

HONG KONG NOIR

FIFTEEN TRUE TALES FROM THE
DARK SIDE OF THE CITY

Feng Chi-shun

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Hong Kong Noir

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Also by Feng Chi-shun

*Diamond Hill: Memories of growing up in a Hong Kong
squatter village*

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FOREWORD

I am a native son of Hong Kong, so it's only natural that I have encountered a lot of people from the city in my life, many up front and personal and many more from a distance. I remember some of them particularly well because they have one thing in common – there is an interesting story associated with him or her.

I remember them best when their stories are downright nasty and vicious, or at least sensational in a disturbing way. There must be a psychological explanation for this. I am not particularly attracted to such dark stories but I don't shy away from them either. I am, by nature and nurture, rather undaunted and unperturbed by blood or gore, brutality or violence.

Being a pathologist, I have seen my share of deaths from unnatural causes such as suicide, accident, and murder. I am not unfamiliar with the underbelly of Hong Kong society, either. I began my life witnessing and dealing with lawlessness around me, having grown up in Diamond Hill in the 1950s and '60s, then a squalid village known for its widespread crime, police corruption, and poverty. After graduating from medical school, I spent most of my professional life working in public hospitals

where patients generally belonged to the underclass. When I was in my forties, I made my worst financial decision ever when I invested in part-ownership of a bar in Kowloon City: a part of town where the Sun Yee On triad faction originated. Although I took no part in the active management of the bar, I spent enough time there mingling with the rough and tough customers to fully appreciate the underclass way of life. I also learned the way of the underworld, and became familiar with their parlance and modus operandi. I sold my share of the bar dirt-cheap in a hurry when I found out that the triad boss overseeing that area and our landlord turned out to be the only beneficiaries of the booming business at that Lung Kong Road watering hole – one receiving a substantial monthly protection fee, the other a hefty monthly rent.

For believers of karma and fate, it seems that shady characters with their sleaze and shenanigans are firmly etched on the blueprint of my life. Maybe that accounts for why I have such a rich recollection of Hong Kong noir.

I am sharing 15 such stories with you. They are not related to my work as a pathologist (that's another story) and they are not from a common source. I have come to know them because some are well-known crimes extensively reported in the local media; some are fascinating yarns I've heard from reliable sources; and some are the remarkable lives of personal friends of mine.

These 15 stories are a cross-section of the vast collection of Hong Kong noir I wish I didn't have in my memory because they don't exactly bring about feel-good sentiments for me.

Writing about them and sharing them with others has proved to be cathartic.

They are grouped under three categories: *Losers and Boozers*; *Beyond Villains and Victims*; and *Sex and the City*. The categorization is not arbitrary and is an attempt to give the stories some orientation and symmetry. But each story is really too unique and complex to be pigeonholed.

I must also clarify the extent of authenticity of these stories.

Inside Hello Kitty's Head, *The Taxi Driver from Hell*, *Crime of Convenience at the 7-11*, and *Lucky Nine* are all well-known crimes committed in Hong Kong and reported in detail by the local media. Only in the case of *The Taxi Driver from Hell*, in which there were no witnesses alive, does the story entail some reconstruction of what might have happened during those gruesome murders. All the others are entirely factual and are based on witnesses' accounts.

Each of the protagonists in *Death by Numbers*, *Leaving Chungking Mansions*, *The Millionaire Street Sleeper*, and *The Girl with the Eagle Tattoo* represents a collapse of similar characters. Their names are fictional but their stories are authentic.

'*It's Now or Never*' by *Elvis of the Orient* and *The Hemophiliac* are two true stories partially fictionalized by creating tidbits of their lives, to connect the dots, so to speak, and to make sense of their final days.

The rest: *The World According to Ron*, *The Dishonorable Medical Student*, *A Hardcore Childhood*, *Mommy's Boy*, and *The Kindest Cut of All* are about my personal friends. (The ones who are still

alive have their names changed.) Their stories are based on what really happened in their lives. There is no need to fictionalize their stories in any way – they are already stranger than fiction.

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