

Chinese Dragon

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Book Two of the Three Kingdoms Trilogy

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chapter ONE

I reached the end of the road and saw the line of traffic, my heart sank as I realised that the rush hour was at its height. Five taxis crawled past, their drivers staring obstinately ahead. My appointment with Mr Na Sang-wha was for six. It meant that precisely. I glanced at my watch, saw that it was barely five-thirty, and decided to walk.

As I weaved my way towards 40 Sejong-daero I wondered what Na had in store for me. He hadn't been any more communicative than usual on the telephone. When I'd asked what my next assignment was he'd replied, somewhat curtly, 'The Chang Chu-chu Affair – if that means anything to you'.

It hadn't, of course, and I'd hung up on a dead line, wondering what kind of a fool I was to have let myself be caught up in the cloak and dagger business of the secret services. I should have gone back to engineering, and had fun and games arguing about health and safety regulations and staff tea breaks.

Searching frantically for Park Song-yong – my ex business partner, whose extravagance had sent our engineering business into freefall and eventual liquidation – I had suddenly come into close contact with Na Sang-wha and his operatives. Na was also looking for my ex-partner and, realising that my knowledge of Park and his association might prove more than useful, he had enlisted my help and put the full resources of his department at my disposal.

I caught up with Park eventually, discovering in the process that I had a hitherto unsuspected streak of ruthlessness in my make-up. To be honest with myself, my conceit was flattered when Na offered me a position on the staff of his undercover department. Perhaps if I'd been married ... But I wasn't. As the clock ticked past six I turned into Sejong-daero.

Chapter two

As I was ushered into the room I thought, as I always had, how improbable a setting it was for the briefing of a mission that could well culminate in violent death. It was high and spacious, with a veined marble floor, and wall-fitted bookcases. Several club leather easy chairs were strategically placed around the modern desk with its businesslike telephones.

Behind the desk sat a man in his early fifties, neatly groomed and wearing an inconspicuous, well fitting dark grey suit. At a first glance he might have been mistaken for a successful businessman; it was not until he started to speak that you realised Na Sang-wha possessed certain qualities, which would have been wasted in the world of commerce.

He rose as I came in, gave me his deceptively benevolent bow, and indicated for me to sit down. As I settled into the chair closest to the door he inclined his head towards a man relaxing in one of the leather chairs by the window.

'I want you to meet Im Sun-taek, Moon Han-sang. He'll be a colleague of yours on this case'. He shot an amused glance at the other man. 'He's not entirely sold that we have a case at all. Or is your cynicism just a cover for laziness, Im?'

Im smiled sardonically. 'Weariness, sir? As Confucius said "roads were made for journeys not destinations". How that woman covered so much ground in stiletto heels will always be a mystery to me'. He stood up and took my hand in a firm grip. 'Do you know how many museums there are in Shanghai, Moon?'

I smiled blankly in the way you do to that sort of question, and he sank back in his chair.

'You will', he assured me.

I gave him an appraising glance. He had an intelligent face, with a long, shrewd nose. His brown eyes had the good-humoured tolerance of having seen

everything and not believing half of it. I had a feeling I was going to get along with my new colleague.

Na said brusquely: 'This is a photograph of the woman you will be having under observation, Moon'. He took a print from his blotter and handed it to me.

It was a photograph of a woman in her early thirties. Shoulder length hair, with wide-spaced dark eyes, a well-shaped nose, and a full, generous mouth. I could have thought of many less pleasant assignments than trailing legs as slender as those below the knee-length pencil skirt.

'Her name is Kim Su-mi, Na was saying. 'She's part owner of an art gallery in Gangnam. She's engaged to a stockbroker. A man named Yun Hyeok'.

I glanced up over the photograph to catch Im Sun-taek' satirical gaze. 'Lucky man, Yun. Eh, Moon?'

Na cut in abruptly. 'She's flying to Shanghai the day after tomorrow. I've arranged for you to travel on the same plane'. He looked at me. 'You've brought your passport?'

I produced the passport. Na gave it a quick glance and pushed it into a drawer.

'It will be returned to you before you leave'.

It seemed high time I asked a leading question, so I said: 'May I ask why you want this woman kept under observation, sir?'

Na took a cigarette from a silver box and pushed the box across to my side of his desk. 'Just over six weeks ago an agent of this department called Chang Chu-chu was killed. He was knocked down by a car driven by Kim Su-mi'.

I helped myself to a cigarette. 'You suspect it wasn't an accident – is that it?'

Im made a steeple of his forefingers and thumbs, gazing through it, one eye screwed up. 'That's the loaded question, Moon'.

Na snapped off his lighter in the direction of Im with a half smile. 'Well, let's put it this way. Chang was one of our best men. There must have been several people who wanted him out of the way'.

I wondered, a trifle uneasily, whether I'd ever achieve that unenviable status in the department. 'But there'd be an inquest. Didn't anything come out in the evidence?'

Na nodded across at Im. 'You take over, Im. You were there'.

'It was a genuine enough accident, according to the witnesses', Im said heavily. 'They said Kim Su-mi did her best to pull up, but just didn't have a chance to avoid Chang. According to their testimony he stepped off the pavement right in front of the car'.

I glanced again at the open, attractive face in the photograph. 'Any idea what Kim Su-mi was doing in Shanghai at the time?'

Na cut in: 'We know she was there on holiday'.

'She's been back there since the accident?' I said.

Na nodded. 'She flew there about six weeks ago and stayed six days. We sent Im over to tail her'.

Im groaned hollowly. 'Six days of museums and art galleries. And nothing more incriminating to report than a sidelong glance at a male nude statue'.

I smiled. 'And yet you still suspect her of not being entirely innocent of causing Chang's death?'

'Not me', Im said emphatically. 'For my part, it was a pure accident. These things happen ... even to us'. He pulled at his long nose. 'Only I can't convince Mr Na that's all it was'.

'All right, Im', Na said soothingly. 'I know you think I've a bee in my bonnet about Miss Kim. But there it is'.

Im laughed embarrassedly. 'I didn't say that, sir'.

'I wouldn't hold it against you if you had'. Na smiled at him paternally, then his face tightened as he turned to me. 'These trips back to China by Miss Kim can't be completely purposeless. I want to know what their significance is. That's your assignment, Moon. I want a report from you on everyone she meets and where she goes'. He rotated his cigarette lightly between finger and thumb. 'I'd particularly like to know whether she visits a café called the *Chinese Dragon*'.

I raised my eyebrows. 'Why the *Chinese Dragon* particularly?'

'Chang used to frequent it'. Na opened a side drawer in his desk and brought out a street map of Shanghai. Spreading it out on the desk he put a manicured finger on a red-encircled area of streets named. 'Tian Zi Fang. The *Chinese Dragon* is just here'. He said tapping his finger on the map.

I made a mental note of it. 'Chang', I said. 'Can you tell me anything about him? What was he doing in China?'

'He lived there. Worked in Shanghai. From time to time he supplied us with information'.

Na's mouth tightened, so I did not press the obvious question about the nature of the information. Instead, I queried: 'Did anyone know about this?'

He shook his head slowly. 'Not that we are aware of. But, of course, certain people must have known we had a contact in China and that information was coming through to us'. He smiled thinly. 'Nothing you need concern yourself about. Just information about things in general'.

You perceptive old devil, I thought. I said, 'What if Im is right? That the accident was genuine and Miss Kim wasn't interested in Chang?'

Na gave me a long, cold-eyed stare. 'I ask the questions, Moon. Your job is to bring me the answers. Your plane ticket to Shanghai will be mailed to you tonight'.

I didn't need cueing to know what my next line was. 'Goodbye, sir'.

As I passed Im's chair he hooded one eye at me. 'I hope you like museums, Moon', he said softly.

I came out of the office into the gathering darkness of the evening. Opposite me, the skyline of Seoul was lit by the bright neon signs of the advertising hoardings. I wished my instructions had been equally well illuminated, at the moment they didn't seem to make a great deal of sense.

Chapter three

The plane ticket arrived the next morning, together with the altered passport. I was relieved to find that I wouldn't be travelling under an assumed name. Na, had simply changed my occupation. It now read 'Journalist' instead of 'Engineer'. A typed note inside the passport said: 'You are commissioned to write articles for a trade paper. Engineering stuff as you know the lingo. Take a video-camera with you. And use it. Destroy this'. It bore no signature. It didn't need to; Na Sang-wha's personality was stamped all over it.

The following morning I was at Incheon airport well ahead of departure time. I hung around the bookstall, keeping an eye on the stairway up to the lounge.

When she did come I drew a quick breath. Her photograph hadn't flattered her. She was hatless, and her raven-black hair was cut short and combed in a fringe round her ears and forehead. It suited her neat-shaped head. She had a fur coat draped across her shoulders, over a dark suit; and her legs looked as though they'd stepped straight out of a stocking advertisement. Even if I hadn't been on an assignment I'd have been watching her every movement with ... well, interest.

As she came beside me at the bookstall a faint perfume I couldn't put a name to accompanied her. I felt like a bloodhound who'd been given a glove to sniff and told to follow that scent. If I'd had a tail I'd have wagged it.

She bought a copy of *Vogue*. She had a quiet, low voice that must have made Yun Hyeok's day when she telephoned him.

I let her board the shuttle ahead of me, then found an empty seat three rows away on the opposite side of the aisle.

Just as we were about to leave, a latecomer came panting towards the shuttle and scrambled aboard. He was obviously an American; he wore a baseball cap, T-shirt, jeans, and a pair of red Converse All Stars. Yet there was nothing brash

about him as he came in favouring all and sundry with a shiny grin. He took the one vacant seat, next to Kim Su-mi.

He seemed to be on easy conversational terms with her before we reached the terminal, and I felt vaguely envious. He was about my own age, I judged, though he was obviously cultivating a more youthful appearance than his years.

When we reached the terminal I was first out of the shuttle and into the passenger lounge. But when it came to board I waited for Kim Su-mi to leave ahead of me, then followed her into the aircraft. As I half hesitated beside her double seat she looked up and smiled at me.

‘Oh ... I’m terribly sorry. Are these in your way?’

She reached out and collected her handbag and magazine from the place beside hers.

As I seated myself and thanked her the doors of the plane closed. From the back the calm, aloof voice of the airhostess reminded us of the safety procedure, and to fasten our safety belts.

When we were airborne and had released our safety belts I produced a packet of mints and, after a momentary hesitation, held it out to her. She took one with a slim-fingered hand, the nails crimson and a trifle too elongated for my liking. Not that I could fault her otherwise. As she engrossed herself in the magazine I mentally scored myself a few points up on Im. From what I’d gathered he’d trailed her the hard way, lurking behind newspapers as he’d trampled after her through museums and art galleries. Then suddenly I felt a moment of misgiving. After all, Im was an old hand; yet he chose to keep out of sight of his quarry. Could there be some flaw in my own tactics? Would I find myself in a situation I couldn’t handle?

A quarter of an hour before we were due to land I felt bound to create an opening that might lead to some clue as to the purpose of her journey.

‘Why anyone comes to China for a holiday defeats me’, I said off-handedly. ‘Only a business trip would drag me here’.

‘That could be Yun, my fiancé, talking’, she said with mild exasperation. ‘Mention holidays to him and he immediately thinks of Jeju Island’.

‘At least you can be sure of the sun there’, I said urbanely. ‘I suppose China has its points. But the weather’s usually foul’.

‘Oh, nonsense! I’ve been to China several times and the weather’s been marvellous’.

‘You’ve been very lucky, that’s all I can say’. I pushed it as far as I dared without arousing her suspicions. ‘What’s the attraction when the cherry trees aren’t in bloom?’

‘Pagodas’. Her eyes mocked me for a moment. ‘Oh, well – just to satisfy your curiosity! It’s the museums and art galleries. Shanghai is the city of museums, you know’. As though to emphasise that the attraction wasn’t male she played with her engagement ring, then quickly changed the subject. ‘So you’re on a business trip?’

I nodded. 'I'm a journalist. I write technical articles. Mostly on engineering subjects. That's the reason I'm going to Shanghai. They've got hold of a new technique in glass curtain walling that my trade paper's interested in'.

'Rather outside my province, I'm afraid', she said, smiling. 'Hello ... I think we're coming in to land'.

Almost immediately the Captain's voice came over the intercom informing us that we were due in at Shanghai Airport in a few minutes' time, and would we fasten our seat belts, please? The weather in Shanghai', he added, 'is fine and sunny'.

Kim Su-mi wrinkled her nose at me. 'There ... you see?' She opened her handbag, brought out a mirror, and began to do unnecessary things to her face. Presently she said, over a lipstick: 'Thanks for helping to pass the time so pleasantly. Perhaps we'll run into one another in Shanghai'.

Smiling, I hoped not too ironically, I said: 'I'll look out for you'.

The plane nosed down towards the flat Chinese coastline. Away to the right the towers of Shanghai were silhouetted against the blue sky of a perfect spring afternoon. Crossing the city, like a sinuous snake, was the Yangtze River.

I let Kim Su-mi precede me through the Passport Control and Customs. Here, instead of having her smart blue and yellow striped suitcase put on the airline bus trolley she picked it up and walked quickly to the main exit. I grabbed my own case from the trolley and hurried after her, arriving at the exit just in time to see a sheer-nylon sheathed leg disappear into a taxi. I signalled the next in the rank but lost it to the American. From his gesticulations with his bag I had the impression he was instructing the driver to follow the other cab.

A moment later I was going through the same performance myself. My driver didn't speak Korean but luckily we both knew enough English for me to get the idea quickly across. With a cheroot wagging from his lips he said, 'Certainly, sir', in a flat, expressionless voice.

In Shanghai we followed the other taxis along a busy street beside the Yangtze. As we approached the most impressive of its many bridges the cabs we were following slowed and drew in to the kerb. Leaning forward, I told my driver to carry on past them. 'Okay, sir', he called back as I ducked down to avoid being recognised by the woman and the man who were now on the pavement, exchanging surprised greetings.

At the next corner I stopped my taxi, and as I paid off the driver I thought some light-hearted comment on the situation was called for. There was always a chance that he might report the incident to the police, and then I'd have a plainclothes man on *my* tail. So I mumbled something about a pretty girl on the plane and wanting to find out where she was staying. I needn't have bothered. All it got me was a shrugged, 'Why not?'

I went down the street that ran at right angles to the canal until I came to a small hotel. It wouldn't rate a single star in a hotel guide. But the tiled floor of reception was freshly polished, and you could see your face in the metal surface of the reception desk.

They gave me a room, austere but spotlessly clean, overlooking the street. After I'd unpacked my shirts and the one other suit I'd brought, I took a quick shower. When I'd dressed I went out and bought a street guide.

In an unpretentious bar I thumbed through the guide, and took my bearings from one of the maps. Eventually I found Tian Zi Fang without much difficulty, and I memorised the route to it from my present position. Then I paid for my beer and went out to give the *Chinese Dragon* a looking over.

It was a typical Chinese restaurant, with low tables. I'd always found the trick is to watch the customers at the outside tables before you decide to enter. If they look like locals, and there are no camera-slung tourists among them, you can be pretty sure the food will be good and the charges reasonable. The *Chinese Dragon* passed the test. However, I did not go inside.

I rambled around for a couple of hours, still getting my bearings. A mist drifted in from the sea and mingled with the pollution to form a yellow smog and, since I badly needed a drink and some food to take the chill out of my bones, I decided to return to Tian Zi Fang. It was splattered with neon-lit bars and restaurants. I was too eager to get into somewhere to be choosy, so I turned into the first door I came to.

What little atmosphere the restaurant possessed was laid on for the tourist trade. Waitresses in fake silk dresses with pigtailed draped over the shoulders; a long bar with a bartender who'd have answered to 'Harry' in any international tourist-haunted bar. Just to be in on the act I flung back a couple of local beers in rapid succession, then, feeling like a refuelled dragon, sat down at a table.

After the beer the menu was overcrowded and elusive, so I settled for the house speciality, a dish of rice and pork, which was rather better than I had expected. By the time I had another beer in front of me and a cigarette alight I felt able to give some thought to my first day's trailing of Kim Su-mi.

So far, I was inclined to agree with Im. She'd discussed herself quite freely on the plane – mentioned her interest in the art and antique business and referred to her fiancé with the naturalness of a girl who had nothing to hide. I thought about Yun Hyeok. A stockbroker seemed an unlikely fiancé for a girl who was mixed up with the kind of people that Na's department was interested in. I sipped my beer. Yun Hyeok was a damned lucky chap!

I returned to the conversation on the plane. She hadn't shown the slightest evasiveness when I'd questioned her about her frequent visits to Shanghai. Or had she? Abruptly, I stubbed out my cigarette, remembering how she'd evaded

the subject when I'd pushed my questioning almost to the point of rudeness. I lit another cigarette and expelled the smoke from my lungs upwards. That was it. She'd turned the conversation to what I was doing in Shanghai as a riposte to my own boorish inquisitiveness.

A man's voice, ordering a round of drinks, suddenly reminded me of the American. Where did he fit into the picture? He could be a lot less the innocent tourist than he looked. In which case, there were two of us trailing Kim Su-mi. Alternatively, there might be no more to it than the usual reason why a man chases an attractive girl. Not relishing either of my half-baked conclusions, and the last one the least, I paid my bill and returned to my hotel.

Chapter four

Four days later I was sitting in the window of a café opposite a museum. By this time I had worked out a method of procedure for keeping Kim Su-mi under observation. After following her at a discreet distance around five museums I decided that my conscience would be satisfied if I simply watched her go into a museum and then consumed two or three beers at a nearby café until she came out. Maybe Im would not have approved, but his more scrupulous method had brought no better result.

Apart from that, I'd discovered that trailing Miss Kim was another word for boredom. I'd compiled a list of where she'd been apart from her visits to places of historic interest. Shops, cinemas, restaurants – the lot. She hadn't been within a quarter mile of the *Chinese Dragon*.

As I watched her stroll out of the museum I gulped down my beer with the decisiveness of a man of action. That afternoon I would contact Kim Su-mi and risk the consequences.

At two o'clock I was outside her hotel, mixing with the crowds and, not to make too obvious my interest in the door of the hotel, occasionally going through the motions of photographing the pleasure craft passing to and fro on the river.

She didn't show up until three. Then she came briskly out of the hotel, crossed the road, went down the steps beside the bridge, and boarded a pleasure craft.

When it had moved off I went down on to the landing stage and checked the timetable there. The boat was due to return at four. That gave me an hour to waste. I put in time over a couple of beers in a nearby café.

On the dot of four I stationed myself at the top of the steps leading to the landing stage, and as her boat drew in I put the video-camera to my eye. This time it was purring quietly. Her plain red dress was a perfect contrast to her dark loveliness.

I dropped the camera on to my chest as she came up the steps. It wasn't until I said, 'Good afternoon', that she noticed me. Her lips parted, then her surprise melted into a warm smile.

'Oh, hello there!' she exclaimed, gesturing a greeting with a black-gloved hand.

'Still alone, I see'.

'And loving every moment of it! No one to please but myself'.

'What are you doing in this part of the town?' I asked innocently. 'Don't tell me you've run out of art galleries?'

She shook her head. 'I thought I'd rest from art galleries and museums this afternoon'.

She came and stood beside me, gazing down at the water. 'It's lovely, isn't it?' she said presently, with a sigh of contentment.

At that moment I couldn't think of anything more perfect. 'You're right about China. It's got something'.

She glanced up at me gratefully. It was with an effort that I forced myself to lead into the object for our seemingly casual meeting. 'By the way, what do you do with yourself in the evenings?'

She shrugged. 'Oh, nothing very exciting. Find somewhere to eat, usually. There are some very nice little restaurants in Shanghai'.

'There certainly are', I said, with a great show of enthusiasm. 'I found a delightful place last night. The *Chinese Dragon*. I glanced at her quickly. 'Do you know it?'

She frowned perplexedly. '*Chinese Dragon*?'

I nodded, without taking my eyes from her face.

'No, I don't', she said slowly. 'I don't think I've heard of it. Where is it, exactly?'

It sounded like the truth. But I decided to maintain my outward enthusiasm, hoping I might still trap her into an involuntary lapse. 'You go into Tian Zi Fang and turn right at the *Cherry Orchard* ... Sorry ... I mean you go into the Tian Zi Fang and turn right at the *Red Cockrell*, then through to the *Happy Shopper* and turn left ...' I swallowed, and started again. 'Look - you turn left at the *Morning Mist*, then when you get to the *Chinese Dragon*...'

'Oh, do stop', she implored laughingly, putting a hand on my arm. 'You obviously haven't the slightest idea where it is'.

I grinned sheepishly. 'We could take a taxi there'. I snapped my fingers. 'I say, that's an idea! Why not let me take you there now, for a drink?'

For a moment she gazed down at a black swan floating along the river. Then she said slowly: 'It's awfully kind of you - but I have to go back to the hotel to change for dinner. I'm going to ...'

I cut in on her. 'That's all right. There's loads of time to fit in a drink. How about meeting me here in an hour?'

'Well', she began hesitantly, then with a quick smile she glanced at her watch. 'Thank you very much. I'll take you up on that. I'll see you back here at five-thirty, if that's all right with you?'

'Splendid!' I exclaimed with unfeigned pleasure. 'Five-thirty it is. 'Bye now'. I cocked an eyebrow at her. 'And don't go wandering off to a museum!'

She turned away, laughing. 'I won't'.

With an odd feeling of light-heartedness I watched her cross the road to her hotel. I was sure now that the name the *Chinese Dragon* had been no more significant to her than if I'd mentioned a restaurant in New York. Na had got his lines crossed where Kim Su-mi was concerned. That was the way I wanted it to be.

Chapter five

There was a lot of warmth still left in the sun when we arrived at the *Chinese Dragon*. The place was crowded at that hour, but a discreetly displayed tip had persuaded a waiter there was room for one more table outside.

After I'd ordered a cinzano for my companion and a soju for myself I went out onto the pavement and started to take some video-camera shots of the colourful scene.

I was focusing the camera on Kim Su-mi when I suddenly realised she was talking to someone. A second later a man's figure came into my viewfinder.

'Hello there!' exclaimed a familiar voice. It was the American, the same disarming grin on his slightly chubby features.

I lowered the camera and managed to wipe the scowl off my face as he embarked upon a detailed account of his day's adventures. Slowly, I went back to the table. He was beaming at Kim Su-mi so agreeably that it was impossible to feel annoyed.

'Have I been around!' he exclaimed. 'I've just about walked my feet to the bone buying things for the folks back home'.

'Of course, you're going back tomorrow'. She nodded. Then, as my shadow fell across the table, she turned to introduce us.

He stuck out a massive hand. 'Glad to know you, sir', he exclaimed, and sounded as if he really meant it. I did my best to reciprocate, but it was an effort.

'Mr Doyle is staying at my hotel', Kim Su-mi told me.

He nodded eagerly. 'And we're always bumping into each other outside the hotel. In boats, buses, elevators ...'

'Museums?' I interrupted, a trifle maliciously.

'No, sir!' Doyle pawed the air contemptuously. 'No museums. Not for me!' His hand dropped to the back of a chair. 'Say, do you mind if I take the weight off my feet ...?'

I accepted the inevitable. 'Of course not'.
'I don't wish to intrude...'

I bit back the short answer to that one, and said: 'No ... no, that's quite all right'.

He planted his bag on the table, put his camera underneath it, and deposited himself in the vacant chair. 'That's better. China's a great place, Mr Moon. I really go for it. But my feet! Will they'll be glad to be back home!'

I gave him his laugh, stuffed my camera back in its case, and laid it down resignedly. Just for something to say, I asked: 'is this your first visit to China, Mr Doyle?'

'No, indeed. I was here about five or six weeks ago. Did the whole country in five days. Didn't figure on coming back'. He rubbed a hand over his crew cut. 'But I had a rather unfortunate experience'.

I raised my eyebrows politely. 'What was that?'

'The night I was leaving, someone broke into my hotel room and lifted my baggage'. He grinned ruefully. 'Well, not just my baggage. They stole everything - literally everything'.

Kim Su-mi glanced at him sympathetically. 'Oh, but how dreadful for you'.

'Yeah'. Doyle beamed at her appreciatively. 'Can you imagine! I'd just got the one pair of jeans and a T-shirt ... the things I stood up in'.

I could see he was going to make a meal of the incident, so I fed him a cue. 'What did you do? Take the next flight home?'

He gave me a grateful look. 'That's one thing the thief didn't steal from me - my vacation. I bought me a new outfit and just kept going'.

'But surely', said Kim Su-mi, 'you reported your loss to the police?'

'You're darned right I did'. He leaned forward. 'And here's the payoff. A week ago the police picked up the guy who stole my stuff and emailed me to come here and claim it. I was in Beijing - just about to fly home. But you bet I came right back here - and fast'.

'You've had all your stuff returned, I hope?' I said.

'Everything except a pair of binoculars'.

'You're a lucky man, Mr Doyle'.

He shrugged. 'Glad you think so'.

'Don't get me wrong', I said. 'I didn't mean to ...'

He waved me down with an outsize paw. 'Forget it, Mr Moon. In a catastrophic sort of way, guess I was kind of lucky'. He snapped his fingers at a passing waiter. 'The same again for my two friends. And you can make mine a Jack Daniels on the rocks'.

I could have been wrong about tourists never having discovered the *Chinese Dragon*. The waiter smiled imperturbably, said, 'Cinzano, soju, and a Scotch on the rocks', and bustled off to the bar.

Doyle turned back to us with an amused smile. 'Guess that guy knows how many yuan go to the dollar!' He ripped back the zip of his bag. 'I was shopping all morning. Made some nice purchases too! Take a look at this'. He dived a hand into the bag and took out a Chinese doll. It was a stuffed cloth doll, a young girl dressed in national costume. 'Ain't that something, now?'

Kim Su-mi lips quivered in a slight smile. 'It's sweet'.

'Wait till I show you today's best buy. A real bargain. I bought it just along the street here'. He rummaged around the bag, not finding what he wanted. With an exasperated grunt he pulled out a Chinese auction catalogue and threw it on the table.

I glanced at the garish cover. 'Planning to have a little bit of China back home, Doyle?' I asked.

'Aw, that's for my brother', he said, then triumphantly produced an exquisitely designed chronometer and placed it on the table. 'Ain't that swell? You know what they call that? A chronometer. It's for sailors. Accurately measures the time so that you can determine your longitude when at sea. You just wind it up ... like so ...' He enjoyed himself winding it. 'Got it for my nephew, Su-Ji. He's quite the little engineer. At least, so his Mom says - I wouldn't know. I got no skill with math -'. Flicking the case, he set the chronometer going, and beat time with a pudgy finger. Then he stopped, and grinned self-consciously. 'Anyhow, it looks good!'

'It's beautiful', Kim Su-mi said breathlessly.

'Sure is! I've seen 'em back in the States, but never one like this'.

I wasn't just being polite when I said I'd never seen one with such delicate workmanship.

Doyle practically flapped his arms. 'I'm some picker!' he enthused. 'That must be the cutest chronograph in the whole world'.

'Chronometer', Kim Su-mi corrected softly, her eyes smiling at me.

Doyle offered me a cigar from a bulging case. When I'd declined he stuffed one in an outside holder, clamped it between his teeth, and looked as happy as a child with a teat. That wasn't a bad description of his round, chubby face.

Then the waiter came with the drinks and over them we drifted into the cliché-ridden talk that passes for conversation, which it's a one woman two men party.

Chapter six

Back at my apartment the telephone bell began ringing the moment I opened the door. Leaving it open, I took the steep stairs two at a time. Not that I was expecting a call. It's just that I'm one of those people who go around biting their fingernails if the phone stops ringing before they've answered it. Kicking open the door of my living room I made a dive for the table and grabbed up the receiver.

'Hello? Moon Han-Sang speaking', I panted.

A low, controlled voice said, 'It's Kim Su-mi. You sound like the finish of the hundred meters'.

I laughed. 'Too many cigarettes. It's nice to hear your voice again. How are you, and did you have a good trip back?'

'Yes, it was very pleasant'. The smile went out of her voice as she continued: 'Look, I'm afraid this is very short notice. But I wondered if you'd like to come round for a drink this evening?'

'Of course. I'd love to'.

'My fiancé, Yun Hyeok, will be here. I know he'd like to meet you'.

'Fine. What time shall I come?'

She hesitated. 'Seven-thirty? Would that be all right?'

'Couldn't be better'.

She laughed lightly. 'How silly of me – you don't know where I live. It's 824 Seoul Tower, Gangnam. Can you remember that?'

'I'm scribbling it down'.

'I'll look forward to seeing you then. Good-bye'.
'Good-bye'.

I put down the receiver thoughtfully, wondering why she had telephoned like this out of the blue. Why should she be anxious for me to meet her fiancé? What was the point? Could there be some connection with that strange film of the car accident? I hesitated, wondering if I should telephone Na. Finally, I decided against it.

Chapter SEVEN

Seoul Tower was a super modern tower block. It had a glass-walled elevator, which I took to the eighth floor. I went along a marble corridor, past half a dozen teak doors, until I came to number 24.

I jabbed a finger at the doorbell, straightened my tie, and conjured up what I hoped was just the right touch of eager expectancy into my smile. I wasted that on a blank door for a couple of minutes, then rang the bell again. As the bell stopped ringing I cocked my head at the door. There was no sound of inner doors being opened or stiletto heels clicking frantically to herald her approach. Just silence.

I glanced at my watch. Three minutes past the half-hour. I frowned at the door. Then I put my thumb on the doorbell and leaned on it.

I took my thumb off the bell after thirty seconds of listening to its mocking ring. I'd phone Kim Su-mi later, I decided; and if I were feeling half as irritable then as I was now, 'Assignment Charm' wouldn't rate more than a hollow laugh.

I was turning away from the door when I heard a scraping sound at my feet. I looked down. A brass key was being slipped under the door.

I gaped at it for a moment, then stooped and picked it up. I tossed the key up and down in the palm of my hand, trying to work out the angles. Was this a hint for me to come back later?

Bracing myself, I inserted the key in the lock, opened the door, and entered a small hallway. On the floor, ripped open, was a bag. I heeled the door to, then

took a closer look at the bag. Attached to the handle was a luggage tag. The name on it was B. Doyle.

Opposite me was the half open door of the living room. I crossed to it, pushed it wide, took a step inside, then froze. Lying in the centre of the fitted carpet was what had once been a stuffed doll; a Chinese girl in national costume. The doll's clothing had been torn open and the stuffing scattered over the carpet. Not far from the doll lay the auction catalogue, the one Doyle had produced in Shanghai. Faintly, my nostrils detected the familiar cigar smoke, and with a chill of apprehension I gazed round the room – at the overturned spindle-legged table, at the gilded lamp beside it, as the shattered china vase and the scattered roses. Then suddenly I noticed the grotesque feet, strangely small for such a big man, pointing at right-angles to each other. I noted the crumpled jeans, the torn T-shirt, the blood-stained, heavy glass ashtray beside the crew cut, matted hair.

I must have been staring at Doyle for almost half a minute before becoming aware of the noise. A rhythmic, jubilant ticking that dominated the quiet room. I spun round and made a dive at the chronometer lying face upwards on the floor. Someone was shouting, 'For God's sake, stop!' It was me. I dropped the instrument back on the floor, straightened up, and went back to Doyle's body.

I didn't like what I had to do, but there was a chance that the searching of Doyle's pockets might produce a clue to the identity of his murderer. I stooped down, then jumped back as though I'd been shot. I was as nervous as hell, and the sudden jar of a telephone ringing in that room was as unexpected as a shout in a church.

I shook myself like a dog coming out of an ice-cold stream, and turned to the telephone, which was on a small table beside the sofa. I hesitated, then went over and picked up the receiver, first covering my hand with my breast-pocket handkerchief.

At once a feminine voice, urgently breathless, came on the line. 'This is Kong So-ra. I was right, Kim Su-mi. He's *very* curious about Bae and World Cup Buk-ro. I thought I'd better ...' The voice wavered uncertainly, then resumed on a more urgent note: 'Su-mi, that *is* you, isn't it?'

There was no point in prolonging the call now, so I slid the receiver back onto its cradle, then stood for a moment with my hand still holding it. I tried to get a mental picture of World Cup Buk-ro – the name was vaguely familiar – but it eluded me. After a few seconds I replaced my handkerchief, and nerved myself to return to the body.

Something told me I hadn't much time, so I began to examine Doyle's pockets as quickly as possible. There was nothing of any apparent significance in his wallet, and I'd just turned out one of his side pockets when I heard the sound of a key scraping the lock of the front door.

Quickly restoring the odds and ends to his side pocket, I glanced round the room and saw, for the first time, a door in a distant corner. As I crossed over to it I heard the front door open and close. I slipped inside the bedroom, which was obviously Kim Su-mi; there was that faint, unmistakable perfume. Leaving the door open a couple of inches I immediately looked round for another exit.

There was only the window, concealed by long silk curtains. I pulled the curtains aside as quietly as possible and breathed a sigh of relief when I saw that it was a patio-style sliding door, which was unlocked. Outside was a balcony. Leaving the door open, I returned to the door.

I was just in time to see Kim Su-mi, wearing an attractive summer dress, come through the living room door. She looked puzzled, and I guessed that she'd been surprised to see Doyle's bag on the hall floor. Her expression changed at the sight of the ravished doll, the overturned chairs, and the auction catalogue. Then she saw Doyle's body.

Involuntarily she stepped back a pace, as if to avoid a blow. She was clutching her handbag with both hands, so hard that the whites of her knuckles showed. After what seemed at least a minute she slowly took a cautious step towards the body, then another. There was a tiny click as the toe of her shoe prodded the chronometer. She stopped to look at it, her face turned from the body.

The telephone rang and she straightened herself abruptly. I could see a tiny frown wrinkle her forehead; then she suddenly seemed to gain control of herself. She went across and lifted the receiver as if she now welcomed the interruption.

She didn't speak, but listened to the chattering voice, which I could hear faintly though unintelligibility. The corners of her mouth tightened, and at last she interrupted.

'So-ra, get off the line!' she ordered. 'Something dreadful has happened ...' There was another burst from the earpiece, then Kim Su-mi lost all patience. 'I must call the police', she snapped, 'so will you please get off the line!'

She slammed down the receiver, her hand trembling slightly as she held it in place to make sure the connection was broken. Then she slowly lifted it again, and I had no difficulty in concluding that she was dialling the familiar emergency number.

I didn't wait to overhear this conversation, but moved quietly back to the patio door, and out on to the balcony. I took a deep breath, and felt the chill air fill my lungs. Fortunately the balconies formed a continuous ring around each floor, with just a low wall separating each apartment. To the right I could see light flooding from the living room, but the apartment to the left was dark, as was the one next to it. I made light work of the low wall and tried the door, it was locked, but I had better luck with the apartment next to it. The owner wasn't expecting any one to try to enter via the balcony.

Once in the street below. I melted into the throng of people strolling casually about their business, the same as any other evening. A taxi dropped a fare a little way up the street. I hailed it as it came towards me, and said: '40 Sejong-daero'.

As we drove off I looked uneasily through the back window at the entrance to the block of flats, but it seemed quite deserted.

Just as we reached the intersection a police car swung round the corner almost on two wheels, causing the taxi driver to snatch at his steering wheel.

'Fuck me!' I heard him exclaim. 'Bloody wooden tops up to their games again!'

'They think they're on a tv show', I replied, trying to sound as casual as possible, then made no further effort at conversation. It was rather important, I decided, that he should not recall anything about this particular passenger.

Chapter eight

At Sejong-daero the door was opened by Shin, of the department, a soft-spoken man in a black double-breasted jacket and striped trousers. Mr Na, he told me as though revealing a state secret, was not available.

Fuming with frustration I asked if Mr Im were available. That got me into the hallway while Shin went down to the far end of it and whispered confidentially into a telephone. Replacing the receiver silently he told me, in hushed tones, that Mr Im could see me.

In the library Im was sprawled in an easy chair, a soju in his hand. 'Sorry about Na. He was called to the Blue House to prime officials on a suitably ambiguous answer to ...' He broke off, eyeing me shrewdly. 'Hello ... You look as though you'd seen a ghost'.

'The makings of one', I said. 'Doyle, the American I saw in Shanghai, is dead. Murdered'.

Im whistled silently, then unfolded himself from his chair. 'What you need is a drink'. He crossed to the drinks cabinet and opened it. 'A brandy I think is indicated'. He examined a bottle. 'Ah, yes. A Courvoisier'. Pouring it, he said, in a conversational tone tactfully intended to bring my nerves off the boil: 'The boss looks after himself well in the drink line. Something of a gourmet, too. You want to time your murders better, Moon. Say, lunch-time at his club'.

I'd sunk into an easy chair opposite his when he came back with the brandy. 'Sorry to be jumpy', I said, taking the glass from him. 'But I don't stumble over corpses every day in the week'.

'Unfriendly things', he said, letting himself down into his chair. 'Na told me about this American. Like to elaborate, Moon?'

When I'd outlined the events in Kim Su-mi's apartment Im pulled at his nose. 'A very unpleasant business. And the murderer left the apartment the same way you did – by the balcony?'

I nodded. 'After first slipping the door key under the front door'.

Im frowned. 'That's what puzzles me, Moon. Why make it easy for you to find the body so quickly? You'd think a murderer would want to give himself plenty of time to make his getaway'.

'That had occurred to me'. I sipped my brandy, trying to work it out.

'It could be this way'. Im closed one eye thoughtfully. 'You were expected at the apartment. They slipped you the key, knowing damned well you'd go in. Right? Then they tip off the police that a murder's been committed. The police come to the apartment, find you there with the body. And ...'

I cut in on him. 'I was expected at the apartment. But by Kim Su-mi'.

Im eyed me casually over the rim of his glass. 'Well?'

'Oh, come off it, Im', I said exasperatedly. 'Kim Su-mi had nothing to do with the murder. I was watching her from the bedroom as she came into the apartment. She was petrified when she saw the body. As for tipping off the police, it was she who telephoned them'.

Im looked down his nose. 'Witness for the Defence can now leave the box'.

'I'm giving you the facts. Her reactions were those of any woman who finds a dead body in her apartment', I said heatedly. 'Anyway, why would I defend her?'

He gave me an amused glance. 'Our Miss Kim's a damn attractive girl', he reflected. 'I wonder what Doyle was doing in her apartment?'

'I don't know. All I do know is that she was as stunned as I was to find him there'.

'You say Doyle's bag was lying in the hall? And the contents were scattered round his body in the living room?'

'An auction catalogue, a chronometer, and the Chinese doll'.

'That Chinese doll', Im said reflectively 'Any theory why the murderer would rip the stuffing out of it?'

'An obvious one. He was looking for something that could be hidden in the doll'.

Im nodded. 'Is there anything special about the chronometer?'

'Mechanically it was like any other. But this one was more than usually ornate. Delicately carved and brightly painted, the sort of thing you'd expect to

find in the souvenir shops'. My fingers tightened on the stem of my glass. 'Chang Chu-chu was carrying a chronometer when he was accidentally killed, wasn't he? What was that one like?'

'You've just described it pretty accurately'.

'Then ...' I began.

Im shook his head. 'This wasn't his. Na has that locked up in his safe. I managed to get possession of it after the inquest'. He smiled. 'This department does manage to pull a string or two sometimes, you know, Moon'.

I looked suitably impressed, then finished my brandy. 'Well, where do we go from here?'

'So far as you're concerned – nowhere, for the moment'. He got up, and took my glass and is over to the drinks cabinet. 'The police will be at Miss Kim's apartment now, questioning her. If she's as genuine as you think she is, she'll tell them she was expecting you tonight'.

'I'd take a bet on that', I said sharply. 'And there's no need to be sarcastic about it'.

'Did I sound sarcastic?' he said smoothly. 'The point I was making was this. You'll need to think up a pretty plausible story to keep the police off your back'.

'I'll just tell them the truth. I've nothing to hide'.

'Haven't you?' Im handed me another Courvoisier, then took his own glass for a walk up and down the room. 'You found the body. Why didn't you wait until they came to the apartment and tell them about it? The police won't like that at all'. He waved his glass at me. 'Oh, we know why you came dashing round here to report to Na. But police won't say, "Thanks very much, Mr Moon, that let's you off!" when you tell them you were doing a tail job on Kim Su-mi. They'll be very curious indeed'.

'Well, suppose they are?' I said, shrugging. 'All I have to do is mention this department ...'

'That's just what you haven't got to do', Im said quickly, swinging round on me. 'Get this into your head, Moon. All Na is concerned with is why one of his most trusted agents should have been killed. That we disagree as to it being an accident is beside the point. Your assignment is to find out whether Miss Kim is mixed up with people who wanted Chong out of the way. And to do that she mustn't know you're tailing her. Tell the police you are, and they'll make big feet noises that will divert her shell-like ears in your direction. And not quite so charmingly as they are at present'.

'It's back-handed, but I'll take it as a compliment on my handling of the assignment so far', I said, grinning up at him. 'By the way, do you still think it was an accident?'

'This American being murdered in her apartment certainly opens up possibilities'. He pursed his lips thoughtfully, then said decisively: 'Phone her now. Give her some reason why you didn't turn up'. He went over to the desk and flicked through the pages of a diary on it. 'Here we are ... '.

I took my Samsung from my pocket, and dialled the number slowly, figuring out a plausible excuse.

I put the receiver to my ear and heard the ringing tone. A couple of seconds later there was a click as the receiver was lifted at the other end.

A man's voice came crisply on the line. 'Hello ...'

I hesitated, then after a slightly surprised, 'Oh – er ...' I went on briskly: 'Could I speak to Miss Kim? My name's Moon'.

There was an unmistakable hand-blanketing of the mouthpiece at the other end, and I lip-spoke 'Police' to Na. He smiled back sagely. Then I was listening to Kim Su-mi's voice. 'Is that you, Mr Moon?'

'I say, I'm terribly sorry about tonight', I said with, I hoped, an authentic note of frantic apology in my voice. 'But I had a business appointment at Daegu. I forgot all about it when I accepted your invitation. I was hoping to get back in time, but this conference went on and on. As a matter of fact, I'm speaking from Daegu at the moment'.

'Bad luck. I mean about your conference. I wondered what had happened to you'.

'I did ring before I left but couldn't get a reply'. I glanced across at Im who seemed amused. 'It was about a quarter past seven'.

'Oh, did you? I wasn't in then. Yun Hyeok, my fiancé, rang me earlier. He had one of his asthma attacks and I thought I ought to go round and make sure he was all right'. A smile came into her voice. 'If you had come you'd have been ringing the bell of an empty flat. Still, some other time, perhaps'.

I said I hoped so, apologised again, and hung up.

'Nice work', Im said, taking a cigarette from the silver box and pushing it across to me. 'Where was she at a quarter past seven?'

'Apparently her fiancé was ill and she went round to look after him'.

'You can rely on the police to check that', Im said, with a sardonic glance at me. 'You want to watch out, Moon. They'll be looking for a motive for Doyle's murder. Something nice and primitive, like jealousy, for instance'.

Chapter nine

It was just after eight when I awoke next morning. I could hear Mrs Kim Jeong-hee, my cleaner, rattling cups in the kitchen. An aroma of green tea drifted in as I reached for a cigarette from the case on the bedside table. I had a lot of mental sorting-out to do and I've a habit of doing most of my constructive thinking in bed.

A report of the murder should be in the morning paper and I decided to see whether there were any fresh developments. As I was about to call to Mrs Kim to bring the newspaper and tea to me in bed, the front door bell rang.

Mrs Kim bustled past, slightly breathless as usual. Then she was back, knocking on my door. 'A gentleman to see you, sir'.

Usually I'm 'Mr Moon' to her, unless she wants to impress my visitors. Latterly, these had been creditors connected with my defunct business; only my name on a cheque would have impressed them.

Cursing, I groped for my slippers and dragged on my blue dressing-gown, pausing only to comb my hair and slip the cigarette case into my pocket.

Mrs Kim Jeong-hee was lurking outside my door, a look of concern on her usually cheerful face. 'It's a plain-clothes man', she hissed. 'I can smell 'em!'

This was it. Thrusting my hands in my dressing-gown pockets I strolled casually into the living room.

A tall man, with neatly brushing hair greying at the sides, wearing a dark suit and grey tie, watched my entrance with a slightly quizzical look, plainly alert for anything that might be construed as suspicious.

'Mr Moon?' he began affably. 'My name's Lee – Detective-Inspector Lee Shi-hoo'.

I frowned perplexedly. 'What's the trouble, Inspector? Another complaint about my parking in front of my next door neighbour's garage?'

'Nothing as heinous as that, sir', he said, with a policeman's heavy humour. 'It's about a lady I believe you know, Mr Moon. A Miss Kim Su-mi'.

'Yes, she's a friend of mine'. I looked startled. 'Nothing's happened to her, has it? An accident?'

He shook his head. 'I'd just like to ask you a few questions about her'. His grey eyes had been casually roaming the room; suddenly they came up to mine. 'You had an appointment with her yesterday evening?' It was more of a statement than a question.

'That's right', I said in a puzzled manner. 'At seven-thirty, at her flat. Unfortunately I was unable to keep the appointment. I was held up at Daegu'.

'I see', he said in a non-committal tone. 'Then you weren't at Seoul Tower at any time yesterday evening?'

'I've already told you that, Inspector', I replied irritably.

'You've told me you weren't there at seven-thirty', he corrected.

'Let's get this clear, Inspector. So far as I know, I've never been within half a mile of – whatever the mansions are called'. His smooth smile provoked me into asking: 'Why this third degree stuff?'

He didn't like that at all. For an instant it got him on the wrong foot. 'I'm sorry you take it that way, sir'. He fidgeted with his stiff-brimmed, dark grey hat. 'This is purely routine questioning'. Then his tone sharpened. 'A man was murdered last night – in Miss Kim's flat'.

I did my best to look startled again, then asked: 'Have you found the murderer?'

'No'. He paused. 'I understand you knew the murdered man'.

'I did!'

'His name's Doyle'.

'Doyle ... Doyle', I said, frowning. Then I snapped my fingers. 'Of course! He was the man I met with Miss Kim in Shanghai. Although I can scarcely say I knew him – I only saw him once'.

'Miss Kim told me about the incident'. He smiled obliquely as though he'd very nearly trapped me. 'Would you say Miss Kim was on friendly terms with him?'

I shrugged. 'No more than the casual friendship of people who meet each other abroad on holiday'.

He watched his finger run round the braided brim of his hat. 'And you were all meeting again in her flat last night to talk over your holiday in Shanghai?'

I fished out my cigarette case to gain time while I tried to avoid the barb in the question. 'She didn't tell me Doyle was coming', I said, offering him my case. 'As a matter of fact, I thought he'd gone back to America. I was invited to meet her fiancé'.

'That's what she said'. He took a cigarette from my case. 'Miss Kim's a very attractive woman, wouldn't you say, Mr Moon?'

I smiled, remembering Im's motive-theory. 'Drink is my weakness', I said.

As I snapped my lighter to his cigarette Lee glanced up at me. 'Does Miss Kim's fiancé know that you are an eligible young bachelor?'

'As it happens', I said tartly, 'I wouldn't have met Miss Kim's fiancé. It seems he was taken ill yesterday evening'. I smiled tauntingly. 'Tell me if I'm wrong, Inspector, but I think you were in her flat when she told me'.

'Quite right. I was', he said imperturbably, glancing at his watch. 'Thanks for your help, Mr Moon. Don't bother to come to the front door'. He made a gesture of good-bye with his hat as he went out of the living room, then he turned back to me. 'We checked on the asthma attack. Miss Kim was with her fiancé from six-thirty to well after seven. We like to confirm alibis, Mr Moon'.

When he's gone Mrs Kim came in with a tray of tea and fruit. 'Was it about your car, Mr Moon?' she asked innocently. 'That man next door was swearing something dreadful yesterday when it was parked outside his garage door'.

'Odd you should think that, Mrs Kim', I said, grinning at her. 'They were almost the exact words I used when I saw the detective'.

Producing a newspaper from under the tray she placed it on the table. 'There's been another murder in Gangnam, Mr Moon', she said, unnecessarily rearranging the contents of the tray.

'So the detective was telling me', I said.

She seemed to get the implication, and bustled out indignantly.

I poured myself a tea, lit a cigarette, and picked up the paper. It was conveniently folded to display the Stop Press. I skimmed it quickly. It merely said that a man had been found in a Gangnam luxury apartment, and that the tenant, Miss Kim Su-mi, was helping the police in their inquiries.

I put the paper down and went back over my talk with Lee. One thing stuck out a mile – Kim Su-mi hadn't withheld anything from him. That confirmed my views on her. She knew no more about Doyle's murder than I did.

But what was the American doing in her apartment? And how did he get in? I was pouring myself another cup of tea when I recollected something that Lee had said. 'You were all meeting again in her apartment last night to talk over your holiday in Shanghai?' Tea was pouring over the top of the cup into the saucer before I realised what I was doing. With a muttered 'Damn' I replaced the pot on the table, got up, and crossed over to the telephone and dialled ...

I listened to the engaged signal for half a minute, then replaced the receiver and came back to the table. I lit another cigarette from the stub of the last, dropped that into the tea-filled saucer, and tossed the inference of Lee's words around in my mind. Was that the excuse Kim Su-mi had used to get Doyle round to her apartment? To meet me and talk over our holiday? But why? To murder him? I saw again the body and the battered head, with the heavy, blood-stained glass ashtray beside it. It simply did not add up. Doyle was a powerful man; a blow from one of his heavy fists would have knocked out any woman senseless. Besides, I had seen Kim Su-mi when she came into the apartment. There was nothing in her appearance to suggest she'd been in a fight. But someone must have let Doyle into the apartment. And whoever did so was the person who slipped the key under the door to me. Circumstantially, the person was the murderer; but not necessarily.

A dozen conjectures later I gave up. I was in the bath when it suddenly occurred to me that Lee hadn't urged me to disclose where I'd been the previous evening. It would have been awkward if he'd pressed me to detail my movements. Why hadn't he done so, I wondered? I had an uncomfortable feeling that he suspected I'd kept the appointment with Kim Su-mi, and was just keeping me on the end of a line until he was ready to haul me in like a floundering fish.

When I was dressed I tried again to contact Miss Kim. At ten o'clock, after a third abortive attempt, I decided that an engaged line meant she was in her apartment, and that I'd go round there.

I called to Mrs Kim that I was leaving, then went down to the mews and got my car out of the garage under my apartment. From behind my living room curtain a face watched me go. I flicked a derisive hand towards the garage next door. Mrs Kim knew damn well I never parked my car outside it.

Chapter ten

Pressing the bell of the apartment at Seoul Tower reminded me it was little more than twelve hours since I'd been standing there expectantly. Involuntarily, my glance dropped to the bottom of the door. I'd almost expected to see a key pushed slowly under it, and it came as a shock when the door was suddenly flung wide.

'Han-sang! ... Mr Moon ...'

I couldn't help noticing the relief in her voice.

'I hope I haven't dropped in at an awkward time', I said, noting the fur coat draped over her shoulders. 'But I tried to ring you ...'

She made a gesture, half welcoming, half apologetic. 'Oh, I'm sorry. If I'd known ... but I've had my receiver off all morning. Those reporters were driving me crazy!' She bit her lip. 'Then this detective and his endless questions ...'

I interrupted her quickly. 'I've just had a visit from Inspector Lee Shi-hoo'.

'I was afraid you would', she said contritely. 'I had to tell him about you when you phoned. But please come in, Mr Moon'.

I followed her into the now tidy living room. 'My friends call me Han-sang', I said with a smile.

She made a little face at me. 'It slipped out'. She motioned me to a cream coloured easy chair. 'Do sit down, Han-sang'.

Slipping out of the fur coat, she let it fall on to the sofa. She wore a red suit, ornamented by a single diamond-encrusted lovers'-knot brooch. 'Forgive me if I'm rather remote', she said taking the easy chair opposite mine and crossing her legs negligently, 'but I haven't yet really recovered from the shock. You read about such things in the papers; you can't believe it can happen to you'.

I nodded sympathetically. 'When the detective told me, I was appalled'. I got out my cigarette case and opened it slowly. 'What I couldn't grasp was that it should be Doyle. I thought he'd gone back to the States days ago'. I raised my eyes from the case, watching her face.

Her forehead furrowed. 'It's beyond me. I was under the impression he flew back from Shanghai the day after we met him at the *Chinese Dragon*. She shrugged helplessly. 'I didn't see him again after that'.

I held out my cigarette case. 'He didn't mention that he might look you up some time if he did come over here?'

'Never even hinted at it'. She took a cigarette, and I put a light to it. 'That detective kept trying to make me admit we'd arranged to meet here'.

'He did the same thing to me. I think he was a bit disappointed when I told him you hardly knew the man'.

She smiled gratefully. 'I'm terribly sorry to have involved you in all this. But what could I do? I had to tell him I was expecting you at seven-thirty'.

'That's all right'. I held my lighter hesitantly to my own cigarette. 'If you were going out don't let me upset any arrangements'.

Her eyes smiled into mine. 'It's thoughtful of you. But it really wasn't all that urgent. I'd been expecting Yun Hyeok to call round; he usually does on his way to his office. Of all mornings he had to miss this one – just when I needed his shoulder to cry on'. Her fingers tapped at the arm of her chair. 'So I was about to descend on him in person. But perhaps I shouldn't be too furious with him. He must be feeling pretty rotten after that attack of asthma yesterday evening'.

'Of course, that's why you were out when I rang the first time – at seven-fifteen'.

'Yes'. She looked at the toe of her shoe. 'You were phoning from ... Daegu, wasn't it?'

'That's right'.

'For your technical magazine, or whatever it was?' Her voice wavered uncertainly. 'You did say you were a journalist, didn't you?'

If Lee began digging into my past, I thought, he'd soon come up with the true facts. 'I do write for the engineering magazines at times', I said truthfully. 'You see, I'm actually an engineer. I had my own works until recently. Unfortunately it went broke'.

'Oh, bad luck', she commiserated. 'Then you were at Daegu ...?' She left the question dangling inescapably.

It was then that I had a brain-wave. By making my visit to Daegu sufficiently obscure I'd forestall any too direct inquiries that Lee might make about its object. 'I didn't want to have to tell you this, Su-mi. But I went down there on the off-chance of getting myself fixed up with one of the engineering firms'. I laughed awkwardly. 'I just wandered about, looking them over and trying to force myself to call on one, cap in hand. In the end I dithered around until I'd messed up our appointment'.

'As though that mattered'. Her face clouded. 'But it did, didn't it? If you had come at half-past seven poor Mr Doyle ...'

I broke the momentary silence. 'How did he get into your flat, Su-mi? Why was he here?'

'Please', she begged. 'I went through all this for hours last night with the detective'.

'I had the impression he wasn't entirely convinced Doyle was no more than a casual acquaintance of yours'. At that moment it seemed important to force a direct answer out of her. 'Was that all he was, Su-mi?'

'I'd never seen the man until I met him at the hotel', she replied angrily. Then, with a shrug, she said wearily: 'I suppose I'd better tell you. I was lying when I said I never saw him again after our meeting at the *Chinese Dragon*. She avoided my eyes, then said in a low voice: 'He came to my room that night'.

'And ...?'

'He made a pass at me'. She spread her hands. 'Nothing happened. He calmed down eventually and apologised. Some nonsense about having fallen for me from the moment he saw me at Incheon Airport'.

'Did you tell the Inspector this?' When she shook her head I asked: 'Why not?'

'And have him tell Yun?' she demanded quickly.

'What if he did?' I smiled. 'Yun surely doesn't imagine an engagement ring puts a barbed wire fence around an attractive girl?'

'I'm afraid he does. Perhaps is his asthma that makes him so intolerant'. Her eyes met mine for a long moment. 'It's absurd, but I think he's even jealous of you'.

The doorbell pealed stridently.

I laughed briefly. 'Of me!'

Then the bell rang again, a prolonged, insistent ring.

She stood up. 'It sounds as though you and Yun may be meeting after all'.

As she went out to admit her visitor I stubbed out my cigarette in an ashtray emblazoned with the Shanghai skyline.

A high-pitched voice drifted in from the hallway. 'What's happened, Kim? Why didn't you ring me?' There was some heavy breathing. 'A police Inspector just called round and said ...'

Kim's voice interrupted quietly. 'Please, Yun – don't get so excited. Your asthma ...'

'Don't get excited!' The voice rose to a crescendo. 'Good God, Kim Su-mi ... don't you realise ...'

'Oh, do please calm down, Yun', Kim said sharply. 'Mr Moon's in there'.

'Moon?' Yun's voice was explosive with suspicion. 'Moon? The man you met on the plane?'

I didn't catch her admonitory whisper.

A moment later I was standing up, murmuring, 'How do you do?' to a tall, desiccated man with dark hair parted in the centre, a cropped moustache, beak-nose, and pale-blue eyes that stared at me hostilely through heavy hornrims. He was taking off his hat as he came in; the impeccably rolled umbrella completed the picture.

'Mr Moon', Kim said, 'this is my fiancé, Yun Hyeok'.

He hung a limp hand at me. 'Kim Su-mi has mentioned you', he said coldly, and withdrew his hand from mine as though it held a soiled handkerchief. He turned to Kim. 'I want to talk to you, Su-mi. Alone, if you don't mind'.

'It's all right, darling', she said soothingly: 'Mr Moon knows what happened. That's why he's here'.

'I thought there might be something I could do to help', I said quickly. 'It's a pretty awful business'.

'Pretty awful. My God, that's an understatement, if you like!' With an effort Yun recovered his breath after this outburst. 'Who is this man Doyle? I demand an explanation, Su-mi! You've never mentioned him to me before'.

'He wasn't that important', she said, with a glance of mock despair at me. 'Just a casual acquaintance we met in Shanghai'.

Yun pointed his umbrella at me accusingly. 'You've met this Doyle?'

'On one occasion. I was with Miss Kim. We met him over some drinks'.

'Drinks? We?' he panted, glancing from one to the other suspiciously. 'How did this fellow Doyle come to be here? I'm not a fool, Su-mi. There must be a lot more to this than appears on the surface'.

I wondered how the devil Kim Su-mi came to be engaged to this querulous neurotic. In a mildly sarcastic tone, I said: 'You've got something there, Mr Yun'.

He glared at me. 'I wasn't talking to you, sir'.

Kim sighed. 'Oh, Hyeok, please'.

'Get a grip on yourself, Yun, I said roughly. 'Miss Kim's had a very unpleasant experience. Right now she needs sympathy, not bullying'.

His lips tightened angrily for a moment, then he smiled bleakly. 'How right you are. I apologize, Moon'. He turned to Kim. 'I'm sorry, dear. I think we should postpone any further discussion until I'm less spent. This evening, then'. He glanced at his watch. 'T'ck, t'ck? I'm due at a Board meeting in half an hour. By

the way Su-mi, do something about that partner of yours. She's phoned me three times to say she can't get hold of you'.

'Of course I will, darling', Kim said placatingly. 'I expect So-ra's furious with me because I hung up on her last night'. She shuddered. 'It was just at the moment when I'd seen the ...'

Yun's eyes followed the direction of hers. He was about to say something when the doorbell interrupted him.

Kim gave another little sigh. 'Why can't they leave me in peace?'

'If it's the newspapers don't tell them anything!' Yun ordered sharply. 'Not a word now, Kim! My name mustn't be mentioned; you understand?'

'Don't worry, darling. I think I can handle them'. She crossed the room, patting his arm reassuringly as she passed.

Yun tapped his thigh irritably with his hat. 'Publicity of this sort would play the devil with my business'. He glared at me as though I were responsible for the situation. 'I'm a stockbroker, Moon'.

'I think you can trust Miss Kim to deal with reporters tactfully', I said. I took out my cigarette case, proffering it to him. He shook his head, patting his chest in explanation. 'Miss Kim mentioned that she had an art and antique business', I said when I'd lit a cigarette. 'You say she has a business partner - Kong ...?'

'Yes, yes', he replied testily. 'Kong So-ra and my fiancée are in partnership'. He glanced round impatiently, eager to be gone.

From the door Kim said: 'It's Inspector Lee, darling'.

I turned. Lee stood in the doorway, his eyes roaming the room as though making an inventory of everything in it. When they met mine he nodded. 'Good morning, sir'.

Turning his back on Lee, Yun said: 'I'm late now, Su-mi. I must go'. He wagged his umbrella at me. 'Can I give you a lift?'

Lee stepped forward. 'I'd like a word with Mr Moon, if you don't mind, sir'.

Yun gave me a long, speculative look, then nodded curtly and walked past Lee to the door.

'Excuse me, Inspector', Kim said brightly, and followed Yun from the room.

Chapter eleven

'Cosy apartment, isn't it, sir?'

I'd been following Kim Su-mi with my eyes, and I now turned to find Lee watching me, a slight smile on his thin lips. 'Very', I said tersely.

'First time you've been here, isn't it, sir?'

With some effort I replied unemotionally: 'I made it quite plain this morning that I'd never been invited here until last night'.

He raised one eyebrow quizzically. 'And you couldn't keep that appointment, could you, Mr Moon?'

Before I could answer, Kim came back. She closed the door carefully, then turned to us. 'Oh, please, do sit down both of you'.

Lee took a hard-backed chair, facing the two Kim and I had occupied a few minutes before. 'Miss Kim', he said, resting his hat on his knees, 'does the name Bae mean anything to you?'

I inhaled cigarette smoke, waiting for her reaction. But it was no more than you'd expect from somebody suddenly confronted with a name completely strange to them.

'No', she said blankly. 'I'm afraid it doesn't'.

Lee glanced at me. 'And you, sir?'

I shook my head. 'It doesn't ring a bell with me, either. Should it?'

'Not if Doyle was just a casual acquaintance', he told us. 'It would have been helpful in our efforts to check Doyle's background if you had known the name. It was written in a diary we found on his body. Apparently he had appointments with this Bae Yeon-seok for today, tomorrow, and the day after'. Lee's tone sharpened. 'Miss Kim ... I'd like you to tell me again how many times you met Doyle in Shanghai'.

'Oh, really!' she said with exasperation. 'I've already told you – the only occasion was when we were with Mr Moon at the *Chinese Dragon*'.

Lee drew the edge of hand along the dent of his hat. 'Would you like to think that over, Miss Kim, and answer the question again?'

She retorted, rather too dramatically: 'Are you accusing me of lying, Inspector?'

He gave a little shrug, then after a moment said calmly: 'We have definite proof that you met him on another occasion, Miss Kim'.

I stiffened as she queried in a more uncertain tone: 'What sort of proof, Inspector?'

He leaned forward. 'A video film, Miss Kim. A video film that we found on the dead man. I ran it through an hour ago. There are some shots of Shanghai – with yourself in several of them. One in particular is of the *Chinese Dragon* café. It shows Doyle joining you at a table'. He cleared his throat. 'You appeared to be more than a casual acquaintance, if I may say so'.

I suppose I must have betrayed some reaction to hearing that my video had been found in Doyle's possession. The Inspector's slightly malicious smile suggested that he'd put a different interpretation on my expression. 'You don't appear to have been present on that occasion, Mr Moon'.

'It may surprise you to know, Inspector', I said unpleasantly, 'that the video was taken by me'.

For once his urbanity deserted him. 'You took it, sir?'

Kim Su-mi sat up, her eyes shining. 'Han-sang Moon! But of course you took it! I remember now'.

'Just a minute', Lee said, the sceptical expression on his face once again. 'If you took that video, sir, what was it doing in Doyle's pocket?'

I thought I knew the answer, but didn't want to get involved with Lee over the video. 'That's your pigeon, Inspector', I said. 'I lost that video somewhere along the line – probably in Shanghai'.

Lee frowned at this unexpected development, then said quietly. 'Let me know if anything more definite occurs to you. You can always leave a message for me at the station'. He stood up. 'Well, that's all for the moment, I think. By the way, Miss Kim, you're not planning to go to Shanghai again in the near future?'

'Heavens, no!' she exclaimed. 'What put that thought in your head?'

'I just wanted to be sure you'd still be here if I wanted you'.

He stood looking down at her, then with an, 'I'll see myself out', left so abruptly that we were both a little surprised.

As the front door closed Kim gave a sigh of relief. 'Thank goodness he's gone!' she smiled. 'I didn't know you were taking pictures of me all over Shanghai, Moon Han-sang'.

'I saw you once or twice', I said, off-handedly. 'I thought I'd like to include an attractive girl on my Chinese backgrounds'.

'That's sweet of you', she said warmly. 'Where did you see me?'

'Oh ... coming out of museums ... on bridges ... getting off boats', I replied rather lamely.

She smiled again. 'I remember that one', she said softly.

I rose. 'I must be getting along now', I said, feeling vaguely ill at ease.

'It's been nice having you here to give me your moral support', she said gratefully. 'How like Yun to walk out on me just when I need him'.

At the front door I said, 'You will let me know if there's any developments, Kim?'

'Of course'. She looked up into my face. 'You'll be the first to know, Han-sang'.

Chapter twelve

I stepped into the first doorway I could find, to telephone Im Sun-taek on my cellphone.

After the preliminary greetings he asked suavely: 'Any news of the bewitching Kim Su-mi?'

'You remember I mentioned that a phone call came through for her whilst I was in the apartment last night, and I answered it?'

'It did crop up among the lurid details. You didn't get around to telling me what was said'.

'By me, nothing', I said, a trifle nettled by his bantering tone. 'It was from a woman who announced herself as So-ra. She went right on talking. So far as I can remember, she said, 'I was right, Su-mi. He's very curious about Bae ...'

Im cut in. 'What was that name again?'

'Bae Yeon-seok'. My hand tightened on the phone. 'Why did you ask me to repeat it?'

'I just didn't catch it at first', he said casually. 'Well, go on ...'

'Well, So-ra turns out to be a Miss Kong – Kim Su-mi's partner in the art gallery'.

'Have you been to the gallery, then?'

'No, I went round to Su-mi's – Miss Kim's apartment this morning. Her fiancé was there and he let the information out more or less incidentally'.

'So he's turned up!' Im laughed. 'What's he like?'

'Rather like you, as a matter of fact, Im. An absolute bastard!'

I let him say his piece, then went on: 'While I was at Miss Kim's apartment a detective – Inspector Lee Shi-hoo – arrived. He'd already given me a grilling earlier this morning. He said he'd taken a diary from Doyle's pocket, which recorded several appointments with this man Bae. Lee threw the name at Miss Kim; she said it didn't mean a thing to her'.

'H'm ...' Im paused. 'You think she was lying?'

'I'm damned sure she was', I said acidly. 'When Kong So-ra phoned she obviously took it for granted that Miss Kim knew Bae – and the street name, too'.

'Street name? You didn't mention a street name before!' Im said sharply.

'For the simple reason that I've forgotten the name of it', I said, frowning.

'World Cup something ... It's right on the tip of my tongue ...'

'Let me give you a tip, Moon. Always get a name down directly you hear it. On the back of an envelope – anywhere, but get it down'. Then he laughed apologetically. 'Sorry to sound off like a Sergeant-Major, but one of the first things you have to learn is never to rely on your memory. I'll see if we have a Bae Yeon-seok in our records. Don't forget to ring me if you remember that street name'.

There was a decent-looking pub a step or two from the doorway, so I parked my car there and treated myself to a bowl of bibimbap and a glass of soju. Then I drove back to my apartment, edging through a couple of yellows, more intent on recalling the street name than on my driving.

Chapter thirteen

I took my key from the front door and was about to stub out my cigarette in the ashtray on the hall table when I heard a faint rustling of paper coming from my living room. Then a drawer was jerked open. I knew it wasn't Mrs Kim; she always left promptly at twelve.

Leaving the front door ajar I stepped across the hallway and peered through the crack of the half open living room door. I could just see a hand foraging amongst the papers in my writing bureau.

I eased the door open a little further. A man in a well cut grey suit stood with his back towards me. The slim waist and powerful sloping shoulders warned me I'd need every one of the ten years' difference in our ages if it came to a showdown.

I took a step inside the room and said quietly: 'You won't find any money there, if that's what you're looking for'.

He spun round and we faced one another in silence, each sizing up the other. His eyes were dark in a sallow face. Above a hard mouth was a pencil-line moustache. He was a type that you see in second-rate bars, reading the racing result in the paper and shiftily avoiding the yes of any stranger.

He refused to meet my eyes now as I challenged him. 'Who are you, anyway?'

He smiled tightly. 'I'll bounce that one back at you, Moon. Who the hell are you?'

'You seem to know my name, anyway', I said, stepping towards a side table and reaching for the telephone. 'Maybe you prefer the police to ask the questions?'

'Keep your hands off that phone, Moon!'

My hand retreated as though it had been stung. I was looking down the muzzle of a .38 automatic.

'What's the game?' he asked. 'Why are you trailing Kim Su-mi?'

'Trailing her?' I said. 'She's a friend of mine'.

'She wasn't until you met her on the plane to Shanghai'.

'Where did you get that information?'

'We got it!' he snapped. 'Now we want some information about you, Moon'.

I'd been doing some quick thinking while this exchange was going on. My living room has a parquet floor, with mats placed here and there. This was the day that Mrs Kim waxed the floor, and no rose had ever smelled so sweet as did the pungent odour of the wax at that moment.

'You're holding the cards', I said, nodding towards the gun. 'But why not short circuit the story of my life and come to the point?' I looked at the end of my cigarette. His eyes followed mine and I took a step forward. 'What is it you really want to know?'

'Don't play the innocent', he said roughly. 'What have you done with them?'

'Done with them?' There was no need for me to fake my surprise.

He waved the gun impatiently. 'You want me to spell it?'

He was standing on a small rug near the desk. 'Oh, well ... I suppose I'd better ...' I began - then, 'Damn!' I exclaimed and dropped the cigarette to the floor. 'Burnt my fingers talking to ...' I stopped quickly and grabbed at the edge of the rug. It was thin and slid across the waxed floor as though it were ice. The man fell backwards, the gun falling from his hand and slithering across the floor to the wall.

I made a dive for it, but he rolled over, clutched one of my ankles, and jerked me forward on to the floor. The next instant he was on top of me. I'd been right about the power in the sloping shoulders.

The wax didn't smell quite so sweet now that my nose was flattened against it. I got my left leg round one of his, pressed the palm of my right hand on to the floor, and rolled him over. Raising my head, I looked for the gun; it was six inches from my left hand. I reached out for it ... then something cracked in my head, I looked for the gun; it was six inches from my left hand. I reached out for it ... then something cracked in my head and I was falling down into the pitch darkness of an abyss ...

The dull, rhythmic pain of a pendulum inside my head woke me. I felt old and tired. At the top of the abyss there were voices and light ... I clawed my way up to them ... Then the smell of wax seemed to restore my full consciousness.

The voice of the man I'd been struggling with was saying: 'No, they weren't in the bureau'.

'Nor on him', said another voice – a cultured voice, which chose words with the preciseness of someone speaking a language not their own. 'I would not have done this, Choi; but in another moment he would have had the gun'. My assailant laughed shortly. 'He's tougher than he looks'.

'I hope so', the other voice remarked gravely. 'The bedroom, Choi? You had better look round in there'.

The door closed. Then I felt a hand in my inside pocket, removing my cigarette case. I lay motionless until I heard the sound of the cigarette case being put down on the bureau, then turned my head round enough to get a one-eyed look at this man. He had his back to me and appeared to be writing. He was shorter and younger than the man I had caught rifling my bureau. His fair hair was close-cropped at the back and sides. I had the impression of a man who took a pride in his appearance. Then my cigarette case was snapped shut and I closed my eyes as he turned back to me.

He'd just replaced the cigarette case in my pocket when the man called Choi returned.

'Nothing there'.

'I have a feeling you were mistaken, Lloyd. I do not think that Moon is connected with those others'. From the direction of his voice I guessed that he was standing over me.

'I'm beginning to have some doubts myself ...' Choi broke off, with an abrupt: 'Anyway, we shall have to see what happens from now on. Let's move, before he comes round'.

I waited until I heard the front door close, then rolled over and sat up. My head throbbed worse than ever, and I put a hand gingerly to the back of it. There was a lump as big as an egg, but no blood on my hand when I took it away.

With an effort I levered myself up and staggered across to the drinks table. I poured myself four fingers of whisky and gulped it down; then I stood looking down at the empty glass while the whisky gradually began to take effect, and presently I took out my cigarette case. Tucked under the cigarettes was a slip of paper. I drew it out and read the scrawled message. Just two words.

WORLD CUP BUK-RO 48-GIL

'World Cup Buk-Ro', I muttered. 'By God, that was it! World Cup Buk-Ro!'

I was still shaky as the devil and not thinking too coherently, so I decided to take a shower. Afterwards I stretched out on the settee and thought over what had happened since I'd come into my apartment.

From what the man Choi had said to me it was obvious that I was suspected of having something. His 'What have you done with them?' could imply anything from plans to banknotes. Whatever the 'something' was he was prepared to use a

gun to get it. But where did Kim Su-mi fit into all this? And why did he want to know my reason for trailing her?’

Suddenly I remembered the Chinese doll, ripped open and lying by the body. Had Doyle been carrying the ‘something’ in that? I wondered for a moment whether I’d been face to face with Doyle’s murderer an hour before. But I dismissed the thought; his assailant would have found what he was after in the doll. The two intruders were obviously under the impression that I had killed and robbed Doyle.

From the glimpse I’d had of him and the snatches of over-heard conversation, I’d got the idea that the second man was the more intelligent of the two. That he was uncertain about me was obvious in everything he had said. But why insert the note in my cigarette case?

I fingered the lump on the back of my head tenderly. I didn’t think I’d been struck with the butt of the gun. The skin was unbroken. I hadn’t noticed any sign of my front door having been forced when I’d come in; that indicated that they’d used the old thieves’ trick of slipping a piece of celluloid into the door latch. But the second man, at least, didn’t look or talk like a thug.

Tomorrow, after a good night’s sleep, I would do some prowling round World Cup Buk-ro 48-Gil. But I wouldn’t tell Im until I’d first had a good look round for myself.

Chapter fourteen

I found it among the maze of streets in the area of Sangam Dong, north of Haneul Park and the river. Close by, as the name suggests was the World Cup stadium

Parking my car down a side turning I walked back to World Cup Buk-ro 48-gil. Its shops catered for the workers in the nearby Media City. There were several cafés and fast-food shops, a health-food store, and so on. It seemed the least likely street for a man with an egg-sized bump on his head to be wandering down in search of ... Well, in search of what? I asked myself, gazing vacantly into the window of a traditional tea shop.

Breaking from a reverie I suddenly realised that I was staring at a quaint Chinese doll. My eyes wandered to the other objects in the window – some hand-painted fans, a model of a Chinese junk. I looked up at the name running in gold script across the window. *The Golden Sun*, it said. I thought a tea in there might help to set my brain working.

It was the usual sort of tea shop. There was a long counter, in front of which were a dozen lacquered tables with matching chairs. The Chinese motif of the window was even more prominent inside. Tourist publicity posters of China in cherry blossom time decorated the walls, interspersed with hanging fans. Pots of chrysanthemums were on every table. I went in and sat at a table

In the mirror behind the counter I had a full view of the tables. The sole occupant of these, just visible between the sails of a model junk, was an elegant woman wearing a close-fitting emerald green dress.

A harassed girl, dressed in a silk smock, string-like hair hanging down to her shoulders, swept a used tea cup and saucer from the counter in front of me. 'Yes, sir?' she said, adenoidally disinterested.

I ordered a tea and idly watched her manipulate the chromium monster. As she came back with my pot for one the woman behind me called: 'My bill, please, So-hyun'.

The waitress searched in the pockets of her smock, found a check pad and the stub of a pencil, and murmuring a fretful, 'Coming!' began to make out the bill.

'How's Jaw-long?' the woman in the green dress inquired, over the lid of her compact. 'Are you expecting him in today?'

The girl brushed some hair from her eyes impatiently. 'He's better now. He should be in this afternoon, Miss Kong'.

I was about to light a cigarette, but now my hand tightened on the dormant lighter and I risked a direct look at the woman, between the sails of the junk.

She was in her mid-thirties, not unattractive in a supercilious way. Her eyes were jade green and penetrating, her mouth a shade too large. I imagined a shrewd, restless mind at work behind the immobile face.

Her eyes met mine and I turned my head quickly away. In that instant of contact I had the feeling that hers had shown a more than casual interest in me. But I was over-receptive to impressions just then; the note in my cigarette case, and Kong So-ra's presence in a tea shop, which featured a Chinese doll in the window, was stretching coincidence to snapping point.

Through the mirror I watched the girl take the bill to Kong So-ra's table.

Closing her compact the latter drawled in a bored tone: 'What is it with Jaw-long, 'flu?'

'Oh, with the usual tummy trouble', So-hyun replied with a sniff. 'I'll be glad when he's back. Leaving me to cope on my own here ...'

A postman came in, flourished a bundle of mail in So-hyun's direction, and slapped it down on the counter at my elbow. 'Turned out nice again!' he said cheerfully.

'Has it?' So-hyun responded perfunctorily. 'I wouldn't know'.

I glanced casually down at the pile of mail. It seemed to be mostly bills, apart from one large buff-coloured envelope, which from its bulk I assumed contained printed matter of some kind.

My attention returned abruptly to the mirror as I heard the door open and voice of Kong So-ra exclaiming: 'Su-mi!'

Chapter fifteen

I heard her heels clicking, then she came into my view. She wore a close-fitting, black belted, sleeveless yellow dress, black gloves, and was hatless. She seemed a little less poised than usual as she quickly crossed to Kong So-ra's table.

'Sorry to be late, So-ra', she said, a trifle edgily. 'I was held up in the traffic, then I had trouble parking the car'.

'You poor dear. I wondered what had kept you', Kong So-ra drawled, glancing at her watch. 'You've just time for a tea, Su-mi. Then we must get down to Wonju'.

Kim Su-mi said hesitantly: 'You think it's worth the trip?'

'Definitely', Kong replied lazily. 'From what I hear, the dealers' ring will be there in full force'.

As their conversation proceeded it became apparent that they were going to Wonju to attend an auction of antique furniture. If I'd hoped to catch something that would give point to the note which had brought me to World Cup Buk-ro 48-Gil I was disappointed. Their talk had no more significance than the gossip you overhear from the seat behind you on a bus.

I'd been staring into the mirror – and, of course, the inevitable happened. Su-mi turned her head in my direction, frowning; then her face lit up with a smile of recognition.

'Who's that?' Kong So-ra said sharply as I slid off my stool and crossed over to their table.

'Hello, there!' I exclaimed. 'This is a surprise!'

'Yes, isn't it?' Su-mi said, a shade sceptically, I thought.

Then she turned to her companion. 'So-ra, this is Mr Moon. We met in Shanghai'. She glanced up at me. 'Kong So-ra – my business partner'.

Kong returned my greeting with a cool nod. As though sensing that her indifference had made me feel an unwelcome interloper, Kim Su-mi said quickly: 'Do sit down, Han-sang'.

I pulled out a chair from the table. 'I hope I haven't interrupted anything', I said, as I sat down.

'A Board meeting', Su-mi said, with mock severity. 'The Annual General Meeting of Kim and Kong'. She laughed. 'It's just our morning tea break, Han-sang. Our gallery is only round the corner, you know'.

I brought out my cigarette case. 'No, I didn't know. But ... well, I'm glad it is!'

Su-mi smiled at me appreciatively. 'Isn't this rather out of your way? I haven't seen you in here before'.

'It's the first time I've been here. The offices of an engineering firm I used to do business with are just down the road', I said, offering her a cigarette. 'One of our creditors, I regret to say. I thought I'd drop in here for a tea before seeing their accountant at eleven'.

Kong So-ra stood up abruptly. 'If you'll excuse me, I have to get back to the gallery'.

Getting up, I said, rather stiffly: 'I'm sorry if I'm in the way'.

Su-mi put out a restraining hand. 'Do sit down, Han-sang. We're going to Wonju to see some antiques. There's no need to start for ten minutes'.

'I'll see you at the shop then, Su-mi, Kong So-ra said, and with a forced smile at me she left.

'Poor So-ra', Su-mi sighed, taking a cigarette from the case I'd laid on the table. 'You have haven't seen her at her best, I fear. It's this Doyle thing. She's terribly worried over the publicity – thinks it will harm our business'.

'It'll blow over', I said as I lit her cigarette. 'I shouldn't let it get you down'.

'I won't. But the business means so much more to So-ra than to me'. She watched me light my own cigarette. 'You see, I'm not dependent on it – that is, not financially'.

'Oh – yes', I said off-handedly. It was not a subject I could pursue, much as I should have liked to. 'As I seem to have disrupted your tea break', I went on, 'can I order you one now?'

'No, please I really mustn't keep So-ra waiting. She's anxious to be there for the start of the sale'. Her eyes rested on my face. 'But I'm glad to have seen you, Han-sang. As a matter of fact, I tried to get you on the phone before coming here'. She glanced over at the girl polishing the tea urn. 'It's not convenient now, but I must have a talk with you, Han-sang, as soon as possible'. Suddenly she looked defenceless, almost forlorn.

I said quickly: 'What time will you be back from Wonju?'

‘This evening, about seven, I imagine’.

‘Then why not come round to my place for a drink when you get back?’

After a few moments’ hesitation she nodded. ‘All right, Han-sang. I’ll do that. Expect me at seven-thirty’. She reached for the ashtray and slowly ground her cigarette in it. She stood up. ‘And thanks a lot, Han-sang’.

I stood looking after her as she went past the window. I thought she must have been educated at one of those schools where the girls learn development by walking about for hours with books balanced on their heads. Deliberately I expelled her more glamorous aspects from my mind and wondered what it was she wanted to say to me.

A telephone ringing behind the counter reminded me of the tea I’d left there untouched. I went across to my stool, sat down, and lifted the cup. The tea was tepid, and I was about to call the girl over when I saw she had the telephone receiver to her ear.

‘Oh, I am glad you’re better, sir’, she was saying in a servile tone. ‘All the regulars have been asking after you ...’

Half listening to her monologue I’d decided to skip another tea and ask for the bill, when she laid the receiver down and hurried across to the pile of mail on the counter. From this she drew out the buff envelope, tore open the flap, and took out a catalogue.

I looked down at it casually, then my eyes riveted on the gaudy cover. It was an auction catalogue.

After a glance at it the girl hastened back to the telephone. ‘That’s right, sir’, she said. ‘It was an auction catalogue in the big envelope’. There was a pause while she listened. Then, with a final, ‘It’ll be ever so nice to have you back, sir’, she hung up.

I paid my bill and went out into the street. There was no reason at all why a man called Jaw-long who ran a Chinese bar shouldn’t receive an auction catalogue – there were at least twenty Chinese antiques in the place. Equally, there was no reason why he shouldn’t have a facsimile of Doyle’s Chinese doll in his window. Yet the doll plus the auction catalogue possibly added up to more than a coincidence. But as far as I knew it was the only Chinese bar in Seoul. All the same, I wanted Na’s reactions to this development.

I strode briskly along the street to find somewhere quiet to make a call.

Chapter sixteen

An hour later I was sitting opposite my chief in the smoking room of his club, sipping soju. I smiled to myself; from the tone of my voice on the telephone he'd guessed I was in a disgruntled frame of mind, and it was typical of him to choose a stamping ground where the laws of hospitality forbade a guest to enter into a heated argument with his host.

He sipped his sherry in silence, allowing me to simmer down. Then, putting his glass on the table between us, he said conversationally, 'Well, now, Moon? What's on your mind?'

'The Chang Chu-chu Affair', I said dryly. 'There are developments which I would like to discuss with you, sir'.

'I imagined there might be', he said, with a wry smile. 'Suppose you bring them out where we can take a look at them'.

'I'll begin with a name', I said, leaning back in my leather armchair. 'Bae. I told Im about a phone call that came through while I was in Kim Su-mi's flat on the night Doyle was murdered. It was from Kong So-ra and she mentioned the name Bae Yeon-seok'.

His expression betrayed no more than polite interest.

I hesitated, then went on a little tentatively: 'Im Sun-taek had obviously heard that name before'.

'It's possible', Na said blandly.

I leaned forward in my chair. 'It's no use, Na', I protested.

'You've got to trust me. I must know more about the background of the Chang Chu-chu case'.

He reached for his glass and sipped his sherry thoughtfully. Then, rather to my surprise, he said: 'That's a reasonable request, Moon. I think the time has come for me to take you more deeply into my confidence'. Returning his glass to the table he relaxed in his chair, fingering his chin. 'During the past twelve months we've been very worried about a certain organisation. We've good reason for believing that the head of this organisation is someone called Bae Yeon-seok'.

'And this organisation', I prompted, when he had lapsed into a frowning silence, 'what does it deal in?'

'Blood diamonds', he replied, coming out of his reverie. 'They're smuggled from North Korea, via China. Bae's little group provides a highly efficient system for buying and selling them'.

'But surely', I said, drumming my fingers on the arm of the chair, 'blood diamonds are police business? I don't see what interest your department can have in a matter of that sort'.

'We're not directly interested in Bae's organisation. As you say, it's purely a matter for the police', he agreed. 'However, that are two angles which involve my department. Some of the diamonds smuggled into this country are industrial diamonds. Quite a brisk traffic there; mainly with the agents of other foreign governments'. He smiled. 'That is why my department comes into the picture. We've already creating a list of possible agents'.

'I see', I said untruthfully. I hadn't a clue what he was leading up to. Twisting my glass around on the table, I said: 'But where's the connection between all this and Kim Su-mi? Or Chang Chu-chu, for that matter?'

'That's the second angle in this business of the smuggled diamonds. And to me, at any rate, it's the most important angle'. His face clouded. 'Two months ago I was told that the Shanghai police suspected Chang Chu-chu of being mixed up in this affair. As you can imagine, I was disturbed by this news. I trusted Chang implicitly. He'd been working with us for some time and possessed quite a lot of valuable information'. He pursed his lips ruefully, then continued, with a shrug: 'Apart from that, I pride myself on choosing the right man for the job. I didn't think I'd made a mistake about Chang – but, for security reasons, I had to check up on him. So I asked him to come to Seoul'. He paused. 'He was on his way to the airport when he was knocked down by Kim Su-mi's car'.

In the silence that followed, I studied his face. This was a new Na. I had always thought of him as a man ruthlessly dedicated to the efficient running of his department; now, for a moment, I had a glimpse of the warm, sensitive nature he normally concealed behind a mask of indifference to the feelings of his subordinates.

Vaguely touched, I said quietly: 'Was Chang Chu-chu a friend of yours?'

He straightened in his chair, shooting a glance at me, which was at once resentful and amused. 'A leading question, that, Moon', he said sharply. Then, with a small gesture of acceptance: 'I'd known him for some time. He played the piano superbly. He and his brother, Joong-ki, were at the Academy of Music in Shanghai; both brilliant musicians. But, of course, I had other reasons than authentic background for employing Chang Chu-chu as an undercover agent.

Although their mother was Chinese, the father of both the Changs was a Korean army officer’.

‘Did Joong-ki know his brother was working for your department?’

‘Of course not’, said Na emphatically. Then his brow furrowed. ‘I could wish you hadn’t brought that up. I don’t want to have doubts about Chang ... But if he did tell his brother, or anyone else, he was working for our department, then I have to admit I made a mistake’. He spread his hands. ‘I don’t often misjudge people, Moon, and until I have definite proof of Chang’s innocence in this matter I’ll have no peace of mind. Apart from my personal feelings, I don’t want it on my conscience that I’ve let the department down’.

I smiled inwardly. This was the ruthlessly dedicated Na. ‘What happened to the metronome Chang Chu-chu was carrying when he was killed?’ I asked. ‘Did Im examine it?’

‘The Shanghai police handed it over to him. There were no diamonds in it, if that’s what you’re thinking. Nor in the one belonging to Doyle’. He smiled blandly. ‘We usually find Scotland Yard co-operative, you know, Moon’.

‘I’m glad to hear it’, I said, returning his smile. ‘Then perhaps you can persuade them to hand over one of the articles they found when Doyle was murdered?’

Na looked at me through half closed eyes. ‘Which article, Moon? The chronometer? I assure it’s been examined down to the last detail’.

‘Not the chronometer’, I said casually. ‘I happen to be interested in the auction catalogue’.

Chapter seventeen

At six o'clock that evening I had a call from an agitated Yun Hyeok; he was anxious to know if I could meet him in half an hour in the upstairs bar at *The Grasshopper*. Remembering that I had an appointment with Su-mi at my apartment for seven-thirty I was about to make an excuse, then I had second thoughts. I decided not to risk my talk with Su-mi being interrupted by a jealous Yun banging on my door. So I agreed to meet him for a couple of quick drinks.

He was standing at the bar, fidgeting with a gin and lime, when I arrived.

'We'll have to make this snappy, Yun Hyeok', I warned him after he had ordered my soju, 'I've an appointment at seven-thirty'.

From behind the spectacles the pale blue eyes quizzed my face curiously. 'With Bar -' he began, then swiftly covered his lapse. '... With that bloody copper?'

I shook my head. 'What made you think that, Yun Hyeok?'

'Damned fellow's been hounding me. Had an hour of him at my office this afternoon'. He pursed his lips petulantly. 'Questioning me about Su-mi's relationship with this Doyle man'.

'But she's already told him that she hardly knew the man'. I said evasively. It seemed I was to be subjected to the boredom of allaying the suspicions of a jealous fiancé.

'Yes, I know. But for some reason or another this Inspector doesn't seem to believe anything he's told'. His prominent Adam's apple wobbled convulsively. 'Moon, you were with Su-mi when she met Doyle at the bar'.

'Yes', I said, trying to keep a note of exasperation out of my voice.

The Adam's apple worked vigorously, then he rushed on: Did you get the impression that they might have met before?

'Of course they'd seen each other before. They were staying at the same hotel'.

'Yes, I know. I didn't mean that'.

Without disguising my annoyance I said: 'What did you mean, Yun?'

He looked into his glass. 'Did you think when they were at the bar that they behaved – well, as though they were on particularly friendly terms?'

It was a question I'd asked myself at the time. 'No, I didn't', I said, wondering if this answer were not so much to reassure myself as Yun. 'But I'm not Miss Kim's fiancée, of course. You would have been a better judge of her reactions'.

'Now, don't get the wrong impression about Su-mi', he said hastily. 'Of course, I trust her. But it's this questioning by the police that's so upsetting'. He slammed his glass down on the bar counter. 'They've even questioned Kong So-ra!'

'Why?' I asked sharply.

'Lord knows!' he said gloomily. 'I haven't the slightest idea'.

Then why, I thought, did he offer me that piece of information? I decided to do some fishing myself. 'Does Miss Kong spend her holidays in Shanghai?'

'Good Lord, no! She can't stand the place. I remember her telling me ...' He broke off, then said slowly; 'Why did you ask me that?'

I shrugged. 'I thought perhaps that was why the police had questioned her'.

'Ah, naturally you would. Very perspicacious of you'. He smiled thinly. 'No, So-ra loathes China. Frankly, I agree with her. Damn shit hole, if you ask me'. He picked up his glass and sipped his drink before going on: 'Why Su-mi should want to go there, after what happened a couple of months back, defeats me'.

I summoned up a polite show of interest. 'Something unpleasant?'

'Very', he said, his eyes never leaving my face. 'She ran over a man in Shanghai; a chap called Chang Chu-chu. He was killed, poor sod'.

'Good God! I exclaimed.

'Nasty business. Still, it wasn't her fault, apparently'. He glanced at his watch. 'Good heavens, is that the time?' He finished his drink hurriedly, 'Just remembered I have an appointment, Moon. Quite forgot it, chatting away here. Mind if I dash? But, of course, you have an appointment, too'. With rather too elaborate casualness he added: 'If you're going anywhere in the direction of ...'

'My car's outside', I cut in on him. 'Thanks, all the same'.

'Well, good-bye, Moon'. Without offering a hand he turned, then swung back. 'Oh – er – if you should run into Kim Su-mi at any time ... I'd rather you didn't mention our conversation. I'd hate her to think I was checking up on her'.

I promised, with mental reservations, to keep everything under my hat, and with a 'That's a good chap' he moved over to the staircase.

Dawdling over my drink, to give him time to drive off before I left, I considered our conversation. I had a feeling that it was not entirely jealousy that had prompted Yun to arrange our meeting. No doubt he was suspicious of Su-mi's relationship with Doyle. But was there more to it than that? He'd said two things that puzzled me. One was the reference to Kong So-ra having been questioned by the police. He'd brought that up, then dropped it immediately I began to get curious. The other was his telling me about Chang Chu-chu being run over by Su-mi's car. He'd been watching me closely when he mentioned it. He could, of course, have been pumping me to find out how friendly I was with Kim Su-mi. It could have been that, I decided, finishing my drink; and the reference to the questioning of Kong So-ra could have been no more than a jealous man's masochistic desire to torture himself over his fiancé's friendship with another male. Dismissing Yun as a frustrated Romeo, I went down to my car, and drive back to my apartment.

Chapter eighteen

Parked in the street, outside my door, was a Hyundai saloon of uncertain age. Leaning against it, smoking a cigarette, was a long figure whom I recognised with a muttered imprecation.

As I got out of my car Im said: 'A drink, for the love of god! I've been kicking my heels for half an hour, waiting for you'.

'There is a new-fangled invention called the telephone', I said, grinning at him. 'It'll have to be a quick drink. I'm expecting a visitor in ten minutes'.

In my living room, as I handed him a whisky and soda, he said sardonically: 'Your visitor wouldn't be Kim Su-mi, by any chance?'

I turned back to the drinks table. 'Talking of her', I said, with a forced laugh, 'I've just had a chat with Yun'.

'That sounds intriguing. What did he want?'

'Oh, nothing really. Just wanted to get a load of jealousy out of his system'. I returned with my drink. 'God knows what Kim Su-mi sees in him!'

Im Sun-taek looked at me quizzically for a long moment, then with a murmured, 'cheers!' sipped his drink.

I began to pace the room, as much to escape his amused stare as anything. Forget it, I told myself. What if Su-mi does come while he's here? All right she's a damned attractive woman; but that doesn't mean Ims' innuendoes should get under my skin.

'I heard you saw Na this afternoon', he was saying.
I nodded. 'Quite a frank talk, actually. It cleared the air, if nothing else'.
'I understand you've asked for the auction catalogue that was found with Doyle?'

I fiddled with an ornament on my writing desk.

'He didn't mention why you wanted it', Im went on, his tone adding a question mark to the statement.

'He didn't ask me, for one think', I said coolly, rather resenting his persistence. 'And if he had I couldn't really have told him. For your information, I'm playing a hunch'.

'Good luck to you', Im said, returning my smile. 'By the way, you're not the only one who's getting inquisitive about Doyle's possessions. Kim Su-mi asked Lee Shi-hoo if she could have a private view of the video they found on him. They played it through for her this morning'.

'Rather an odd request', I said, genuinely puzzled. 'Did she give any reason?'

'No. But I think I can supply one'. He frowned into his glass. 'She's obviously getting very, very curious about you, Moon'. He paused, then looked up with a quizzical smile. 'It is Kim Su-mi you're expecting, isn't it?'

'Well, yes, it is', I said defensively. 'Although the invitation was at her request'.

'That doesn't surprise me. I'd take a bet she wants to discuss the video with you'. He shook his head at me, chidingly. 'That film is going to take a hell of a lot of explaining away. I've seen it. And, in my opinion, you overdid those shots of her'.

'It's easily explainable. I've already told her she only came into the video because I wanted to include a pretty woman in any memories of Shanghai'.

'Is that so?' Im murmured. 'I'd say you were including Shanghai in your memories of Kim Su-mi'.

He was still smiling cynically as he drew back the window curtain. 'And here is the star of your film, making a personal appearance. And in a Samsung 2 Litre, too'. He dropped the curtain. 'Do you mind if I fade out of the picture into your bedroom?'

The thought of Im listening in to what promised to be an embarrassing conversation didn't greatly appeal to me. But I was caught on the wrong foot. 'It's the door on your left', I said curtly.

'Make it sound convincing', he advised, 'but try to find out if she suspects anything'.

I nodded as the doorbell rang.

Chapter nineteen

She'd changed into the suit she'd been wearing the first time I saw her. But, as I followed her into the living room, I thought she looked less at ease than she had then.

'I'm sorry, Han-sang, but I'm terribly on edge', she said, over her shoulder. 'That detective was waiting for me outside my apartment when I got back from Wonju. This cat and mouse business really is preposterous. I'm sick and tired of answering the same old questions. I must have told him a dozen times I've never heard of this – what's his name? – Oh, Bae Yeon-seok'.

As I looked down at the dark brown eyes ablaze with indignation I refrained with difficulty from challenging her, there and then, with Kong So-ra's telephone message. I think it was only the thought of Im listening behind the bedroom door that deterred me. Abruptly, I turned, and went over to the drinks table.

'Do sit down, Su-mi. What can I get you?'

'Please, if you have it, a brandy and ginger ale'. She sank into an easy chair. 'What a day it's been! So-ra, then that dreadful Inspector, then Hyeok ...' Her tone lightened. 'He hasn't phoned you, has he?'

Keeping my back to her I clinked bottles while I made up my mind whether to tell her or not. 'No', I lied. 'No, he hasn't'.

'Well, that's one mercy', she said, with a short laugh. 'Perhaps he's stopped being suspicious at last'.

When I came back with the drinks she smiled up at me. I took my whisky and soda to the chair opposite hers and sat down.

'This is definitely what I needed', she said. 'Now, I suppose I should tell you why I wanted to see you'. She looked at me from under half closed eyelids. 'I've seen your video, Han-sang. The one they found on Doyle. The police played it through for me'.

'Not exactly a professional job, I'm afraid', I said easily. 'It was a first attempt, you know. I'd only bought the camera just before I went away'.

Her eyes widened. 'For a beginner the shots were remarkably good – particularly the ones of me'. She twirled the stem of her glass between her fingers, then demanded bluntly: 'Why were you following me in Shanghai, Han-sang?'

'Following you?' I repeated. I hadn't expected her to be quite so quick off the mark, and was momentarily at a loss.

'There can't be any other explanation. Although the Inspector only seemed to recognise me in one or two shots, I caught a glimpse of myself in at least six others'. Her eyes narrowed. 'I simply can't believe that we both happened, by chance, to be in those places at the same time'.

There didn't seem much purpose in continuing to deny her accusation. 'All right', I said, with a half smile, 'I was following you'.

Her knuckles whitened as her fingers tightened on her glass. It was a moment before she spoke. 'Why?'

'If you insist on knowing', I said, feeling slightly ridiculous, 'it was because you are ... well, an extremely attractive woman'.

'But why follow me?' she persisted. 'You'd met me on the plane. There was no reason why you couldn't have asked me to go out with you'.

'You'd made it very plain to me that you were engaged. I can take a hint as well as most other people'.

She relaxed in the chair. 'So you just kept a respectful distance', she murmured. 'That's rather touching'.

'You sound relieved', I said sharply, in an attempt to discover whether she believed my explanation.

'As a matter of fact, I am', she said imperturbably. 'I thought you must be a private investigator or something'.

'Me!' I laughed. 'I've told you, I'm an engineer'.

'I don't know why I should have thought that. But strange things have been happening since ...' She fluttered a hand. 'Oh, let's forget it. You're not a private detective, and that's all that matters'.

'I can't let you get away with it as easily as that', I said lightly. 'Not after having practically accused me of spying on you. What are these strange things that have been happening to you?'

She bit her lip. 'I hate going over all this'. She closed her eyes. 'I killed a man'.

I tried to appear suitably shocked.

Her eyes opened, and looked directly into my face. 'In a car accident in Shanghai. His name was Chang Chu-chu. Oh, it was his own fault – that was proved at the

inquest – but that didn't make me feel any better about it. I tried to contact his family, even consulted a lawyer to trace them, but without results. I just came up against a blank wall'.

'That is strange. He must have had some relatives'.

'Han-sang', she said, suddenly leaning forward in her chair. 'You don't think there's a connection between Doyle's murder and my car accident?'

'I don't see how there could be', I said, watching her. 'Do you?'

'Not unless Doyle had known Chang Chu-chu. Doyle had been in Shanghai before, you remember'.

'Yes, he said he had all his possessions stolen'. I gripped the arm of my chair. 'What are you driving at, Su-mi?'

'Oh, I don't know – I'm so confused by it all'. She brushed the back of her hand across her forehead. 'Can't we talk about something else now?'

'How about another drink? You've finished that one'.

She glanced at the watch on her wrist. 'No, I really must fly now. So-ra and I have to take some furniture down to a client. We're supposed to there by nine'.

'Don't you ever let up?' I said, trying not to sound too curious. 'I never seem to be able to pin you down. It's either a five-minute drink or a two-minute tea'.

She made a little face at me, and I went on: 'There was that first date I had with you ...' I left the sentence unfinished, hoping she would give me a lead-in to my real purpose.

She shuddered. 'That dreadful evening; and I had so looked forward to it'.

'I meant to ask you this before', I said casually, getting up and taking our empty glasses to the drinks table. 'It's always puzzled me why you invited me to your apartment that night, Su-mi'.

'But I've told you – to meet my fiancé'.

I crossed the room and looked down at her. 'He's almost psychopathically jealous. I should have thought the one thing you'd have wanted to avoid would be introducing a man you'd met on holiday'.

'That's the whole point', she said earnestly. 'I'd mentioned meeting you. If I hadn't asked you to the apartment after that, he'd have suspected there'd been something more between us than just a casual acquaintance'.

'I suppose he would', I had to agree.

She stood up, smoothing the jacket of her suit. 'I'm so glad we've had this talk, Han-sang. I hated to feel I couldn't trust you'.

'And you do now?'

Her eyes misted. 'You know I do', she said softly.

She was very close to me now; her face raised to mine. As I involuntarily made a movement towards her she placed a restraining hand against my chest. 'Han-sang, why did you ask me about the invitation to my apartment?'

I smiled at her. 'You've explained it all now, Su-mi'.

'And you're not suspicious of me?'

I wasn't thinking very clearly at that instant. 'Suspicious of you? Of course not. Why should I be?'

Her hand dropped to her side, and she sighed deeply. 'Everyone else seems to be'.

Looking down at the head dropped so close to my chin I had an almost overwhelming desire to stroke the jet-black hair. Then I remembered Im. I stepped away from her. 'You mustn't keep dear So-ra waiting', I said, with a light laugh.

She looked at me for a moment, rather dazedly, then smiled. 'Thanks, Han-sang. I'd completely forgotten her'.

The spell was broken and, as I ushered her out into the hall, we were two normal people exchanging conventional phrases after a social drink.

When I came back to the living room Im was squirting soda on to a whisky. 'Sorry to abuse your hospitality, but my tongue was sticking to the roof of my mouth'.

'Mine too', I said, with a laugh I hoped didn't sound too embarrassed. 'Her refusing another drink rather cramped my style'.

'So I gathered', he said dryly. 'Oh, by the way, here's the auction catalogue you wanted'. Taking it from his jacket pocket, he handed it to me.

I flipped the pages. 'Let's hope my hunch pays off'. I strolled over to the drinks table. 'Well, what did you make of it all?'

He was in the middle of the room, his feet planted wide. 'Can I give you a piece of advice, Moon?'

Unstopping the whisky decanter, I said: 'About not mixing business with other things?'

'Something like that'.

Why the hell must he always act the schoolmaster, I thought irritably, giving a stiffer than usual whisky. I lifted the glass, smiling at him.

He said, quietly: 'But you can take care of yourself, can't you, Moon?'

'I can take care of myself, Im'.

'A lot of other people have said the same thing'. He tossed back his whisky. 'Perhaps Chang Chu-chu said it. Who knows?'

Chapter twenty

After I had breakfasted next morning I lit a cigarette and went over the auction catalogue, page by page. I could find nothing, which might conceal a cryptic message; no underlined letters that could have been the basis of a code. It was just like any other auction listing.

I skimmed through the lots. Furniture, Porcelain, bronze, Gold jewels, Jade carvings and other exotic artefacts calculated to make the collectors fingers itch. If I were an art collector I would have been in heaven – if I were a collector. I wasn't; but I had a hunch that I could display the catalogue where the Chinese dragon on the cover would not go unseen.

As Mrs Kim was clearing away the breakfast things she said, in an innocent tone intended to conceal her undying curiosity. 'Was that lady who was here last night the one who phoned in the morning, Mr Moon?'

'You should keep up with the times, Mrs Kim. Men use perfume these days'. Then I did a quick double-take. 'Did she leave her name?'

Mrs Kim came down from the heights of indignation reluctantly. 'All she said was, were you in? When I said, no you wasn't, she hung up quick'. Mrs Kim smiled innocently. 'Could it have been a woman policeman, do you suppose, sir?'

I said yes, it was the one who was teaching me Judo. We decided to call it a draw; and I went into the mews, got my car out of the garage, and drove to World Cup Buk-ro 48-gil.

After parking my car I walked quickly to *The Golden Sun* tea shop.

Time might almost have stood still since I'd been there last. The sole customer, at the same table she'd occupied previously, in the green dress she'd worn the day before, was Kong So-ra. The one difference was that, instead of the string-haired girl, a man now stood behind the counter. He was short and thick-set, with black hair growing low on his forehead. His eyes were deep-set under bushy eyebrows. His heavy jowl was already showing 'five o'clock shadow'.

As I came in Kong So-ra called across to him: 'My bill, please, Jaw-long'.

I went over to her table, and stood with my hand hesitating on the back of a chair. 'Good morning, Miss Kong'.

She glanced guardedly up at me. 'Oh, good morning', she drawled, assuming what, for her, was a friendly smile. 'Won't you sit down?'

As I pulled out the chair Jaw-long lumbered over from the bar. 'Nice weather again today, Miss Kong', he said, with a heavy Chinese accent. Although I didn't look up at him I knew from the direction of his voice that he was scrutinising me. He was pawing up the money for the bill with a hairy hand when I looked up at him.

'A green tea please', I said, suddenly catching his gaze. 'Won't you join me, Miss Kong?'

'I'm just going', she said, snapping her handbag shut. 'But thanks all the same'.

After another speculative glance at me Jaw-long moved back to the counter.

'Su-mi not coming in today?' I said, turning to Kong.

'I'm afraid not. We're frantically busy'. She pulled on a glove. 'And to crown everything, the police have been to the shop again this morning'.

I clicked my tongue sympathetically.

'I've read murder cases, police investigations, and people being questioned', she went on. 'But never in my wildest dreams did I imagine it would be anything like this!' She gave an expressive shrug. 'That Inspector person is like a terrier. I'm sure he'd use any sort of torture if he could get the right answers. As though I'd know whether Doyle had any appointments with a man called Choi Jong-hoon!'

I scratched my chin. 'Was that the name? I thought it was Bae Yeon-seok'.

'Oh, Bae - was that it?' She looked at me blankly for a moment. 'The name doesn't mean a thing to me. And why should it? I'd never heard of Doyle until I saw his name in the paper; so how on earth am I supposed to know he had an appointment with ...'

'Bae', I suggested quietly.

'Oh, I couldn't care less what his name is'. She rose. 'I really must go now'.

I stood up. 'By the way, Miss Kong – you didn't phone my yesterday morning, by any chance?'

'What an extraordinary question', she drawled, eyeing me almost insolently. 'I scarcely know you'.

'Nor I you', I said with a smile. 'Whoever it was didn't leave a name. My cleaner took the call, but she didn't recognise the voice ... I happen to have a rather keen ear for voices, Miss Kong', I added, looking at her steadily, and mentally recalling the first time I'd listened to her penetrating voice on the telephone in Su-mi's flat. 'Yes, I've a very good memory for voices'.

She held my gaze for a second or two, without answering. Then, with a hard little smile, she said: 'I mustn't keep Su-mi waiting, Mr Moon'. She exchanged a glance with Jaw-long, then sauntered out of the tea shop.

I sat down and cautiously looked across at the man behind the counter. He had drawn my tea from the urn and was about to bring it over to me. I took the auction catalogue from my pocket, opened it, and turned the pages slowly, as though absorbed in the selection of antiques for my collection.

As he placed the tea in front of me I held the catalogue so that the brightly coloured cover was directly under his eyes.

'Thanks', I said, acknowledging the tea with an upward glance.

His eyes flickered from the catalogue to my face; then a hairy hand rose to his jowl, fingering it thoughtfully.

'Are you interested in antiques, Jaw-long?' I asked.

His hand continued to stroke his jowl. 'When did you arrive?'

'You haven't answered my question', I said coolly.

He gave me another long, speculative look, then nodded, more to himself than to me, and returned to the bar. He peered beneath the counter, took something out, returned without a word, and slid it on to the table in front of me. It was an auction catalogue exactly like Doyle's ...

A stubby finger reached across and pointed at a sticker on the cover. 'This is a new one', Jaw-long said heavily. 'It's up to date'.

My eyes focused on the sticker. *Chinese Fine Art Auctions*, it read. *Seoul Agents: No Jung-jong*.

Chapter twenty-one

When I left *The Golden Sun*, with the two auction catalogues tucked under my arm, I saw a newspaper stall and headed towards it, only to find that I hadn't any change in my pocket. The vendor looked up at me.

'I wonder if you have change for a twenty pound note?' I asked, handing the barrow boy the note. 'I'm out of change for the paper'.

'Anythin' to oblige, guv!' he said with an engaging grin. 'There we are!'

As I thanked him he looked round cautiously, then said in a low voice: 'Want to do yerself a bit of good, guv? Then don't forget 'Bronze Dragon'. It's four-nineteen. Best tip of the week, guv!'

I smiled and nodded my head, then walked off fishing my cellphone from my pocket. I looked up No Jung-jong in the directory, and selected his number. After listening for a full minute to the burring at the other end I hung up, and as it was almost noon I decided to have a snack lunch before phoning No Jung-jong again.

As I wondered off the barrow boy was grinning broadly. 'Don't forget – Bronze Dragon in the four-nineteen, guv!' he reminded me. 'You're on a winner there!'

I flipped my hand in acknowledgement, then paused, biting my lip thoughtfully. I hadn't noticed it before, but now I thought there was something vaguely familiar about the trim, fair-haired figure. I shrugged; he was just a rather sprucer than normal barrow boy.

I returned to my car, drove into town, and parked in a side street, beside a bar, which I believe was called *The Rice Farmer* – an old collector's-piece, with enormous wall mirrors and teak fittings. Here I had a bowl of rice and steamed

fish, and a glass of soju at the bar counter. I'd bought a midday paper from the newspaper seller outside and I scanned it for any further developments in the Doyle murder. All I found was a buried news item, which proved no more informative than is customary when the old bill are running round in circles. Reading between the lines, it seemed that Detective-Inspector Lee Shi-hoo was up against a blank wall.

Out of curiosity I turned to the racing page. My barrow boy's 'hot tip' looked cold. No horse named Bronze Dragon was listed among the runners for the four-nineteen that afternoon.

After lunch I drove in the direction of City Hall, stopping twice to call No Jung-jong, but with no reply. Eventually, I decided that he must be a three-hour-lunch man.

It was five o'clock before I made contact with No Jung-jong. Then, at the first ring, the receiver was lifted and a fruity voice said: 'Chinese Art Auctioneers'.

'No Jung-jong speaking', the voice said when I asked for him by name.

I tried to sound convincing as I said: 'I'm interested in buying some Chinese antiques, Mr No. Your firm was recommended by a friend of mine'.

There was a pause of a few seconds at the other end, then the voice asked guardedly: 'What's the name of this friend?'

'Bae Yeon-seok', I said, my hand tightening on the receiver.

I could almost sense No Jung-jong's nod as he responded at once, quite matter-of-factly, with: 'I see. And what's your name?'

I glanced at the newspaper beside me and gave the first name that met my eye. 'Kim – Kim Sang-woo. You don't know me'.

'No, I don't'. No Jung-jong paused, then asked: 'Have you got a catalogue?'

'Of course', I said easily. 'Otherwise I couldn't have phoned you'.

'That's right'. He appeared to have swallowed my story. 'I'll be in my office for the next half-hour', he said decisively. 'And don't forget to bring the catalogue with you'.

I assured him I shouldn't forget, and rang off.

There wasn't much sense in picking up my car and then touring the streets of Seoul for a parking space. So I walked briskly through the side-streets and was outside No Jung-jong's office building in three minutes.

It was not exactly impressive. A hand-painted sign in the entrance informed me that of his presence on the first floor. I climbed the wooden stairs and went down a dismal passage until I came to a glass-panelled door marked 'Chinese Art Auctioneers. Seoul and Shanghai'.

At my knock the fruity voice I'd heard on the telephone called: 'Come in'.

Chapter twenty-two

I opened the door and entered a room carpeted with much-worn linoleum. The damp-streaked walls were partly concealed by faded posters depicting China, and, slightly askew, a calendar advertising a fine art convention. The furniture consisted of one wooden-backed visitor's-chair, a filing cabinet, and a desk. Behind this sat a middle-aged man, eating rice cake with obvious relish. His face was as round and colourless as a December full moon; his black hair was parted just above one ear and sparsely combed across a bald dome.

'Mr Kim Sang-woo?' he inquired, through a mouth full of cake. I nodded, and he waved the cake at the wooden-backed chair. 'Have you got the catalogue?'

I'd taken the precaution of leaving Doyle's copy in my car. I now produced the one Jaw-long had given me and put it on the desk. No Jung-jong pulled it over to him, scrutinised the sticker, then looked over at me inquiringly.

For a moment I was nonplussed, realising that what I said next was probably the pay-off. I decided to throw the ball back into his court. 'I haven't quite made up my mind about which antiques ...' I broke off with a slight smile.

Apparently I'd said the right thing. No Jung-jong nodded, took another bite at his rice cake, and with a splutter of crumbs began to reel off a list of names. 'Well, we've got traditional furniture, bronzes, porcelain, silks ...'

My mind flashed back to the barrow boy! With forced composure I said, 'I think I'm interested in a – Bronze Dragon'.

He gulped down the remainder of the cake and explored a tooth with his tongue while he studied my face. 'How many?'

It seemed I'd backed a winner with the first half of the barrow boy's tip – Bronze Dragon. Now I gambled that the time of the race was significant. 'Let me see ... I should say ... well, four-nineteen'.

No Jung-jong's small mouth stretched into a smile. 'All right, Mr Kim', he agreed affably. 'What would you say to joining me in a cup of green tea before we get down to business?'

What I needed at that moment was a soju. Also, I wanted to avoid answering questions. 'Thanks all the same', I said hesitantly, 'but why waste time by going out now?'

'I keep it on the premises', he replied genially, leaning back and pulling out a drawer of the filing cabinet. 'Doctor's orders. "Feed your ulcer, Mr No Jung-jong", he said. "Have a bite of something and a green tea every two hours"'. He produced two saucerless breakfast cups and a vacuum flask from the drawer and placed them on his desk. 'Hot as the devil, sweet as sin, eh, Mr Kim?' He chuckled, unscrewing the lid of the flask and pouring the steaming liquid into the cups. Passing one across to me he went on cheerfully; 'Now then, we'll get down to business'.

He took a key-ring from his pocket, selected a key, and unlocked a drawer in his desk. The palms of my hands grew damp as I watched him.

'There we are!' he said, bringing out an object and placing it on the desk beside the flask.

I had last seen its exact counterpart beside the dead body of Doyle ... No Jung-jong moved the gbrightly decorated chronometer on to his blotter and beamed at me expansively.

Chapter twenty-three

The barrow boy's tip had produced the rabbit out of the hat! Now I felt as foolish as the member of the audience who has accepted the conjurer's invitation to step onto the stage. I accepted my role as the stooge and smiled aimlessly.

Like a cloud crossing the moon, the glow faded from No Jung-jong's face. 'Well, Mr Kim ...?' he prompted.

At that instant the telephone rang. Without taking his eyes from mine he reached slowly for the receiver.

'Hello ...'.

Whoever it was at the other end wasted no time on preliminaries. I couldn't catch any of the flood of words, but I realised that the voice was a woman's. No Jung-jong listened intently, his mouth pursed, and I knew that the tense, urgent voice on the phone was warning him about me. Occasionally I thought I could detect a note in the voice, which seemed familiar.

Whilst the call lasted I assumed an air of detachment, as one does when the person one is with takes a phone call. But I knew I wouldn't get away with it.

There was a sudden click in the earpiece, and with maddening deliberation No Jung-jong replaced the receiver.

Half rising, and with every nerve alert, I mentally calculated the distance to the door.

'Just a minute, Mr Kim', No Jung-jong said menacingly. 'Or should I say ... Mr Moon?' His hand snatched open his centre drawer and a pistol was pointing at me before I had a chance to rise from the chair.

My lips were dry but I attempted a feeble smile. 'Not very efficient, are you, No Jung-jong? The safety catch is on'.

As his eyes dropped to the gun I grabbed the tea cup and flung the contents in his face. He gave a small, choking scream and, dropping the gun, clawed at his face. Sweeping the pistol from the desk to the floor, I snatched up the chronometer and ran from the room.

Chapter twenty-four

A taxi was dropping a fare as I came out of the office building. I was in it before the driver had put his flag up, and directed him back to my car.

Immediately I'd retrieved my car I drove to World Cup Buk-ro, cursing the rush-hour traffic. I wanted to catch the barrow boy before he packed up. I knew now why I'd experienced that vague sense of familiarity when I'd seen him that morning. In the moment No Jung-jong had pulled the gun on me a chain of images had flashed through my mind: looking down the muzzle of a gun; the blow on the back of my head; my recovering consciousness; the neat, fair-haired figure of a man slipping a note into my cigarette case ... I was certain now that the barrow boy and the man who had left the note were one and the same person.

Turning into World Cup Buk-ro I thought for a moment that I'd missed him. Then I spotted the barrow at the far end. I braked behind it, got out, and went up to him.

He had his back to me as I said: 'Thanks for the tip – it came off'.

He turned an unfamiliar sallow face towards me, wagging the stub of a cigarette between his lips. 'What's that, mate? Mistook me for someone else, 'ave yer?'

'Oh, I'm sorry!' I said, with a laugh. 'A bag of apples, please'.

He eyed me as though I were a drunk, decided I wasn't, put four apples in a bag, and tossed it onto the scales. 'There you go, guv'.

I took ten thousand won note out of my wallet. 'Where's the other chap who was on the barrow this morning?' I asked.

'Oh, 'im. 'E's 'aving a night orf', he said. Then he scratched his head. 'Ain't you got nothin' smaller than that?'

'You needn't bother about change', I said, waving the money at him. 'That is, if you tell me where that other man is'.

'What you take me for?' he said nastily. 'Go on -scarper!'

He came round eventually, after I'd shown him an old business card that I had in my wallet, and persuaded him that the other man was an old schoolfellow.

'Well, this chap, 'e just come up to me, see - and 'e paid for the loan of the barrow! Says 'e was an author writin' a book about barrow boys. To tell the truth, mate, I wondered what he was up to, so I kept me eye on 'im from round the corner, see. 'e don't make no move to serve no-one! Then today I see 'im givin' you the nod'. He wiped his nose with the sleeve of his jacket. 'Beats me, guv!'

'Will you be seeing him again?'

'Dunno. Might see 'im in the boozier - he's been in there the last couple o' nights ...'

'Give him this card if you do see him', I said, handing the card over with the five-pound note. 'It's got my phone number on it. Tell him to give me a ring'.

'Right - o!' He stuck the fiver in his waistcoat pocket, grinning at me. 'Cor!

The Missis won't believe a flipping word of this!'

Chapter twenty-five

As I turned out of World Cup Buk-ro I noticed a slim, angry-looking figure, waving an umbrella at the stream of occupied taxis. I pulled in to the kerb beside him.

‘Want a lift, Yun?’ I called through the open window of my car. ‘You’ll never get a taxi at this hour’.

He blinked myopically at me for a moment, then gave me one of his rare smiles. ‘Oh, it’s you, Moon. It would be jolly helpful if you could drop me off at City Hall’.

I said, untruthfully, that I was going in that direction, and reached over and unlatched the door.

‘I do appreciate this’, he said, sliding into the seat beside me. ‘What a stroke of luck you should happen to be passing’. From the rather sly way in which he said this I had the idea he was trying to pump me.

‘Yes, it is, isn’t it?’ I said innocently. ‘I came down that street to short circuit the rush-hour traffic’. I drew away from the kerb. ‘I must remember that short cut for future occasions’.

‘Yes, the taxis use it quite a bit’, he said indifferently.

My offer of a lift had not been entirely altruistic. I’d been as curious about his reason for being in World Cup Buk-ro as he had obviously been about mine. ‘Have you just come from Miss Kim’s shop?’ I asked conversationally.

'As a matter of fact, I have', he said somberly. 'I wanted to have a talk with Kim Su-mi about a visit I had from that detective this afternoon. Unfortunately, she wasn't available'.

'Bad luck', I murmured, and casually inquired what Lee Shi-hoo wanted to know this time.

'He's got it into his wooden head that I can give him some information about a man called Bae'.

'And can you?'

'No, of course I can't! Never heard of the chap'. His emphasis brought on a brief spell of asthmatic coughing. When he'd got over that, he said: 'Has he been questioning you about Bae?'

'He did ask me whether I knew him'.

Yun seemed more exasperated than ever. 'Kong So-ra tells me he's been hounding her, too. Why he should be so keen on trying to pin some knowledge of Bae Yeon-seok on to all of us defeats me'.

'All of us?' I said sharply. 'Who do you mean, exactly, Yun?'

'Well, isn't it obvious?' he said peevishly. 'You, me, Su-mi, So-ra - he doesn't trust any of us. I must say it's a fine state of affairs that I, a reputable stockbroker, should be subjected to the indignity of being cross-examined by that idiot of a policeman! And in connection with murder, of all things!'

From then until we reached City Hall I had to listen to a monologue on the impeccable life of Yun Hyeok, and when I finally said good-bye to him I found myself wondering whether Su-mi had any inkling of what she was letting herself in for.

Chapter twenty-six

Half an hour later, sitting opposite Kim Su-mi in the bar at the Koreana Hotel, I again thought how incredible it was that so glamorous a personality should be engaged to a man like Yun. It had been her idea that we should meet for a quick drink and she'd sounded anxious on the telephone.

Lighting her cigarette, I said: 'A quick drink – that's all it ever is, eh, Su-mi?'

'I'm sorry, Han-sang'. Impulsively, her hand touched mine, then was as quickly withdrawn. 'But I have to meet So-ra in half an hour, I've been out of the shop since lunch'. Her face clouded. 'That's why I wanted to see you, Han-sang – about what happened this afternoon'.

I fingered the stem of my soju glass. 'Well ...?'

'I went back to my apartment at lunch-time to change. I'd spilt some tea on the dress I was wearing. So I hurried into the apartment without paying much attention to anything. Then I noticed that some things weren't in their usual places, so I had a look over the entire apartment. It wasn't very obvious, but a drawer in a bureau wasn't quite closed; the kitchen door was open and I'm positive I closed it this morning ...' her eyes held mine. 'Han-sang, somebody has been searching my apartment'.

'Was anything stolen?' I asked tentatively.

She shook her head. 'That's what puzzles me. There was some money in a drawer, and some jewellery on my dressing table. Oh, nothing very expensive, but a thief wouldn't have ignored it'.

'It sounds as though whoever got into your apartment was looking for something', I said slowly. 'Maybe letters, or a document of some kind – does that suggest anything to you?'

'But I haven't anything of that sort that could possibly –' She caught her breath. 'You mean anything that could be used to blackmail me?'

'Oh, now, just a minute, Su-mi', I said deprecatingly. 'I wasn't implying you had anything ...'

'Of course you weren't, Han-sang', she said lightly. Then her expression changed; she said, with a frown, quite suddenly: 'Doyle was a blackmailer'.

I nearly snapped the stem of my glass in two. 'How do you know that?' I demanded.

'As soon as I was sure my apartment had been entered I thought I'd better telephone Inspector Lee Shi-hoo. He came round to the apartment, but he didn't seem particularly interested in what I had to tell him. Then, for some reason I can't fathom, he proceeded to tell me that Doyle was a blackmailer'.

I frowned. 'It's not like him to give information away'.

'He was watching me all the time in a shifty sort of way. I felt he was hinting at something connected with Doyle's blackmailing activities'. Her mouth trembled. 'I had a horrible feeling he was hinting that Doyle and I ...' She hesitated.

'Were running a blackmail racket?' Laughing, I shook my head. 'Lee's like all policemen; they always try to push you on to the defensive. What else did he tell you?'

'Ask me, you mean', she said wearily. 'He wanted to know if Doyle actually smoked cigars'.

'Very pungent cigars, from what I remember of that evening at the *Chinese Dragon*', I said casually. Then suddenly the oddity of Lee's question hit me like the blast of a furnace. 'What was he getting at? Did he give you any clue?'

'He said they'd searched Doyle's room at his hotel. Apparently they found several boxes of cigars in his suitcase. Full boxes'. She shrugged. 'I can't think why he imagined it would interest me; but he seemed to expect me to collapse or something'.

'I think you are rather letting your imagination run away with you', I said, my mind busy with Lee's motives. 'Still, I'm glad you told me all this, Su-mi', I added. 'You know you can always unload your worries about this Doyle business onto me, don't you?'

'Yes', she said softly. Her eyes dropped to her glass and she hesitated, twirling it along the table.

'Go on ...' I prompted. 'There's something on your mind'.

'Oh, well ... I was just wondering why I didn't phone Hyeok when all this happened ...'

'Well, why didn't you, Su-mi?'

'I don't know. I didn't think of it. I thought of you ...' She raised her eyes to mine. 'I just picked up the phone and found myself calling your number'.

I could almost hear Im laughing sardonically. 'Talking of Hyeok', I said, 'I met your fiancé just before you telephoned. I gave him a lift to City Hall'.

'Oh, did you?' she said sharply. 'Where did you meet him?'

'At the corner of World Cup Buk-ro 48-gil.'

'I expect he'd been to the gallery. Thank heavens I wasn't there to listen to all the boring details of how the publicity over Doyle is ruining his business. He never thinks how harassed I am!'

I said casually: 'It seems Lee had been to see him, to question him about Bae.'

'I'm getting a bit tired of that name', she murmured.

'Yun said they'd questioned Kong So-ra about him', I went on, watching her closely. 'Has she ever mentioned the name to you?'

'Only when she was telling me that Lee Shi-hoo had been asking her if she knew him'. Her forehead furrowed. 'Han-sang, you don't think So-ra does know this man Bae?'

I smiled ironically. 'If she does, she's hardly likely to confide in me.'

She couldn't repress a little smile. 'It was silly of me to say that. But in this atmosphere of suspicion one begins to doubt even one's friends'. She slid a finger across the table towards me, then abruptly withdrew it. 'You're not suspicious of me, are you, Han-sang?'

'Of course not. Why should I be?'

She didn't answer, but glanced at her wristwatch. 'Now I really must go'. Gathering her gloves and handbag, she got up. 'I hate leaving you like this, but ...'

I stood up. 'You can't manage dinner, later?'

'I'm afraid not. I'll be at So-ra's apartment until all hours'. She rested a hand on my arm. 'But if anything should occur to you about why my apartment was searched, ring me at So-ra's. You'll find her number in the book'.

I promised her I would, and accompanied her to the door.

She disappeared into the busy traffic of Seoul, and I returned to the bar.

I beckoned the waiter over, ordered another soju, and sat gathering my thoughts. It was when I took out my cigarette case again and was tapping on it reflectively that things suddenly began to add up. Su-mi's apartment must have been broken into by the same two men who had searched mine; they were obviously looking for what they'd failed to find in my apartment ... Something that could have been hidden in a doll.

I was wearing the same suit that I'd worn on the night of the murder. I felt in the ticket pocket of my jacket, and my fingers found what they wanted ... the key of Kim Su-mi's apartment ...

Chapter twenty-seven

Closing the front door, I stood for a moment in the darkness of the hallway at 824 Seoul Tower, listening. I was remembering Im Sun-taek's words: 'But you can take care of yourself, can't you, Moon? ... A lot of other people have said the same thing ... Perhaps Chang Chu-chu said it ...' it was a risk I had to take.

I crossed to the living room door and pushed it wide with a gloved hand. I wasn't going to be caught a second time if Lee should have any reason to look for fingerprints again. The room was in darkness, the heavy curtains already drawn across the window. In the light from my pocket torch the chairs and sofa yawned at me vacantly.

I went quickly to the bedroom and eased the door open. An empty, pink-duveted bed; a wardrobe with its door ajar; two feathered mules nestling like love-birds on the floor; the faint, elusive fragrance of Su-mi's perfume. That was all.

I went back into the living room, and switched on the light. Then, suddenly, my mind clarified. I would try to re-enact the scene when Doyle had faced his murderer.

All my reasoning was based on two assumptions; that the aroma of the cigar smoke I'd noticed in the room on the night of the murder had more than usual significance; and that Doyle's immediate reaction to an attack had passed unnoticed by his murderer. Also, I was gambling on the chance that the previous searchers hadn't followed my own line of reasoning, in which case it was unlikely they would have found what I was looking for.

I went over to the spot where Doyle's body had lain, took a cigarette from my case, and put it in my mouth. Then I turned towards the door, imagining I'd suddenly realised the imminence of an attack, and acted in the instinctive manner of a man about to grapple with an assailant. I tore the cigarette from my mouth and flung it from me; and only then did I take my eyes from my imaginary adversary.

My cigarette had fallen beside a waste-paper basket. I picked up the cigarette, then examined the contents of the waste-basket. Torn envelopes and circulars were not what I was looking for, but there was nothing else. I did some weights and measures calculations. What Doyle had snatched from his lips would have carried twice the distance of a flimsy cigarette. Accordingly, I widened the radius of my search and presently came to the fireplace.

My hands were trembling as I knelt down and fumbled under the iron legs of an electric fire on the hearth. Then my fingers touched a smooth, cylindrical object. I drew it out and stood up. In my hand I held a half smoked cigar in a chunky holder. It was the holder I had last seen clamped between Doyle's teeth at the *Chinese Dragon*.

I crossed to a table, took out my breast pocket handkerchief, spread this out, and put the cigar and holder on it. Using a paper-knife which was lying on the table, I cut open the cigar. There was a pungent smell of stale tobacco. I shredded the leaf between my fingers, then picked up the cigar-holder, and examined it closely. It was heavily stained with nicotine, about two inches long. I'd been holding it gingerly between finger and thumb, not much relishing its intimate association with the dead Doyle, when I spotted a groove between the mouthpiece and cup. Using the thumbs and fingers of both hands this time, I unscrewed the mouthpiece. Taking a match from my pocket I prodded the obstruction in the cup of the holder ...

Two fair-sized stones, sparkling prismaticly, fell into the palm of my hand ...

Chapter twenty-eight

‘They’re diamonds, all right. I can’t value them off-hand, but you can take it from me, they’re worth a packet, Moon!’

It was the afternoon of the day following my discovery of the diamonds in Kim Su-mi’s flat. I’d tried all morning to contact Na, but neither he nor Im had been available. Now I was in the library at 40 Sejong-daero, watching Im sliding the diamonds along Na’s blotter with a long, bony finger.

‘Im was once in the diamond business’, Na said dryly. He turned to me. ‘This all ties in with certain facts we’ve managed to dig up. Our dossier on Doyle shows a past record of convictions in Europe for dealing in stolen gems. In my opinion, Doyle was acting as a courier for Bae, smuggling blood diamonds into this country. He also has a record as a blackmailer’.

I smiled. ‘Yes, I picked up that bit of information myself – from Kim Su-mi. Lee told her about Doyle. I think he was trying to find out whether she was being blackmailed by him’.

‘It’s a motive for murder’, Na said. ‘But not in this instance. Doyle was killed because someone knew he had these diamonds on him’.

‘And Bae had arranged to meet Doyle in Su-mi’s flat’, Im interjected. ‘That sticks out a mile’.

‘Which makes her one of the members of this diamond smuggling organisation’, I said, frowning. ‘I just don’t believe it! Remember I was watching her when she came into the apartment and found Doyle’s body. She was completely surprised, and obviously horrified. In fact she was in an absolute panic when she phoned the police’. I shook my head. ‘She’s as bewildered as the rest of us’.

Na waved a restraining hand as Im leaned forward in his chair. 'But remember that earlier phone call from Kong So-ra. Does Kim Su-mi still deny she's ever heard of Bae Yeon-seok?'

'She asked me today whether I thought Kong So-ra knew Bae Yeon-seok. In a way that might explain the phone call. Suppose So-ra does know Bae – is having an affair with him without realising he was mixed up in anything like this. Wouldn't that explain Miss Kim's denial of Bae – one woman protecting another?'

'It's ingenious, but it doesn't account for Doyle being found dead in Kim Su-mi's apartment'.

'No', I agreed. 'It doesn't'.

Na had been drumming his fingers on the desk, inattentively, during this conjecture. Now he pursued another line of thought: 'You say you thought you recognised the barrow boy as one of the men who raided your apartment?'

'I'm practically positive of it'.

'Are you suggesting they also broke into Miss Kim's apartment?'

'Well, someone did – we can only assume it was the same two who raided mine'.

Na nodded. 'How I see it is this: if they were in Bae's organisation, then you suggest they got wind of his meeting with Doyle, double-crossed Bae, and murdered Doyle to get the diamonds for themselves?'

Im fixed his eyes on the ceiling. 'Of course, one of the men could be Bae himself. Perhaps he lost his temper with Doyle', he suggested.

'It's possible, I grant you, Im'. Na rubbed his chin thoughtfully for a moment, then waved his hand in the direction of the three chronometers which were now standing on his desk. 'We've had these examined. They're perfectly ordinary chronometers. Just what their significance is escapes me at the moment. Any ideas, Moon?'

'It's obvious that No Jung-jong is in the Bae organisation', I said tentatively. 'He could be a fence, using his business as a cover for the buying of smuggled diamonds. The auction catalogue is a passport, as it were, to identify the seller. As an additional precaution the thief must also give the code words – in this instance, 'Bronze Dragon, four-nineteen''. I leaned forward. 'But there is a third procedure to be gone through – a procedure in some way connected with a chronometer'.

'Did this fellow No Jung-jong say anything when he produced the chronometer?' asked Na.

'Nothing at all. It seemed to be my cue to talk. I was damned relieved when his telephone rang'.

'You said the voice on the telephone sounded familiar to you?' Im said.

'I'm practically sure it was Kong So-ra's', I said. 'If so, then that puts her in the Bae organisation. And No Jung-jong will have enlightened her about you'. Na's eyes met mine. 'From now on you can expect trouble, Moon'.

'And not only from Bae's outfit', Im commented quietly. 'Lee hasn't finished with you yet, my boy. From what you've told me, he's still far from convinced that you didn't keep that appointment with Kim Su-mi on the night Doyle was murdered'.

I looked over at Na. 'Why don't I take Lee into my confidence, sir?'

Na shook his head emphatically. 'Get this quite clear, Moon. All I'm interested in is Chang Chu-chu. I want to be sure that he was a reputable agent and not mixed up in this diamond smuggling. The murder is police business. You'll have to talk your way out of that as best you can'. His eyes hardened. 'Once the police know what you're doing the newspapers may get hold of it. Then this department will be in the limelight'. He sniffed contemptuously. 'The sensational press would have a bean feast! "Korean Secret Agent involved in Doyle murder" – all that kind of stuff. There could even be questions in the Blue House ... No, Moon, you must handle this case entirely on your own'.

'All right, sir. I understood', I said. 'But if I'm on my own I must be given a free hand to handle the case in my own way'.

Na looked at me sharply. 'What do you have in mind, Moon?'

'I haven't worked out all the details yet', I said airily. 'But I think a return visit to No Jung-jong is indicated'.

Chapter twenty-nine

Back in my apartment I felt a good deal less confident than I must have appeared to Na. That I had to see No Jung-jong again was certain, for he was the obvious link in the chain that might lead me to Bae; and in order to get at the truth about Chang Chu-chu my best bet was to force a showdown with the top man in the diamond smuggling organisation. What Bae's reaction would be in such a situation I had no idea; except that it would probably be highly unpleasant. My concern at the moment was to concoct a story that would persuade No Jung-jong to pass me on to Bae. It would have to be a convincing one.

After pacing the carpet aimlessly for half an hour I gave up.

It was well after six o'clock and the light was fading. I switched on the table lamp, and as I did so my heart missed a beat. Had I turned off the light in Kim Su-mi's apartment last night? I had a nasty feeling I hadn't done so, in my excitement at finding the diamonds.

I decided to phone her. She would be almost certain to mention it if she'd found the light on when she got back the night before. I thumbed through the telephone directory to find the number of the gallery, trying as I did so to think of a pretext for ringing her. I smiled a little guiltily as I dialled the number. If Im had been there he'd have certainly made a caustic comment.

Kong So-ra answered the telephone. I told her who I was and asked to speak to Su-mi. Without replying I heard her call: 'It's the Moon man, Su-mi'.

The receiver changed hands almost immediately and I heard Su-mi speaking, almost in a whisper. 'Han-sang ... I was just about to go out and ring you'.

So the light must have been on, I thought! 'Anything important, Su-mi?' I said aloud.

'Well, yes'. She went on in rapid, low tones: 'I can't tell you now. Could you meet me this evening?'

'How about dinner tonight?'

She hesitated. 'Can you make it somewhere quiet, where we can talk?'

'Meet me at *Café Paris* ... You know it? ... It's in Yeoksam-dong ... I'll be there at seven-thirty'.

We said good-bye and I hung up. As I did so I noticed that the address pad, which I always kept beside the telephone had disappeared. It was a leather-covered pad with an alphabetical thumb index. I hadn't had occasion to use it for a couple of days, so I couldn't estimate exactly how long it had been missing. I wondered if the man I'd caught searching my bureau had slipped it into his pocket, intending to check up on my telephone list later. I recalled that the last number I'd jotted down was Kim Su-mi's. That would account for her apartment having been searched. Otherwise the names and addresses would be of no interest. Fortunately, Na's was not among them.

Then the telephone rang. Picking up the receiver, I gave my number and heard a precise voice said. 'Am I speaking to Mr Moon?'

I gripped the receiver as I recognised the voice. It was undoubtedly the man who had slipped the note into my cigarette case. 'Yes', I said.

'My name is Zhong', the precise voice continued. 'You do not know me'.

'Bronze Dragon in the four-nineteen – best tip of the week, guv!' I said, mimicking his barrow boy impersonation. Then: 'I must compliment you on your Seoul accent, Zhong'.

He laughed. 'I have picked it up in your Seoul bars'. His tone changed. 'You have given your card to my barrow boy friend. You wish to see me, perhaps?'

'Very much', I said, tenderly fingering the back of my head. 'I still have a painful recollection of our first meeting'.

'You have guessed it was me? It is as well. I can now apologise to you. We made a serious mistake about you, Mr Moon'.

'We?' I queried.

'I cannot explain the situation over the telephone. But when I do so you will realise that I, and my companion, had a legitimate reason for searching your apartment'.

'And for stealing my telephone pad?' I suggested.

'I do not understand you, Mr Moon. Nothing was taken from your apartment by us'. His tone became thoughtful. 'Yes ... I think it is very important that we meet as soon as possible. At once, perhaps?'

'I'm afraid I can't manage that. I've a dinner date for seven-thirty'.

'Ah! Where is this dinner date, please?'

I hesitated. But there was an urgency in his tone which suggested I'd be satisfying more than curiosity by meeting him that night. 'Yeoksam-dong, I answered. 'I'm dining there'.

'And the number of your car?' I shrugged, but told him.

'When you leave your friend after dinner you will drive, please, to City Hall and stop just before you come to the main door', he instructed in businesslike tones. 'I will be on the kerb there at eleven o'clock'.

'Why all the cloak and dagger stuff?' I asked irritably. 'Why can't we meet for a drink somewhere?'

'It is better that we are not seen together', he said gravely. 'I must warn you, Mr Moon, these people that we are concerned with will not hesitate at violence – or worse'.

That 'we' again. 'I'd feel more comfortable if I knew who you were, Zhong', I said sharply.

'I will set your mind at rest later, after you have dined with Miss Kim'.

'Just a minute!' I exclaimed. 'I didn't say ...'

'It was a shot in the dark, Mr Moon', he interrupted with a short laugh. 'It is as well that you are not dining with Miss Kim in her apartment. Now you will be able to enjoy your tea with peace of mind'.

'What the devil are you getting at?' I demanded heatedly.

Then I heard a gasp and the sound of splintering glass, and the clatter of the receiver falling.

'Zhong!' I called out. 'Zhong – what's happened?'

There was a strange choking sound and then a jumble of voices and a woman's scream. I kept calling, 'Hello', but there was no answer, and finally someone slammed down the receiver at the other end.

I replaced my receiver and hesitated. It would be impossible to trace the call. Perhaps the police should be notified?

Eventually I decided to take no action, as putting through an emergency call would involve me in explanations of more than passing interest to the police. I didn't want Lee to start questioning me again.

In any case, I was at a loss for an explanation of Zhong. From the little he had told me I had the impression that he was on the law and order side of the fence. And from the noises on the other end of the phone it seemed highly unlikely that he would be keeping our appointment at eleven. I glanced at my watch. I had twenty minutes to get to Yeoksam-dong.

Chapter thirty

Café Paris is a favourite restaurant of mine; so I was automatically given a corner table. The head waiter brought me a soju and handed me a menu. I tried to divert my mind from Zhong by selecting the dishes I would recommend to Su-mi. I was still rather on edge from the episode of the telephone and I didn't want her to notice it. I was expecting to have to do some clever fencing, anyway, about the light being on in her living room the previous night; I'd had the distinct impression that she'd suspected me at first of being connected with the searching of her apartment that afternoon.

Directly I saw her I knew that whatever else was scheduled for the evening it was not dinner with me. She wore her red suit and a mere wisp of a hat.

'I'm terribly sorry', she said contritely, 'but I'm afraid our dinner date's off'.

I experienced a sense of relief, which I did my best to conceal. I rose, and drew out a chair. 'At least you can spare time for a drink', I said. 'You look as though you need a tranquiliser'.

'I do, indeed', she sighed, sitting down. 'But I've no time. So-ra's waiting in my car. There's a hitch over a drum-top table we bought at Wonju. We have a customer for it, and now the auctioneer says he didn't accept our bid. So-ra can't wait to have it out with him'.

I thought it rather a late hour for a business row with an auctioneer, and said so.

'He does a lot of deals in his local at night', Kim Su-mi said indifferently, then toyed with the cutlery in front of her. 'But I simply had to see you, Han-sang. It's about my apartment. Another very odd thing has happened'.

'Oh?' I said, noncommittally.

'I have two keys to my apartment. One I keep here' – she tapped her handbag – 'the other is always in the Chinese dish on my hall table'.

To bridge the pause, which I felt to be a little too obviously pointed, I said: 'Go on ...'

'When I looked for the spare key this morning it had disappeared! I tried to phone you at once, but there was no reply'.

'Why did you phone me, Su-mi? There's nothing I could do about it'.

'Of course not, I know that, but ...' Her eyes rebuked me. 'Well, you knew about my apartment having been searched, and I thought you'd show some interest in the disappearance of my key'.

I tried to show some interest in a key, which was at that moment in a pocket of a suit in my wardrobe. 'If that key was used to get into your apartment, how would the – er – visitor have got hold of it?' I asked her.

'That's what bothers me'. She met my eyes for a long moment. 'Someone who visited my apartment in the last few days must have taken it'.

I waited for her to go on.

'There have only been four people', she continued, watching me. 'So-ra, Hyeok, that detective ... and you'.

'You're forgetting Doyle', I put in quickly. 'And his murderer'.

'Doyle was murdered –' she began; then in a startled voice: 'The murderer! Did he take the key ... and come back yesterday?'

It was a problem that I thought I'd solved until I'd had that phone call from Zhong. Now I'd readjusted my thinking. 'It's possible', I said, then threw the really loaded question at her. 'How did Doyle get into your apartment in the first place?'

She stared at me for a second, then said quietly: 'You're not suggesting that I gave him one of my keys?'

I said weakly: 'No, what I meant – but expressed it very clumsily – was that the murderer could have entered your flat by the balcony, and then when Doyle rang the door bell ...'

'Oh, Han-sang', she said wearily, 'why would Doyle be calling on me?'

'He was staying in Seoul. He could have looked you up in the phone book, decided to drop in on you ...'

She stood up. 'Isn't it the same old circle? It simply doesn't lead anywhere'. She glanced at her watch. 'Heavens, I've been here ten minutes – So-ra will be having a fit'. Her eyes softened. 'I feel an absolute beast walking out on you like this'.

'There's always another night', I suggested. 'Tomorrow perhaps?'

'I'm dining with Hyeok tomorrow night. And every other night this week I have engagements'. Suddenly her face brightened. 'I know! I'll make sure we're back from Wonju by ten. Drop in at my apartment just after. We'll have tea together'.

At that moment the patron himself came to the table, spreading his hands in consternation at her obviously imminent departure. She smiled winningly at him, and with a wave of her hand she was gone.

I reassured the patron, who was protesting that he was coming to take Madame's order personally. 'It wasn't the service', I assured him. 'Her sister's ill'.

I ordered the Korean barbeque, which merited his recommendation. But my mind was more concerned with the tea, which was to follow ... the tea at ten, in Su-mi's apartment.

Chapter thirty-one

After leaving the restaurant I found myself in an unsettled frame of mind, a mixture of frustration at Kim Su-mi's evasion, and anticipation of our next meeting. I sat in my car for some minutes, wondering how to spend the next hour or so. There were plenty of inviting bars within easy reach, but I felt that it was important to keep a clear head.

In the end I decided that I might as well go back to my apartment, just in case there should be any telephone calls before ten. I started the engine and drove slowly to the top of Yeoksam-dong. As I turned right, with a careful eye on my driving mirror for any following traffic, I caught sight of a black saloon car drawing out from the kerb. It swung round the corner close behind me. In the next road I had to pull up for the traffic lights and saw the black saloon swerve sharply in.

A couple of minutes later, however, it was only twenty yards behind me. I took advantage of the traffic flow to turn quickly down a narrow side street on my left, and when I saw the black saloon in my mirror once more, I knew I was being trailed.

As I steered carefully down the narrow street my brain whirled with speculations as to the identity of my pursuer. I tried several times to get a glimpse of the driver of the car through my mirror, but the angles seemed to be all wrong. All I could see were reflections on the windscreen.

Turning right I made the most of a clear stretch of road and passed through one set of traffic lights on red, leaving my pursuer to wait for the next change to green.

In the swirl of the thick traffic I thought I'd lost the black saloon, but it was visible in my driving mirror again. I thought of Zhong's warning: 'These people will not hesitate at violence – or worse'.

The black saloon kept a steady twenty yards behind me. I tried to figure out why they should be following me. If they'd planned some sort of attack, surely it would have been easier to wait for me in the dimly-lit street. Or didn't they know where I lived?

I glanced at the petrol gauge; there was enough in the tank to keep me going if I just drove around until I was due to meet Su-mi again. But that would only have meant being followed to her apartment. I decided that I had to shake off the black saloon once and for all.

I pulled up quickly, jumped out of the car, and dodged past the bus queue, into the subway station arcade. I ran almost to the end, then turned into the opening to the line. The lift was ascending with infuriating deliberation, and I lost patience. I darted down the steps just as a westbound train was coming in. I muttered something to the ticket collector, then rushed down the steps, three at a time. As I shot into the train the doors began to close, as if on cue. Breathless, I sank into a seat, satisfied that no one could have followed me on to that train.

Leaving the train I gave the ticket collector a shilling and went out into the street. I still regarded every black saloon suspiciously, but their drivers never glanced my way. When I came to my street I walked round to the back entrance from the square.

I entered the apartment as quietly as possible, carefully closing the door after me and putting up the catch. I flung open the living room door and waited a second before entering. I looked behind the door, then crossed to the window and drew the curtains before switching on the light. The room seemed unnaturally quiet.

When I was halfway through a cigarette I felt much more relaxed. The clock in the corner chimed nine. I blew a long stream of smoke and decided I'd go back to pick up the car.

Leaning back in my armchair I tried to work out what plans Kim Su-mi had for me at our meeting, but the heavy silence of the apartment was beginning to be unnerving. I reached over to switch on the tv, but before I could do so the doorbell rang.

In my haste to switch off the light I nearly knocked over an occasional table. Four more strides took me over to the window, where I peeped cautiously through the curtains. There in the street below was the familiar black saloon car.

The doorbell rang again.

I decided that the showdown might as well come now as later; at least I was on my home ground and fully alert. I switched on the light again and went to the

front door. My plan was to open it quietly for a few inches and stand prepared to slam it into the intruder's face.

'It's all right, sir – nothing to fear', said a familiar voice as the door opened. I pulled it wider and immediately recognised the man in the raincoat and grey hat. It was Detective Inspector Lee Shi-hoo.

Chapter thirty-two

I stepped back a pace, my hand on the catch.

'Good evening, sir. Is it convenient for me to come in?' Lee said, one eyebrow raised in a sort of amused quirk.

'Of course', I said shortly. 'Why shouldn't it be?'

He came in, taking off his hat. 'I thought perhaps, sir, you might have a visitor already'.

'This isn't my night for feminine company'. I grinned at him. 'Pity she had to miss dinner at the *Café Paris*. It was excellent. How was the food at *Park's*, Inspector?'

'I can recommend the soups, sir', he replied imperturbably.

'Sorry I had to keep you waiting so long', I said. 'Why didn't you come straight here, instead of playing cops and robbers? Rather melodramatic, following me like that, wasn't it?'

'I didn't want to miss you, Mr Moon. You might have had another appointment'.

'Well, I hadn't. And what made you trail Miss Kim to *Café Paris*?'

'Routine, sir. A body was found in her apartment in unexplained circumstances; checking on her movements is all part of our routine inquiries'.

'You mean you hope she might lead you to the murderer? Somewhat naïve, isn't it, Inspector?'

'To think that the murderer may have been a friend of hers, Mr Moon?' He gave me a derisive glance. 'How would he have got into Miss Kim's apartment if she hadn't known him?'

'By the balcony, I said simply. 'I remember you taking a look at it the morning of the murder'.

He smiled thinly. 'Yes. As a matter of fact, we finger-printed it'.

I tried to remember whether I'd touched the balustrade as I left the apartment. Lee's eyes were probing my face. To evade them I turned to the drinks table. 'What will you have, Inspector?'

'Not for me, thank you, Mr Moon'.

'Never drink on duty, eh, Inspector?'

'That's right, sir'. He twisted his hat round in his hands.

'Well, if you don't mind ...?' I said, picking up my glass.

'There are one or two questions I'd like to clear up with you, Mr Moon'.

'Oh...' I said; then, with a laugh, which I hoped didn't sound as hollow to him as it did to me: 'Is it against the rules to sit down on duty?'

He sat down, and I straddled a high-backed chair, facing him. I had an idea that if the questions became awkward I could get up and pace the room without making it look too obvious.

'Well, what's the first question?' I said easily.

'It concerns your movements on the night of the murder, sir. I think I remember your saying you were unable to keep your appointment with Miss Kim'.

I nodded. 'I'd gone down to Daegu and couldn't get back in time'.

'I see'. He closed one eye speculatively. 'What was the purpose of your visit to Daegu, sir?'

I'd already planted a plausible story in Su-mi's mind. Now once again I went into my piece about my business troubles; having gone down to Daegu looking for a job; then ducking the issue.

'I know how you felt, sir'. He nodded sympathetically when I'd finished, then looked thoughtful. 'It makes it rather awkward though, Mr Moon'. He smiled bleakly. 'I mean, there's no one with whom we can check that you were in Daegu at seven-thirty on the night of the murder'.

'You think I'm lying?' I said heatedly.

His eyes travelled across my face almost abstractedly. Without any change of expression he murmured casually: 'You've never been in the diamond trade, have you, Mr Moon?'

'The diamond trade! Of course I haven't. I told you - I, an engineer'. I rose from the chair and began the room-pacing act. 'What's behind that question, Inspector?'

'Routine, sir', he replied coolly. 'I thought perhaps that might have been what brought you and Doyle together in Shanghai. A sort of common interest in diamonds'.

'Let's get this quite clear, Inspector', I said irritably. 'I met Doyle once. With Miss Kim. I can't even remember what we talked about - but it certainly wasn't diamonds'.

He flicked a non-existent speck of dust from his hat. 'Then it will come as a surprise to you to know that Doyle dealt in blood diamonds'.

I tried to register the appropriate surprise. 'But it's unbelievable! He looked and behaved like any other American tourist'. I turned, and paced behind Lee's chair, trying to fathom what he was leading up to. At last I said: 'I'm afraid I'm not quite following the drift of all this, Inspector'.

'I was coming to that, sir. In view of what we now know about Doyle it is fairly certain that whoever murdered him was after the diamonds he was carrying'.

'You know that he was carrying diamonds at the time?' I asked innocently.

'He was in the habit of smuggling them into this country from North Korea. It's likely that he had some with him that evening'. Lee turned in his chair, facing me. 'Possibly they were hidden in that doll, Mr Moon'. I looked blank. 'Doll? What doll?'

'There was a doll in the room by the body. It was ripped open'.

I snapped my fingers. 'I remember now! He'd bought a souvenir doll in Shanghai'.

'That's the one, Mr Moon', Lee said, nodding. 'And you never saw it again after that meeting in Shanghai?'

'How could I? I never saw Doyle again'.

'You're positive about that, sir? You never saw him again, alive' – he paused heavily – 'or dead?'

'What the hell are you getting at?' I demanded furiously, coming round and glaring down at him.

'Your fingerprints, Mr Moon. We found them on the door of Miss Kim's living room'.

I laughed. 'Of course you did! I was in there the next day'. I finished my brandy. 'And, incidentally, Inspector, how do you know they were mine?'

He put a hand in his pocket. 'We checked from this, sir', he said slowly, holding out my telephone pad.

Staring at it, I said lamely: 'So you stole it that morning you were here?'

'I took the liberty, sir. Although "stole" is not the word. "Appropriated in the course of police inquiries" is a more accurate description'.

'Call it what you like!' I snapped. 'All right, you found the fingerprints I made the following day. What's the significance of that?'

'There wouldn't be any significance, sir', he said coldly, 'except that your fingerprints were among those we took on the night of the murder...' His eyes hardened. 'Would you care to explain how they got there, Mr Moon?'

My doorbell rang. It seemed that I was fated to be saved by the bell from answering awkward questions. Lee rose, with every intention, it appeared, of answering the door himself.

'Don't bother, Inspector', I said, crossing to the door. 'It may not be a man with a gun'.

It was Im. Glimpsing Lee across my shoulder his face froze. 'If you're busy, Moon ...'

I almost dragged him in by the lapels. 'Inspector Lee was just leaving, weren't you, Inspector?' I said.

Somewhat reluctantly Lee moved to the door. 'Yes, sir. But I shall be wanting to talk to you again very shortly', he said curtly.

'I'll look forward to that', I replied. 'By the way, this is Im Sun-taek ... Inspector Lee Shi-hoo'.

For a second, as they nodded a greeting, I thought I caught a look of bewilderment flash across the Inspector's face when he heard the name. Then he was saying: 'Perhaps you'd telephone me, Mr Moon, should an explanation of the matter we've been discussing occur to you'.

'I'm sure there is one, Inspector'.

He smiled wryly. 'I hope so, sir. Good night'.

'Trouble?' inquired Im, when the Inspector had gone.

'Plenty. I left my fingerprints on the inside door of Kim Su-mi's flat'.

'What of it? He knows you've been there'.

'But not before the police found Doyle's body'.

'I still don't get it. How could he check that they were your fingerprints?'

He cocked his head at me. 'You haven't a police record, have you, old boy?'

'It seems I'm getting one. Lee helped himself to my telephone pad when he was here before'. I glanced over to where he had been sitting. 'And, damn him, he's gone off with it again!'

Im whistled soundlessly. 'You've got yourself in a nasty jam, Moon. Why in hell weren't you more careful?'

'I didn't know I was going to find a body', I said testily. 'Anyway, what brings you here?'

Im took a rolled sheet of paper from his inside pocket. 'I'd like you to take a look at this'.

When I'd unrolled it I saw that it was a flashlight photograph of a man's head, propped up on pillows. His eyes were closed and his mouth hung open. He was either dead, or very near it.

'Who is it?' I asked quietly.

'A man called Zhong. He's Chinese.'

I looked, with some apprehension, more closely at the photograph, trying to associate the face with the smiling barrow boy. It was the shape of the head, the fair hair, and the prominent cheek bones which eventually convinced me. 'Yes, I recognise him. It's the man who gave me the tip from a barrow in World Cup Buk-ro'.

'That's where he was shot. In World Cup Buk-ro. While he was calling from his cell phone'.

'He was phoning my!' I said quickly. 'I knew something had happened to him at the time'. I glanced again at the photograph. 'But I didn't imagine it was anything like this'.

‘That photograph was taken in hospital twenty minutes ago. He hasn’t recovered consciousness, and I doubt whether he ever will’. Im tapped his chest, just above the heart. ‘He was hit here’.

‘Who shot him? Have they got the man?’

Im shook his head. ‘He was shot from a passing car; it got clear away’.

I handed the photograph back to Im. ‘How did you come by this?’ I inquired.

‘I’m still on this case, you know, Moon’, he replied cagily. ‘Tell me about this phone call’.

I did my best to recount every detail of the telephone call from Zhong.

‘So he gave you a warning’. Im smiled grimly. ‘Ironic, isn’t it, that a moment later it was he who was shot?’

‘But why was he shot? And by whom?’ My spine tingled as I realised these were questions to which we would have to find the answer very soon.

‘Didn’t he give you any clue as to his identity?’

‘None. Though I had the impression that he could have been working for some department such as ours. He wasn’t one of Na’s men, was he?’

Im shook his head. ‘He could have been in the Chinese undercover police, possibly tracing North Korean diamonds. Equally, he could have been in the diamond smuggling game himself. I don’t suppose Bae has cornered the entire market in stolen diamonds’.

I frowned. ‘But why should Zhong warn me that I was in danger? And give me that tip?’

Im shrugged. ‘Maybe that was just to see what you’d do’.

Suddenly I remembered Zhong’s reference to tea with Kim Su-mi. ‘Here’s a damned odd thing’, I said. ‘Zhong guessed I was having dinner with Su-mi tonight ...’

‘His guess seems to have been as good as mine’, Im murmured.

Ignoring this remark I went on: ‘But the point is, when he heard we were dining at a restaurant and not at Su-mi’s flat he said: “Then you will be able to enjoy your tea with peace of mind”’.

‘M’m ... Cryptic, to say the least’. Im paused. ‘Did you enjoy your tea?’

‘Su-mi had to call the date off – for business reasons’, I said. ‘But she has asked my to go to her apartment tonight for tea’.

He grinned at me as he helped himself to a cigarette. ‘As I said once before, you can take care of yourself, Moon. And, talking of that, what about this return visit to the antique importer?’

‘That’s already scheduled’, I said carelessly. ‘But I’ll want one or two things from you first. Sit down, Im, and I’ll tell you what they are’.

Chapter thirty-three

As I followed Kim Su-mi into the living room of her apartment I was mystified yet again that such an attractive woman should be satisfied with a neurotic hypochondriac like Yun. With her looks and figure she could have looked much further than the Stock Exchange for her life partner.

In the living room she turned to me with a swift, engaging smile, as though she were welcoming an old friend. 'Make yourself comfortable, Han-sang'.

She had changed into a black dress, plain except for a simple spray of diamonds.

Su-mi walked over to the tea tray. On it, with the cups, was a glass teapot, a spirit lamp burning beneath it.

'You don't mind waiting, do you, Han-sang? I've a think about making tea this way'.

I smiled. 'How did the brawl with the auctioneer go?'

'Trust So-ra to handle a situation like that. Of course, there were a lot of fireworks, but eventually he promised to deliver the drum-top table by ten tomorrow'.

'Never a dull moment in the antique business!' I brought out my cigarette case.

'Certainly not in ours! We had a visit from that detective just after you phoned today'.

'Lee? What's on his mind?'

I lit her cigarette and she exhaled slowly before replying: 'You, Han-sang'.

'You make that sound rather ominous'.

'In a way it is'. She gave a small sigh. 'Why must we always be discussing this wretched Doyle business?' Her eyes softened. 'There are so many other things I want to talk to you about, Han-sang'.

'Hadn't you better disperse this cloud that's hanging over my head first?'

'It's about the appointment we had on the night of the murder. Apparently Lee's not convinced that you didn't turn up'. She smiled remotely. 'It seems that now I'm suspected of loaning the key of my apartment to you'.

I waved that idea away with a deprecating flourish of my hand. 'Why should Lee fling that one at you?'

'He says he's found your fingerprints on my living room door'.

I wasn't ready at that juncture to tell her of Lee's talk with me. 'Why shouldn't he find my fingerprints in your apartment? He saw me here the morning after Doyle was killed'.

'That's what I pointed out to him'. She looked at me with a puzzled expression. 'Although he didn't actually say it, I felt all the time that he was leading up to something else; that you could have been in my apartment the night before'.

'Do you agree with him, Su-mi?' I asked quietly.

'Of course not!' she exclaimed, with an impatient gesture. 'How could you have been? You were still at Daegu when you phoned me long after seven-thirty that night'.

The telephone rang and, excusing herself, she picked up the receiver. She gave her number, then glanced over at me as the caller identified himself. 'Oh, hello, Hyeok ... Yes, I'm alone ...' She nodded her head wearily while a voice droned at the other end. 'Have you taken your tablets, Hyeok? ... Well, you must give time to act, dear'. She listened to a lengthy protest. 'All right then, Hyeok - I'll come round. In about half an hour. See you then, dear'.

With a sigh, she replaced the receiver. 'I suppose it is another of his asthma attacks. But sometimes I wonder if he doesn't play on my sympathy and make them an excuse to have me run round and fuss over him'.

I put on an expression of polite impartiality. 'One can't help feeling sorry for him, I suppose'.

She nodded, not very enthusiastically, then darted back to the table and blew out the flame beneath the teapot. 'Goodness! I almost forgot the tea!'

She sat down and began to pour it.

'Do you take sugar, Han-sang?'

My cigarette had burned down to a stub, scorching my fingers, but I couldn't risk taking my eyes from the tea just then.

'Two lumps, please'.

'Oh, dear, I was afraid you might. And I've run out of it. Do you mind having saccharine?'

I heard myself saying I didn't mind, then I let my cigarette stub drop into the ashtray as Su-mi produced a small bottle and dropped two tiny white tablets into my tea. She handed me the cup and leaned back in her chair.

'Hyeok really would have an attack if he knew you were here having tea with me'. She gave me an amused glance. 'So-ra swears he's jealous of you'.

'He's the type who'd be jealous of any man', I said, laughing. 'By the way, was So-ra there when Lee dropped in on you this afternoon?'

She nodded. 'Very much so. I had to listen to her theories on the Doyle case all the way to Wonju and back'.

'Were her theories plausible?'

She bit her lip thoughtfully before answering. 'You know So-ra can't make you out, either. She wanted to know whether you ever made a pass at me in Shanghai. When I said you certainly didn't, she took the attitude that - well, if he's not the sort of man who makes passes at engaged girls why is he running around after you now?' She lowered her voice. 'Why are you, Han-sang?'

Once again I was saved by the bell. This time it was the doorbell. She looked at me without speaking, then got up and went out into the hall. Directly I heard her opening the front door I changed my tea cup for hers.

'So-ra!' I heard Su-mi exclaim. 'Is anything wrong?'

'Don't panic', said Kong's strident voice. 'I left my cigarette case in your car, that's all'.

Su-mi was saying, 'Oh, you could have phoned me', when Kong pushed open the living room door.

Her start of surprise on seeing me was just a shade too obvious. 'You're the last person I expected to find here', she said, then turned back to Su-mi. 'I'm sorry, darling ... If I'd known, I wouldn't have barged in'.

'That's all right', Su-mi said with a forced smile. 'Did you leave your cigarette case in my car? I don't remember your using it on the way back'.

'Then I've left it on the bar of that pub in Wonju. That means it'll be stolen!'

'I expect you'll find it's in the pocket of the coat you were wearing', Su-mi said coolly. 'Now you're here you'll stay and have tea ...?'

'Darling, are you sure I'm not interrupting something?'

'I'll get another cup', Su-mi said.

Kong gave a tiny shrug and smiled at me. 'Nice to see you', she said, depositing herself in Su-mi's chair. 'Really, I feel it's very naughty of my not to have phoned first'.

'Please don't apologise', I said. 'I was just going, anyway'.

Su-mi brought another cup and saucer. 'And I have to go and see Hyeok. He's been ringing ...' She clattered the cup and saucer on the table as the phone rang again. 'Wouldn't it be just like Hyeok to want to know why I haven't dashed over right away?'

'Doesn't he ever let you off the leash, Su-mi?' Kong said, raising her eyebrows. She picked up the full tea cup in front of her, stirring it mechanically.

Presently, Su-mi replaced the receiver and came back to the table. 'He wants me to go round immediately. But I suppose I can be allowed time to drink my tea first'. She glanced down at Kong. 'Oh - you seem to have appropriated it, So-ra'.

'Oh, sorry, darling', Kong began. 'I'll pour you another ...'

I hastily sipped my own. 'Hello!' I exclaimed, watching Su-mi's face. 'There seems to have been a mix-up with the cups. This one isn't sweetened'.

'Oh, Han-sang, you must have got mine', Su-mi said. 'Never mind, I hadn't started it. Help yourself to more saccharine ...'

'No, don't bother', I said quickly. 'I must be going, anyway'.

Kim Su-mi picked up her handbag. 'Yes, well, so must I. Hyeok's so bad tempered'.

As I got up Kong said firmly. 'You're not going to drag Mr Moon off with you, Su-mi; I'm relying on him to give me a lift when I've finished my tea'.

'Oh', said Su-mi, a trifle petulantly. '...Well, you might have asked Han-sang whether he minded'. She smiled at me. 'I'll give you a ring some time tomorrow'.

'See you in the morning, darling', Kong said nonchalantly as she helped herself to a cigarette. 'And you can tell Hyeok from me that he takes you too much for granted!'

Chapter thirty-four

'That man!' Kong said when the front door had closed 'Possessive isn't the word for it!'

'Sick people usually are', I said.

'I'm always telling her she'll have an invalid on her hands if ever she does marry him. Can't you persuade her not to rush into this marriage with Hyeok?'

'Me?' I protested. 'I don't think I've known Su-mi sufficiently long to discuss her personal affairs'.

'I suppose not'. She let the smoke drift from her lips. 'Although you've discussed yours with her, I believe'.

'What exactly do you mean?'

'Well, about your business affairs. She tells me your engineering firm ran into financial difficulties'.

'I did mention something about it', I admitted. 'But I'm rather surprised that Kim Su-mi should have broadcast it'.

Kong laughed. 'Nothing like that, Mr Moon – just one girl to another'. She finished her tea. 'I suppose you'll start it up again directly you get back on your feet?'

'I suppose so', I said shortly. 'When I can lay my hands on some capital'.

'That's none too easy, I imagine'. She crossed her legs. 'By the way, did Su-mi tell you Inspector Lee Shi-hoo went to see her this afternoon?'

'She did mention it'.

'I wasn't really listening, but I couldn't help overhearing some of his questions ... He seemed very interested in that appointment you had with Su-mi'.

'On the night of the murder, you mean? I was detained in Daegu. I couldn't keep it'.

'And, of course, you couldn't have got into the apartment if you had kept it. Su-mi was detained by Hyeok – as usual'. She flicked the ash from her cigarette on to the carpet. 'You know, this fingerprint system has always fascinated me. Can they really tell the actual day on which the prints were made?'

'I should imagine you know the answer to that one', I said with a dry smile. 'What made you say that?'

'It was rather silly of me, wasn't it? Naturally, it would only be the fingerprints found on the night of the murder that would have any significance'. She raised the foot of the crossed leg, and examined the toe of her shoe rather elaborately. 'I heard Lee telling Kim Su-mi that Doyle was in the illicit diamond trade'.

'He told me that, too', I said, mentally noting that Su-mi hadn't said anything to me about that part of her conversation with Lee. Had she intended to mention it, I wondered? After all, there'd been some interruptions and it could easily have slipped her mind. Or had she deliberately concealed the information?

'I wonder if he had any diamonds on him the night he was killed?' Kong So-ra was saying. 'If he had, then the murderer must have had quite a haul, mustn't he?'

It was obvious that she was leading up to something, so I decided to play along. 'But could he have done anything with them?' I asked innocently. 'He couldn't just take blood diamonds into a jeweller's and sell them'.

'There are men who will deal in them. Doyle must have known one'.

'Then that must be the man he had the appointments with!' I exclaimed, as though suddenly enlightened. 'Bae! Now I know why Lee's been questioning me about him'.

'He's questioned us all about him – me, Su-mi, Hyeok ...' She laughed lightly. 'Oh, well, if anyone ever comes to me wanting to dispose of North Korean diamonds, that's who I'll put them on to – Bae Yeon-seok!'

'If you can find him', I said, joining in her laugh. 'The police can't'.

'That's true'. She dropped her cigarette stub into the dregs of her tea. 'So it's no use you finding any blood diamonds, Mr Moon, because you wouldn't be able to get rid of them'. She smiled ruefully. 'What a horrible thought; walking around with the potential capital to start your business up again, and not being able to do a thing about it'.

'Just hunting for a needle in a haystack', I agreed. 'I wonder what this Bae Yeon-seok looks like'.

'Like any respectable bank manager, I expect'. She stood up. 'I suppose I did rather take it for granted you'd give me a lift. Would you mind, Mr Moon?'

'No, of course not', I said. 'Where can I drop you?'

'Is Itaewon-dong all right for you?'

'It's on my way', I told her.

At the front door she paused. 'You know, I think all this trouble has made Su-mi see Hyeok in a new light. He hasn't shown a scrap of concern for all the worry she's going through'. She arched her eyebrows. 'Your sympathy has meant a great deal to Su-mi, Mr Moon. She's told me that'.

I mumbled something about a shoulder to cry on.

'Su-mi's such a sweet person ...' She smiled at me knowingly, then tapped my arm with her handbag. 'You must hurry up and get the capital you need to get on your feet again, Mr Moon'.

Chapter thirty-five

The next morning, as I wandered into the living room, Mrs Kim was standing by the telephone, duster in hand. As I entered she started to polish the telephone with unnecessary vigour. This, I knew only too well, was a cover for some seemingly innocent probing.

‘I meant to ask you, Mr Moon’, she began, ‘have you put the telephone pad away somewhere?’

I seated myself behind the tea jug. ‘It’s in my desk drawer. Did you want it for anything?’

She was slightly taken aback for a moment, but quickly recovered, and started polishing a speckles brass candlestick. ‘Did you find out who the lady was that phoned?’

Of course, it had been Su-mi; I’d remembered, some time afterwards, that she’d mentioned it when we’d met in the tea shop. But I wasn’t going to enlighten Mrs Kim on that point. I shook my head and poured myself some tea.

‘There was a police car at the top of the mews this morning when I come in’, she went on persistently. ‘I suppose they’re keeping any eye on somebody’.

I supposed they were. I was mentally cursing Lee; my plans for the morning didn’t include having fun and games evading a trailing police car. I decided it would be as well to check which end of the street, in Mrs Kim’s devious mind, was the top.

I adopted the oblique approach. 'Did you notice whether the blossom was out in the square as you came in this morning, Mrs Kim?'

It no more deceived her than a pill in a piece of meat fools a dog. 'If I was you, Mr Moon', she said, with a flick of the duster, 'I'd use the bottom end of the street today'. Then the front door bell rang and really made her day. 'Shall I say you're out, sir?' she inquired in an eager whisper.

I overcame my irritation and laughed. 'You're a treasure, Mrs Kim! Answer the door, then bring another cup and saucer'.

As I'd expected, it was Im. He came in carrying a small leather case. 'Good morning, Moon. I've brought what you wanted'.

'Splendid! You'll join me in a tea, won't you?'

He nodded, smiling. 'Talking of tea ...' he began, obviously alluding to my appointment with Su-mi the previous evening.

'Forget it!' I said. 'That was a false alarm. I switched the tea cups'. I then went on to describe what had happened. 'Kim Su-mi reacted perfectly normally. And Kong So-ra certainly showed no sign of being drugged. In fact, her mind was exceptionally active'.

'It sounds as though Zhong was just trying to throw a scare into you'.

'Seems like it', I agreed. 'Though perhaps he doesn't trust Kim Su-mi any more than you and Na do'.

Im pulled his nose. 'And you think she is to be trusted?'

'With one reservation, yes'. I changed the subject quickly. 'By the way, how is Zhong?'

'I phoned the hospital this morning. He's recovered consciousness and they think there's a good chance that he'll pull through. I'll have a talk with him this afternoon, if they'll let me'.

Mrs Kim came in with the extra cup and saucer, eyed Im covertly, obviously decided he was just a business acquaintance, and retired somewhat disappointed'.

I poured Im a tea. 'You didn't have any difficulty in persuading Na to hand over the things I asked for?'

Im opened the small case on his lap. 'He was a bit worried about the diamonds'.

'I imagined he might be. But don't worry – I shan't lose them'.

I opened the jewellery box he handed me and examined the two diamonds, which looked very impressive against their black plush background.

Im delved in the case again. 'And here's the metronome you took from No Jung-jong'. He put it on the table.

'Just what was I supposed to say when No Jung-jong produced this?' I rubbed my finger over the polished surface. 'I've a hunch that it's the key to everything we want to know'.

'Which is simply', Im said warningly, 'the problem of Chang Chu-chu. Was he the reputable person Na thinks he was? Or was he mixed up in the blood diamond racket? That's all'. He regarded me shrewdly for a moment. 'Don't get too ambitious, Moon'.

'I'll keep that in mind, Im', I replied, not altogether sincerely. I was too deeply involved in a personal way to be satisfied with anything less than the full answers to the side issues that had cropped up in the Chang Chu-chu case.

'And here's the other thing you wanted'. Im brought out a small black automatic and balanced it on the palm of one hand. 'Na looked down his nose when I told him you wanted a loan from the armoury'. He handed it to me, but first. 'Don't expect the department to give you a medal if you use it'.

I slipped the gun into my jacket pocket. 'For persuasive purposes only', I explained.

Im Sun-taek smiled back at me, closed the case, and snapped the locks. 'Have you decided what line you'll take with No Jung-jong?'

'My own special brand of persuasion', I said.

'Fact – or fiction?'

'Maybe a little of each', I told him.

Chapter thirty-six

On my previous visit to No Jung-jong's office I'd noticed a tea and snack bar a few yards from his building. It was frequented by the porters from the market when the bars were closed. Relying on my guess that No Jung-jong would come out at some time to fill his flask and purchase lunch, I stepped into the doorway of a warehouse facing his office block. I had half an hour's wait; then he came out with his flask tucked under one arm.

I watched him go into the tea shop, then I hurried across the street, into his office building, and swiftly along the dingy passage to his office. If he had locked his door my visit would lose an important asset – the element of surprise. But my luck held. I slid inside the room, and closed the door behind me.

I went over to No Jung-jong's chair, unwrapped the chronometer and placed it in the centre of the desk. Then I reversed the chair, straddled it, took out the pistol and laid it beside the chronometer, ready to hand.

Presently I heard heavy footsteps coming along the passage. Grunting to himself, No Jung-jong entered the room and closed the door, apparently preoccupied with the newspaper he was reading.

As he turned it was the chronometer which first caught his eye. He froze, staring at it for a moment, then his eyes slowly travelled to the gun I was pointing at him. With a crash the flask slipped from his arm to the floor.

'Good morning, Mr No Jung-jong', I said cheerfully. 'Picking a winner for the four-nineteen?'

The newspaper slid from his grasp. 'Moon!' He ran his tongue across his lips. 'What are you doing here?' His voice was hoarse, almost choked.

'Returning your chronometer', I said.

Without taking his eyes from my face he pushed the flask aside with one foot. 'Why?'

'Our last little talk ended rather abruptly; before we got around to discussing the chronometer'. I smiled. 'I thought it might be a good idea if we had a more friendly chat about it'.

'I see', he said, glaring at the gun.

'Don't get any wild ideas, No Jung-jong', I warned him, making a show of tightening my finger on the trigger. 'Not that I'd shoot to kill – but I can pick my spot at this distance'.

He winced. 'What is it you want?' he gulped at last.

'That's more like it!' I said affably, waving the gun towards the chair in front of the desk. 'Sit down'.

He slumped into the chair and put a packet of rice cakes on the desk. 'Do you mind if I eat a cake?' he asked, beginning to tear off the paper.

'Go ahead', I nodded. 'We'll skip the tea this morning'.

He looked at me sourly for a moment, obviously recalling the use to which I'd put the scalding tea at our last meeting; then he pushed the cakes across to me with a sudden gesture. 'Very nice – freshly cut'.

I shook my head. 'Now, No Jung-jong, about this chronometer. You were waiting for me to say something the other day when you produced it, weren't you?'

He picked up a cake. 'Was I?' he said eagerly. 'Then why didn't you?'

'You didn't give me much time, did you, before pulling a gun on me?'

'You never know who anyone is these days. It might have been a hold-up'. He took a large bite. 'How did I know you weren't going to stick me up then – like you're doing now, Moon?'

'Oh, it wasn't my day for carrying a gun. I hadn't any diamonds to protect then'.

He considered this for a few moments as he chewed noisily. 'You have now?' he asked tentatively.

I drew the jeweller's case from my pocket, pressed the catch, and displayed the two stones. No Jung-jong's eyes bulged.

He wiped the back of his hand across his mouth. 'May I examine them, Mr Moon?' He half rose and reached across the desk.

I kept my hand on the case and smacked his arm down with the gun. 'Keep your hands to your side of the desk, No Jung-jong!'

'Could you pass me my jeweller's eye-glass?' he begged. 'Second drawer down'. I found it and slid it over to him.

He screwed it in his eye and examined the two diamonds expertly. 'What do you want for them?' he asked eventually, taking the glass from his eye.

'Not a middle-man's price. But I'll do a deal with your boss'.

His expression changed. 'Who said I had a boss?'

'Doyle'.

He brought the half-eaten cake to his mouth, then slowly lowered it and replaced it in the packet. 'Are you a friend of Doyle's?'

'I knew him in America', I said glibly. 'We were once in business together'.

'What sort of business?'

'We won't go into details', I replied crisply. 'I lost touch with him for several years. Then I bumped into him a week ago in Shanghai. We had a night out'. I shook my head. 'Doyle never could hold his liquor. He got a bit talkative'.

No Jung-jong smoothed the sandy hair across his bald head. 'Talkative about what?'

'His present line of business. Of course, we'd been very closely associated in America, so he didn't hold much back'.

'I always said that bloody big mouth of his meant trouble!' No Jung-jong scowled down at the diamonds. 'Well, let's have it!'

'He started off by telling me he was smuggling stuff over here from the North', I said, surprised to find how easily the lies rolled out once I'd warmed up. 'After a couple more drinks he really spilled the beans. He said he had a very nice little diamond smuggling racket, and he went on to boast about the size of the organisation he was working for; and the foolproof code system they used'.

'So that's where you picked it all up', No Jung-jong muttered, obviously impressed by my carefully devised story. 'We wondered how you got on to the auction catalogue and the code words'.

'So you had a Board meeting about me, did you?' I suggested with a laugh. 'Which of the directors were present, besides you and the Chairman?'

'You're not in a bar with a drunk now, Mr Moon', No Jung-jong said. 'I'm not Doyle. So don't think you can kid me into dropping names'.

'Well, I'll drop just one name', I said. 'Bae Yeon-seok. He's the boss of your organisation'.

'Doyle!' No Jung-jong spat out the name with contempt. 'The loose-tongued bastard!' He prodded the diamonds with a fleshy finger. 'So now you're onto the set-up and you want us to buy these? We'll have to know where you got them, first'.

'I got them from Doyle'.

His jaw dropped. 'He sold them to you?'

'No'. I paused, then adopted a confidential tone. 'I'm going to be frank with you, No Jung-jong. I've an idea that Bae isn't playing quite square with you'.

'He'd better not try any tricks', he began angrily; then, more guardedly: 'What do you mean?'

'Have you ever heard of a girl called Kim Su-mi?' I asked, watching him closely. His stare, as he shook his head, was too mystified not to be genuine, so I continued. 'I met her in Shanghai. She was on friendly terms with Doyle. When I returned to Seoul she invited me to her apartment for a drink. I went to her apartment but no one answered the doorbell. Just as I was about to leave ...' I frowned at him. 'You won't believe this, No Jung-jong ...'

'Well, give me the chance', he said irritably. 'Go on ...'

'As I was turning away from the door someone slipped a key under it. I picked it up and let myself into the apartment. It was empty, except for a body lying on the floor of the living room'.

He moistened his lips. 'Doyle's?'

I nodded. 'His head was battered in. He'd been murdered. Remembering what he'd told me about being mixed up with the North Korean blood diamonds I knew his killing must be connected with it. Then I remembered that back in the States he used to smuggle heroin across the Mexican border in a cigar holder. I thought he might be using the same method to smuggle diamonds. His cigar-holder wasn't on him, but just as I was leaving the apartment I spotted it lying in the fireplace'. I pointed the gun at the diamonds on No Jung-jong's desk. 'Those were in the cigar-holder'.

No Jung-jong breathed heavily, his face flabby and moist with fear. 'You think Bae ...?'

'That's anybody's guess', I said. 'But if he did, he didn't get the diamonds'.

No Jung-jong pressed a hand to his stomach. Through an obvious spasm of pain he muttered: 'What's the next move, Moon?'

'You'll get in touch with Bae. Tell him I have the diamonds and I'm prepared to do a deal – and no questions asked. I'll be in my apartment from seven o'clock tonight'. I reached over, closed the jewel case, picked it up, and put it in my pocket. 'And you might mention also that I haven't as trusting a disposition as Doyle had'.

I rose and backed to the door. 'I'm sorry to have interrupted your tea break, No Jung-jong'.

In the passage, with the door closed behind me, I dropped the gun into my pocket and hurried down to the street.

As I was looking for a taxi, a horn honked imperatively and I glanced back to see Im leaning out of the open door of his car. I went back and opened the far side door.

'The get-away car', Im explained, grinning. 'Just in case you had to take a pot at No Jung-jong and make a dash for it. I expect you need a drink now. We'll go round to the *Crescent Moon*; they should be open by this time'.

Chapter thirty-seven

'Just the place to hear about the events in No Jung-jong's office', Im said, nodding at the pillars plastered with ancient show bills 'It's got the authentic theatrical atmosphere'.

'Everything went according to plan', I said rather smugly, and went on to tell him all that had happened.

When I'd finished he sipped his soju thoughtfully. 'A bit risky, letting him know you were in Kim Su-mi's apartment on the night of the murder, wasn't it?'

'You think he might inform the police? And have them digging into his business? Not a chance. I was curious to see what it would stir up, apart from any reaction from Bae. If I'm right, and it was Kong So-ra's voice I heard on No Jung-jong's telephone, he's certain to pass everything on to her. And it also gave me an opportunity to try out Kim Su-mi's name on him'.

'Was there any reaction?'

'None. I'm positive he'd never heard her name before'.

'That must have given you a nice, warm glow', Im said with a smile. 'Incidentally, what do you intend to do if Bae does come round to your apartment tonight?'

'From the hints I threw out to No Jung-jong about my adventures with Doyle in America, Bae will assume he's dealing with a crook', I said, doing some quick thinking out loud. 'So I can talk quite freely. My idea is to mention Chang Chu-chu's name as a man who'd bought North Korean diamonds from me. How Bae reacts to that should definitely either prove that Chang was working for Bae, or confirm Na's belief in him'.

'It all sounds very simple over a glass of soju', Im said dubiously. 'But you're up against a tough crowd, you know, Moon'. As though to emphasise his point, he added: 'I've just left one of their victims'.

'Zhong? How is he?'

'He has an even chance of pulling through – that is, if there are no complications'.

'You had a talk with him?'

'I was allowed fifteen minutes. He's a Chinese investigator. He's been on to this Bae set-up for some time. Doyle was known to be smuggling diamonds over for them, and Zhong had been trailing him for weeks. He'd followed him to Kim Su-mi's apartment on the night of the murder'.

I smiled grimly. 'He thought I was the murderer, then?'

Im nodded. 'He also concluded that you had Doyle's diamonds. Hence the search at your apartment'.

'That's understandable. But what beats me is why he should have put that note in my cigarette case to send to World Cup Buk-ro. And why tip me off to the code words?'

'It's that fatal charm of yours, Moon!' Im laughed. 'Seriously, when they found no diamonds in your apartment, and no evidence there of your being mixed up in that sort of business, they came to the conclusion you were investigating the smuggling ring. So, having got no further than No Jung-jong and come up against a brick wall themselves, they decided to let you in on what information they had, and see what happened'.

'M'm ... very big of them – though they needn't have been quite so violent', I said, rubbing the back of my head. 'Did Zhong see anyone else that night at Su-mi's apartment?'

'Nobody. But there's another way out of Seoul Tower, across the inner courtyard. So the murderer obviously came down via the balconies and left that way'.

I sipped my drink, which reminded me to ask whether Zhong had given any explanation of his odd remark about the tea.

'He said it was meant as a warning that crooks often make use of glamorous women'. He added, slyly: 'Your activities with the video-camera in Shanghai didn't go unnoticed'.

'He's definitely not my favourite detective', I said shortly. 'Is Kim Su-mi on his list of suspects?'

'Doyle stayed at her hotel. She was seen with him in Shanghai; he went to her apartment. It makes an interesting dossier'. Im glanced at me sharply. 'You're not by any chance falling for her, are you, Moon?'

'Oh, come off it, Im! The girl's engaged. And, anyway, apart from the fact that my job is to check up on her, I don't entirely trust her myself since that telephone call of Kong So-ra's'.

'And if that had some reasonable explanation?' he persisted.

'I'm always open to conviction', I grinned at him. 'By the way, how has the avuncular Im been filling in his spare-time? Have you checked up on Yun's prospects as a husband-to-be?'

'Not a hope there, Moon. He's on the Stock Exchange recommended list. His bank manager asks him out to lunch'. He finished his drink. 'Talking of food, I'll stand you lunch today; a reward for enterprise! They do you very well here'.

Chapter thirty-eight

After lunch I returned to my apartment, planning a quiet read and smoke, but I couldn't shake off a feeling of restlessness.

Of course, the seven o'clock meeting with Bae Yeon-seok wasn't exactly something to look forward to with eager anticipation. Supposing he stuck a pistol in my stomach directly I opened the door? I patted the revolver in my own pocket. 'Gun duel in Seoul apartment' would make a sensational reading in the morning's newspapers, I reflected. Mrs Kim would revel in it! That reminded me that she also had a passion for funerals ... My apartment felt as cold and lonely as the North face of the Eiger.

Su-mi, too, was disturbing me, in more ways than one. Im had pushed me into a corner with his insistent questioning. True, I hadn't known her long; yet there was a warmth and friendliness in her nature that might, if the circumstances of our meeting had been different, have developed into an intimate relationship.

The front door bell interrupted these thoughts, and I glanced at my watch. It was six o'clock. With my hand on the pistol in my pocket, I went to the front door and opened it.

Leaning on his umbrella, wheezing asthmatically, was a figure who looked about as frightening as an indignant rabbit. It was Yun Hyeok.

'There you are, Moon!' he said, his absurd moustache bristling. 'I must see you on a matter of great importance'.

I took my hand off the butt of the gun, unable to repress an amused smile.

'And I'd prefer to discuss it in private'.

'Come on in then', I invited, standing back.

He strode past me into the living room, and I followed.

'Sit down and try to relax – or you'll bring on one of your attacks', I said.

'I would rather remain standing', he said pompously, planting himself in the middle of the room, his bowler hat pressed to the handle of his umbrella. Then he raised the umbrella and waved it at me. 'I'll come straight to the point; are you having an affair with Su-mi?'

'Am I *what*? Now just a minute ...'

Are you having an affair with her, Moon?'

I dodged the ferrule of the umbrella as he advanced a step towards me. The eyes behind the glasses had a near maniacal glare.

'Don't be a bloody fool, Yun. Of course I'm not!'

'That's a lie!' he fumed. 'I'm not blind. This hasn't come as a complete surprise to me, Moon'.

'What hasn't?' I suddenly gripped the pistol in my pocket.

'The breaking of our engagement'.

There was silence for some seconds. Then I heard myself ask. 'When did this happen?'

'Last night – as though you didn't know', he stammered excitedly. 'We were perfectly happy until you came on the scene, Moon'.

'Are you sure, Yun? Maybe you were. But if Kim Su-mi's broken your engagement you've only yourself to blame. You've taken her too much for granted'.

'Only myself to blame!' he exploded. 'Only myself to blame for another man taking advantage of my being ill to steal my fiancée?'

This made me really angry. 'Yun, that's not true! On the few occasions we've talked about you, Su-mi's been most sympathetic. She'd never listen to any criticism of you, I'm sure of that – she's much too loyal'.

'Breaking off an engagement isn't my idea of loyalty'. He took a further step towards me. 'Do you swear there's nothing between you and Su-mi?'

'For God's sake stop dramatising yourself!' I said with irritation. 'Neither Su-mi nor I have ever said a word you couldn't have listened to'.

He gave me a long, intense look. 'I accept your word, Moon', he said at last. Somewhat reluctantly, he added: 'Perhaps I should apologise'.

I waved the apology aside. 'That's all right – forget it, Yun'.

'I wish I could', he said, self-pityingly. Then, with a sudden change of mood, he went on in an anxious tone: 'Has Su-mi ever mentioned the name of any other man to you?'

'In the way I think you mean – no. Of course, she's mentioned various people concerned in this unfortunate business – Doyle, Lee ...'

'Bae?' he suggested nervously.

'She denies any knowledge of him', I said, wondering how much he knew.

'Isn't that significant?' His breath came in short gasps.

'Why should she deny it? I'm certain that she knows him'.

'What makes you think she knows him, Yun?'

'I called in at the gallery yesterday. Kong was on the telephone. I heard her say: 'Bae wants to meet you again. Shall I fix it for ten tomorrow morning, at *The Golden Sun*?' Directly Kong saw me she hung up'.

'How do you know she was speaking to Su-mi?' I said sharply.

'Su-mi wasn't in the shop. And the guilty way that Kong cut the conversation short convinced me it was Su-mi she was talking to'.

'Did you ask Kong who it was?'

'Naturally'. He began to pace across the room. 'Of course, she denied it. She said she was talking to a client who wanted her to fix up a meeting with an art dealer called Do Hong-ki. I made a point of dropping in at the tea shop this morning. Needless to say, neither Kong So-ra nor Su-mi put in an appearance'.

'You're positive the name she mentioned was Bae?'

'No doubt about it'. He blinked at me unhappily. 'Why do they both deny knowing Bae? Why all this secrecy? I'm positive there's another man behind it. He's responsible for Su-mi breaking our engagement. And Kong is the instigator. She's always disliked me ...'

I was getting a little tired of this emotional display. 'Why don't you face the facts, Yun?' I snapped. 'Su-mi broke off the engagement because of your selfishness. But your pride won't let you accept that; you have to pin it on to another man. First it was me – now it's Bae. And, personally, I think you only imagined it was his name you heard'.

'I hope to God you're right', he said miserably. 'I couldn't bear to lose her. Just lately she's changed ...' He broke off, fighting for breath.

Hastily I poured a brandy and put it into his hand. He was trembling violently. He muttered his thanks and, with an effort, raised the glass to his mouth.

I was wondering whether to phone for a doctor when the doorbell gave two sharp rings. I had an instant of panic! If this should be Bae the situation promised to be even more fantastic than my wild imaginings had supposed. It seemed certain that there would be at least one corpse for Mrs Kim's satisfaction; Yun was already near to collapse and it seemed unlikely that he would survive the shock of coming face to face with Bae at this moment.

As I flung open the front door a postman just managed to save himself from falling on to the mat. 'Sorry!' he said, with a sheepish grin. 'I was just having a look through the letterbox. I thought you weren't in'.

I took the letter and ripped it open as I hastened back to the living room.

Yun was standing where I had left him, looking very woebegone and staring blankly at his empty glass.

'Are you feeling any better?' I asked, with genuine sympathy.

'I'm all right now, thanks to the brandy'. He smiled at me bleakly. 'I really shouldn't let myself get so excited'.

'No ... well – try not to worry too much, Yun', I said reassuringly, taking the glass from his hand. 'I'm certain everything will be all right. Now, if you're

sure you're well enough to get back home, will you excuse me? I've just had a letter calling me away'.

'Don't worry about me. These attacks look worse than they really are'. He squared his shoulders and swung his umbrella nonchalantly. 'Not bad news, I hope?'

'No. Just a rearranged meeting'.

At the front door he apologised again, then walked briskly off down the street. I had the feeling that he was trying to impress me with his virility.

Back in the living room I re-read the letter. It said:

WILL MEET YOU ELEVEN TONIGHT PARK CAR AT NAMSAN PARK WILL LOOK
OUT FOR YOU

NO JUNG-JONG

I stuffed the letter into my pocket, picked up my untouched drink and looked at it for a long moment. Then I took it out to the kitchen and poured it down the sink.

I was going to need a very clear head for the meeting at eleven.

Chapter thirty-nine

It was ten past eleven when I arrived at the rendezvous. I was deliberately late because I wanted No Jung-jong to be first on the scene. If he were alone I'd decided that I would drive straight past him. He might well be the decoy to get me out of my car, leaving me wide open to attack; and I thought it unlikely that Bae, as head of an international organisation, would move around without a substantial bodyguard. I had my pistol with me, of course, but had no intention of using it except as a last resort. Attracting half a dozen police cars was definitely not on my agenda.

As it turned out, all my plans were wasted. No reception committee waited to greet me; the decoy was nowhere to be seen. Parking my car as close as possible to the street lights, I switched off the car lights, made sure the car doors were locked, and waited for events to catch up with me.

It was a moonless night, with a trace of mist. Ideal, in fact, for any unpleasantness. I lit a cigarette and sat back, regretting that I hadn't filled a flask with whisky. Not that I was bored; I was constantly on the alert, and each time the headlamps of a car loomed up I kept carefully out of sight. I remembered the technique they'd used on Zhong and was taking no chances.

While I was waiting I contemplated my talk with Yun. Even making allowances for his jealous imaginings, it seemed fairly likely that the name Kong So-ra had mentioned on the telephone was Bae's. What was less certain was that she'd been talking to Su-mi.

I stubbed out my third cigarette. It seemed I'd been too clever in my calculations. It looked as though No Jung-jong and his associates had decided I didn't intend to

keep the appointment and had taken themselves off before I arrived. Vaguely disappointed at having been denied any excitement I switched on the headlights and started the car.

I hadn't driven more than a few hundred yards before I saw the light of a torch being waved in the car park ahead. I slowed down, anticipating a trick. Then my headlamps caught the figure of a man leaning on a moped. He was wearing the squat hat, green jacket, and breeches of a Park Warden. I pulled up beside him, lowering the car window just sufficiently to ask what the trouble was.

'It's a man lying back there in the bushes', the Warden told me. 'He's in a bad way – otherwise I wouldn't have stopped you'.

'What is it – a hit and run case?' I said. 'He looked more like he's been beaten up, sir', the Warden said grimly. 'He needs hospital attention right away'.

I considered this for a moment, then said: 'I'll pull in to the side of the road, Warden. Then we'll go and look at him. If he's not too badly hurt perhaps I could drive him down to Seoul National University Hospital'.

When I'd moved my car I followed the Warden into the bushes, where a heavy figure lay on the turf, groaning, his head partly concealed by his arm. I stooped over him.

The dark hair that usually spanned the bald dome was hanging over his left ear. The full-moon face, with the broad nose swollen and discoloured, and the wary eyes no longer capable of using a jeweller's eye-glass, stared up at me.

'Moon ... Is that you, Moon?' His voice was little more than a whisper.

'Now don't worry, No Jung-jong – everything's going to be all right'. I tried to sound reassuring. 'We'll get you over to my car ...'

'You know him, sir?' the Warden asked incredulously. 'Funny, isn't it – you just happening to come along like that and ...'

'A lucky coincidence', I said brusquely. 'Give me a hand to lift him over to my car, will you?'

No Jung-jong was a dead weight; it was like lifting a sack of flour. But we eventually had him propped up in the back seat of my car.

'Now, sir', the Warden began in an official tone, dragging a notebook from his tunic pocket. 'It's my duty to report this to the police, so I'll have both your names and addresses, if you don't mind'.

I didn't need the groan of protest from the rear seat to tell me that I should make a quick get-away. 'My friend's an ulcer case. It may be critical. I must get him to the hospital right away', I called urgently, engaging the gears. 'The hospital will give you our names. Give them a ring later. Good night, Warden. Thanks for all your help'.

'Good man, Moon', No Jung-jong muttered as we gathered speed.

'Good for you, you mean', I called back. 'He'll have the number of my car! And save whatever breath you have left till we get back to my place'.

Chapter forty

Somewhere on the drive back No Jung-jong lost consciousness. When I parked outside my apartment he was breathing heavily, his head lolling on the back of the seat. I dashed up to my apartment, poured a half tumbler of brandy, and returned to the car.

No Jung-jong was stirring slightly. He opened the one eye, which was still functioning. 'Milk ... Moon ... milk ...' he murmured.

I managed to get him over my shoulder and carry him into my apartment. There I took off his jacket, loosened his tie, and lowered him into an armchair.

When I went out to the kitchen to get him a glass of milk and a bowl of rice I carried his jacket over my arm, and it wasn't until I'd looked through the pockets and found what I was looking for that I took it back to the living room, hung it over the back of a chair, and poured myself a large glass of soju.

'How are you feeling?' I inquired, coming over and gazing down at him.

'I'm perking up', he said. 'Thank God they didn't kick me in the stomach ...'

His face was in a mess and there was a gash in his left temple, which I judged had been caused by a lethally-aimed kick.

'Who are "they", No Jung-jong?'

'Gang of teenagers', he said unconvincingly. There was an awkward pause as he took another spoon of rice. 'This is what the doctor ordered!' he chuckled, shedding grains of rice onto the front of his crumpled shirt.

'So a gang of teenagers beat you up just for the fun of it?'

'They do that, you know'. He nodded sagely. 'But this lot were after my money. Turned out all my pockets'.

I crossed over to his jacket and took out his wallet. 'Well, they evidently missed that; and the forty thousand won inside'.

'Well, that's a stroke of luck!' he exclaimed. 'Maybe that Warden disturbed them. I wish he'd come sooner. Tomorrow I'll be so stiff I shan't be able to move'.

From his jacket pocket I took out two other articles and held them up. 'Then it looks as though you'll have to cancel this plane ticket to Vancouver. I see you're due for a flight timed ten-thirty a.m.' I tossed the ticket on to his lap.

'What the hell are you up to, going through my pockets?' he snapped, his one serviceable eye watching me apprehensively. 'And what are you doing with my passport?'

'I'm keeping it, No Jung-jong. Whether you get back it depends on how co-operative you are'.

His reaction was surly. 'I'm not going to answer any questions', he muttered. 'You're wasting your time, Moon'.

I threw the passport on to a table. 'There's one thing more in the pocket of your jacket, No Jung-jong. A gun. That might interest the ballistic experts at the lab. They've extracted the bullet from the man who was shot yesterday in World Cup Buk-ro.

'That wasn't me'. He levered himself up in the armchair, then fell back with a groan. 'I swear to God it wasn't'.

'You'll have to do better than that, No Jung-jong – otherwise I'm handing it over to the police. It is registered with them, I suppose?'

He gave a helpless sigh. 'All right', he said tonelessly. 'What is it you want to know?'

'First, why did you come to meet me with a gun in your pocket? ... Or shall I answer that?' I crossed to him, put a hand under his chin, and held up his face to mine. 'You were going to use it to force me to hand over the diamonds, weren't you? Your plan was to double-cross Bae and get out of the country – wasn't it, No Jung-jong?'

'I paid for it, Moon?' he moaned. 'They rumbled what I was up to and beat hell out of me'.

'Don't expect sympathy from me', I said harshly. 'Was Bae with them?'

'Bae's too smart for that', he said bitterly.

'But you know who Bae is!' I persisted.

He shook his head, and a spasm of pain crossed his face. 'Those bastards never tell you anything'.

'Answer my question, No Jung-jong!' I said sharply. 'Who is Bae Yeon-seok?'

'I don't know. I've never even spoken to him on the telephone. And that's the gospel truth!' He eyed me wearily. 'Are you a detective, Moon?'

'You know who I am, No Jung-jong; you were tipped off about me by telephone the first time I came to your office. We'll take it from there'. I looked down at him, thoughtfully. 'Your job in the set-up is to act as a go-between. The diamonds originate in North Korea and are smuggled over via China by people

like Doyle. To prevent any slip-up the smuggler has to identify himself before being passed on to you. Am I right?’

‘You said Doyle told you all that. Why do we need to go over it all again?’

‘I’m just verifying the facts’, I said equably. ‘Now – if I were working for Bae I should be supplied with an auction catalogue, which I’d take to *The Golden Sun*, and they’d pass me on to you?’

‘Jaw-long made a false move there’, he said angrily. ‘You’d never have got on to all this if the bloody fool hadn’t given you that catalogue’.

‘No doubt Bae will take care of him’. I nodded. ‘Now you tell me the rest’.

‘I daren’t, Moon’, he replied with a shudder. ‘You see what they’ve done to me already. Next time it’ll be ...’ he drew a hand across his throat.

‘All the more reason why you should tell me’, I said, picking up his passport from the table. ‘You’re going to need this very badly – but you’re not getting it until you’ve come through with all the information I want’.

‘For God’s sake, Moon! You’ve got to let me have that passport!’ he shifted uneasily in the chair.

‘Go on, No Jung-jong ...’

I waited and at last he responded: ‘When they’re passed on to me I reel off a list of names. Among them is the code word. If they pick that out and repeat it, together with the code number ...’

‘Bronze Dragon. Four-nineteen’, I said, with a smile.

‘How the hell you knew it beats me; it’s changed every week’. He gave me a sly look. ‘Where you came unstuck was on the last test’.

‘Ah ... the chronometer’.

‘That’s right’. He extended a finger and waved it to and fro. ‘You should have moved the finger to a certain number on the clock-face. When you didn’t do that, I knew you were a phoney’.

‘Suppose I’d known the number – what then?’

‘You’d have been passed on to somebody else’.

‘Bae?’

‘Nobody gets passed on to Bae’. He wiped his mouth with the back of his hand. ‘Give me a break, Moon. You wouldn’t want them to kill me, would you?’

‘You’d have killed me out there on Namsan Park, I said savagely. ‘Is Kong So-ra the go-between?’

He licked his lips nervously, then nodded.

‘And it was she who warned you about me on the telephone?’

He nodded again.

‘You say no one gets passed on to Bae. Does Kong So-ra settle the deal?’

‘Yes’. He plucked at the arm of the chair.

I half filled a tumbler with brandy and handed it to him. It was not entirely a gesture of solicitude, for I was relying on the brandy to loosen his tongue.

He gulped down most of it, then looked up at me contritely.

‘You’ve got me wrong, Moon. I wouldn’t have used the gun on you tonight. It was only meant as a threat’.

'I'll take your word for it', I said, dropping into a chair opposite his.

Presently, he said: 'You know something, Moon? After the way they beat me up, I'd shop them all'.

I decided this was to be the moment of truth, and that now was the time for me to ask: 'What do you know about a man called Chang Chu-chu?'

'I've heard of him', he admitted. 'He was killed in a car accident in Shanghai'.

'And the North Korean diamonds that were ...'

'Chang Chu-chu knew nothing about the diamonds', he interposed. 'They were hidden in a chronometer that Chang was carrying, but as far as he was concerned he was just delivering a birthday present to a friend of his brother's'.

'His brother?'

'That's right – Joong-ki Salinger. Joong-ki often brought diamonds over to Bae, but at that particular time he was laid up with a broken ankle, so Joong-ki hit on the idea of hiding the diamonds in the chronometer and asking Chang to deliver them'.

'But Chang never got here'.

'He was knocked down when he was on his way to the airport. The chronometer vanished. I heard that Bae was furious about the whole business. He thought Joong-ki was double-crossing him. He put the pressure on the poor devil, and Joong-ki finished up by killing himself'.

'How do you think Doyle got hold of the missing diamonds?'

No Jung-jong shrugged. 'He must have known Chang Chu-chu was carrying them. Maybe Joong-ki told him. Doyle probably decided to follow Chang and wait for his chance to knock off the chronometer. Anyhow, he came over here and tried to do a deal with Bae ... You know what happened'.

This sounded remarkably like the answer to Na's problem. But I still persisted.

'Kim Su-mi was driving the car that killed Chang Chu-chu. Now, tell me what you know about her'.

'I told you before, Moon – the name means nothing to me. But knowing names isn't encouraged in Bae's outfit. I know Kong So-ra's because I have to contact her when someone comes into my office with a packet of blood diamonds. As a cover she runs a gallery'.

'With Kim Su-mi', I said, more to myself than to No Jung-jong.

'Doyle was murdered in Kim Su-mi's apartment, wasn't he?'

No Jung-jong scratched his head. 'Bae suspected Doyle of selling diamonds to some other set-up. If you ask me, that's why Doyle was murdered'.

'By Bae, personally?'

'Possibly'.

'Did you pass on the word that I wanted to do a deal with him?'

'Yes, through Kong So-ra. I don't know what made him suspect I was up to something. I told Kong you'd be bringing the diamonds'.

'Strange that Bae didn't set his gang of thugs on to me, then'.

‘That’s what I thought. You had a lucky break there, Moon. But they’ll catch up with you before long. You watch your step, Mister – you wouldn’t want to finish up like Doyle, would you?’

‘You can say that again!’

‘Well’, he said after a pause, ‘do I get my passport?’

The telephone rang. I picked up the receiver, watching No Jung-jong as a female voice drawled in my ear. ‘Oh, Mr Moon – this is Kong So-ra. I’d very much like to see you ... Could you be at *The Golden Sun* at ten o’clock tomorrow morning?’

‘I think I can manage that, Miss Kong’.

She cut in on me hastily: ‘Don’t mention this to anyone, Mr Moon – particularly Su-mi. Ten tomorrow, then. That’s a date’.

As I replaced the receiver No Jung-jong said: ‘What did she want?’

‘She wants to see me’.

‘What did I tell you!’ he said knowingly. ‘Your number’s in the frame, Moon! I’ve warned you ... Well – what about my passport?’

‘It’s all your’, I said, pushing it across the table towards him.

He picked it up and slipped it into his hip pocket. ‘And would you do me a favour?’ he asked. ‘Phone for a taxi. I’ll never make it to the subway’.

I dialled the taxi firm.

‘That’s oaky, No Jung-jong’, I said presently, ‘It’ll be here in five minutes. I should have a hot bath and a couple of aspirin tonight. And be sure you catch that plane tomorrow morning’.

‘You can bet on it!’ He lifted his jacket from the chair, groaning as he tried to put it on. ‘Could you give me a hand?’

As I helped him, I took the pistol from the jacket pocket. It was .38 automatic. ‘I wouldn’t be caught landing in Vancouver with this, if I were you, No Jung-jong. I’m told the Canadian police can be pretty rough with gunmen’.

‘You’re welcome to it. And good luck to you, Moon. No hard feelings, I hope’.

‘You’re an optimist’, I said, steering him to the door. ‘There’s your taxi now’.

Chapter forty-one

As I was leaving my apartment the next morning I walked straight into Inspector Lee Shi-hoo.

'I'd just like a word with you, sir?' he said, edging me back into the apartment. 'I shan't keep you a moment'.

'You'd better not', I said. 'I've an appointment in twenty minutes time'.

In the living room Mrs Kim was gathering my breakfast tray. 'Would the gentleman like a cup of tea, Mr Moon?' she inquired.

I told her the visitor wasn't staying and she took the hint.

'You wouldn't be able to get rid of a wife as easily as that', Lee said enviously when Mrs Kim had gone. 'There are times when I wish I was a bachelor again, sir'.

'Why? A policeman can always find an excuse for being out late. I should think you have the best of both worlds, Inspector'.

'Odd you should mention being out late', he said, lifting an eyebrow. 'What time did you get back last night, sir?'

'So that Park Warden did get the number of my car', I said urbanely. 'Well, what is it you want to know?'

'The name of the man you said you were going to drive to the hospital'.

'He was a friend of mine. I brought him back here. All he needed was a brandy'.

'According to our information he was badly beaten up. Do you know why he was beaten up, sir?'

'If I knew that, Inspector, the problem of juvenile delinquents would be solved'.

'Yobs, eh? That's what the Park Warden thought'. He eyed me quizzically. 'Quite a coincidence his being a friend of yours, wasn't it?'

'I'm plagued with coincidences. A man is murdered, and my fingerprints turn up on the door'. I laughed. 'That's the sort of coincidence I'm always running up against'.

'I shouldn't let it happen too often, sir. It could prove awkward'.

'Such as my being suspected of murder, for instance?'

'You're not under any suspicion in the Doyle murder, Mr Moon', he informed me somewhat reluctantly. 'Although we do think you know who did it'. He studied his hat-band carefully. 'It's a serious offence to withhold evidence that could assist the police in their inquiries'.

'What makes you think I would defy the police?'

'You seem to be very friendly with the lady who occupies the apartment where the body was found, Mr Moon. Women do tend to confide in ... well, a rather special man, you know, sir'.

'I do know some of the facts of life, Inspector. But if there's any "special" man, as you so discreetly call it, in Miss Kim's life, it's the man she's engaged to'.

'I saw Mr Yun just before coming here. He tells me the engagement is broken off. I gathered he wasn't too happy about your friendship with Miss Kim'.

'That's strange ... When he was here yesterday he gave me the impression that he thought you were being rather over-zealous in your visits to her ... But I shouldn't let it worry you, Inspector'.

'I shan't', he assured me. 'Though you'd be surprised how careful a policeman has to be sometimes. A woman as attractive as Miss Kim, for instance, can lead you right up the garden path'.

'Well, I'm not a policeman ...'

'You do mix with some rather strange people', he countered, and I presumed he was referring to Im Sun-taek.

'I have many friends', I said. 'I don't always ask them how they earn their living'.

'As a policeman, it's the first thing I want to know. We're always interested in a man who has no known occupation'. He rubbed his chin. 'You fall into that category, sir'.

'For your police records I'm an engineer by profession, temporarily engaged in journalistic work. Does that satisfy you?'

'It doesn't explain why you have so much free time, Mr Moon. Or what you do with it'.

'What's all this leading up to?'

'Just this, sir. I suggest you leave police business to those who are paid to do it'.

'Why should you think I dabble in police business?' I challenged.

'You're too interested in the Doyle murder, sir. And if you'll take my advice, you'll keep clear of it. Doyle was mixed up with some unpleasant characters who can be very nasty indeed with anyone who crosses their path. I'm warning you, Mr Moon'.

'Thanks, Inspector. By the way, did you ever trace this Bae you've been questioning us about?'

'We know that Bae Yeon-seok is the head of the North Korean diamond organisation that Doyle was working for. That's as far as we've got'. He gave me a penetrating stare. 'Why did you ask that?'

'I was curious, that's all'.

‘Then I advise you to restrain your curiosity, sir’. He walked to the door, then turned. ‘And if you do happen to get to know anything more about Bae, telephone me – at once! That’s an order, Mr Moon! Otherwise you may find yourself charged with obstructing the police. I don’t care who’s behind you’, he went on emphatically, ‘I’ll make it my business to see that you get six months! I mean that’.

From the look on his face I was sure that he did.

As I took a taxi to World Cup Buk-ro I wondered just how much pull Na had with the police – and whether or not he’d use it on my behalf if it came to a showdown. I had an unpleasant feeling that he wouldn’t.

Chapter forty-two

Kong So-ra was talking to Jaw-long when I arrived at *The Golden Sun*, and as she caught sight of me the smile faded from her face. He followed her eyes and, turning quickly, hurried behind the counter.

I crossed to her table and sat down. As I did so Jaw-long left the counter and quickly locked the door, deftly switching the 'Open' sign to 'Closed'.

As I watched him I heard Kong So-ra saying: 'Would you like a tea, Mr Moon?'

'No, thank you', I replied, still keeping a wary eye on Jaw-long. Without a glance at us he returned to the counter. 'Well, what is it you want to see me about?' I asked Kong.

She dropped a lump of sugar into her strong tea, and stirred it slowly. 'I'm worried about Su-mi', she replied, with a rueful smile. 'She's broken off her engagement'.

'Why should that worry you?' I asked, making no effort to keep the sarcasm out of my voice.

'Hyeok's making such a nuisance of himself, running her nerves ragged, trying to get her to change her mind'.

'How did you expect him to take it?'

'I thought you might talk to Su-mi', she said. 'She listens to you. If you can just convince her she's done the right thing ...'

I regarded her with some amusement. 'Is that why you asked me here this morning, simply to persuade me to boost your friend's morale?'

Her eyes hardened. 'It wasn't the main reason'.

'Then why don't we come to the main reason?'

She glanced across at Jaw-long, then lowered her voice. 'I want the diamonds', she said coolly.

I effected a look of surprise. 'What diamonds?'

'Let's not play games', she replied, her tone hardening. 'I know you have the Doyle diamonds'.

I laughed incredulously. 'What the hell's got into you, Kong? Do you mean to say Doyle really was carrying diamonds?'

'You know he was'. She looked over to Jaw-long and nodded. 'All right, Jaw-long'.

He reached under the counter and produced a tape recorder, then pressed the starting switch. I recognised No Jung-jong's voice immediately.

'How much do you want for them, Moon?'

'Not a middle-man's price. But I'll do a deal with your boss'.

'Who said I had a boss?'

'Doyle'.

I listened to a little more of that familiar conversation, then Kong So-ra nodded to Jaw-long once more and he obediently switched off the tape recorder. There was a pause.

'So you didn't trust No Jung-jong', I said at last.

'Bae didn't. But then Bae Yeon-seok doesn't trust anyone. Not even me'.

'Apparently he trusts you to buy diamonds for him', I said. 'Well, Kong, how much are you prepared to pay?'

'I'm not prepared to pay anything', she said coldly. 'Just hand them over to me, and we'll consider the matter closed'.

'And supposing I don't hand them over, Kong?'

She shrugged. 'We'll simply tell the police you have them. That, coupled with the fact that your fingerprints were found in Su-mi's flat, will put you really on the spot'.

'As Doyle's murderer, you mean?' I said. 'Is that what you're trying to pin on me? Play through the rest of that tape. Then you'll hear how I happened to be in the apartment'.

'I have played it through, Han-sang. Do you think the police will swallow that story of the key being slipped under the door?'

'How would I have got in otherwise?'

'The same way Doyle got in - via the balcony'.

'And why would he go up that way?' I said incredulously. 'Somebody inside the apartment let him in'.

So Su-mi hasn't told you what really did happen?' She gave a short laugh. 'Then I'll tell you. You see, Doyle had a sideline to his diamond smuggling'.

'Blackmail?'

She nodded. 'He picked up your camera at the *Chinese Dragon*, probably accidentally. Then when he'd run the film through, he thought he had a video he could use to blackmail Su-mi. He'd discovered she had a jealous fiancé who'd be livid when he knew another man had taken such an interest in her'.

'There's a perfectly innocent explanation. Hasn't Su-mi told you?'

'About you wanting an attractive girl in your pictures of Shanghai?' She laughed again. 'Su-mi's a damn little idiot to fall for that! But to get back to Doyle – he phoned Su-mi to find out how much she'd pay for the video. She thought he was crazy and refused to buy the film from him. So he entered her apartment by way of the balcony to try and scare her into doing a deal'.

'How do you know all this?' I countered. 'Were you there at the time?'

'It's obvious. Su-mi went to Hyeok's – you followed Doyle and went in via the balcony after him. You knew he had the diamonds on him. You told No Jung-jong as much, and it's on the tape recorder, don't forget. You can't wriggle out this time'.

Im was right. It had been a mistake to tell No Jung-jong I was in the apartment that night. 'I was there', I admitted, 'but Doyle was already dead. He was murdered by whoever slipped the key to me'.

'Who'll believe that? Not the police, you can be sure. You give me the diamonds and I'll have that tape recording erased'.

'You work for Bae', I said. 'I dragged that out of No Jung-jong yesterday evening, after he'd been beaten up'. I glanced at my watch. No Jung-jong would be on his way to Vancouver by now. 'Yes', I said guiltily, 'I was in the apartment, and I answered the phone when you rang to warn Su-mi that someone was curious about Bae Yeon-seok and World Cup Buk-ro'.

She nodded. 'But the "someone" was Yun Hyeok. Don't try to pin anything on Su-mi, Han-sang. She's just a damn little fool who can't make up her mind'.

'Then why that call about Bae? If she's not mixed up with him, why the warning?'

'Bae has seen me with Kim Su-mi. He's fallen for her, and he wanted me to arrange for him to meet her here at *The Golden Sun*. Yun came into the gallery one day while Su-mi was out, and said he'd overheard her making arrangements to meet someone. That's why I phoned Su-mi on the night of the murder – to warn her that Yun was getting suspicious'.

'Tell me – did Su-mi ever meet Bae?' I asked.

'Never', she said emphatically. 'Nor does she know anything about the diamond set-up'.

Though I was far from satisfied I didn't want any further argument. 'All right, Kong', I said, 'I'll accept your explanation. But you can tell Bae that I want twelve million won for those diamonds. They're worth a great deal more, and I've no doubt he'll make a nice profit. I want twelve million, nothing less and I want it from Bae himself'.

She stared at me suspiciously. 'You wouldn't be working for the police, would you, Han-sang?'

'Does it sound like it', I retorted quickly, 'when I'm offering blood diamonds for sale? But if Bae Yeon-seok doesn't come through with twelve million I'll tip the police off about you. So you'd better do some fast talking'.

She considered this for a few minutes, then said: 'I'll try to arrange for Bae to meet you, I promise you that'. Then her mouth tightened. 'But I promise you something else. You'll get a beating up later that will make you think No Jung-jong's was fun and games with the kindergarten class'.

I made it obvious that this threat didn't bother me at all.

As I moved to the door I took Jaw-long aside.

'You'd better think up an alibi for eleven o'clock last night'. I advised. 'The police are looking for the thugs who beat up a man on Namsan Park at about that time. Before I go to meet Bae I shall write a letter to Inspector Lee Shi-hoo telling him to call in here if I should be away from my apartment for longer than twenty-four hours. You might keep that in mind, Jaw-long'.

'He can have a tea on the house', Jaw-long said threateningly. 'While he's listening to that tape recording, Mr Moon'.

'Then maybe he'll let you hear a recording of my conversation with No Jung-jong after he was beaten up last night', I said, grinning at him. 'Your name crops up in it several times ... I'll leave the "Closed" notice on the door', I said casually as I put my hand on the latch. 'I've an idea it'll be there for a long, long time. Good morning, Jaw-long'.

I went out, reflecting with some amusement that, for a Chinese, Jaw-long's command of obscene Korean was remarkable.

Chapter forty-three

Im was pacing up and down the mews when I got back. As I got out of the taxi I asked the driver to wait ten minutes, then drive me to Gangnam.

'Bet you a drink I know the address', Im said, at my elbow. 'It'll be 824 Seoul Tower, driver'.

'That wasn't funny, Im Sun-taek', I said irritably, as we went into my apartment.

'Moon, the job you were assigned to do is completed', Im said firmly. 'Why chase around after Kim Su-mi, trying to solve a murder that's no concern of yours?'

'She's invited me round to her apartment for lunch. Do I have to ask Na's permission?'

'He's in the mood to say "yes" to anything you ask him. As a matter of fact, that's why I've called. He wants me to pass on his congratulations for the way you've handled the Chang case. But now that we know Chang was innocent of any connection with Bae, the case is closed'.

'Not so far as I'm concerned', I said. 'In the engineering trade we learn to see the job through. And I shan't have finished this one until I've found out who Bae Yeon-seok is'.

'Very noble sentiments, Moon. But I'm afraid they don't impress me'.

'Exactly what do you mean by that, Im?' I said angrily.

He shook his head reproachfully. 'Am I right in thinking you're trying to prove that Kim Su-mi had nothing to do with the murder of Doyle?'

'What if I am?' I said, throwing my hat into a chair. 'Is there anything against helping a girl out of a bloody awkward situation?'

'And if you establish she's the sweet, innocent thing that you imagine, what then? What sort of reward are you expecting, eh?'

'Your trouble is, you're a romantic, Im', I said testily.

'My trouble is, I'm just a cynic who likes to collect his bets when he wins'.

'All right, Im', I said. 'Help yourself to a drink'.

He did so, then looked up at me and said seriously: 'You're on dangerous ground, you know, Moon'.

'I know', I said. 'And I'm seeing this thing through, Im. I'm making an appointment to see Bae, and I'm hoping to sell him those diamonds for twelve million won'.

He gave a long, soft whistle. 'I suppose you know – quite apart from the fact that the diamonds don't belong to you – that dealing in blood diamonds is a criminal offence? Are you asking me to compound a felony by giving you the go-ahead?'

'I'm playing the cards my own way', I said airily. 'All I want to do is to meet Bae; the diamonds are only a bait. My aim is to find Doyle's murderer'. I went on, not very convincingly: 'And everything points to it being Bae. When that elusive individual is behind bars I'll call it a day on the Chang case'.

'Better retire from this case on your laurels', advised Im. 'You're Na's blue-eyed boy at the moment'.

'Unfinished business never did satisfy me', I said obstinately. 'Anyway, I'm curious to know who Bae is'.

'You can let me know when and where you're meeting him, Moon', Im said dryly. 'Zhong wasn't so well when I phoned the hospital this morning. He's pretty weak'.

'That's another reason for bringing Bae to justice', I said vehemently. 'All right. I promise to let you know where and when the meeting is to be. Does that satisfy you?'

'It may save me having to dig into my pocket for a subscription to a wreath!'

My taxi driver was stamping up and down the street when I came out of the building a few minutes later.

'Jump in, guv!' he said, and we drove off swiftly, leaving Im staring after me with a resigned expression.

At Seoul Tower I paid off the taxi and went up in the lift to the eighth floor.

When I rang the bell, Kim Su-mi opened the door and seemed relieved to see me. 'So-ra's here', she said, 'And Hyeok's just phoned. He's become a nightmare stalker'.

'About your breaking off the engagement?' I queried sympathetically.

'So he's been to see you?' Su-mi said, leading the way into the living room.

'He's been to see me all right!' I ejaculated. 'He's practically accused me of being the man responsible'.

I nodded to Kong So-ra, who was sprawled in an easy chair. She gave me a knowing look.

The telephone rang, and Su-mi made a gesture of impatience. 'That's probably him. I'll take it in my bedroom, if you don't mind, Han-sang'.

I nodded understandingly, and she went into the bedroom.

Kong looked after her, then turned to me. 'I've arranged the meeting with Bae Yeon-seok for tonight'.

'So he's prepared to do a deal?'

'He's agreed to your price. He'll meet you at Number 418 Jayu Court'.

I pulled out my diary. 'Just a minute, I'll make a note of that', I said, remembering Im' advise about jotting down addresses.

'And come alone', Kong added quickly. 'If there's anyone with you the deal is off'.

'I'll come alone', I reassured her.

'Bae will be watching to make sure of that. You can't miss the apartments. It has a neon sign outside'. She took an electronic key from her handbag and handed it to me. 'Just let yourself in. It's empty, so you won't be disturbed ... '

I regarded her thoughtfully. 'What assurance have I that Bae will hand over the money, or that I'll come out of that apartment alive, for that matter?' I asked.

'You haven't any assurance', she said smoothly. 'But presumably you thought of that contingency when you asked for this meeting'.

I smiled and nodded. 'When I get back to my apartment I'm going to write a letter. I shall address it to Inspector Lee Shi-hoo, and hand it over to my lawyer with very definite instructions. I'm sure I don't have to tell you what those instructions will be, Kong. If anything happens to me tonight, that letter will be delivered to City Hall tomorrow morning. You might pass on that information to Kong'.

'I will'. She laughed. 'But I think you're in for a surprise, Han-sang'.

'Maybe Bae is due for a surprise himself', I suggested, pocketing the key. 'What time do I see him?'

'At midnight'. She glanced at her wristwatch. 'And that reminds me, I have an appointment in ten minutes. Do apologise to Su-mi for me'.

A few minutes later Su-mi came into the living room. She nodded without speaking when I told her that Kong had left; she seemed depressed, and sank into an easy chair.

'Hyeok is driving me frantic', she said presently. 'He's threatening to kill himself, among other things'.

'Oh, he'll get over it. But you must be quite firm and refuse to see him'. I leaned back in my chair. 'Incidentally, after first accusing me of having an affair with you, he switched the blame on to the man called Bae Yeon-seok. I tried to tell him you didn't know anyone of that name. You don't – do you, Su-mi?'

'No, I don't', she said, hesitating, her eyes on my face. 'I don't know him, but ... well, you see, Bae is a friend of Kong's, and I thought if I told Lee that ... well ... ' She broke off with a little shrug.

'Go on ...'

'I thought the police would be sure to think she had some connection with Doyle.'

'And had she any connection with Doyle?' I persisted.

'No. No, I'm sure she hadn't', Su-mi said with conviction.

'Have you known Kong long?' I asked her.

'Quite a while'. She locked her hands behind her head and half closed her eyes. 'Hyeok introduced us, as a matter of fact'.

'Did you know anything about her before you met?'

'Not much', she said with reluctance. 'She knew a lot of people with money who were interested in art and antiques. So, naturally, I thought she would be quite an asset as a partner in my business'. She caught my eye and said: 'She might be useful to you if you're needing some capital to start up your business again. Why don't you have a talk with her?'

'I'd need twelve thousand', I said dubiously. 'That's quite a lot of money, if you haven't any security to offer'.

'I suppose it is', she said. 'Haven't you any security?'

I shook my head and gently brought the conversation back to Bae. 'Did Doyle ever mention Bae to you?' I inquired. Then I added, suddenly: 'You know that Doyle was dealing in North Korean diamonds, don't you, Su-mi?'

She looked startled. 'No ... No, I didn't know', she said quietly. 'Lee said he was a blackmailer, but I didn't think ...'

I wanted to believe her. Kong So-ra must have been lying when she'd told me Su-mi knew about Doyle's other activities; she'd obviously used it as an excuse to introduce the subject of the diamonds.

'You're not trying to warn me against Kong So-ra, are you, Han-sang?' she said anxiously. 'I've always trusted her - I'd hate to think she was mixed up in anything like that'.

'No, I didn't mean that', I said hastily. 'But Kong knowing Bae, and Lee being so obviously suspicious of him - well, it made me curious about her background'.

'Really, you're as bad as Hyeok!' she protested. 'He's always warning me not to trust her'.

'There's another possibility, Su-mi. Do you think Doyle came here that night to try to blackmail you?'

'Blackmail me! But how could he? There was nothing he could blackmail me about'.

'There was the video they found on the memory card in his pocket - the film I took of you in Shanghai. Yun might have been jealous if he'd known I was following you around'.

'I must say it did look as though you had more than a casual interest in me, Han-sang', she admitted, smiling. She sat up in her chair. 'But how did Doyle get hold of that video? I remember you telling the Inspector you lost it somewhere. Doyle must have stolen it'. She stood up, with a despairing gesture. 'Oh, I can't bear any more of this. Ever since that car accident I've had a feeling I was being followed. There was a man in Shanghai who followed me everywhere.'

Wherever I went I'd see him - in museums, art galleries ... Then you - when you were taking pictures of me - and then Doyle being murdered in my apartment - and this constant questioning by that detective ...'

Impulsively, I put my hand on her shoulder. 'Tell me the truth, Su-mi; have you ever met Bae?' I asked gently. She raised her head and met my eyes without flinching.

'Bae means nothing to me - nothing at all, Han-sang. Can't you understand that?'

Reassured, I smiled down at her. 'I'm meeting Bae tonight. Kong has arranged it'.

She shook her head. 'You mustn't keep that appointment. I'm sure something dreadful will happen'.

'What makes you say that?' I asked sharply.

'I just feel it', she said miserably. 'Kong So-ra has some object in all this. I don't know what it is. But it's dreadful to feel oneself surrounded by all this suspicion ... Han-sang, I just have to get away for a bit. I have a cottage on Jeju Island - overlooking the harbour. It's so quiet there'. She smiled up at me. 'Can you sail a boat, Han-sang?'

I nodded. 'I used to', I said. 'I used to go to the coast sometimes when I had a lot of business problems. Somehow, in a boat my worries didn't seem quite so important ...'

She held out her hand, tentatively. 'Why don't you come with me, Han-sang? Then we could get all this unpleasant affair into its proper perspective. Will you, Han-sang?'

It sounded very tempting.

Her eyes softened. 'I'll have everything packed tomorrow morning. We could catch the ten-thirty flight. Can you call for me here?'

I said I would, and she gave me a little sigh of satisfaction. 'And, please, don't go to meet Bae Yeon-seok tonight ... Promise me that ...'

I shook my head. 'I want to clear up this Doyle business, Su-mi, for your sake. Until that's settled there can be no peace of mind for you. Don't worry, Su-mi, when next we meet I hope to have everything cleared up'.

'Then take care of yourself', she urged. 'Promise me, Han-sang?'

As I promised I touched the pistol in my jacket pocket, just for luck.

Chapter forty-four

The thought of the pistol in my pocket comforted me once again as I walked along the deserted street, peering at the tall apartment block of Jayu Court. It was shabby and in need of repair, with a gaudy neon sign outside.

I caught the elevator up to the fourth floor and walked along the paint-peeling corridor until I reached 418s door, and swiped the electronic key over the lock. The door creaked as I pushed it open, and I stepped into a stuffy-smelling hallway.

I switched on my small torch, and looked round the meagrely furnished hall. There was a door on the right, opposite the foot of the stairs. I stood and listened for a moment or two; if Bae had arrived there was no sign of his presence. Carefully, I turned the door-knob and slowly pushed open the door.

At first glance it looked like an ordinary living room: the furniture was covered with dust sheets, and I could detect the familiar shapes of chairs, a sideboard, and a writing bureau. Swivelling the torch beam over a wide radius, I began to advance across the room. It seemed like any other room awaiting the removal men – until the beam of my torch suddenly lit up a man's foot.

The foot was turned upwards, and as the torchlight probed further into the darkness I discovered that the owner of the foot was lying behind the sofa, apparently unconscious.

My first reaction was to switch off the torch and stand perfectly still, listening for the sound of his breathing. A shaft of light from a street lamp on the opposite side of the road shone weakly through the side of the old-fashioned wooden

window; the room was still eerily quiet, nor was there any sound from any other part of the apartment.

Making up my mind at last, I took a couple of quick steps, put one knee on the sofa and, leaning over the back, shone the torch behind. What I saw made me go round the sofa at once to take a closer look ...

The pale face and sandy hair were only too familiar. No Jung-jong hadn't used his passport to get to Vancouver, it seemed. He would never use it again.

There was a heavy crimson smear on his left temple and a trickle of blood from his mouth. Obviously there was nothing I could do for him this time ... I straightened myself and as my head came above the level of the back of the sofa the beam from a powerful torch caught me squarely in the eyes.

It was a few seconds before I could distinguish the figure in the doorway. Standing there, with the torch in his left hand and what looked like a .38 automatic in his right, was Yun Hyeok. He had removed his glasses, and his staring eyes were cold and menacing.

I waited for him to break the silence, but he did not speak. 'I came here to meet Bae Yeon-seok', I said at last, through dry lips.

'That's a damn lie!' Yun said hotly. 'You'd arranged to meet Su-mi here'.

I gripped the back of the sofa.

'Switch off that torch and put your hands up!' he ordered, and it seemed safer to obey. His face was strangely contorted as he said: 'Why the hell couldn't you stick to the job you were hired for, and leave Kim Su-mi alone?'

'What was the job I was hired for?' I asked edging forward.

'To uncover the diamond racket, wasn't it?' he said, gripping the butt of the gun. 'Kong So-ra's been on to you ever since you went to see No Jung-jong'.

'I've brought you the diamonds', I said, lowering my arm and feeling for the jewel box in my waistcoat pocket. 'Have you brought the twelve million won?'

'Keep your distance!' he said sharply. 'No, I haven't brought the twelve million. Do you think that I'm Bae?'

'No, I don't', I said. 'Don't be a fool, Yun. The people I work for won't let you get away with murdering me. Put that gun away and you can have the diamonds'.

'You're in no position to bargain, Moon', he said, taking a pace towards me. 'You're going to die - not only because you know too much, but because you took Su-mi from me'.

'Wait a minute, Yun', I said, opening the jewel case. 'Lee Shi-hoo's getting damn close to finding Doyle's murderer. If you have any sense you'll leave the country as soon as you can. You'll need money. Here, take these diamonds and sell them to Bae'. I held out the box, letting the light shine onto the stones. 'They can buy you your freedom. Otherwise, you'll get a fifteen years' sentence at least'.

The gun in his hand wavered. He leaned forward, his eyes focused on the box. I brought my hand up with all my weight behind it, the diamonds hitting him directly between the eyes.

As he staggered back I swung my other arm against his gun, knocking it from his hand. As I made a dive for it he came down on me with an upward knee-thrust. Then his fingers closed round my throat with the vicious clutch of a near-maniac. In a desperate attempt to escape those choking fingers I heaved my body upwards, throwing Yun over my head. His hands left my throat but he grabbed at the gun. Then he was kneeling over me, the gun pointed between my eyes. There was a sudden crack, and I thought for a moment that the explosion was the bullet crashing into my skull. Then I realised that the gun itself had dropped on my forehead, and the blood I could feel on my face was dripping from Yun's wrist. I rolled over, and saw the figure of a tall, lean man looking down at me.

'Doesn't do too badly for a sick man, does he?' said Im' imperturbable voice.

'Thanks, Im!' I managed to say breathlessly, as I struggled to me feet. I indicated the sofa. 'I was luckier than No Jung-jong, poor devil!'

'Yes, we know about him', Im said quietly. 'They've already dealt with No Jung-jong when I arrived on the scene'.

'Yes, just what are you doing here, Im Sun-taek?' I asked, still trying to get my breath back.

'Our department isn't a suicide squad, Moon', he answered smoothly. 'When you were so adamant about meeting Bae Yeon-seok I simply decided to keep an eye on things'.

'M'm ... ' I said reflectively. 'So that's what was in your mind when you insisted on knowing the time and place'.

He smiled, and picked up Yun's gun, wrapping it in his handkerchief. 'This will interest the police, I daresay', he said to Yun, who was binding his own handkerchief round his injured wrist. 'Inspector Lee Shi-hoo should be here at any moment. I put a call through to him directly I found No Jung-jong'.

'It's lucky for me you came back here when you did', I said. 'Thanks again!'

'A pleasure', he said, and added casually: 'Don't forget the diamonds, Moon. Na will dock their value out of my salary if you don't return them ... '

I laughed, retrieved the diamonds, and handed the box to Im. A police car drew up outside the house.

'Come on, Moon'.

As we went down the pathway Inspector Lee Shi-hoo got out of the car. 'I'll want a word with you tomorrow, Mr Moon', he said as he passed me.

'Make it ten o'clock', I said. 'At 824 Seoul Tower. It may be rather urgent'.

'I'll have two of my men there', Lee said, turning. 'We don't want anyone getting out by the balcony this time, do we, sir?'

Chapter forty-five

At ten minutes to ten next morning I rang the bell outside Kim Su-mi's flat. She opened the door, wearing a fur coat over the shoulders of a dark suit.

'That's what you were wearing the first day I met you, Su-mi', I said. 'Remember, on the plane to Shanghai?'

She nodded, her eyes shining. 'Did you imagine I'd forget?' she kissed me lightly on the cheek and gestured at the suitcase in the hall. 'I've been up since seven ... packing'.

She waited for me to come in and close the door, then went on: 'Am I glad to see you! I tried to telephone you to make sure you'd be here, but you were out'.

'I told you I'd come', I said quietly.

'Yes, I know'. She sighed. 'But I've been involved in so many panics lately. And, of course, So-ra is simply running round in circles. It'll be wonderful to get away from it all'. She smiled and held out her hand to me, then moved one of her cases out of the way. 'Han-sang, where's your luggage?' she queried suddenly.

'It's outside ... in my car ...' I stalled.

She glanced at her wristwatch. 'There's just time for a drink, if you'd like one?'

I shook my head and she seemed to sense the tension in my manner.

'Is anything the matter?' she asked.

I indicated the door of the living room. 'Can we go inside for a few minutes?'

She stood with her back to the fireplace, facing me. I was momentarily at a loss, but finally managed to say: 'I'm not going away with you Su-mi'.

She caught her breath sharply and put out a hand to clutch the back of a chair. 'Then why did you come?' she demanded, as I moved a couple of paces towards her.

'To meet Bae', I replied quietly.

She stared at me for some seconds without speaking. There was no sound in the room except the muffled throb of a pneumatic drill some distance down the street.

'You expect to meet Bae here?' she said in an incredulous tone.

I nodded. 'Yun Hyeok's made a full statement to the police. They know about the diamonds, and why Doyle came here to see you. They know how Yun murdered him, then pushed the key under the door so that I could let myself in and leave my fingerprints'.

'It isn't true!' she protested, but I went on unheeding.

'You both left by the balcony then you came back alone through the front door and put on a very convincing performance. Was that why you invited me – to provide an audience?'

'No, Han-sang', she said simply. 'It was an accident – you've got to believe that'.

'Then why did you ask me round to your apartment that night?'

'I asked you so that Yun could take a look at you. I knew you'd been following me in Shanghai. I thought perhaps if you were in the diamond business Yun might recognise you'.

'So there was no intention of murdering Doyle in the first place?'

'No. No, he just turned up out of the blue – and then when he started his blackmailing threats I'm afraid Yun lost all control ... However, it turned out rather well, except for the diamonds'. She fidgeted with the strip of braid on the back of the upholstered chair. 'What made you think of looking for them in the cigar-holder?'

'It's my job to think of things like that', I replied evasively. The cards were on the table now, and I was watching her closely for the first sign of any suspicious move. 'I can't understand you, Su-mi', I said helplessly. 'You killed Chang Chu-chu because you thought his brother Yun was double-crossing you and that Chang was making off with the diamonds; you were responsible for the suicide of Joong-ki; you involved your best friend in diamond smuggling, and your fiancé in murder ... Why did you do it?'

She regarded me distantly for a long moment, then said quite calmly: 'Because I happen to be Bae Yeon-seok'.

Chapter forty-six

For a brief moment I hesitated, then went out into the hall and opened the front door. Lee was waiting outside, as I'd expected, and together we returned to the living room. As we entered, Su-mi was picking up her handbag.

'I always knew there would be an end to all this', she said, nodding towards the Inspector. 'But it will be my way, not theirs'.

As Lee Shi-hoo crossed to the bedroom and called to the policeman on the balcony she drew a small automatic from her handbag. 'Don't touch me!' she said, levelling the gun at Lee. The policeman came in from the bedroom, a grizzled, elderly man, in a flat squad-car hat. He was plainly startled at the sight of the gun. 'Stand over by the Inspector', Su-mi ordered, waving it at him threateningly. 'I'll use this, you know'.

'Do as she says, Sergeant', Lee said suavely. 'There's no sense in starting anything'.

Su-mi slid her hand into her bag again and took out a small red-capped phial. 'I'm going into my bedroom now', she said quietly. 'Don't follow me, Han-sang – now or later. I don't want you to see me again'.

I heard a strained voice, which I had difficulty in recognising as my own, saying. 'Su-mi, don't be a fool!' Then she disappeared into her bedroom, closing and locking the door after her.

'Yun warned me about this', Lee said. He sent the Sergeant out to re-enter the bedroom from the balcony.

But as soon as the bedroom door opened we knew it was too late. Lee looked at the inert figure on the bed. 'I suppose this will get me a black mark, but I'd rather that than another murder. She'd have used that gun all right'. He held up his hand as I moved towards the bed. 'I wouldn't, sir, if I were you', he said quietly. I hesitated, then with a brief nod went out into the hall.

Chapter forty-seven

Im was sitting at a table at the *New Yorker* when I arrived.

'I've ordered a dozen oysters', he said. 'Why don't you have a glass of champagne first?' He beckoned the wine waiter.

'She killed herself', I said, as the waiter departed.

'She'd more guts than Yun', Im said. 'He's still arguing. According to his version he knew what was going on but denied being in the organisation. He even maintains that he threatened to break off the engagement unless Kim Su-mi gave up the racket. He won't get away with that one at court. It's possible, though, that his story of killing Doyle while in a jealous rage may be accepted. It would save him from a capital sentence'.

'I should think it's true', I said. 'Doyle was battered with that ashtray, which seems to point to a fit of uncontrollable rage. Yun wasn't sane when we saw him – although I'm not going into the witness box on his behalf'.

'You're not going into the witness box, period'. Im said flatly. 'Na doesn't want the department to get that sort of publicity'. He patted my arm. 'Sorry, about that. Kim Su-mi was a damned attractive girl, I don't blame you for falling for her. But you've done a good job, Moon. Have a drink on it!'

'Bollinger ... '49', I said wryly reading the label on the bottle. 'A champagne to celebrate with. You finish it, Im'.

'I'm damned if I know why', Im said, 'but I don't feel like oysters and champagne today. And I understand that Na has another case he wants us to go to work on. Wouldn't do to float in on the old boy, not in office hours, at any rate. I sometimes get the impression that he thinks murders that don't take place between nine and five aren't really his department's business. I do hope you won't find working for the government too dull, Moon'.

I said I'd try not to.

Two hours later as we left the restaurant Im said: 'I say, Moon, you're not one of these fellows that goes in for masculine perfume, are you?'

I sniffed the sleeve of my jacket. 'Reminds me of a girl I once met at Incheon Airport', I said. 'Would you mind driving me home first? I think I'd like to change my suit'.

'And change that handkerchief', Im said. 'It has lipstick on it. Na'll take a poor view of that'.

'To hell with Na', I said. 'I've changed my mind. Drive me straight to 40 Sejong-daero, Im Sun-taek'.

Im and I sat facing Na, who had our reports on the Bae Yeon-seok case in front of him. There was nothing in mine about Kim Su-mi's invitation to accompany her to Jeju. Na closed one of the folders and turned to me.

Chapter forty-eight

'I hope you appreciate that we have allowed you a certain amount of latitude on this case, Moon', he said. 'You cleared up the Chang Chu-chu problem so neatly that I let Im talk me into allowing you to go after Bae. But I want you to realise that it isn't to be taken as a precedent'.

I mumbled something about being so involved that it had been difficult to withdraw.

'You were fortunate to have Im Sun-taek keeping an eye on you', said Na severely. He closed the folders and replaced them in their file. Then he took out another folder and placed it on his desk. 'Now, about your next project ...' he began, but was interrupted by the telephone.

The call was for Im, who went into the adjoining office to take it. While we were waiting for him to return, Na opened the bottom right-hand drawer of his desk and took out a video-camera.

'You may as well have this back now', he said. I took and gave it a quick glance, then handed it back to him. 'This isn't mine', I said.

'Then that explains the switching of the films', Na said, reaching down and producing another camera from the drawer. 'This is the one that was found with Doyle's body'.

'Yes, they got mixed up accidentally at the *Chinese Dragon*. Doyle's had just been returned by the police; it was stolen from his hotel on his previous visit, a month or so earlier. That would be when he took the film of the accident'.

'Yes, that's right', Na agreed. 'They're both the same make, and the cases are almost identical'.

'It was Kong So-ra who first put that idea in my head', I went on. 'She tried to make me believe that Doyle had picked up my camera by mistake, and then used my video to blackmail Kim Su-mi. It was an accidental switch all right, but Doyle didn't need my video for blackmailing purposes – he'd already found out who Bae was. That's why he was blackmailing her'.

'Perhaps it was lucky you got the wrong camera', Na said with a smile. 'Very occasionally, mistakes do turn out for the best, but we never accept that as an excuse in this department. However, you've made a good job of this assignment'.

I said: 'I'm glad you were proved right about Chang, sir'.

He gave a little shrug. 'I suppose you thought I was unduly sentimental. As he was dead, what did it matter whether he was innocent or guilty? Well, it mattered to me'.

This was one of the things about Na that ensured the full support of the men who worked for him.

Im Sun-taek returned, and Na reopened the folder on his desk.

'Now, about the next assignment, Moon ...'