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Journal Entry: Lijiang

### **Self full-filling prophecy**

We had been in LiJiang for several days and the weather was not getting warmer so I finally decided that it was time to go buy a warm jacket or sweater to wear. It would have to be something that I did not have at home. We had three hours of free time that afternoon before we were to meet for supper in the Naxi Village. I asked Allison if she wanted to go with me. She said, "No." I told her I would get lost without her. She told me I would be fine on my own.

With that reassurance I left to find my way around the Naxi Cultural Village on my own. I was doing fine until I got to the Mansion and the square. I had not found what I was looking for and that is when my problems started. I took a wrong turn and after walking for several minutes I was out of the area where all the stores were located. Instead of retracing my steps all the way back to the square, I thought I could take a short cut to the water wheels. Before I knew it I was at the market we had visited previously. There was only one problem. I could not get my bearings because it was closing for the day and I could not tell where the meat sellers and vegetable sellers had been. I could not find the shoe vendor stall from the day before. Then the unthinkable happened. I was out of the park and on a busy street I had never seen before.

Nothing looked familiar. I had ten minutes to find my way back to the water wheels to be on time to meet the group. The first thought that went through my mind was I have to find someone who speaks English. I asked myself. "Where would Dirk Pitt look for someone who speaks English?" A hotel! That would be the most logical place and sure enough there was a nice looking hotel on the next block. I went in and walked up to the desk and with confidence that this was going to be easy, asked if anyone spoke English. One person spoke a little. I asked for a map. After much pointing and drawing a picture of what I thought looked like the two water wheels, we determined that I was at the opposite end of the park from where I needed to be.

Looking at the map, and the city streets, it looked like I just had to walk a couple of blocks, turn a corner and then it would be a straight shot to the street where we always turned to go to the entrance of the park. I thanked the people and started on my way. I only had 6 minutes to get to the water wheels. I started running. I am sure that the natives found the sight of me running quite amusing. After a couple of minutes of running I realized I was nowhere near where I needed to turn. Time to get a taxi.

But first I wanted to make sure that I was on the right track. Another hotel that looked quite prosperous was right ahead of me. However, no one spoke English there. I was not having much luck with finding someone who spoke English. Then I spied a car dealership. There might be someone there who spoke English. I was sure they exported cars or dealt with manufacturers who spoke English. A young girl knew enough English to tell me that she could not be of help to me. Everyone understood Naxi, but could not phantom where I wanted to go.

There were lots of taxis, but finding a taxi driver who understood English was not a solution to my problem. Finally I gave up on that. Meanwhile, I was frantically looking

for anything in my purse that had the name of the hotel on it. Allison had the key and the box of matches I had was from the hotel in Dali. I was running out of options. I would give one more hotel a try. It was a beautiful looking hotel and very modern. The concierge met me at the door and I asked if he spoke English. He nodded his head. I told him I was trying to get back to the Naxi park with the water wheels. As I reached into my purse to pull out the picture I had drawn for the other hotel personnel, I came out with the ticket for the Dongba Dance and Music program we had attended the night before. The one I almost missed because I had gone to use the ladies room and when I came back, everyone was gone.

I told him I need to get to that place. He wrote the address in Chinese on a piece of paper. I thanked him profusely after much confirmation, he in Chinese and me in English, that it was where I wanted to go. Now I was ready to find a taxi. There were no Taxis to be found. The street that just minutes ago had been teeming with cars, bicycles and taxis was almost empty. Did I somehow get on another street. I looked up and down the street. I walked to the corner and still very little traffic. Why do these things always happen to me? Finally a lone taxi appeared. I handed him the address and my ticket. He said something in Chinese and I answered yes. I was hoping that he said, "You want to go to this place?" After several minutes of driving, I muttered to myself that I didn't think he was going to the right place. After all it didn't seem that far on the map back at the first hotel. That will teach me to look at the scale before I try going somewhere. The taxi driver pulled over to the side and said something again in Chinese while pointing to the address on the paper, I assumed he said, "You want to go to this place, right?"

I said, "Yes." And we were off again. By this time I was really late for meeting the rest of the group and I didn't care where he was taking me. I began to think of what is this ride going to cost me? It was almost 7:00. I am thinking that there is no way I could have walked this far to have to travel this long to get back. Soon I see shops that look familiar and there is the bridge that I saw the first day we drove into Li Jiang. Moments later the taxi pulled up to the village on the north side. I asked him how much and he wrote on my paper with the address 10. I asked, "Yuan?" and he shook his head yes.

I was grateful to be back in familiar territory and amazed that I had this long taxi ride that cost me a \$1.25. Life can be good sometimes. I hurried over to the water wheels but no one was waiting for me. Guess I have to find supper on my own. I knew those granola bars would come in handy. Some milk and ice cream would go well with them.

Be careful of what you say. You have the power to make it come true.