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## **Waking Up In Asia**

by KIM M. HOOD

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**Waking Up**  
**in**  
*Asia*



**Kim M. Hood**

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|                                    |     |
|------------------------------------|-----|
| Intro .....                        | 1   |
| Nightmares from Lard Yao.....      | 5   |
| The King's Court.....              | 10  |
| Hospital Reject Tea.....           | 33  |
| Nefarious Nigerian Neighbors ..... | 41  |
| Daymares .....                     | 48  |
| Monsoon Years.....                 | 60  |
| Fed-Con Air Express .....          | 74  |
| Seven Calendars.....               | 166 |
| Outro.....                         | 196 |

## INTRO

**I**t took four Thai police officers and two DEA agents, to escort me through the airport. We were rushing to the prisoner transport van. I didn't understand why though. Captured and vulnerable, there was no escaping. My handcuffs were tight. They were moving me along the Don Mueang International fast. It was as if we were range walking. I figuratively had tainted blood on my hands already, from a pending domestic violence case. Now, I was seeing red out of anger and embarrassment. I didn't know what the hell I was doing. Being arrested in Bangkok, while out of jail on a bond in Alabama, would be unexplainable to my parents. They were under the impression I was doing quite well in Birmingham. I wasn't supposed to be out of my home state, let alone the country. Recklessly, I'd attempted to carry several kilos of heroin onto an aircraft, bound for The United States of America. After the DEA agents had taken photos of the drug seizure, video footage was recorded. Afterwards, I was hurriedly marched out of the building, and loaded into a vehicle. I was informed of my destination and quickly whisked away. With each bump on the uneven

highway, my thoughts were going off kilter. So unimaginable it all was! I'd gone from never having any legal troubles in my life to now being charged with two major felonies within the same year. It was a sickening state of affairs. I couldn't do anything, but think about one question repeatedly, while on the drive to the local Thai jail for in-processing. Why did I get out of the military and start gravitating towards desperate people? Willingly, I'd opened my arms and taken their bait. For the wellbeing and safety's sake of two children, I'd made some dangerous decisions from the start.

Being a disabled veteran and ex-postal service worker, I know the held importance of individual freedoms. Events that are shared within the following pages have since come and gone. The relevance to current times, and difficult situations some people still fall prey to, will never cease. I'd managed to accomplish a lot of my goals before, during, and after getting out of the military in late December 1991.

Unforeseen circumstances temporarily dashed the hopes and dreams of my future in 1994. That's the year I landed inside of an Asian prison. The vehicle that was used in my public downfall is being turned around. It's an opportunity to have some healthy dialogue. About the routes we all take, whether good or bad, throughout our trajectory of life.

I'd never had a problem with making friends or elocution. However, talking too much behind prison walls can be misinterpreted with detrimental results.

The information was disseminated from The United States Embassy, during the incoming briefing. Ensuring the stakes were clearly understood by all newcomers, they would come out to see the American women and men, at least once a month for official visits. Checking on our safety during incarceration and conducting various monetary transactions was a part of their busy schedules. They also relayed any family emergency information, which couldn't wait for the mail system.

“What on earth made you think it was a good idea to jeopardize your bond and travel off to another country?” That was one of the most asked questions I'd received from several of the missionaries. They'd heard rumors about my cases from the newspapers.

Genuine interest in the details of what happened to me was appreciated. My position was oblique and evasive for fear of judgment. The missionaries, who came inside of the compound visitation area, were there to take care of the shopping needs for the non-local prisoners. I was on their list as one of the inmates, who had money on their account books. It was an ongoing insider joke amongst the few dozen American women. The more Thai baht we had would definitely keep the visits coming in regularly.

I'd decided shortly after sentencing, one of my frequent visitors, who was a German man, would be the person with whom I would open up to about my many sagas. He'd recently left a well-paying job to travel the globe. His latest stop was in Thailand, only a few months before I'd arrived. Listening to the reasons he'd

given behind leaving his long-standing job and becoming a missionary were some of the most intriguing one's I'd ever heard. I didn't know how many chances we'd get to see each other. Only twenty-minute durations set when we did have visitation would be a hindrance. I was willing to tell him the unadulterated truth slowly, every week if given an opportunity.

I wouldn't say to him I'd been duped into despicable acts. That was the perception many had gathered from the bits and pieces they'd heard about me. The heavy yolk of silence needed to be lifted from my shoulders. A small breakthrough was coming, after a couple years of silent confinement. I was ready to burst. I'd built a well-crafted moving fortress revolving around the premise, "Nothing this bad could ever happen in my world." Unfortunately, for me the precision hadn't been correct with that calculation.

There was no communication with family members, other than through the mail or the U. S. Embassy. It was a harsh penalty to endure. When speaking with one particular missionary, like a lifeline phone system during my imprisonment, made me realize at lot of things. If I dealt with what issues I'd wanted to avoid the most, it could be an invaluable lesson until freedom came back to me.



## NIGHTMARES FROM LARD YAO

**I**t was nicknamed The Notorious Bangkok Hilton long before my arrival inside. The official name is Lard Yao Women's Remand Home. Its location is centered deep within the walls of Klong Prem Central Prison in Bangkok, Thailand. In my late twenties, I spent four and a half years out of my life as an inmate, inside of the one-hundred-year-old Draconian compound.

It took me two years after being incarcerated, before I'd felt any real considerations about opening up to talk. I was ready to speak to someone about the actual facts, surrounding my involvement with international drug trafficking smugglers from Nigeria. At the time of my arrest, I was out on bond for another serious charge. Though sketchy, the allegation stemming from one of the crimes was true, but complicated. Technically speaking, I did attempt to board an aircraft, heading into The United States of America with over six kilos of heroin. However, that wasn't a part of my original plans.

During my years of being confined in the mid 1990's, I was a witness to unbearable horrors. My intent was to steer clear in order to survive them. The



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