not having foreseen anything of individual this night, Will and his buddy accepted at once. Will didn't know this type of establishment that of reputation and he found funny to visit the one of Quito.

After a good dinner offered by the German, they came back to the hotel. Will wore a clean shirt and his least dirty trousers, the other French had a very alike holding, with their jeans and their checkered shirts, they looked like a couple of Canadian lumbermen who would have lost their axes.

While descending to the reception, they found their German evening promoter that had taken out again his big opportunity tuxedo and that was the attention of all looks. After strength embraces with the boss of the hotel, jump in a taxicab, and direction toward the casino.

When the porter of the casino saw the trio arriving, he had difficulty imagining that they could be together so much their holdings were different; he opened the door extensively to this beautiful and so elegant man who came to re-float the cash-boxes of the establishment. But as soon as the German had passed, the big strong man in full red dress with golden frogs interfered to block the passage to the disguised French in Canadian. Rules were very lucid in this select establishment; one went in suit or tux, anyway with tie and evidently not in jean and sandals. The two French were close to abandon the idea but the German surprised by not hearing them anymore returned on his path and asked to the *cerbère* what displeased him. For the guard of the token temple, the rule was basic and had to be applied, compliant holding, otherwise outside. The German, who was in one day pomp didn't accept to have the rules dictated and in addition, it was headstrong. All regulation can be topic to interpretation and the German had arguments this night. He opened in big his wallet where a thick sheaf of

dollars waited to jump on the green carpet peacefully. The porter tried to tell him once again that he was evidently welcome but that the two other one, no indeed, impossible, was not able to, with this look!

For the German, it was basic, they brought in all three or not at all, then, indeed with regret, and already anxious of the future commentaries of the director, the man with the red overcoat let pass the three amateurs of luck.

The place had class and the German was not the only to carry a tux, on the other hand lumberman's disguise was not even fashionable in these places because strangely, they were tonight, the alone with this look of vanguard.

The German found a seat very quickly at a table of roulette and began combinations of encircling numbers that especially had for result to amputate his capital more severely to every thrown of the white ball. He continued on this launched with the deep conviction that he was going to catch up losses of the last month and to take the advance on the following month. The two French had not agreed of big budget and the roulette appeared them really like a vacuum cleaner tuned on the maximum power.

Then, to give themselves the countenance, they gave to eat to the one arm bandits that were in periphery of the big room.

Not of big luck, but not of loss neither. To follow the evolution of the situation, they came closer of the table where was installed the German, but there, the situation had turned to the slaughter. Bank notes had left to an accelerated speed and tokens never came back to stack themselves before him. For a test, Will tempted five dollars on the twenty-one and his number left.

Thirty-six times the stake, this stroke represented two supplementary journey weeks. One rows tokens and one stops all. For the German, the partition was written, he believed in his luck until the last bank note of his wallet so swollen two

hours before had been collected by the **croupier**. He finally rose groggy as if he was surprised by his lack of fortune.

The porter was happy to see them leave so quickly and go into a taxicab without a word.

The following day, flowers had a little lost of their burst, as the German besides, that renegotiated a supplementary period of credit to wait for a next mandate. When Will left the hotel few days later, the German waited still for the mandate that would have permitted him to achieve his Argentinean project. Will had had the time to think about his proposition and knowing his clumsiness with cards had preferred to give up the idea. He didn't feel ready to taste tar and feathers.

In Ecuador, he had achieved his old railway dream however on a line of train that descended to Peru.

The ridiculous price of this journey had made him choose the first class on the four available, in first, one nearly had right to the large and comfortable armchairs with the small mat of white lace not to mess up head rests. In this class, nearly nobody. In second class, benches were in slats of redwood and it was crowded. A true ambiance of advertisement movie, very local colour, merchants of cloths with their enormous packages, peasants with hens, children in all corners, Merchants of all sort of things that could be eaten managed with difficulty to pave themselves a passage, to make it short, it was very enlivened.

The third class, on the other hand, was more basic, the true animal wagon all built in wood with soil covered with a little straw and a ticket at symbolic price. Until there nothing of very original, but it is descending on the embankment to buy some fruits for the journey while waiting for the departure that he had a true surprise. He noticed that on wagons of second and third class were seated Indians on the rounded part of the roof.

It was the famous fourth class that was not represented on the official tariff but that helped to put some butter in the spinach

of the controller. The Indians were all enveloped in their covers and Will had the feeling to have come back to the time of the Far West indeed.

This impression continued on the embankment because this train was pulled by an authentic steam-powered loco with its column of grey smoke that stood fiercely in head of convoy. Will was amazed that people were allowed to get settled to this place that, in all movies of action, is considered like the most dangerous and where happen fights between the hero and bad persons that don't want to let him travel alone.

The departure was finally given without big report with the planned timetable but steam power doesn't permit the same accurateness that electricity.

Will had regained his first class comfort, but, in his wagon, nearly alone, he had again in the eyes these impassive Indians waiting for departure. After the controller stamped his ticket, he didn't hold there any longer and decided to be going to see how was like a journey on the roof of wagons. He crossed the second class with difficulty because it was still as crammed that before the departure and found himself again on the footbridge of junction with wagons of beastly reconverted in transport of people. On this footbridge stood a stationary ladder that brought to the roof, he climbed there and saw that the Indian had not moved from on inch and that they had kept their faces without expression if not the one of a deep indifference to the outside world.

Will didn't try to disturb them and was going to get settled on the roof of a wagon, the roof was stuck out and it was necessary to walk right in the centre while avoiding the small pipes of ventilation that were on his passage, he had to walk with the legs enough remote not to lose his balance and find himself scattered four meters lower.

Jounces of the way didn't help to progress in security and Will felt reassured once seated.

He had finally rejoined Kerouac in his train journeys, to the difference that he had in his pocket a first class ticket and that he had chosen the fourth class solely by taste of the adventure. The view from the top of the wagon was superb, he had gotten settled forward of the Indian and the only obstacle to the panoramic view that was offered to him was the grey column of smoke that came out of the chimney of the loco by hitches. When wind was folding back, it received its humid heat in full face as well as the famous smuts that he only knew from the literary way.

In this seated position, the impression of danger was not more omnipresent and the journey looked like a gigantic ghost train trip but without tunnels.

It is exactly while thinking it that one decided to present itself on the horizon, he had not thought about this detail but the tunnel makes part of the railway landscape and it approached at a big speed.

The speed of the train was close to eighty kilometers per hour and he could now see distinctly the black gulf that was going to swallow him.

While watching behind him, he saw that all Indian were already lengthened on the roof and he didn't wait to imitate them. Melted to the black...

He was very impressed very to see the rocks of the arch of the tunnel that were not to more than fifty centimetres of the wagon roof. He considered that remain lying was the best way not to be transformed in a bloody mush. The obscurity was nearly total, alone remained a gleam in front of the train, mixture of the lantern and the flush that came out of the chimney of the loco.

He thought that the only boredom that it would meet would be the weak available vital height between the roof of the wagon and the arch of the tunnel but it had not thought about the smoke of the loco.

Going further into the tunnel, the temperature grew in constant way and he wondered what tops it would reach.

Air became unbreathable, his lungs burned, he had the impression that his eyes were going to burst like eggs in boiling water if his stay in the tunnel lasted more than three minutes.

He was like in an oven, he felt himself become red as the lobster who takes its last bath. He had plated himself at more close to the sheet metal of the wagon for less to have the burning breath in the face and he hoped to see the famous tip of the tunnel in an immediate future. He remembered of the proverb that said to mistrust of light that appeared at the end of the tunnel, in certain cases, it could be the beacon of another loco coming towards you. In the worse of situations, even the beneficial bottom can be in quick sand, optimism...

In his head paraded all warnings and forbidden of the railway enameled panels:

*E pericoloso sporgersi*, not to bend to the outside, not to use toilets in station, not to cross the way outside of crosswalks, in case of emergency pull the handle, all abuse will be punished, thirty-six men, eight horses, a train can hide another one, etc,...

Freshness, ice to the mint, pure air, soft rainwater on skin, violent sudden shower, all these nice feelings were so far in this furnace...

He was like a Chinese gulp in his small basket in bamboo and he had to feel the same thing that her when light came back suddenly and that he could breath again. He straightened himself mildly to verify that this long tunnel was not the beginning of a long set.

He turned around to see the state of his batch colleagues and could note that the Indian Ecuadorian supports well the heat stroke, they were all put back in single file and seemed less cooked that Will. The wind of the speed brought him back to a

normal temperature and he decided nevertheless to remain on the roof to continue the adventure.

He was not disappointed by the next events.

The train had stopped again in a small station more western like that the one of the departure. Will had regained his compartment not to have the surprise to see from the roof someone disappearing with his backpack.

After newcomers replaced starters, he went on the embankment to attend operations of replenishment of the furnace. The autonomy of this small loco had to not exceed more than hundred kilometres.

On the embankment, a column in decorated cast iron prolonged itself to the horizontal by a hose of thick adjustable diameter, itself finished by a canvas sleeve that had to guide water in the reservoir of the loco. The replenishment ordered itself from the ground by a chain that opened closed the arrival of water either. The debit was very important because water came from a cistern in wood that was situated in border of embankment and to about ten metres high. Once the replenishment of the reservoir was done, one could bring back the sleeve and the horizontal tube above of the embankment to let safe passage to the train.

The arrival of the train and its departure as well as all preparations created the animation in the station. A lot of people on the embankment to greet the family or friends , still the unavoidable sellers stealthily with fruits, the stuffed tortillas, eggs and drinks. This coloured crowd strolled on the embankment in a happy mess.

Comes finally the moment of the departure, Will had decided to remain on the roof to see all this spectacle from top and he was to the first stalls to notice that a shrewd kid had put back the sleeve to water in the axis of the train and that he had opened the floodgate as soon as the train had started. It had to be the classic joke of the station because everybody laughed on the embankment while waiting to see the Indians taking

themselves a shower. Will had remained standing and had seen all the stage, the Indians didn't mistrust and had not seen the manoeuvre because they were not sat in the sense of the march. They were sat of profile and when the water sleeve with its whirlwind of fleet spent them over, they were soaked instantaneously. Will had two wagons of respite before he didn't undergo the same fate. His advantage on the Indians was that he would not be taken by surprise. When the sleeve arrived over him, it was necessary to pay attention simultaneously not be swept away by the horizontal hose and neither to go under the thick debit shower, he made an avoids the thick hose that would have raised *olé*s in a Madrilenian arena in precise small jumps avoiding to slip on the wet sheet metal and to remain as dry as possible, he managed this dance under laughter of spectators and let behind him this station where one knew so well how to amuse the traveller. Will had had his account of emotions and returned in his armchair of first class thinking about these soaked Indians that were going to freeze themselves during the remainder of the journey.

## **Cali, 24 th December, 6.15 PM**

Their arrival in Cali had permitted them to note that the city was constructed according to the North American system of streets and avenues that crosses themselves to right angles; the only avenue that remained rebel to this system was the avenue of the *Circunvaidacion* that snaked through the city.

The country was topic to earthquakes and alone the big hotels and the official buildings were multilevel.

The numérotation was not fanciful and blocks were pretty much in the same size.

All passengers of the bus were in a hurry to see the end of the road and their arrival in the road station was greeted by applauses.

Will and Hiro found a hotel enough quickly in a neighbouring district of the station; it was not cluttered of stars and prices exercised were quite in adequacy with their budget that was not expandable. This district arranged a big hotel capacity if one considered the number important of signs that affirmed that it was their main activity. The doubt was permitted because none of these establishments had invested in a luxurious entrance with reception. The welcome was there very discreet and the identity questions unknown. In fact, most of these hotels were already full but the natural niceness and the sense of welcome of girls from Cali made that they

accepted with pleasure a co-tenant for some hours against an involvement to the expenses justified by their efforts.

This was not what interested particularly Will and Hiro, but a report imposed itself, in South America, the cheapest hotels are warehouses, but they don't accept hosts for the complete night that don't consume, it is true, that doesn't make serious and if one begins like that, one ends up finding itself in the Accor group with plenty of stars above of the door.

They were satisfied for having quickly found a roof. The friendly hotel that they had found was in the middle of the pink district, they had easily convinced the boss to rent them the only room of two beds deprived of worker. It is so difficult to refuse the dollars of two *gringos* that accept to rent a slum deprived of window with two beds good for retirement since any years.

While they emptied their bags on their beds, they discussed on the different ways to finish the day.

They were burst but they could not have gone to sleep immediately in reason of the buzz of the bus that was still in their ears. It was necessary to take contact with reality and quietly to consider the remainder of the night.

The room was not suitable to this brainstorming; they separated therefore without regret of their lodging, greeted to the passage the boss of the pink house as well as the young woman who were with him at the reception, and without precise goal entered in Cali.

Their conquest of the city started in bloom with the assault of a small square with trees and stone benches.

The place seemed ideal to relax and what better way to change ideas that to evoke memories. Will began with a recent memory and particularly of circumstance.

He explained to Hiro what had happen him in Panama the previous month; he arrived at the end of the Pan-American road and wanted to visit Panama City during two days. He had been as today, disembarked at the road station from where left

and arrived the Greyhound buses of American origin, true monsters covered of bright aluminium giving a true impression of strength, especially by reason of their free exhaust pipe. Bag on the back, he had entered the city in search of a hotel, without putting no question to natives, after some time, he had found himself again as a matter of course in the hot district of the old city. The atmosphere there was colonial, but it was visible that the caring of the historic heritage was not the main worry of residents. The large sidewalks were overhung by the big balconies terraces that permitted to walk in the shade. Will knew very well that these hotels had another vocation than the one to welcome him but he was tempted so, as of other boys before him, to know what happened in these big houses. He tempted his luck and climbed the staircase that drove to the reception. It was in the middle of the afternoon, the reception was a small glazed cabin situated to the middle of a big central piece from where it was possible to see all rooms on two levels practically. Some girls in combination discussed before the start of the busy evening, the ambiance was to the détente, in the glazed cabin, the master of places watched Will to come toward him and was ready to give him prices in dollars already. When Will asked him for a room without consumption, he explained him that he made a mistake; it was a serious house and that it would be necessary to try elsewhere. Will benefited of these very short first instants in this place and insisted asking once more time to remain a few more, he had the impression to be in a historic movie and he tried to make last the pleasure. To the second refusal of the brave man, he had now to move from the place. His visit had been noticed by two girls who discussed on a sofa. He smiled them while leaving and turned them the back to bring down again the staircase. He had a secret weapon and it was the moment or ever to test it. It was necessary to descend mildly, especially not to run. He was some to the half of the staircase and he heard to discuss in his

back, he continued his coming down as indifferent to these noises when he was called from the top of the staircase, he turned around and played the astonishment very well. A girl was in top of the staircase and made him sign to climb up, he was alone in the staircase, but he pointed his index on the chest with an interrogatory look, she confirmed him her intention to see him coming while agitating several times the hand. Will played very well the role of the one that didn't understand what had happened, did someone have not refused him the room thirty seconds ago, no?

The girl was in full discussion with the keys of gold man, for him the discussion was over and he was not ready to modify his position. As he tried to resist her arguments, her colleague of work came to sustain her and after one minute of palaver, Will had finally the possibility to be sheltered in this place that came out of the plain. What had made so suddenly pass Will of a passer-by without particular interest to an indispensable host? It was simply a small rectangle of cloth in three colours arranged in the right way that he had had the idea to sew on his bag before leaving while thinking that the image of France abroad could bring him some favours. In the world of seduction, it seems that there are some international credentials; he recovered a little at moment the interests on the work made in the previous centuries by his forebears in this particular domain. Girls were all excited to have in their walls a French, but Will did not show any emotion while letting one of them drive himself his room.

Evidently, users of the place didn't come for the decoration nor for the comfort and they were right. The room was minuscule; in short, it had become ridiculously small thanks to a wild partition work of plywood board that had multiplied the number of pieces of the building by five. So certain rooms had preserved a window maybe, his had not had this luck and the only possibility of ventilation was given by a fenced fan that had to have received a shoe during one evening of *fiesta* and

that imposed a choice: wind and tap-tap of the blade on the grid that was going to forbid all hope of sleep or slow but efficient cooking, hard dilemma...

Will didn't want to sleep at all, first of all, it was a lot too early and it was necessary to benefit of this decor of movie where he had gained the allowance to stay. Besides, it was necessary to recognize that the room didn't invite to remain there if one was alone. The bed was in synthetic foam and the indigent lighting was very indulgent with the multiple stains that decorated the flower canvas of cotton that regained it. In his summary inspection of the room, Will had noticed that the panels of separation on the two sides of the room were pierced with many small holes that had been stopped very elegantly with small wads of toilet paper. He justified there the explanation of the television absence and promised himself to have a closer look to the appropriate moment there.

His temperament of handyman made him interest himself themselves to the uproar of the fan, the grid touched blades slightly, to stop this hell of a noise, he just had to pull back the grid and maintain it in place...

He left on the footbridge that connected against all rooms on the first floor and immediately interested his neighbour who had let her door open to his problem. He asked her for a rope, it didn't make part of her working tools, and one was in a serious establishment.

But she was a courageous worker; very few of her customers could blame her for having grumbled before the obstacle. The French had a problem, she would have the solution.

She didn't hesitate, opened a drawer of dresser, took a sexy *deshabillé* there and tore the entire fringe in lace that decorated the bottom of it and offered him gently.

Will noticed that his merry-go-round had not passed unobserved from of the housekeeper and judged wise not to make notice himself longer in regaining his room. He repaired

the fan or rather forbidden the grid to touch the blades what gave a more tolerable burr.

He could not remain in this squalid room; he didn't either want to tour in town so he took a book in his bag and went in the big hall for reading. It was evidently impossible; his attention could not fix itself on the narration being so fascinated by the life of the very quiet place. The activity of the warehouse had to be rather nocturnal because one felt that the ambiance was not yet to the welcoming the clientele.

The interest that girls had carried him to his arrival had attenuated itself strongly, probably because it was not reciprocal enough. Will didn't show there that he was insensible to the feminine charm, he simply refused to mix money and love or what looked alike. He was a real beginner in this domain and not very lucky still, but he didn't consider that it was a sufficient reason to pass by the fixed rate solution. He remained anyway very interested by the topic because it was about women and this specie fascinated him.

He knew how to make himself so discreet that the world around considered him as making part of the décor since ever. But as the interest of the situation was decreasing, he finally decided to go for a walk in the city until things became serious.

He wanted to see the canal but he ignored that it didn't pass indeed in border of the city centre; his walk took him very close to a basin of the harbour where he dreamed about men that wanted to change the shape of the earth. A lunacy, surely, but is this really one when it transforms dream in reality?

He thought of the man who wanted to dig a channel between the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific Ocean. If pyramids showed that the man could achieve some gigantic enterprises even to the price of thousand of worker deaths, why to limit its imagination? Anyway, these workers would be died today, but the channel was now there and so had become a strategic interest for hamburgers eaters. It is necessary for men who

dare to have some mad visions, even to the price of their life or more often of the one of others, because these visionaries are those that made advance our blue ball. He couldn't see therefore from his eyes the famous channel, but it would remain idealized in his eyes and this was probably as well.

All these thoughts were perfect for changing topic but Will had remained in the brothel by the thought and was now pressed to return there because he wanted to fully benefit of his resident's new statute. One had him greatly advised against strolling around at night in Panama City and the sky darkened to quick pace. He headed therefore directly toward his home for nothing to lose from the show that was going to be played there. He made himself very discreet at the time of his return and went in his room showing no particular interest to what was happening around him. One felt nevertheless that the evening had begun because there was more people down the staircase than in the afternoon. In his room, he did not wait long before removing one of the paper plugs to see what happened to his neighbour. He assisted in direct to the preparation of the evening, either a cleaning in due form of the operation field. He could not be nearer. A half-hour later, arrived the first customer and Will understood why his small flag was bringing fantasy.

Ladies, don't make the mistake to think that warm bloodied men live under tropics. This first customer had unified all qualities that try to avoid a woman in a man; Will was utmost surprised when he saw that they started by foot nail cutting!!

Was there no graduate podiatrist in Panama?

Too shy to remove his socks in front of a foot doctor?

Panamanian phantasm?

A lot of questions and no answers, Will did his best to understand what was going on but it was said that his behaviour survey would remain incomplete...

Once all seemed satisfactory about foot nails, they extinguished light and finished their small business so sadly

that Will closed again the thin wall of separation and fell asleep without trying to neither see nor know further more. No, indeed, the place was magic, but users were so conventional that Will had the desire to tell them:

-Come on boys, you have the most welcoming girls of Central America, they want to give big value service for your money and you ask them what any well-intentioned companion could not refuse you. Go back home and do not return without smart fantasies, what a waste!

The hour was to the détente and a history bringing another one, Hiro started the narration of his Carthaginian adventures. When he arrived in Colombia, he aimed straight to Cartagena, Spanish-colonial charming walled city situated on the Caribbean Sea. One had especially praised him the big beaches of white and the historic wealth of this city very well preserved. This city had become a true tourist destination very frequented by Americans who could find hotels situated in beach border with all the comfort to which there they were accustomed.

Contrary to Will, he was rather carried on food and he interested himself to everything that can be eaten, he went from discovery in discovery and he took some notes that would maybe serve him in the future.

He was different of Will on this point and on the mystical plan, he didn't try to make proselytism, considering that the approach of the spirituality had to make itself naturally and was the result of a personal need or the consequence of a life accident.

Will was not caring for food; he considered the fact of eating rather like an inconvenience to which it was necessary to submit to continue to make function the machine. His daily diet was often composed of an orange juice bought in the market, a soup and a corn cob grilled completed this regime and were sufficient for the day.

It explained its thin completion; he was feeling well and was not tempted by the special dishes, and to make it simpler, he did not like unknown food. He had made the choice of a very economic journey; he had decided to reduce costs to make the maximum of distance and to visit as many countries as possible. According to this rule, in Mexico, he managed to reduce his budget to two dollars per day, while eating at street sellers a taco and a sweet potato, and sleeping at night on the small fishing boats of the Veracruz harbour. At this rhythm, he could have held more than one year effectively with his capital but feeling that he was toppling trampiness, he understood quickly that his trip was going to lose very quickly in interest and returned to the more elevated standards while deciding that it was really more reasonable to sleep in hotel.

The appeal of Hiro for the Taoism and Tantrism let perplexed Will, he was persuaded that one could cross the existence without cluttering himself of beliefs nor philosophy. He wanted to believe in Man and interrogated himself however on mysteries of the presence of this funny character on the planet. He was curious to know others better and to live besides an Oriental during several weeks had permitted him to ask many questions.

From the philosophy of Hiro, he had especially remembered that tantric love practised according the rules permit him to widen considerably enough his techniques of mating, a few too classic to his taste.

Will and Hiro were therefore very different on several points but they had found their comfortable association comfortable.

Hiro had a big interest for France and its culture, for him, Will was invested of a knowledge that he believed every small French received in inheritance at birth.

He was sometimes asking questions about “The French Food”, but in front of Will very evasive answers, he ended up concluding that either the family's secret was kept well, or that Will knew very little about it.

Will appreciated the simple food, in his journey he had met the better and sometimes the worse; his better to remember was a barbecue of fishes directly from the sea to the grill on the beach with just a green lemon feature; he had made some stern concessions to his diet that day as while eating a small ten.

The worse until now, that had to be when he had ordered in a Ecuadorian market a thick soup, at a misery cost of course, but that he had not been able to absorb. The topic presented itself badly, disgusting plastic plate, smell of cadaver, colour of dysentery result, indeterminate components with tips of bone of unspecified animals and a table that had never received a stroke of sponge since its exit from the woodworker's hands.

He was hungry when he had ordered the dish and all these Indians around eating with appetite had incited him to join them in the same action. When he received the plate, he had first to call for his courage that answered absent, he tried nevertheless to absorb a small spoon but the combined smell and the taste made him renounce, he didn't want to throw away the plate and said himself that it was the moment to make a good action (or a bad in this case). He threw a circular look and saw a beggar that was colour mud and grease, a *camaïeu* of browns if one wants; a visual exchange made the beggar understood that it was his day.

Will showed the plate and pointed his toward him; immediate result, the beggar was at his side in less time that it is possible to write it. Will wanted to let him his seat but the beggar took the two sides of his poncho, made a pocket apron of it and by very expressive gestures asked him to pour the content of the dish to the middle of his beautiful costume. While seeing how he treated its clothes, one could understand better the colour of the *poncho*, these natives didn't take indeed any care of their dresses. He didn't want to sit down to be hunted in the minute, he was like the birds that finds a beautiful worm and fly away as soon as possible in order to eat quietly. Will executed himself with disgust, poured soup to the middle of the open

*poncho* and looked at the guy disappearing in the crowd of the market after having folded against him his load that already trickled him on the thighs. Will had adjusted his problem, the hunger had gone and it didn't come back before the evening.

This culinary experience could not have happen to Hiro who was paying high attention to all that he swallowed. He was so much interested to food and its methods of manufacture that he nearly crossed his first experience of cook one month earlier.

Will could have been jealous of this near to be experience, in the beginning of his trip, he wished to work in the countries that he would cross but the reality had caught up him, to work meant to be paid here like an Indian but continue to live while supporting expenses of an American tourist. This was not economically viable and especially the local job market was not prepared to welcome this category of emigrant of a new kind.

To work on a boat permitted to benefit from international wages, to be fed, lodged and to continue to travel. The dream of the *routard* who is not affected by sea sickness. This story interested at utmost Will, Hiro didn't have to be prayed, especially because they had all their time and that the ideal temperature of this small park incited to the *farniente*. After the story of Hiro, they would feel surely in better shape, ready to face Cali and its nocturnal pleasures.

Hiro had found a small hotel therefore in the walled city of Carthagen. He had had this idea of cook job after some talks with other *routards* looking for a boat on which they could work and that would bring them back into their country.

A Carthagen guy met in the street had convinced him that this idea was very good and easily feasible with his help and his numerous contacts in the harbour.

He just had to bring up a very basic file because only composed of a photo and twenty dollars. Money would be given rightly before the departure. The business presented

itself well but it was necessary to invest on the mediator because the contact person with the name of Emilio was quite expensive in beers at each of their daily appointments.

After one week of searching in the harbour, Emilio came to fetch for Hiro in his hotel to announce him the good news and to tell to him that he had to be ready for the very same evening.

Hiro prepared his luggage and even visited a jewellery shop with he intention to buy an emerald that he wanted to bring back to a certain Yoshiko for whom he had some feelings and that had revealed him the pleasure of the yoga practised in couple and the position of *yab yum*.

The purchase was impressive, the jeweller opened his safe and spread out under his nose about hundred green stones of various quality so that he could make his choice, Hiro knew nothing to the world of gems but he let the choice to his hart and moved toward a stone with a sustained green built in rectangle, the price of twenty dollars seemed as reasonable, to believe that everything was priced at twenty dollars in South America. He made some others small purchases of souvenirs and went back to finish his packing in the hotel, happy.

As planned, at 8 PM precise, Emilio arrived at the hotel to bring him to the harbour in taxicab.

Every thing looked all right, Emilio had brought a small document in blue cardboard carrying a stamp that appeared official, on this document Hiro recognized his photo and his name without too many mistakes with on the line *empleo*, the enrolment written with a pencil of *cocinero*. The Spanish designation for cook.

It was official, he had picked up his first international cook job, he was in sky.

Emilio told him that the boat that he had found didn't leave to Japan, it was an American boat that made oil research in the Carribean. But when it would come back in Cartagen one

month later, he would, for sure, have found him a Japanese boat.

Hiro said himself that to begin a maritime cook job, it did not had to be so complicated and he trusted Emilio. They left together in direction of the commercial harbour.

The road to the harbour was short and ten minutes later, they had arrived. The harbour had an international zone forbidden to all non permit carriers. Emilio told him to show his blue card as well ad his ID papers at the man guarding the gate, the boat was the one that was at the end of the embankment; she had for name the Endeavour. He didn't forget to ask him the twenty dollars for his, reminded him to pay the taxicab and let it heading toward the fenced door on his own. After showing his documents, Hiro could pass the gate and made a big friendly salute to Emilio that answered him with a big smile.

He engaged himself on the pontoon to rejoin the Endeavour and quite found her nice looking while bringing closer. She looked like a small yacht and had a big back shelf protected by a roof. There was no one of visible on the boat, Hiro took the ladder of gangway and was soon on the rear bridge.

He launched one:

-Hello, of the boat! in English but didn't get an answer, he imagined that occupants had left in city to celebrate their departure and that they would soon be back. He got settled comfortably in an armchair and waited while beginning to imagine all good dishes that he was going to cook them. He was in a hurry to see the kitchen for feeling *cocinero* indeed.

He was already to the fifth recipe that he memorized when the door in varnished wood that gave on the back shelf opened up and that a big type, with for all garment a towel around loins, made his apparition. He was more surprised by the presence of Hiro that the inverse.

"Don't tell me, Pearl Harbour II, they always attack when one is under the shower, holy Japs!! was his first thought, but his

small access of malaria passes, it tried to understand what happened on the boat.

Hiro was a little annoyed that his first contact happens of this way but he didn't have the choice.

The big strong man had readjusted his towel and had probably approached of Hiro to introduce himself and to wish him the welcome.

Hiro was surprised by his first question:

-What the hell are you doing on my boat?

Emilio didn't have him therefore prejudiced, Hiro simply answered him that he was the new cook and that he was ready to jump in the kitchen in the hour.

In front of the dazed eyes of his interlocutor, Hiro had to tell more. He took out fiercely from his pocket the rectangle of blue cardboard with his name and photo beside the name of the boat. And there, the big fellow is suddenly showing obviously pity for Hiro; was the job going to be so difficult? thought Hiro.

The truth was different, Hiro was a new victim on the list of the crook Emilio that had sold him an enrolment as cook that did not exist.

The big boy presented himself, he christened himself Jim and was the boss of the boat, he had never needed to hire any additional employee and if the case had arise, he should have been American.

Jim was very friendly, he had now understood all muddles and was disappointed sincerely for Hiro, he proposed him to have a drink in a bar behind the harbour before to bring him back to the city. Hiro was still under shock and accepted.

His first thought was to recover Emilio and to force him to eat his blue cardboard, and then he considered that it could wait for the following day.

After having drunk several glasses in company of Jim without managing to recover his state of mind, he came back to his hotel in a awful shape. He felt pain, especially after having

said goodbye to everybody; it was the perfect example of what one calls to lose the face in Japan. In the same situation, his grandfather would have gone up in his, He would have written a small word for his family, would have removed his shirt, would have himself in tailor style on the bed, would have put on his belly a small scarf of silk and with his dagger sharpened like a razor would have opened up his stomach in a movement starting from the navel and finishing under the ribs in a total indifference of those that were going to clean behind him.

Hiro was a lot less a traditionalist; he sat down on the floor, straightened his back, loosened his shoulders and put his head in alignment perfects with his spine.

He closed alternately a nostril while continuing to breathe with the other, he linked a total stop of his breathing by a deep expiration, after twenty minutes of this practice, his calmness had come back, he was now able to go to bed naked torso on his bed, as would have done his grandfather, but times had changed and he only sank into a deep sleep.

### **Cali, 24 th December, 7 PM**

Will and Hiro were telling stories since more than one hour and they had not felt the night coming.

They felt really well in the small park and the best way to make last this pleasure was to continue to tell themselves stories.

Hiro had spent a busy month in Cartagena, he had met a lot of people there also. After his problem with Emilio, he had searched for him everywhere, but strangely, the crook had become untraceable. Hiro wondered how one could bring up all one history to only harvest twenty poor dollars. It is maybe what one calls vice...

While going for a walk several hours per day in the city to find Emilio, he had met Gary, a Englishman who was there since more than one year. He had gone up with an American pal, married to a Columbian, a clandestine bar that would be dedicated to the tourists. The idea was funny, he was invited to drink a glass there and to meet the boss, Mike.

The bar was perfectly situated at the end of the street that bordered the old harbour and that sheltered the small fishing boats and leisure sailing boats.

It was a big apartment at the first floor of an old building with only one very big room painted in white with three balconies looking at the harbour and the citadel.

To the central balcony was suspended a yellow banner that announced with big letters the name of the place: "*Puerta del Sol*".

Mike and Gary's project was simple; they wanted that this place becomes the ideal place for tourists who liked to have a nice drink without mixing themselves with natives.

Not so bothered with laws and rules, they had launched their small business like a private club, in fact it was mostly deprived of any authorization.

In order to have their pub famous in the shortest terms, the two accomplices had elaborated a marketing strategy, as they could not advertise; they had imagined that beaters could make know the bar in return of free drinks.

They wanted to create an international place, with a minimum of Colombian customers, a true private club.

The choice of beaters was simple; any tourist with easy contact with others could face the job.

The ideal was to find one multicultural, they didn't have a Japanese; Hiro would make the business, the enrolment was immediate.

Hiro spoke English well and it was more useful than the Japanese to begin this job, tourists of the archipelago were rare not to say non-existent then he concentrated on the others.

The possible customers had to have a certain open-mindedness because to be landed by a Japanese in Colombia, not British, to hear a proposal of drinking a glass served by a English barman in an American bar that carries the name of *Puerta del sol*; that could have worried more than one, but at the end of one week, evenings began to be a little more animate and when the first ladies arrived, the pub became the place where to be. On the other hand, Hiro was a precious help for Gary as

bartender and his knowledge of some colourful cocktails with three floors and exotic names was much appreciated.

He was receiving some tips and he didn't ask for more. Evenings were nice, music was American, a lot of jazz, one could play chess or backgammon and customers were often surprised to be still there in the early hours without having seen the time passing.

Hiro was wondering if he had interest to keep his hotel, but to sleep in the morning before a good shower would not have been easy to do elsewhere and his room the ideal place for his exercises of meditation. The afternoon, he was giving some help to Gary when he was looking for fresh supplies. They were going to buy some ice in block, it was quite surprising: they were into a big hangar full of wood sawdust, where was the ice?

It was simply under a big heap of sawdust, after some shovelfuls of wood chips removed was appearing a mountain of shiny crystal; they took every time one or two big breads of ice that they charged in a small pickup out of age but that made only shopping in city.

Life flowed out gently, at the rhythm of evenings where there were never less than twenty people in the pub. The place had not remained a long time unknown of Columbians and this coming and going of tourists was not always very discreet, the music that was poured in the street from the balconies attracted as well the attention.

The tourist was for some Carthagen natives, like Emilio, a source of income.

And after some days, there was more and more often at the bottom of the staircase of the *Puerta del Sol*, some weird people who proposed all kind of products that help to see the world under another angle or another colour. Mike didn't spend an evening without his two joints and Gary liked to sniff, he said that it was compulsory to remain all night long in shape.

Hiro didn't touch to these drugs, he had tried one evening in the staircase some coke that one had proposed him gracefully; he didn't absolutely felt anything felt and had stopped there the experience.

Hiro felt that the project of the *Puerta del Sol* took a delicate turn, too many rapacious persons turned now around the bar and Mike and Gary were not heedful enough on the choice of visitors.

Hiro had to cut down on his daily practice of meditation, his cycles of sleep were also very affected and he found his mental balance under danger.

The select bar of the beginning looked some evenings more like an opium den and Hiro felt that he was time to stop the experience, this was not his project, he didn't have any advices to give to Mike and Gary that knew the country better than him but one day he suddenly decided to continue his road toward Medellin the same evening.

He said farewell to everybody, achieved the most beautiful cocktails that he knew; he was proud of his "Banzaï": grenadine, juice of pineapple and rum and of "Rising sun on Fuji mount ": rum, whisky, sake in one full glass of crushed ice mixed to coconut juice.

Mike and Gary knew well that he was not going to remain for ever and watched him leaving with regret because in three weeks, he had succeeded in bringing in the pub regular customers in reason of his friendliness with the clientele.

Hiro went out from the bar, was going to stroll on the harbour, it is the moment that choose three dark blue cars of police to stop in front of the *Puerta del sol*, four cops rushed out of the first car, went up to the first floor immediately while three other ones remained at the entrance gate to prevent any move inside or outside. Hiro said himself that he could not have had any more luck on this stroke, a quarter of hour earlier, he would have had right to the police encounter and its unknown consequences.

## One night in Cali

Hiro didn't find useful to wait watching for the police operation, he made confidence to the trick of Gary and Mike's local supports to get out of this risk. He returned to his hotel and left the following day to Medellin.

## **Cali, 24 th December, 8 PM**

Cali was ready to celebrate Christmas and they were not fully convinced, especially Will, that they were going to place the small Jesus that evening in the crib. No decorations typical of the celebration of the Nativity were installed, except some fireworks explosions that could be heard from time to time in various places of the city.

They were distinctly in better shape that two hours earlier and the buzz of the bus that was vibrating inside their head began to dim. All these histories and the soft ambient temperature had given them thirst and they were going to leave toward another oasis supplying brewed hops when a tall black (or to be more historically correct, a descendant of African tribe, immigrant against his will, by reason of the inaptitude of his ancestors to the footrace, with pigmentation of the epidermis darker than the average of the population, big consumer of soup generating a disproportionate verticality) approached of them with large gestures of welcome and sympathy.

There the author decides to keep "big black" for the following of history, it will be clearer.

To see in this literary choice a racist act would be the reader's big mistake, that the one that never had hundred lines to write in punishment recalls himself of it.

The big black is the designation the more simple and suitable of the described person who enters the story at this stage; this person having not yet introduced himself.

Nothing insulting as what would have been written fifty years before nor hypocritical as the formula supposedly correct " : man of colour of large size " .

Even if it is not visible in the style, this is a first novel, the reader's number is in its most embryonic shape and it would be stupid to offend already a minority of readers for the bad reason of a formula that would displease some.

Side talk, maybe, let's not be disturbed and let's recover our trio where we had let him.

Their first thought was that the hospitality was at very high level in Cali because hardly disembarked since only two hours, they were welcomed personally and set under the protection of a likely representative of the local tourism office who was going to indicate them all places to visit, museums and places where it is necessary to be seen.

The following of events was going to prove them that they were wrong.

The essential activity essential of this brave boy was not the tourism but the horticultural product trade that made the renown of this country by reasons of the nature of soil and of the Colombian climatic conditions. He got involved in different species praises of the herbs proposed to the sale: *punto rosso* was an exceptional product, he did put forward its excellent quotient effect/quantity that made of it a bestseller, a small puff and you started to fly in a marvellous spiral. There was also *punto nero*, less violent but that made you travel longer. It is not indispensable to make the list of points of all colours that was available, the choice was impressive and the seller saved neither his words nor his gestures to describe qualities of each of his products.

All that was very interesting, but a problem occurred: the market survey had been botched as well as the selection of customers, all that work had not been done seriously and far too quickly.

Will and Hiro were not amateurs of these herbaceous pleasures, or only in very occasional way. And tonight, they wanted to keep their feet on earth.

It was necessary to get rid of this intruder who didn't doubt of the success of his enterprise and that intensified his commercial pressure.

At this moment, Will had an idea that proved to be thereafter all except good.

-*Amigo*, all your plants, it is very nice and surely great, but you see, broken, that's already done, so your cones with herbs of the mountain, that doesn't interest us at all.

But kindly caring that the poor boy doesn't leave them too unhappy while saying himself that the trade was not anymore what that had been, he linked;

-The two of us, our thing, tonight, that would rather be to meet two cute, nice and not venal girl friends, that would perfectly suit us as Christmas gifts.

Beautiful restoration of our oblivion merchant:

-*No problema, señor*, one has also that in stock, you wait for me here, I will be back!

Then, immediate departure and disappearance of the big black in the night fall on Cali.

This interview let the two *gringos* perplexed and initiated in their minds a serie of dreams crossed by big black beauties. But with the time passing by, the reality took over and the Colombian Venus moved away for leaving them alone with the certainty that the king of the easy talk had preferred to move toward less difficult customers.

It was at this very moment that he reappeared, alone, but he immediately reassured them on this detail while confirming that all went for best, beauties got ready and were going to rejoin them in a small bar where they were going together.

How to refuse such a program, Will and Hiro were feeling suddenly in much better shape ready for an intimate approach of the local feminine population.

On the sentimental plan, one as the other had to tighten it of several spunks their belts these last weeks and it was time to loosen the pressure.

They followed the big black in several small fairly animate streets to finally arrive before a small house built in the simplest way with a big PEPSI sign hung between the two open doors on the street.

The kind bar was not of an extreme architectural originality, but the concrete bricks never permitted a lot of fantasy in variety of shapes. The two entrances gave on the street but while passing by quibblings that forbade to see what happened inside and reciprocally.

The room was enough big and oblong, they got settled to the table that was nearest of the street and that was placed between the two passages that communicated with the outside. The table was gluey to wish, chairs also, in fact, you could not dream a better place for a romantic appointment.

The room was not full, the customers, especially men, had sent several eye sides to the trio that had just gotten settled. The lighting also had to be romantic but the pale light only succeeded in giving a lugubrious air to the whole and didn't contribute to give any charm to the place.

They ordered three beers to begin. After only some minutes, their mediator rose and without spreading on his reasons slipped out to start a ballet of in and outs from the bar that showed him more nervous at each of his passages.

His brief passages to the bar were the opportunity of explanations on the advancement of the situation, each of it being all smokier the some that others to explain the delay of girls.

Will and Hiro began to wonder in what they had embarked, their confidence in their guide had come close to nil and they were less and less impatient to meet the girlfriends of the black, if they existed indeed.

The black had left again, more and more nervous, they imputed his state to his profession; he was probably his better customer and had to have to test the merchandise to be able to speak some in connoisseur. The foreseen program began to

bore them and they thought about to quit the joke and to change canteen while putting a rabbit to their promoter of evening.

**Cali, 24 th December, 8.30 PM,**

Just as they were going to rise to leave, the big black was back again, that was there, they were going to arrive, one more minute and their patience was going to be rewarded.

His watch was probably not well adjusted and advanced a little, because thirty seconds later, this was not two local dolls that went into the bar but a group of about ten people that engulfed itself with a coordination perfected by the two doors in the bar and that surrounded the table where they were sat all three.

A police insigne was put well in evidence on the table before eyes of Will and Hiro while an unknown but not innocent hand threw under the table a thick paper sachet at their feet.

This sachet didn't remain on the concrete floor very long because the one that had put his medal on the table bent and collected the bag to expose him to the general view.

He opened him, watched inside, felt it and with the grandmother's air that surprised the kid in the cupboard to jams, proclaimed theatrically in Spanish:

-Ah, ah, traffickers of grass, you are in, my strong men, that one takes them!

Will and Hiro did not have any of nothing to say, they were under the influence of the surprise and didn't absolutely know what was going on, this entire group being dressed in civilian.

They were raised of their chairs and advanced without care toward the exit, seeing that, the landholder of the tea lounge interfered, the hope was of short length for the two poor guys, she simply wanted to be paid the drinks and these three customers gave her the impression not to be able to linger. Hiro took out a bank note from his pocket that was immediately inhaled by this brave shopkeeper. He had probably given the exact amount because nothing was given back him.

The situation could appear worrying, under the lighting of the street, the group faced Will and Hiro, they were able at this moment only to realize that all of them were equipped of devices made for ventilating red meat, devices better known under names of automatic guns and automatic rifles. They had put themselves as along a bow around Will and Hiro. It looked like a firing squad in less well organized...

Hiro attracted most of their attention; this brave boy of Osaka didn't hide his Asian origins and had a little look of Bruce Lee that evidently impressed them. Movies of Kung Fu were little on screens since about ten year and the local population appreciable to the second degree was intrigued by these people

that could fly as of squirrels and to cope without problems to a group of villains.

Hiro had to weigh as much that Bruce Lee all wet but had never frequented a dojo of his life, he was starting to regret it...

The practice of the tantrism is solely pacific and even though he exercised the *tai-chi-chuan* from time to time, he knew very well that this discipline based on the slow movements associated to the meditation would be from very small help.

This detail of the past of Hiro was ignored of the gun holders that imagined with concern that he was going to launch a killing shout as starting and initiate a set of feline springing to let them all on the ground.

But the shout didn't come out of the sore throat of Hiro and their courage came back, they threw themselves together at him, mastered him it and rocked him like a dirty linen bag in a small banal dark blue pickup was parked before the bar.

He rejoined the big black there, that had made no trouble to enter the pick up.

For Will, the business was simpler, because movies about the French traditional boxing were very badly distributed in Colombia and his corpulence didn't impress them. He was pulled and advanced toward the pickup and forced to enter by the lateral door. In last recourse, Will had the reflex to fold his legs under the passage of door but it was only a way to delay the action, they finally found themselves to six at the rear of the pickup that was equipped of benches of wood fixed to the sides of the van.

The equipment was very comparable to French police vans but contrary to the "navy blue and white HY" of the French police, this small pickup didn't carry any distinctive sign of its adherence to the police.

These some missing letters on flanks of the vehicle put them in the deepest disarray.

Who were their raptors?

To part the plate of police glimpsed some instants, the only sure thing was that their liberty was threatened seriously by an armed group of unknown origin. Very poor as information!

In any cases, the some witnesses who had seen the scene had made no movement to interfere, those people appeared to be feared and acted without hiding themselves in the middle of the city.

The pickup started and all of them left toward a destination unknown at least of two passengers.

Will asked where they were going, the answer came from the driver seat:” POLICIA”!

This answer reassured them however a little, they could only wait for the following of events. While crossing the city, they said themselves that their obvious honesty would be very quickly recognized and that they would be taken back to their hotel with the flattest apologies of the chief of the police that would not lack to lecture his employees and to transfer some of them to confines of the Amazonian in order to teach them how to distinguish a tourist supplier of net income from a bandit trafficking of marijuana. Will already began to construct his defence and searched in his indigent vocabulary to find all words that could be useful to make explode the truth.

It is strange how innocence is able to reassure the people who will be confronted to the worse tests.

The fires of artifice were more numerous and calicoes were in the street to celebrate Christmas as must be. After several kilometres of urban crossing in the middle of an anarchical circulation, the pickup finally stopped in front of a very imposing building with in fact above of the entrance porch the POLICIA word.

These letters relieved Will and Hiro who did not wait a second to come out of the van and were going directly to place themselves under the protection of the porch, still follow-up by the big black and framed by their " police raptors ".

The chief of the operation was still carrying in hand the small bag of grass and was doing to whoever wanted to listen very negative commentaries on what can happen to the mindless who take the risk of engaging themselves in this doubtful trade. Will asked in his imperfect Spanish to finally meet a person responsible of the local police in order to clarify and explain him the situation.

His Spanish had to be too much imperfect, or his accent maybe, his request got lost in the interminable passageway that led them once again toward an unknown destination.

No light in the offices, they were marching in the only pallid gleam of emergency exit watchers.

The odour that reigned in this big building evoked the boredom and misery, a mixture of dust and old beer perfectly in harmony with the faded paint of passageways without end. The crossing of this building didn't make encounter anybody; the hour and the date were effectively not very compatible with an interview with a responsible interlocutor.

It is while making this reflection that they found themselves at the other extremity of the building without having finally met anyone.

**Cali, 24th December, 21 PM,**

After this succession of halls with anaemic light, they cleared in a big court that contrasted with passageways by its very powerful lighting that fell from two high pylons. This court was surrounded by high walls that isolated it of the outside; a big iron door was closing this court. Only a small window in this wall permitted to see and to communicate with the street. A big metal grating separated the building of the police of this court.

They were welcomed in this new place by a huge character that had like symbol of authority a big truncheon in wood about one metre long that was hung to his belt and was beating his calves.

The transfer of property was done very merely. He came to open them the metal grating, the carrier of the paper bag made them enter, let them advance in the court, said some words to the type with the truncheon and disappeared by the same way that they had arrived.

The metal grating was closed again behind them and everything went very quickly.

The guard with the truncheon summoned the three of them the order to head toward a big grid in steel that was in fact the unique door of a common cell whose inside was in the obscurity.

Hiro had the bad idea to find the demand inadmissible and expressed his refusal on a tone that visibly displeased to the guard.

That one was not a movies addict and he had not seen a lot of movies of Kung Fu because he immediately headed on Hiro, put his hand to the belt and began a discussion with him of type of broken sticks. Will saw the truncheon to rise and to fall three times in a short sequence, the argument was valid; Hiro went running into the cell.

Will understood very quickly that he had better to obey to this very susceptible person and followed Hiro immediately.

The big black who was okay with all was already in the piece.

This cell had to have the same architect that the bar from where they came, a big rigor of shapes that forced the contemplation, the proportions of the piece respected the gold number; about ten meters by three by two meters of height. On the width, a big grid assured functions of door, of ventilation and permitted the surveillance of the life cell.

No light or broken bulb?

The night had fallen since at least two hours and the court being illuminated strongly, the contrast of light prevented to distinguish the inside of the room, but it was its calmness that made it appear empty.

While entering in, they were intended to the middle of about forty co-convicts.

They were all calm, some slept on cardboards of packing or to even the tiled soil.

Will and Hiro looked for a small corner where to get, they preferred to remain as close as possible to the grid because an too fast immersion in the Cali underworld appeared them a little risky. They preferred to better know the occupants of the

place before coasting them of too much near. A new test presented himself for the two new arrived, and once again, they had missed time to get prepared.

The basic delinquent of basis prepares his offence and anticipate risks. He can imagine consequences thus of a muddles that turns wrong. Often, he prefers to think about what he will make with the profit of his foreseen act but for our two tourists, they were as spectators - actors of a movie whose script was unknown of them. Even when decors of acts change, they must find their marks without the help of the realisator, except very rarely, when was indicated gently, for example to Hiro, the place where he had to go.

They would have nevertheless appreciated to read a minimal script, to participate in the new wave of the realistic Colombian movies is a chance but one always needs to be a little controlled when one starts.

Short movie or blockbuster?

The actors' play must nevertheless to be adapted, the producer takes the risk indeed that one sees their inexperience.

About the casting, extras of the big cell had been very well selected, there were few beginners among them, or maybe this scene had already been shot several times before their arrival.

One was in front of the cream of the cream of the street bandits, the makeup was particularly great. They had played maybe in a movie of pirates before this one, because one could recover some typical accessories; buckles of ears, scars, etc...

The weak light was giving a dark shine to the skins, the heat was on and the immobile air was not helping the breath.

After some minutes in the room, Will and Hiro had obtained a square meter of free space against the wall close enough to the grid. From this corner of the room, they could retail their new residence. The silence was impressive, no one spoke, everybody seemed dejected.

The reason of this autism? Heat of in the evening? anxiety about the future? prayer of the Christmas night? several questions and no answers.

This reigning calm was only disturbed by the permanent noise of a water tap that flowed behind a thin and small wall in the darker end of the room. One could imagine that this unique hole permitted to urinate, to defecate, to vomit and to drink above if the desire was still there.

This small corner had to be reserved to the confirmed cocaine-maniacs without big nasal sensitivity, because the net of water had not succeeded in evacuating the tenacious smell of urine scum mixed with other perfumes less identifiable.

To the place where they were sat, the odour was tolerable, and they other prisoners seemed much less disturbed than them, probably a question of practice or habit.

They were the only non Colombian in the cell and their arrival that had attracted all available looks interested their immediate neighbours only.

This public was not so easily ready to have fun, they had looked with interest the arrival of Hiro when he had played them Puppet with his strokes of sticks, but since they were behind the grid, they had taken part in the family. What could be the interest in people in the same shit as you, there are little odds that the salute comes from their side.

But these two, had nevertheless a little more exotic that made them a little more interesting than the average.

One of their near neighbours, that had to make swindler of low range in the civilian and that had the sense of the communication therefore, landed them in first.

The presentation type in this kind of place is slightly different of the one of a Parisian lounge, anonymity is respected there and after an assessment with an eye side of the other, one can have right to a question of the type:

-Why are you there?

The answer is a classic:

-As you, by mistake!

While learning that they had been stapled in reason of green plant business, their neighbour of barrack-room, took several of his mates witness and came back toward them with the result of the *gallup*. Opinions differed but the average of five years seemed to make the unanimity.

Will and Hiro immediately felt better with this impression to have swallowed a ice cube thick like a ball of *pétanque*. Cold pill...

They understood very quickly that if they wanted to keep a minimum of state of mind, it would be more prudent not to ask too many questions to their neighbours. It was going to be necessary to draw as soon as possible in their personal and positive resources before being carried away by a wave of blues.

The situation was delicate but it was necessary to concentrate on the friendly side of things, they had not yet been slaughtered above of the smelly hole of the bottom of the piece. Them, usually so attracted by the exotic populations, which guide would have proposed them to spend these moments in tête-à-tête with this bottom selection of the calinese population, as them unhappy victims of mistrials?

It was necessary to change of ideas and to look at what happened around was a good derivative.

One evidently was in front of rare people of Cali, all these mean that outside would have been attracted by your miserable possessions were now again in group and the tail between the legs.

If the union makes strength, in this situation, the promiscuity underlined their weakness. Once out of their jungle, the street, they became again as innocuous as of children.

Taken one after the other, each of them could have frightened if met at the corner of a street and could have generated reflexes of flight at the majority of the population, but the fact

to be seated on the same tiling made forget the usual danger and gave birth to a feeling near of compassion.

The fact not to be Columbians prevented Hiro and Will to think that they were going to be judged like all these strong men, one doesn't treat a Japanese or a French of the same way without risking to involve the protection consulate shields, embassies, humanitarian organizations and of all those that spend their time and money to defend the widow and the orphan.

It was especially what made them keep a hope in the future, they only had very badly chosen their moment for visiting the Cali' jails , the Christmas night, that is made to go to the Church and not in prison.

Tomorrow, that would be Christmas day, therefore, no one at work, then, lucky break, one links on the week - end, then very little chance that one took interest to them before three days in the best of cases, and in about ten days, if it was necessary to wait after festivities of the new Year, seemed to be a minimum.

They had difficulty indeed considering themselves as of brothers of pain of their cell neighbours during all that time.

They didn't have ever attacked a small old lady in the street nor big youngster either, they didn't consider the city as their jungle and respected most laws since their childhood, it has a price, all these efforts.

Their neighbours had also some difficulties to consider them as their counterparts; they represented still what they would have run after to make their deal of the week of it, if by accident, they had crossed their district of work. Then, to make feel them this difference, they continued to explain them in what mud they were going to penetrate.

For the meantime, they had put feet in the sludge but if all happened foreseen how, they were going to penetrate slowly in this smelly swamp, no sympathetic root would be at the good place as providential last help.

Two guys who wanted to speak and had the air to know well the topic began to explain them the situation and to describe the operations to come.

One was to the central deposit of the police that was only a transit place and that was emptied to regular intervals. Prisoners were sent then toward the different jails power stations according to unknown *criteria's*. The two specialists were there since several days and thought that seen the quantity that they were already, the transfer would take place at lasting the next three days.

What seemed to put in this apathetic state all these hard guys was surely the reputation of the Colombian jails known by most the accustomed.

One especially, had an infernal reputation, according to them, it was rare to survive more than six months there thanks to menus of the kitchen chief of this famous establishment.

The Modello, it was the name of this mythical and infernal establishment that made even tremble hardest.

Its name yet inspired seriously and could let think that it was a modern, probably firm justice tool but just. They had started with evoking the plain, only those that had a stomach in steel had a chance, one finished there simply in diarrhoea. Will and Hiro that were thick as playing cards wondered how much of time their skinny reserves would make them hold.

Feeling a certain shaking of the state of mind of the two prisoners, the big black redid surface to bring some complements of information. Will and Hiro didn't want to cope with this type anymore, he was the reason of their situation and if one had let him with them, this was not surely by chance.

He knew the Modello, he had especially had the luck to be able to take out some. This jail had the detail unique to be so dangerous that guards don't penetrate there. It was structured like a small city where convicts tried to survive there as they were able to. The law there was the one of bosses of the narco-

traffic who have bought their security while surrounding themselves of armed and paid bodyguards.

Without money, the convict is the lowest on the ladder, no weapon, no food from the outside, no protection; he should submit to requirements of strongest or could tempt to rebel and end up stickled like a collection dried beetle.

The level of convict arming is impressive over there, everything that money permits to buy could go in there, the most often with the help of the completely corrupt guard that were taking any advantage of their position.

Some lived there even in family with woman and children; one can imagine the future of a boss's child who will have passed his tender years there!

To make the picture complete, all known drugs were available and prostitution was there flourishing.

As example of other friendly place, there was also the Pinota in Bogota, famous for its mutinies so violent that the army was sent there regularly to re-establish peace.

According to all these new data, a point on the situation could be made: Will and Hiro would be transferred as small dealers in one of the central jails of Cali or Bogota, no one would take interest in their case before about ten days and during this time, they would need to survive and to find protections close to bosses of coke.

Hiro said himself that he would be able to give lessons of *yoga* or *origami* to the refined bosses. The Japanese art to make pans in paper made surely many adepts beside tradesmen of the white powder while Will thought to give French lessons or teach French "cuisine", of course, he would have some difficulty to find an occupation.

But the big black also said that if one paid quickly, one could escape all that mess but that action should be done quickly before interlocutors disappear.

All pieces of the puzzle were taking place and the part of sky that was under clouds became again blue to their eyes. The big

black was their hyphen to make walk at the end the scheme of the beginning, he was the false victim that knows which strings to pull and was kept with them in order to accelerate the process.

It was not necessary to wonder if in this country, it was prisoners who made the law and had taken controls of jails. The police is so hopeless and paid so badly that it is reduced to bring up some so measly strokes so miserable that they are only pale copies of what makes rebels and crooks. Cops trying to be crooks must be topics of high laughing by the people of cartels.

They were not lucky; the scenarist of their story had probably been inspired by a cartoon or a movie child.

Will and Hiro had understood where the system wanted to bring them but they didn't want to go there so quickly.

First stage: one impresses and one weakens.

Then, one frightens and one projects in the time, and immediately after one begins to send the small strings of hope while waiting for the thick rope that all good fish must bite, but it is exactly like by the river, the fisher must remain discreet and his fishing rod invisible, otherwise the good fat fish, is going to see farther if it does not look better and especially less dangerous.

In their case, bravo for the teasing and the first part, but their colour partner was indeed a bad actor hurried to leave and to touch his share, he wanted to eat before the fish to be hooked, attention to the line that breaks, especially as he had gone up a little thick!

For Will and Hiro, all was clear enough, their conviction to be in a classic plot that consisted in wringing the luckless tourists legally confirmed itself.

But they didn't want to give them reason too quickly, after all, no one waited for them, if there was a price to pay, they would have to deserve their dollars.

If all was planned so well, broken in, tested on about ten or hundred guinea pigs, the stake in common cell evidently made part of the system.

The author of the piece had said himself that any “normal” tourist that took out his hotel to end up two hours later in a Colombian prison without landings of adaptations must feel a shock that must result in screaming, tears, calls for help and normally of bribes of paying his guards.

Our two friends didn't want to consider themselves as of the tourist *lambdas* and began to consider this experience like a sociological investigation of big interest *in vivo*.

It centered with their philosophy of the journey, to benefit the maximum of it with a given budget, the past time was not important.

What beautiful luck was offered them: an approach of Colombia while starting with shallows and only one path: the ascent toward the surface and the liberty!

They were conscious of the strength that was provided to them by their understanding, since the beginning of their problem, they had not had any disagreement. Even though Will led the action more since two hours, Hiro was not at all a dead weight, he had put to profit his knowledge of the relaxation by the breathing and one could see a big calm reigning on his face, he was an important support for Will.

They had the same view of the situation. They were under stress but they didn't let it show and it was their motor and their strength.

To show any sign of weakness would have been a mistake.

Hiro had nearly recovered from his three strokes of stick that had fallen close to his fourth chakra, the one of the love, the memory of Yoshiko and the meditation had made him practically forget the pain. He had also understood that his method was less good than the one of Will that analyzed more and pulled up his instincts.

Will was in full reflection, he found that their adversaries had a lot of shortcomings to their breastplate in spite of all means and the expanded production. It was necessary to now prove that the ruse can carry away him on the brutal strength.

Will was not a brawler, he knew in advance that in all type of fight, he had all odds to finish second. Honorable place in a lot of sports but that reduced a career, in the boxing, for example. He liked to observe people and managed enough quickly to understand who was his opponent. He was sometimes mistaken, of course, but in general his first impression was right.

To therefore to foil plans of these police artists in the nocturnal melodrama organization with displacement of vehicles fenced, utilization of loaded shooting material and incarceration, it was necessary to pass for stupid and to consider everything that arrived to them as normal or simply to show that they were not impressed the less the world by this dissolute living of means.

To put in action this tactics, they got settled of possible best and simulated a small sum.

It was necessary to remain however heedful because they had on them all their money and they were like two chickens shut in in a full cage of foxes.

Foxes thought more that these two were other foxes of a neighbouring race maybe, but if a more attentive fox that others saw sudden their feathers, a new problem would occur.

They were going to be ridded very quickly of this worry, because the gentleman to the stick had left of his small office, approached the grid, opened him with his big key and asked at the three last arrived to get out with his natural niceness.

## One night in Cali