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NEVER AGAIN Book 4

Red Terror
NEVER AGAIN

R.J. RUMMEL



Llumina Press

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“Tell me, what do you think of Marxism?”

“It’s evil!”

“Evil? When so many noted Western intellectuals believe in it; when it is so widely and favorably taught in American classrooms?”

“Yes, what else do you call an ideology whose followers have murdered 110,000,000 people, over three times more than have died in combat in all the domestic and foreign wars of the 20th Century, and starved to death tens of millions more? It is a death machine.”

“Then why so many believers?”

“Ignorance, self-righteousness, an absolutist mind set, but mainly the lust for power.”

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And foremost, always, is my wife Grace. She made this series and this novel possible. Without her, I could not have written it. Another kiss, sweetheart.

To be sure, this is a book of fiction. Although some characters may in name and position bear a striking resemblance to historical figures, they are fictional. Nonetheless, I must say again that whatever errors of fictional facts exist are mine, and wholly mine.

Chapter 1

October 25, 1903

Novaya Uda village, near Irkutsk, Siberia

He knew the rats would start eating at his face soon. The darkness almost hid them, but he could see their black bodies circling, their eyes reflecting what little light there was. They were sniffing the air, ready to brave the human smell mixed with that of the pork fat smeared on his face.

He hung from a rafter by a rope tied to his feet, his hands tied behind him, and his head hovering an inch from the straw-covered dirt floor of the stable. He could only wait in a shivering cold sweat, his heart thudding violently, his stomach knotted in anticipation of what would soon come: a rat would move in, the rest of the rats would follow, the excruciating pain would start, and he would take too long to die.

Again and again, he had swung his body and shook his head to scare the rats away. But he had been doing that for hours, and now he was so exhausted that he could only squirm and nod his head. The rats moved closer.

He tried to scream, but the greasy rag tied into his mouth by a rope looped around his head turned it into a muffled screech. Nobody would hear him. Nobody would pass by the stable. Not at this time of night.

Everything had gone so well. He had been exiled here by the Okhrana, the feared Czarist secret police, but only to mislead his fellow revolutionaries. He was an Okhrana agent provocateur, but he also secretly worked for the revolutionary overthrow of the Czar, was a member of a criminal gang involved in armed robberies, and conspired to murder associates. His principles were simple: what profited him was right.

He heard the rats shuffling closer over the straw.

Frantically, his mind tried to deny what his ears and bulging eyes told him. This could not be. When he had arrived at Novaya Uda under guard, a telegram from the Kutais Okhrana had soon arrived at Irkutsk, supporting him: *I.V. Dzhugashvili plans to leave. Do not stop him. Render assistance.* A telegram bearing a description of him had soon followed: *Iosif Vissarionov Dzhugashvili. Age: 23. Appearance: ordinary. Height: 5 feet, 4 inches. Build: medium. Hair: dark brown. Beard*

and mustache: brown. Nose: straight and long. Forehead: straight and low. Face: long, swarthy, and pockmarked. Second and third toes on left foot fused together. Nickname: Riaboy.

A rat the size of a cat, its eyes like reflective marbles, sniffed at his nose. He jerked his head toward it and it backed off. Fear triggered his bladder to empty again; he felt his urine soaking into the crotch and waist of his long underwear.

Yesterday the local Okhrana had given him a document identifying him as an Okhrana agent so that he could return to Batum, the Black Sea port near Turkey from which he had been exiled. Last night, as he'd been returning from celebrating with the Okhrana Captain Ivan Rykov, a man stopped him on the road and said, "A local social democrat wants to have a secret talk with you before you leave."

The man was dressed as a peasant, looked weathered and wrinkled like a peasant, and spoke Russian with a terrible accent, like a foreigner who had been exiled here some time ago. He led Riaboy here, but there was no one waiting.

Hooy na ya—no fucking way. Riaboy's thoughts raced, incoherent, as panic encroached from the fringes of his mind. *I could have killed him with one hand. Pizdoon—fucking liar. How could the zasranee do this to me? How could the svolock—* He'd fought. But the man was too strong.

"Why? What did I do?" Riaboy had yelled.

The stranger's green eyes regarded him. "Chto poseesh', to i pozhniosh'. Chto poseesh'," he'd grunted. "As you sow, so shall you reap." Then he moved off to watch from at a distance.

The big rat was back, along with a companion.

Riaboy could barely move his head. Terror gripped him. He felt slippery wetness in the crack of his ass—he'd crapped in his underwear. His mind finally collapsed into hysteria, and frothy saliva blew out of his nose. Only one thought remained: *WHY? Why? Why? wh . . .*

The man who in later years would have been known as Joseph Stalin gurgled and moaned. His whole body seemed to jitter in anticipation. The large rat hesitated, then bit at his cheek. The stab of hot pain tore through him, convulsing his muscles, triggering a strangled howl. The other rats moved in; another stab of pain was followed by another, and another, for the rest of his life.

Chapter 2

January 25, 2002

Silicon Valley headquarters, Survivors' Benevolent Society

John Banks

John's upper right arm still pained him, but so did his hip and left leg, although only with an aching throb. He massaged the arm while listening to another revision of the plan for his and Joy's intervention sometime in the early years of the twentieth century. Their mission: to prevent the century's vast, killing wars and even more murderous democides, and to foster democratic peace.

There was really nothing new in the presentation, and his mind wandered back to his latest injuries and bruises from the morning's training session. *Damn*, he thought, *Joy is getting rough. She won't be happy until she breaks one of my bones.* Joy, the gorgeous young woman sitting next to him, was not only his partner in this mission, but his sensei in karate and judo.

During that morning's session, she'd been teaching him the twisting hip throw of an attacker, illustrated, of course, by throwing him a million times. In one of them, he had twisted awkwardly in the air and wrenched his arm as he landed. In spite of the pain, he remembered with some pride that he still had rolled up and into the appropriate ready stance. Then he had yelled at her, "You won't be satisfied until you injure me, and then I'll have to forget I'm a gentleman."

He recalled her response and what followed with a mental smile. She had tilted her head, crossed her arms, and instructed, "In martial arts, John, no pain, no gain."

"Yeah," he had responded, "but, a gain, and a gain? I thought our mission was to change history so it would never happen *a gain*."

She frowned, then grinned, but only a second before launching a swing kick at his right side, which he had to block with his bad arm. He had gritted his teeth, hardened his face against the pain, and shouted, "You did that on purpose."

She nodded, but then put her hands on her hips and regarded him with eyes that reflected her deep concern for him, almost worry. "Of

course. And so will your enemy. During our mission, you may have to fight assassins or ordinary thugs out to kill you. They will show you no mercy. If you are injured, you not only protect your injury, you use it. You know what your enemy is going to do next. He is going to attack the weakness in your defense caused by that injury. So, use that information to block and counterattack or, better yet, no matter the pain, fire off a series of attacks, ending in the death blow.”

No sooner had she finished than she launched another swinging kick to his right side, but this time he jerked back a step, made a left arm swing block to her kick that forced her leg past his body, and then kicked inside the knee of her supporting leg. As she went down, she grabbed his *uwagi*—karate shirt—and used his weight to twist him around and under her so she could land on top when they both hit the mat. He knew she had a million ways to kill him at that point, but he was so happy to have finally bested one move of hers that it made this day.

And, unbelievably, drill sergeant Joy had complimented his growing skill: “Good, quick response, John.” But then she continued with, “Now, this is how you should have followed that up,” and she proceeded to show him. More bruises.

When his name was mentioned, John refocused on what one of the Society’s historians, Laline Fernández García, was saying. “. . . you are also a historian, and this period is your specialty. So I’m putting this more as a question. In this latest version, we think that 1902 would be the best year downtime for you to arrive. I’m particularly concerned with preventing Trotsky’s abortive Russian Revolution in 1905. It led to the successful coup in 1917 by the Lenin-led Bolsheviks, and the seventy-five years of communist rule that caused so many wars and cost so many lives. Preventing the 1917 takeover is one of your prime objectives, right up there with preventing World Wars I and II. What do you think, John?”

John let go of his arm and rubbed the back of his neck. He appreciated Laline’s intelligence and grasp of history, and had engaged in several long conversations with her about Castro’s tyrannical communist rule over Cuba, a regime she had escaped. Both her parents had been pro-democracy dissidents who were arrested and tortured when she was a teenager. They’d died in prison—or were killed—within a year.

She had been hidden by her apolitical “boyfriend” for favors. She had discovered other dissidents, and soon after learned that they were

planning to flee to the United States in a homemade sailboat. She pleaded to be included. For more favors, she was. The weather favored them, Cuban reconnaissance fighter planes never spotted them, the American Coast Guard missed them, and they reached Florida safely.

The anti-Castro community adopted her, and eventually she learned English, completed high school, went on to Princeton University, and worked her way through graduate school. Throughout, she was dedicated to one mission: to rid the world of such tyrants as Castro and to promote democracy in Cuba and elsewhere. She majored in history, for she saw an understanding of history as the means to realistically promoting democracy. She reveled in her freedom of expression, and became well known through her pro-democracy activism on campus, and her commentaries that appeared in the local press.

When Laline became known to Joy's adoptive mother Tor through university contacts, Tor invited her to join the Society. And here she was.

John scrunched up his face and complained, "I'm finding it hard to think through the incredible pain that Joy inflicted on me today, as she does everyday, but I'll try. She hates men, you know. Jealous of their natural male abilities."

Joy jerked around in her seat to stare at him with raised eyebrows, and then must have seen the dimples forming at the edges of his mouth. She grinned, and waved at him while looking at Laline. "Poor thing."

Laline smiled in return, then looked back at John. "No pain, no gain."

John was about to open his mouth when Joy stole his response. "Yes, even though our mission is . . . never a gain." She sat back with a smirk.

Everyone around the table chuckled. John glowered at her for a moment, shook his finger at her in the way she hated, and then finally turned to the question. "Well, I know the 1905 attempted Russian revolution is of great political significance to historians. Many believe it provided the lessons and created the conditions for the successful 1917 Bolshevik coup. The Bolsheviks certainly did learn much from their having been so close to victory then. But, I think 1905 also taught the monarchists and conservatives a lesson, and their move away from absolute rule, their granting of more power to a Duma, and their acceptance of elections, although limited, will make it easier for us to prevent the 1917 coup and promote Russian democracy.

"Second." He held up two fingers. Martial arts was Joy's thing; these minilectures were his, and he hid a smile as he dropped into his

lecture tone. “If we somehow prevent the major events that led to the abortive 1905 Revolution, that surely will change the history of Russia and perhaps Europe. That means the chronology we will take back in time with us will be voided. We will be flying in the dark when trying to prevent World War I and the 1917 coup. It may even make our mission deadlier than it is already.

“Third, arriving in 1903 would not give us enough preparation time to set up contacts and our new export and import company offices in Russia, Poland, and Germany, the three most relevant locales. We would need at least five years, but if we arrive in 1900, for example, we would be getting pretty old to prevent World War II in 1939, or even the Japanese invasion of China in 1937.

“Fourth.” John waved four fingers at Joy—one finger was bad enough, four fingers was a capital offense. The others looked on in amusement. They were well accustomed to the banter between the two, especially since the Society’s engineers had mistakenly left their tap on Joy and John’s subcutaneous intercommunication devices, and the overheard intimate conversations and joking exchanges became hot gossip at the water cooler.

When Tor had gently hinted to them that their bedroom chatter was being overheard, John told Joy later, “Oh, I can’t stand it that all the women here must so envy you my . . . ah, attention.” A long sigh. “Very distracting. From our mission and training, you know.”

Joy had thrown a pillow at him. “Can’t stand it, eh? Keep that up, mister, and the next time it stands I’ll whack it with a karate chop. Then you won’t be able to stand it. Ever.”

“Jeez, baby, I can’t believe you would so deprive yourself of my Society-renowned . . . attention.”

She pushed him off the bed with her foot.

Tor later consulted two of the Society’s psychologists about their banter and personal jokes. Some in the Society thought it showed that they unconsciously hated each other—not good for the mission. But the psychologists thought this behavior was a healthy bridge between their disparate backgrounds, skills, and cultures—Joy was a Sino-Vietnamese orphan raised by Tor, a Cambodian refugee, and a warrior trained to kill since the age of four. John was a typical lower middle class, Midwestern Euro-American, a near pacifist, and a first year professor of history when, he claimed, Joy had vamped him into volunteering for the mission.

Moreover, once sent back in time, they could never return. Although no one ever mentioned it to Joy or John, or to Joy's mother Tor, most in the Society thought their chances of survival into middle age was less than 10 percent. They would be fighting against powerful dictators who controlled vast armies and secret police, using modern weapons, billions of dollars in funds, and an ability to forecast events through the precise chronology they would take with them. They would have tremendous power, and their humor, especially the banter, would enable them to put their power in perspective, and help relieve the unhealthy tension and stress that they must now live with, perhaps for the rest of their lives.

"Fourth," John repeated, in case his four fingers were not enough, "since we've settled on San Francisco as our operating base where you will send our supplies—"

One of the Society members interrupted. "We're just about to do that. Just in case an emergency necessitates a sudden escape downtime."

John nodded, then resumed. "If we arrive in 1903, we will be endangered by the great earthquake and fire of April, 1906. Although we will know it's coming, we cannot know all the details and danger spots, and we might well be injured or killed. Finally—"

Joy looked up at the ceiling and muttered, "Thank God."

"—I'm sorry to say that, while in 1906 the great feminine revolution in dress is just beginning, dress in 1903 is still adamantly Victorian." He hesitated for effect, and shot a quick glance at Joy. Her eyes were wide and her lips were slightly parted as she listened. He had her. He dropped the bomb. "Joy would have to wear a corset. Only whores would be seen without one."

Joy didn't even take a breath. "Never. I would be boiled in oil first."

Laline held up her hand toward Joy to stop whatever more was on her lips, and looked at John with a little grin. "Very persuasive, especially point five." She held up five fingers. "I think we all will agree that 1906, after the destruction from the fire and earthquake has settled, will be the best time for you to start your mission."

"Ah shucks," John said, "I wanted to see Joy in a corset and bustle."

With a huge smile so no one would misunderstand, Joy yelled, "I wanna new partner!"

Chapter 3

November 13, 1906
San Francisco

Captain Khoo Jy-ying

The jackhammer of sound blasted her mind and Jy-ying put her hands over her ears and moaned from the pain. She thought she was dying.

In an instant, the sound ended, Jy-ying had a sudden falling sensation, and was jolted to her knees.

She couldn't think. Maybe she was dying.

As her senses returned, she checked herself all over to be sure she was okay. She finally murmured, "*Allah akbar*—God is great. Thank you. I'm in one piece and apparently healthy. But, did I make it?"

She looked up at the digital reading: 3:22:04 p.m. November 13, 1906. "Success!" she exclaimed. "The month is a little off, but that should not make any difference. Time to see the old world."

She took out her Taiyang .38 caliber semi-automatic, clicked the safety off and, holding it at the ready, she opened the door a crack. She opened it wider and wider, then suddenly furrowed her brows. *How strange. Feels as though I have gone through this before.* She shook her head at that impossibility.

She saw nothing dangerous outside the door, no more than the empty factory she was supposed to land in, and her equipment capsule resting near one wall. She stepped quickly out and swung around, holding her gun before her with two hands, just in case, as she scanned the factory floor. She was alone. With a relieved sigh, she reentered the time machine and reholstered her gun in her purse.

The checked gingham jumper she wore didn't provide enough warmth against the chilly, damp air. She opened her suitcase of clothes and essentials and donned a fur-lined cape for warmth and a relatively flat hat with Japanese satin braid and fancy cloth drapery—the only hat that the project scientists showed her for her first day wear that she did not wave away with a laugh. The suitcase would get her by until she found a place to stay, then she could get whatever she needed from her

equipment capsule or buy it with the wealth of gold, counterfeit money, and jewels that the supply capsule contained. If she couldn't get to the capsule, there was a fortune in the double bottom of the case.

Picking up the purse and suitcase, she stepped out of the machine and walked toward the exit.

Peking 2001, New Universe Imam Ch'en Hsu

The message from Imam Abdul-Raouf, the chief advisor to the mayor of San Francisco, said they found what Imam Ch'en Hsu was looking for in the archives of the San Francisco Fire Department. It had been evidence in the arson investigation of an apartment house partially destroyed by fire in 1938.

He scanned the Chinese translation with increasing excitement. There were many gaps where pages of the original were scorched and charred, and an unknown number of final pages were burned away, but nevertheless, he could not believe the information it contained. He went back through it, underlining the important details: The time travelers were the Americans John Banks and ethnic Sino-Vietnamese Joy Phim. They landed in San Francisco on November 14, 1906, and created the successful Tor Import and Export Company. Ch'en also noted the dates for their travel to Mexico, China, Japan, and Europe for their interventions in the wars and democides in those countries.

The document even mentioned that John Banks had set up the Joy Phim Democratic Peace Institute, of which the Institute in Santa Barbara had been an affiliate. The members of the godless affiliate had blown it up after sending a message back in time to Banks and Phim about Abul Sabah—God's Prophet, and the Islamic ruler of Middle Asia and China—and the nuclear destruction of the democracies perpetrated by his son, but attributed to him. The result was a world victory for Sabah's version of Islam.

Now we got them. For sure, Banks and Phim are the time travelers who received the message. And the message they received could only say one thing: kill the Prophet Sabah as a child, well before he begins his glorious, God-directed rise in power.

Ch'en put through an urgent call to Shu Kuo. When Shu answered, Ch'en asked without preamble, "Can we contact Khoo Jy-ying right away?"

Shu Kuo hesitated, and when he finally responded, he sounded surprised that the Imam would ask this after he had seen her time machine disappear on its way to 1906. "No. She is still on her way, or has arrived in the past."

"I want to send a document to her immediately."

"I do not understand."

"This document will contain new information that will make it easy for her to find the American time travelers and execute them before they assassinate Sabah. I want you and Chief Scientist Liu to prepare a time capsule to carry back this document to Khoo. I do not care how you do it; I do not care about the expense; you need not hurry. But I want to make sure she gets this message."

After Shu Kuo assured him they would start on the assignment immediately, he hung up.

He held the original of what its author, Banks, called his *Remembrance*. It was overtly revolutionary, Satanic, and anti-Sabah. It was too dangerous for anyone to read, other than a high Imam, who was armored against its lies. It exulted in a counter theology, that of infantile freedom. Ch'en knew what he had to do.

After he personally made a copy to send to Khoo, he took the original and the translation home with him late that evening. He turned on the floodlight on his patio, carried the documents to his little garden off the patio, and dug a deep hole among his prized hamamelis. He slowly tore the pages of both documents into small pieces. "I have just saved the Sabah faith, the word of God," he told himself as he stuffed the pieces into the hole.

He covered the hole with soil and mulch and watered the mound.

Tianjin, China

Director Shu Kuo

Shu Kuo watched the final preparations for sending the document to Khoo Jy-ying. They were giving the buzzer its last test. He read English and had scanned the document. It detailed where John Banks and Joy Phim were staying in San Francisco, their major interventions in-

cluding with whom they met, and other activities up to their death. With this information, she would have no difficulty finding, ambushing, and killing them.

Liu motioned him over and said, “All the space-time coordinates are now set, and have been triple checked. We have clearance to heavily draw on Tianjin’s electrical power. Anytime you are ready, we can send it off.”

Shu Kuo walked over to the little red metal container, punched in the code—which was the same as that of Jy-ying’s equipment capsule, so she would know it—and inserted the plastic-sealed document. Hiding the open container with his body, he also put on top of the document a personal message from him, telling her how much he missed her and concluding with *I can only hope now that we will meet in Paradise. Have a long life, Jy-ying, and I applaud with a kiss what I know will be your success. God surely will be with you.*

He closed the capsule and returned to stand next to Liu at the large control console. “Send it downtime,” Shu ordered.

He watched through protective windows as the massive laser beams impacted against the red container. It seemed to shrivel, turned hazy, became only a dusty outline, and then disappeared into its time-space wormhole.

Jy-ying

As she left the time machine and started toward the exit, Jy-ying noticed a loud buzzing again. When she’d first exited the machine, she thought the buzzing came from the street. Now she realized it was nearby, emitted by a red metal container about an inch or so away from the rear of the machine. She walked over to it, and saw her name written in Chinese on all its visible sides.

Eyebrows raised, she stood stock still. *This cannot be*, she thought. *I came from 2001. This is 1906. No one knew I was coming—no one could possibly know.*

She bent over and took a closer look at the container. *Ah*, she realized, *it must have been send to me from uptime.* She put down her suitcase and picked up the red container. It wasn’t heavy. She moved it around in her hands, looking for an opening. She saw the lid and tried to raise it, but it seemed locked.

She returned to the time machine, turned the light on inside, and pulled down its little seat from the wall. Holding the container on her lap, she could see a keypad on one side and below it in Chinese, *Use capsule code*. She keyed in the code and the lid loosened with a little click.

She lifted the lid and saw a note on top of a sheaf of papers held together with a plastic clip. The note was from Kuo. She quickly put it aside. She knew she would miss his arms, and maybe shed some tears over the loss, but that was in the future. After all, she had just seen him an hour or so ago, before she was sent on this one-way mission to kill the time traveling assassin.

She lifted out the clipped document, undid the clip, and started reading. She read about John Banks, an assistant professor of history, escaping death in the 9/11 Twin Towers collapse; his lecturing on democide; Joy Phim attending his class to check him out and, satisfied, inviting him to attend her mother's party; and about the party itself, attended exclusively by members of the Survivors' Benevolent Society, including Joy's mother. She had invited him so that they could ask him to join Joy on a mission to prevent the wars and democides of history that had killed so many, and in which they had suffered and lost loved ones, and to promote democracy to ensure there would be no more wars and democide.

Jy-ying paled, and read on.

She learned that Joy was so desirable and John's hatred of war so great that he finally decided to join her in this mission from which there would be no return, especially since she intimated they would have to be intimate; that once he accepted, Joy gave him intensive training in martial arts, particularly karate and judo, and in weapons; and about his constant arousal, and finally their lovemaking.

She gasped when she read about the FBI SWAT team attack on the Society's headquarters in search of a rumored time machine, and Joy's hasty good-bye to her loving mother before she and John departed in the time machine; about their landing, and Joy's tearful breakdown over the loss of her mother, forever.

She read about their preparations for their interventions, and unconsciously put one hand over her mouth as she read about the intervention in Mexico, where Joy murdered four boys who tried to rape her—an event that would lead to her campaign to rid the streets of muggers and rapists—and the fight between Joy and John over it. She read about their intervention in China, where John saved Joy

from death after a thrown knife he'd ducked lodged deep in her thigh, and about their various interventions in Europe; about their near breakup when John discovered Joy's secret street campaign, and finally, about the middle-aged Joy's attempt to assassinate the presidential candidate of the United States, who she claimed was a communist, only to be thwarted at the last second by John. Believing she had become too dangerous, he held a pillow over her face and, with her help, suffocated her to death.

Jy-ying shook her head in disbelief. He had put their affairs in order, she read, as he wrote this *Remembrance* to help him remember their years together and express his love for her, and when he was finished, he put the *Remembrance* on his chest and waited in their bed to die in the fire he had set. Judging by the condition of the original document, as evidenced by the copy, he had been successful.

She sat still long after she finished reading. She had not imagined in all her preparations for this trip that the time traveler would be two people. The scientists had assured her, since they could not do it themselves, that time travel by more than one person was impossible. And then . . . and then, for the time travelers to be lovers—lovers with such a love for humanity and peace as they saw it that they would sacrifice their lives to come to this godless, backward, uncivilized era . . . she could not help but respect them. *And then to die so tragically!* she thought. *His killing his lover like that, and her helping him with her own strength to smother her. A warrior—she had to be. He could never have done it, otherwise.*

She let out a long sigh. *This cannot be real life.* But she knew it was. No such fiction would make it through the screening of Ch'en's secret service.

She stared unseeing out the machine's door. She should be relieved, very happy. There would be only minimal searching, no serious investigation to uncover the time travelers. She knew they would arrive at 2:51 a.m. tomorrow; she knew they would buy the warehouse in which they landed and set up a new company, and on and on. There was absolutely no doubt she could find them and rid the world of them. And then, free of their danger, she could assist Sabah in his world movement and the eventual victory of Sabahism, without the worldwide nuclear holocaust his son unleashed on the democracies. Victory could come in peaceful ways.

Yes, their lives were in her hands. Yes, she would kill even such lovers.

She stiffened and raised her head. After all, they were heathens, godless, a deadly threat to Sabah. If she did not kill them, they would kill Sabah and her religion, and billions of people would be without God, their souls forever excluded from Paradise.

I am a captain in the Sabah Security Guard. I took the Oath of Sabah when I was commissioned, and I must carry out the mission I volunteered for, that I maneuvered for, no matter how unsavory. She was not stupid. She realized she had just covered her disquiet with wet paper. *I will do what I must*, she thought, but without her strong pre-travel conviction.

She frowned, compressed her lips tightly, and clipped the papers back together. She shoved the document and Kuo's note, unread, back into the container. She removed from her purse the detailed map of 1906 San Francisco and the list of mid-range and better hotels that had been prepared for her. These hotels would provide her with a decent room until she was ready to play the Chinese Princess, move to a high-class hotel, and, so she had planned before reading the *Remembrance*, enter high society in search of the time traveler, who himself must have brought a fortune with him and be circulating among the rich and powerful.

All now a thing of the past, she thought, not even smiling at the unconscious pun.

Jy-ying looked down at the list of hotels, and first singled out the Little Palace Hotel on Leavenworth and Post Streets. She liked the name, and checked its address against the map. No, too far away from the factory in which she had landed, which was on De Haro Street, already marked with a red circle. She wanted a hotel within walking distance so that she had easy access to her supply capsules until she bought an automobile.

She looked at the other hotels listed—the All Nations Hotel, the St. Francis Hotel Annex, The Nob Hill Hotel, and others. Her eyes came to rest on the sixth hotel on the list. She could not explain her intuition; it just felt as if it were the best mid-range choice. In fact, the more she concentrated on the hotel's name and one-sentence description, the better it seemed. She checked its address on the map. It was on 16th Street, near the intersection with Rhode Island Street—only about two

blocks away. *That is where I will stay*, she thought. *Maybe that is where Joy and John will spend their first days, also.* She grinned at the thought of what stupendous luck that would be.

The document had given no information about where they would land tomorrow, so she could not . . . kill them when they emerged from their time machine. Nor did it say where they would stay during their first days here. Or during the year, for that matter. Of course, she would soon find them. But if she were so lucky as to be in the same hotel, how easy it would be to kill them. *I could do so while they were asleep together—yes, I would kill them then, as I have been trained to do. It is what my country and my religion trusted me to do when they sent me here at great expense.*

She felt a sudden chill over killing them in each other's arms, but squelched it again with the thought of the billions of lives that would be saved for Paradise by Sabah, were he to live because of what she—*she*—would do. She was trained as a member of the elite Sabah Security Guards, and she had been trained to kill. She knew she could do so if the killing was just, and what was more just than to secure humanity's soul?

She held onto that thought. It was better than wet paper. *The killing would be just. Billions would be saved.*

She stood. *Okay, I am ready again. Off I go to the old world.*

After turning off the time machine's light, she put the container under one arm, picked up her suitcase, and walked to the factory exit. Before she got there she yelled back at the time machine, "It would be just." She did not realize that she had dropped the categorical "will be" in favor of a conditional.

As she passed a newspaper kiosk on a corner of De Haro and 16th Street, the violent cover on *The Saturday Evening Post* made her veer closer.

Oh Sabah, it is impossible, she thought, staring aghast at the magazine wedged upright in a wire stand. *That has to be fiction.*

She took a quick look inside the magazine while the gray-bearded old man in the kiosk stared at her. She had to read it as soon as possible. She opened her purse, took a quarter out of its coin pocket, and gave it to him. "Keep the change," she said as she thrust the magazine under her arm next to the red container.



“We do not rent rooms to Orientals.” The hotel clerk’s voice dripped arrogance as he regarded her from behind the reception desk.

She had not expected that. Although she knew of the great prejudice against Orientals at this time in San Francisco, she had not considered that it might apply to her. Especially when renting a hotel room. Well, she could go elsewhere.

She turned, about to head for one of the blue velvet easy chairs in the lobby to study her list of hotels, when something stopped her. *What is it with me and this hotel?* she wondered. With a mental shrug, she turned back to the clerk. She straightened her body, tilted her head back, and with haughty eyes, looked down her nose at the clerk. “You dare, little man, to deny a room to Princess Tz’u Li Poh? In China I would have you flayed, and when your skin was torn into ribbons, I would tie them into braids for my pleasure.”

The clerk turned white and stepped back against the mail slots behind him. He looked at her with flashbulb eyes, gulped, and tried to swallow. Finally he stammered, “Hotel . . . rule I would get . . . fired.”

“Take me to your manager,” she commanded in an imperious voice.

The clerk began to sweat—Jy-ying could smell his fear above the stink of the hotel lobby. “He’s gone,” he wailed, waving his hands as though she were attacking him.

She looked down a short hallway to the left of the registration desk, and saw a door with *Office* painted on it. She picked up her suitcase and made for the door.

“Hey, you can’t go there!”

Ignoring the clerk’s cry, she turned the doorknob, pushed the office door open with her foot, and walked in. As she pushed it closed behind her, she overheard a male guest who had risen from one of the lobby’s Versailles chairs ask the clerk what had happened.

The clerk was shaking and still sweating. “She demanded a room,” he croaked. “Can you believe it? The whore. She pretended she was a princess—with those common clothes she was wearing! The boss will kick her ass out or call the police. No worry.”

Jy-ying smiled and closed the door on the scene as he pulled a rumpled handkerchief out of his back pocket and wiped his face with it.

Twenty minutes later, Jy-ying emerged from the office with a plump, middle-aged man in a gray suit. He strode up to the desk clerk and announced with a wave of his thumb at Jy-ying, “She bought the hotel. She now owns it, and I am her manager.” He stood there, seemingly at a loss for more words as he stroked his graying beard.

The clerk's eyes grew large and his jaw dropped. Nearby, the curious male guest's face assumed the same expression.

The clerk finally cleared his throat and rasped, "She owns the hotel?"

The new manager seemed to have a hard time nodding, but finally got his head to move up and down.

Jy-ying came around the reception desk and told the clerk, "I want your very best room."

The clerk looked back at the new manager, held his two palms up, and shrugged as though asking, "What am I to do?"

The manager hissed, "She owns the hotel," and added, "idiot."

The clerk turned to the mail slots, took out the key to a third floor room, and dropped it on the counter in front of Jy-ying. She picked it up and, smiling, told her new manager, "We do not hire surly desk clerks. Give him one week's notice. And his replacement better be free of this bias against Orientals, or I will hire a clerk from Chinatown."

As the manager's eyes widened and he paled, Jy-ying pulled the hotel register over to her, wrote the date and her former address in Tianjin, China, and her name *Khoo Jy-ying*, all in Chinese. Pleased with her calligraphy, she headed for the stairs. There seemed to be no bellhop around.

After getting settled in her room and using the bathroom at the end of the hall, Jy-ying reread the papers that had been sent to her, underlining crucial facts and writing marginal comments on the most important ones. Then she placed them next to the water pitcher and bowl on the chest of drawers. Puffing up the feather pillows on the bed, she lay down, picked up *The Saturday Evening Post*, and leafed to the cover article. She began to read.

"No, I do not believe it," came out involuntarily five minutes later.

"This cannot be true," soon followed.

"*Ta ma de*—Oh, shit! What universe am I in? Did I get sent to the wrong one?"

After finishing the article, she sat up and leafed back to the beginning to reread its high points. Then, deep in thought, she dropped it next to her, rested her head on both hands, and closed her eyes tightly. For many minutes, only her rapidly beating heart revealed she was alive. Finally she sat up and tossed the magazine at the papers on the chest, almost knocking over the pitcher.

"Well, Shu Kuo and your brilliant scientists, where have you sent me? Huh?" She let out a deep sigh. "Everything is changed. Everything."

Chapter 4

January 21, 1905
St. Petersburg

Vladimir Knipovich

The tall priest grabbed Vladimir Knipovich by the arm and nodded toward a quiet corner of the shop where they could not be overheard by the other printers. He led Knipovich there, then turned his back on the shop floor, put his finger to his lips, and whispered, “Father Gapon sent me to tell you about tomorrow’s attack on the emperor’s Winter Palace.”

Knipovich was sure he hadn’t heard right—the priest had an awful Russian accent. *He must be an outlander.* Knipovich instinctively looked down on him. He raised his chin and patted the air with his ink-smearred right hand. “Attack?” He raised his voice. “You can’t mean attack. I was told we were to demonstrate peacefully there, and back up Father Gapon’s petition to our great emperor with holy and patriotic signs and songs.”

He quickly looked over the priest’s shoulder and lowered his voice. “This is only going to be a demonstration of our workers’ power. Yes?” Knipovich was head of St. Petersburg’s police-sanctioned Zubotov printer’s union, and a member of Gapon’s *soberanie*—The Assembly—as were almost all the workers here, now.

The priest leaned close to Knipovich. “No,” he whispered. “We are getting enough rifles, pistols, and grenades for thousands, and a captain, a secret social democrat, promised that his artillery company will come over to our side and barrage the Imperial Guards if they interfere. More troops have promised to join when we show our commitment. We plan to take the Winter Palace and declare that St. Petersburg is ours and that Russia is a constitutional monarchy. We will win.”

Knipovich stood paralyzed, gaping at the priest. “Are you sure?” he finally asked. “When will my union be armed?”

“You must be patient,” the priest replied. “There are so many people—about two hundred thousand—that, even with all the arms we have, not everyone, nor even every union, will get them. If we do not

have enough for you, be ready to take up the arms of the troops and police we shoot down.” He gripped Knipovich’s shoulder. “I must go now; I have many people to inform.”

Automatically Knipovich blurted what he should have suppressed: “No, I will not do this. It is treason. I love the emperor.”

The priest nodded and tightened his grip. “I know. We all do. But you must understand that we are saving him from the Jew social democrats and revolutionaries. They are getting ready to bring him down and declare a socialist state. Gapon, as you know, is only interested in reforms in working conditions, and national representation in a duly elected Duma. If we win, the emperor will still be our Loving Father; if we lose, if we are unwilling to be bloodied, the revolutionaries will win, and he may lose his head on a chopping block. You must understand what is at stake. Do you?”

Now in control of his reaction, Knipovich nodded and filled his “Yes!” with enthusiasm.

The priest released Knipovich. As he turned to go, his green eyes flashed, and he raised his fist. “Tomorrow, victory is ours!”

Knipovich watched the priest hurry away. When he was sure that the priest could no longer see him over his shoulder, he let the smirk fill his face. *All these years, all these risks as an agent provocateur for the Okhrana now will pay off. They will reward me well when I tell Major Fedotov what Gapon plans.*

He rushed for a different exit from the one the priest used.

Prince and General Vasil’chikov

Prince Vasil’chikov studied the details of his final disposition of the Guards, troops, and Cossacks for the upcoming mass petition in front of the emperor’s Winter Palace. His Highness was not about to let that *kozol* priest Gapon get away with threatening the palace and himself, even if the emperor was currently at Tzarskoje Selo. The Winter Palace symbolized too much for the Russian people to be sullied by Gapon and his stupid radical demands for, among other things, an eight-hour workday and an elected constituent assembly. These radical workers had to be shown the power of the czar in blood, if they refused to disperse when officially ordered to do so.

He was just about to add to his written orders that his troops be given live ammunition and vodka in the evening when Grand Duke

Vladimir, commander of the St. Petersburg military district and uncle of the emperor, opened Prince Vasil'chikov's door without knocking. He strode across the office and around the prince's desk, then leaned over him with his hands on his hips. His round face was red, and he was puffing hard. His eyes blazed as he tried to get his words out.

"Do you know what that traitor Gapon plans for tomorrow?" he finally yelled. "He is arming his followers and they are going to attack the Winter Palace and proclaim a republic." Spittle flew out of his mouth. "He was once one of our agents, but he has turned. He was supposed to lead a peaceful, patriotic demonstration." Duke Vladimir took a deep breath and shouted, "You must stop them."

Prince Vasil'chikov stared, eyes wide. The normal hubbub in the outer office cut off as though guillotined. Only the heavy breathing of the duke broke the sudden silence.

Vasil'chikov jumped to his feet, almost hitting the duke with his shoulder, and hurried to close his office door. He returned to stand in front of the duke and asked, trying to keep his voice respectful, "Are you sure? Someone must be lying to you."

The duke took a step back and shook his head so vigorously, his upper body jerked with the movement. "No, no. The Okhrana has an agent near the top. He got personal word from one of Gapon's priests, telling him about Gapon's plans, and that thousands of arms are being handed out for the attack. The *sosat'* has betrayed us."

The duke's face turned even redder. He banged the desktop with a huge fist and shouted, "There's a mutiny. *Blin!* A mutiny. One of the artillery companies is going over to the revolutionaries. You should shoot them all tonight."

"Which company?"

"I don't know. Does it matter? You can't have that many artillery companies ready for action tomorrow. Shoot them all." The duke rubbed his fist, then pointed a finger at Vasil'chikov. "You must stop this attack. I guarantee you, the emperor will support what you do, no matter the cost in blood."

"The Okhrana will have agents with guns mixed among the revolutionaries. When the attack begins, they will shoot the leaders." The duke held up his hand. "Do not worry about them. They know they risk being shot by your troops. They are all volunteers willing to die for the emperor. In case they miss Gapon, I want you to assign your best marksman to kill him."

Prince Vasil'chikov asked, "What about Police Director Lopukhin?"

"I'm on my way to see him next."

Duke Vladimir stared at Vasil'chikov through narrowed eyes for several seconds, then nodded, turned abruptly, and marched to the door. He jerked it open against its stop. Vasil'chikov listened to the duke's boots drumming through the still silent outer office until the duke slammed its outer door.

He quickly closed his own office door and sat down at his desk. Brows furrowed, he tore up the orders he had written. He unlocked his desk drawer and took out ten sheets of sealed and embossed imperial paper. He thought for several seconds, then began to lay out the new troop depositions around the palace and on the approaching avenues for the Horse, Finnish Life, Preobrazhenskii, Chevalier, Pavlovskii, and Imperial Guards; and almost twenty-two battalions of infantry, twenty-three squadrons of cavalry, and nearly nine hundred Cossacks. All told, he had about nine thousand infantry and thirty-nine hundred cavalry at his disposal, but even so, he worried whether they would be nearly enough against a hundred thousand or more raging civilians, many with weapons.

He put one sheet aside. It was to contain his secret order to arrest the men making up his two companies of artillery. He would investigate their loyalty later. He was not going to execute them out of hand, and he was sure that Duke Vladimir would see the wisdom of that when he cooled down.

Chapter 5

*Eight volleys from the Neva
And the Ninth
Tired, like glory
This is—
(From left and right
Already running at a trot)
This is—
(In the distance they cry:
We will yet avenge the massacre)
This is the tearing apart
Of the Joints
Of oaths
To the dynasty sworn.
— Boris Pasternak, “1905”*

January 23, 1905
Geneva

Lev Davydovich Bronstein

Steam billowed around the locomotive as the snow-shrouded train from Munich slowed to a crawl and finally hissed to a stop in the Cornavin train station. Within seconds, passengers stepped down from the cars and streamed toward the concessions and the vast exit. No one knew—indeed, no one would believe—that the thin, clerkish-looking man among them, the one with goatee, wire rimmed glasses perched high on his Jewish nose and no hat to cover his mass of unruly black hair, would be the dictator of Russia within a year. He would lead the Red Army in a bloody civil war and become known as the Red Butcher.

Clad in a long black coat, Bronstein, or Lvov as he called himself, lugged a large, beat-up suitcase in one hand and carried in the other several books with torn paper markers sticking out of their pages. He was exhausted. He was returning to Geneva after a hurried lecture tour, which had included an appearance in the great hall of the Polytechnic

Institute in St. Petersburg weeks before, and had spent a sleepless night on the train. He soon had to stop to put the suitcase down and readjust the books in his hand.

Nearby, a newsboy in knickers with a haversack of newspapers over his shoulder held up one and waved it at the crowd. "*Révolution en Russie*—Revolution in Russia," he cried in French in a squeaky voice, and then repeated it in German.

Heart beating fast, Lvov suddenly found the energy to lift the suitcase and hurry over to the paperboy. "Hold the paper still, will you," he demanded. He then saw that it was dated the day before, and the energy went out of him like air from a pricked balloon. He bought a copy anyway, and sat on his suitcase to read the old news.

Seven days ago, all thirteen thousand workers at the Putilov arms works went on strike; two days later, twenty-six thousand workers were out, and voted for radical political reforms, especially democracy; and just three days ago, 105,000 workers went on strike. What was new was that yesterday, just before the paper was published, 111,000 workers struck, and a huge demonstration of workers, soldiers, professionals, and businessmen led by Father Georgii Gapon was about to take place in front of the czar's St. Petersburg Winter Palace.

The headline exaggerated. This was the buildup to the revolution, but there was yet no spark to set it off. He hoped the troops guarding the palace would—had, since it already occurred—attack the demonstrators. Perhaps too much to hope for.

Tired as he was, he decided to go right to the Bolshevik center in Geneva, which stood on the corner of the Rue de Carouge and the Arve embankment. There, the Bolshevik *Vperyod*—*Forward* editorial and dispatch offices, the Lepeshinskys' Bolshevik restaurant, and the apartments of leading Russian emigrants and Bolsheviks were concentrated.

When he reached the station exit on Rue du Mont-Blanc, there was only one taxi left, a victoria hitched to a swaybacked hack. Bronstein gave the driver the address; when he arrived he paid the driver, lugged out his suitcase and, carefully so they would not fall into the sludge, he pulled out his books. As he turned to enter the building's portico, a strange man suddenly appeared at his side.

"Here, let me help you with that," the man said in barely understandable Russian. He grabbed the suitcase from Bronstein's hand, mounted the stairs to the building, and put the case down on the cleared

area under the portico. Then he turned to Bronstein, who had hurried after him. His deep-set eyes were wide and shining with admiration as he asked, "Just to be sure—you *are* Lev Davydovich Bronstein?"

Bronstein tilted his head. Brows furrowed, he stared at the man. Assassinations by the Okhrana were occurring with frightening regularity, as were the assassinations of high officials by the revolutionaries. The man towered over him; as far as he could see, the strong-jawed stranger was heavysset, perhaps very muscular under his fur-trimmed coat. He looked about Bronstein's age—mid-twenties. He had carried the heavy suitcase as though it were filled with feathers. But the devotion in his face was obvious—hardly the look of an assassin. Anyway, Bronstein reasoned, he was unarmed and there was nothing he could do now.

He nervously answered, "Yes."

The man grabbed Bronstein's left hand with both of his and shook it. "This is the happiest moment of my life. To meet you and help you achieve your revolutionary program has been my dream. Come, let us go to your favorite cafe and I will tell you what happened with Gapon's demonstration in Saint Petersburg. It's now called Bloody Sunday." When Bronstein hesitated, he added, "I am rich; I want to bankroll your revolutionary success."

The man picked up the suitcase and started down the stairs. Still holding his books in one hand, Bronstein stared slack-jawed for several seconds, his other hand hovering over his chest. Finally he shook himself and rushed down the stairs to catch up with the stranger, who was already several yards down the concrete sidewalk.

"Who are you?" Bronstein yelled at him.

"A supporter," he answered. "A believer."

A block away, they entered the émigré Café Landolt, where Bolsheviks gathered almost every evening. The stranger led the way to an empty table in the back, where the gas- and candlelight barely penetrated. It was stuffy, warm, and smoky inside the café; the man took off his black overcoat and threw it over a chair before seating himself.

Bronstein did the same with his greatcoat and, dropping down on the chair across from the stranger, he blurted, "What happened in St. Petersburg?"

A round tub of a man in a leather apron approached their table through the smoke, and Bronstein motioned for the stranger to wait until they gave their order. Once the waiter departed with their order for *Kvass*—imported Russian beer—Bronstein looked at the stranger and raised his eyebrows.

“The revolution—the revolution is now!” the stranger exclaimed, raising two fists and shaking them. Bronstein listened carefully to what the stranger said next, ignoring the mispronunciations and filling in the broken Russian. “The czar’s troops around the Winter Palace and on its approaches lost their heads. It was a massacre. The demonstrators numbered about 140,000—mainly workers and their families, with a scattering of professionals and students. They had no weapons; they were told by Gapon’s organizers not even to carry a knife or brass knuckles. What they did carry was church banners, portraits of the czar, Russian flags, holy icons, signs with medals affixed to them, peace signs, and signs asserting faith in the czar mixed in with signs demanding a decent wage, eight-hour workday, land, freedom, and so on. The workers dressed in their Sunday best and made it a family affair, bringing along their wives and children. Nothing revolutionary.”

“Yes, yes,” Bronstein commented, “we tried to organize them, but they would not listen to us. All they want is better working conditions and pay. They love the czar.”

The stranger nodded. “Then you will not be surprised to hear that the workers not only refused to allow many revolutionaries to participate, they beat up some of them when they tried to pass out leaflets or shouted revolutionary slogans in the crowd. No matter. On the roads and bridges to the Winter Palace, troops blocked the way and opened fire when the workers refused to turn around.”

Leaning forward on the table, unaware that his glasses had slipped down to the edge of his nose, Bronstein asked, “What troops? Fired? Where?”

The stranger pulled several folded sheets that looked like telegrams from the inner pocket of his ill-fitting corduroy suit. He unfolded them and slid the candle close so he could read them. “Let’s see,” he said. “Oh, yes; I should point out that it was a bright, sunny, bitterly cold day—the temperature was about 5 degrees, the air was clear, good for shooting.”

He picked up one sheet and held it close to the flame to read it. “When a mass of sixteen thousand demonstrators on the way to the Winter Palace tried to cross the bridge over the Obvodnyi Canal, they were blocked by an infantry unit and two hundred mounted Cossacks. An officer shouted that the crowd could not cross the bridge. After the workers refused to stop, the Cossacks attacked with whips and the flat of their sabers and used their horses to trample them. But the Cossacks

only succeeded in creating temporary open spaces in the huge crowd, which continued to surge forward. Many workers in the front ranks pleaded that they were peaceful and only wanted to petition the czar.

“As the crowd pressed toward the line of infantry, their commander gave the order to fire on them. A bugler sounded the signal, and the troops fired a volley directly into the crowd. Many in the front ranks collapsed, some screaming. Amidst the bodies, the crowd reformed, some yelling to others, ‘Do not betray us.’ Some opened their coats to bare their chests and shouted, ‘I will die for the emperor.’ They must have thought the troops were betraying the czar’s sympathy for his people.

“Several more volleys were fired into the crowd, and the area in front of the bridge and the approach along Shlissel’burg embankment was filled with still bodies, pools of blood and swaths of red in the snow and on the ice, and crying, wailing, groaning, wounded men, women, and children. Some tried to crawl away. Some raised their heads or hands in pleas for help. Some yelled, ‘There is no God any longer’ and ‘There is no czar.’”

The stranger picked up another paper, and lowered his voice to an incredulous whisper. “Another huge mass of workers on the way to the bridges over the Neva were blocked by soldiers. Some of the workers waved white handkerchiefs to show their peaceful intent. Worker representatives asked the commanding officer permission to pass, but he ordered mounted Cossacks to disperse the crowd with their whips and sabers. When that did not break up the crowd, he ordered his troops into firing position, but when the bugle sounded they refused to fire. So he used the Cossacks again . . . and again. Many more bodies; even more wounded.”

Another paper. “A large mass of workers was led by Father Gapon. As it advanced along Peterhof Chausee, it appeared to be a celebratory religious procession, what with the many crosses and religious icons the crowd carried. They also held up a large banner that read, *Soldiers! Do not shoot at the people.* The crowd turned toward the Narva Arch and the bridge over the Tarakanovka River. It was blocked by a line of infantry.

“As the tightly packed crowd of marchers approached, the infantry parted, and a squadron of Horse Grenadier Guards attacked them with sabers. Protected by the workers around him, Gapon yelled out, ‘Be brave. Forward, comrades! Freedom or death.’ Singing bravely, the crowd continued to move toward the bridge, and two companies of the

Ninety-third Irkutsk Infantry Regiment. The bugle sounded 'fire' three separate times, but the troops would not obey. Finally, on the next order, the troops fired into the air. Demonstrators kept coming. When the crowd was almost upon them, the troops fired directly into the tightly packed mass of people. Screams and yells rang out as the bullets downed many in the front ranks.

"Again, the bugle sounded. Another volley into the crowd. And the bugle again, and still another volley, and another and another and yet another, until both companies had emptied their box magazines. Dead and wounded lay everywhere, Gapon among them, with a hole in the back of his head."

The stranger's hand shook as he picked up another paper, and a corner almost caught fire as he brought it close to the candle to read. "At the Troitskaia Square by the Peter Paul fortress, a different procession of workers was attacked by mounted ulans who ripped into the crowd with sabers. This crowd did flee, and dispersed into side streets. But later, another huge crowd, involving some of the same workers, approached Troitskaia Bridge. Arm in arm, they walked toward the three companies of Pavlovskii Guards blocking their way. When the crowd would not halt, the commanding officer ordered his infantry to attack them with fixed bayonets. The workers retreated and fled. More bodies; more gravely wounded."

Another paper. "A different crowd of workers, estimated at over twenty thousand—the largest of them all—later approached the same Troitskaia Square on their way to the palace. They also faced the line of the Pavlovskii Guards, with a company of Grenadier Guards held in reserve. A bugle sounded, and troops fired a volley into the crowd.

"Bugle again. Another volley.

"Bugle. Volley. And ulans charged into the fleeing crowd, their deadly sabers swinging mercilessly, their horses trampling the dead and wounded."

Bronstein felt his stomach constrict. He leaned out of his chair and put his hand on the pile of remaining papers before the stranger could pick up another. The dirty lenses of his eyeglasses spread the candle's red flame across the telegrams like blood. His head ached. "What about the Palace Square?" he croaked. "Did any workers get there?"

"Yes. Let me read the telegram."

Bronstein removed his hand and hunched far back in his chair.

The stranger leafed through the papers and picked out one. He held it up to the flame, the shaking of his hand now evidently under control.

“The square that fronted the green and white Winter Palace, the buildings of the Imperial Army General Staff, the Admiralty, and Royal Guards’ General Staff was guarded by regiment after regiment of Guards and other troops, as well as Cossacks. They were placed to prevent any access to the square.

“By breaking into small groups and using side streets, or walking on the ice over the Neva to avoid the bridges, tens of thousands of the workers finally reached the Palace Square and collected in adjoining streets. They were peaceful; many shouted that they were there to present their petition to the czar, to see the czar, to achieve justice and establish their rights. They waited for Gapon to arrive with the religious procession to present their petition to the czar. They did not believe they would be shot down in front of the palace. They were the czar’s workers. He was their Father. He would hear their plea.

“Many were yet unaware that others on their way to the square had been shot and killed, or cut down, by the czar’s troops, but word began to spread from the survivors who had reached the square. Many did not believe what they heard.

“The military commander decided to start clearing away the crowd, beginning at the Aleksandrovskaia Gardens that flanked the square. First he sent cavalry armed with whips and the flat of their sabers. The crowd only milled around, keeping a good distance from the horses. This attack made credible what many had heard about the shootings. The crowd began to shout and taunt the troops.

“Prince Vasil’chikov sent a direct order to the commander to shoot the demonstrators. At the bugle call, the front line of Guards dropped to one knee and aimed, then fired a lethal volley into the crowd. Another bugle call launched another volley. The crowd scattered in waves, surging first in one direction and then another to escape the bullets.

“The troops in front of the Admiralty building parted to reveal the navy’s Maxim machine guns. Machine gunners opened fire, spraying their bullets into the fleeing workers, killing men, women, children, bystanders, tea sellers in the gardens, ice skaters on the nearby pond, and police indiscriminately. When the firing stopped, the commander unleashed the Cossacks, who systematically cut and slashed at those still alive in or near the square, and steered their horses to pound with their hooves those on the ground.”

The stranger threw down the paper, fisted one hand, and slammed the other flat on the table, drawing the attention of those seated nearby

and causing Bronstein to jump. "This will be known as Bloody Sunday," he hissed. "No count of the dead could be made, but they must be in the thousands."

He shook his fist. When he continued, his voice apparently trembled with righteous anger. "The workers could not believe what happened to them. But when it sank in that the czar's troops had shot at them in front of his—Russia's—home, they were enraged. They turned into a rampaging, riotous mob, attacking small groups of police and soldiers on the streets and burning government buildings. They built barricades, and the few who had weapons used them.

"Most important, comrade—" the stranger emphasized his words with his fist—"they now are listening to what the revolutionaries have to say. The workers want leadership. But, as yet, there is none. Gapon is dead; most of his staff are dead. Gapon's alliance of hundreds of thousands of workers is now an unorganized mob willing to fight and die. They now are a revolutionary army."

He leaned back, relaxed his hands, and stared for a moment into Bronstein's eyes. Bronstein felt horror and hope rip his face in different directions.

The stranger continued in a level voice. "The city is now locked up in a general strike. All major unions, even the police's counterrevolutionary Zubatov unions, have walked off the job. Trains are not running; no one can send or receive telegrams, except those permitted by our comrades. Telephone operators have walked out, food is not being delivered into the city, electricity has been shut off to government districts, and it is a ghost town. In Russia's major cities, about half a million strikers are out. But, while small groups of soldiers and sailors have mutinied, palace guards and other regiments have remained loyal, and so has the navy."

The stranger pushed the candle away and leaned on his elbows toward Bronstein. "This will change. You now have your trigger event for the revolution. As word of this huge massacre reaches Moscow and other Russian cities, the general strike will spread."

It seemed the stranger had wanted to introduce an optimistic tone into his words, but they came out guttural, like a German trying to pronounce French for the first time. Nevertheless, Bronstein clearly understood. He finally choked out, "That is what I've hoped to hear for a year, but I often thought I never would."

Even in the semidarkness of the café, Bronstein could see that the stranger's face was alight with anticipation. Bronstein himself could

not keep his hands still; he picked up his beer, set it down, and slid it in a circle on the scarred tabletop. "Yes, yes," he exclaimed, waving northeastward, in the direction of St. Petersburg. "This is it. I must go to St. Petersburg immediately. But, it may be hopeless. Many more will die; we may fail unless the soldiers mutiny. We don't have the guns."

The stranger seemed to have been waiting for Bronstein to say something like that. He reached across the table and put his hand on Bronstein's arm, and told him, "I have the funds for you to purchase what you need. I am rich, as I mentioned, and I am a revolutionary socialist, a Bolshevik, and your ardent supporter."

At the word "Bolshevik," Bronstein raised his eyebrows. In the internecine struggle among the revolutionary groups, Bronstein had only recently joined the minority Bolsheviks and their leader Lenin.

The stranger leaned both elbows on the table and locked eyes with Bronstein. He said in the clearest, simplest Russian, "I will give you fifty million rubles for guns. Is this enough?"

Bronstein's jaw dropped; he knew his eyebrows were reaching for his fur cap. The rest of his body sat frozen in the chair. The stranger waited, his eyes still locked on Bronstein's. When Bronstein finally spoke, he said apologetically, "*Prastite*—I'm sorry, your Russian accent is difficult to understand. How much did you say?"

The stranger gestured for Bronstein to wait a moment. He pulled the candle close, and took out a small notebook and pencil. He tore out a piece of paper and wrote down *50.000.000*, then handed the paper to Bronstein.

He stared at the figure in the candlelight. "You are giving us that much?" he gasped. "It is a fortune." He narrowed his eyes, pursed his lips, and stroked his goatee for a moment, then looked up to stare at the stranger, whose eyes were in deep shadow. His whole face looked satanic. Bronstein had been horrified by the massacres, then ecstatic over the revolutionary potential now unleashed. Now he felt as though he had been thrown down a cliff. "All that is a trick," Bronstein threw at the stranger, waving at the pile of papers still on the table.

Bronstein jumped up, ready to leave. "You are an agent. Who are you working for?"

The stranger quickly leaned over the table. Holding one palm flat out toward Bronstein, he gently pushed him back down with the other. "*Pa-ver' mne*—believe me. I will prove it to you. Just check out the bank account that I created for you."

Bronstein stared.

The stranger tore out a page from his notebook on which he had already written something, added it to a folded sheet of paper from his inner pocket, and held them toward Bronstein.

He slowly reached out and took them as though he was being offered a huge diamond. He held the notepaper next to the candle to read the name of the Darier Hentsch & Cie Bank in Geneva, the numbered account at the bank, and the account's name and password.

Bronstein slowly put the papers down. He struggled to merely smile. He felt like jumping up and doing a jig. And yet, this could not be. It was too much money to be true. The doubt hung on. He asked, "You have done this for us?"

"Yes," the stranger answered. "You have all the information you need to check the account at the bank. It is only a twenty minute walk from here. Then, you can withdraw what you want at your own pace for buying the weapons you need. I'm sure you can buy many of them secretly from Russian manufacturers such as the Putiloff munitions factory, but with that much money, you no doubt can persuade some arms merchants to export to you what you need."

Bronstein shook his head. "I'm an intellectual, a writer, an organizer. I don't know how to do this. I have never bought or carried a gun. I know nothing about guns."

The stranger pointed at the folded sheet of paper that Bronstein had set aside. "On that paper are the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of the Frenchman Eugène Schneider and his major competitor, the German House of Krupp. They both have been supplying the czar, but tend to be apolitical. I imagine you can interest them in your money, especially if you let them secretly transport the arms into Russia for you, and promise an exclusive arms contract when you establish your revolutionary government. Bloody Sunday should give your revolution credibility. Use your people in Paris and Berlin for the contacts.

"I trust you. I have studied you, going back to your birth in 1879 in the village of Yanovka, Kherson Province, to the gymnasium you attended in Odessa, the St. Paul *realschule*—high school, and your revolutionary activities and theories up to now. I know your writings. I especially believe in your theory of permanent world revolution. I agree that the revolution must be spread to other countries, or it will never be secure in Russia. Moreover, you are a well-organized person, and know well how to respond to emergencies and opportunities. You are a leader, and I have no doubt you will effectively and efficiently use these funds."

Bronstein picked up his warm beer, then put it back down. He rubbed his hand on the rough wooden tabletop. He crossed his legs and uncrossed them. All the while, his eyes moved back and forth between the stranger and the figure on the notepaper. He took a deep breath, and let it out slowly. He still had his doubts. "Okay, I am sure that this is either a practical joke or a trick. I will check with the bank. There is too much at stake to fear looking like a fool or being arrested again."

The noise in the café had increased to such an extent that Bronstein leaned across the table to be sure the stranger heard him. When he nodded, Bronstein then looked around to see what was happening.

The café had filled with men and a few women, and they yelled excitedly back and forth. Some were passing around telegrams they must have received from St. Petersburg. Bronstein caught some of the words: "Massacre . . . the revolution has begun . . . faith in the czar torn apart . . . tyranny shall fall . . . the people shall rise up . . . powerful and free . . . leaving for Moscow . . ."

Bronstein forgot about his doubts over the money. He felt fired up about the revolution all over again. Turning back to the stranger, he said in a voice charged with excitement, "The people from *Vperyod* are here. They must be passing the word. There is Martov and Lenin, and . . . oh, his wife Krupskaya is with him. The Lunacharskayas are here—"

"Listen," the stranger said.

Grim-faced people at a nearby table had begun singing the revolutionary funeral march, *You Have Fallen in the Struggle*, and its solemn refrain was being picked up by others. Soon it filled the café. Bronstein and the green-eyed stranger joined in.

Chapter 6

November 14, 1906
San Francisco

Joy Phim

The green-striped cab bounced over ruts and potholes as it took John and Joy to a hotel recommended by Hands Reeves, a hotel he and his teammates had used when he was a catcher for the San Francisco Seals. He was one of the three squatters in the empty warehouse where their time machine had landed hours ago. John had hired him and the other two, Sal Garcia and Dolphy Docker, as the first employees of the Tor Import & Export Company that John planned to create as a cover for their foreign interventions.

They were all together in the horse-drawn cab. Joy, seated next to John, was dressed in a cloth cape over a “lady’s” white satin waist—really a shirt, with a wide collar held tight at the throat with an imitation silk bow, the waist tucked into a blue “short lady’s” mixed cotton and wool walking skirt with a flounced bottom. No corset—she would go naked first. She had her hair up in a large bun on top of her head and partly covered by a wide-brimmed hat trimmed with folded lace, imitation flowers, and white egret feathers sticking out at the side.

She kept looking at John out of the corner of her eye. He looked so funny in his clothes of the age. He had on a blue diagonally-worsted coat, all-wool gray pinstripe pants, black boots and, under his coat, a long-sleeved white madras shirt with a separate linen collar, around which he’d knotted a maroon bow tie. That amused her the most.

A bow tie. On my John. Doesn’t fit him. A red cowboy bandana around his neck would better suit him.

Then there was his cocky-looking Fedora. That was different. With its slight tilt to the side that revealed blonde curls, he did look like a lady killer.

The three guys sat scrunched in the narrow seat across from them. They wore the cheap work clothes—denim, cotton worsted, and twilled sateen—of the time; Sal and Dolphy wore the popular golf cap, and Hands had a Bismarck-styled one. Not one of them would sit next to

Joy, although they would have had more room, and all three pretended they were looking out the window. But she caught them several times staring at her.

John had told them she was his assistant and translator, and that they were moving their company from New York to San Francisco. He explained her job as handling their business with Asia, and since she was Oriental—Sino-Vietnamese, she always corrected—and spoke Chinese and Japanese, she had a very important role to play in the company.

Since John and she had unwittingly changed their clothes behind the supply capsules while the guys waited for them, they would have been stupid not to recognize an intimate relationship between the two. So she understood why she saw more in their looks than simple attraction. It was more like appraisal.

It was early in the morning, with a light fog yet to retreat north, and the streets were crowded with people on their way to work or late in bringing goods in from the country for the various markets. Farm wagons, carts, carriages, horse riders, automobiles—or what some called motor cars—and bicycles crowded the street, and added a stench of horse manure, urine, livestock, exhaust fumes, and unwashed bodies to the fog. A funk common in all major cities of this era.

Apparently entranced by his first glimpse of a period he had only read about, John stared out the side window, unbothered by the stink. Joy was. She kept twitching her nose over the awful smell of this world, which its inhabitants seemed not to notice. “They all must have had their noses seared at birth,” she muttered to herself.

She again swung her hand across her face, trying to bat away the flies that had invaded the bouncing buggy, and kept landing on her nose. She couldn’t believe that John could sit relaxed as he was, with these flies and the reeking streets. *He must have an invisible clothes pin on his nose.* With a little grin, she glanced at John. *Of course, he has that Caucasian body odor. That will keep the flies away. I’d better not tell him that, though. He’ll use it to avoid taking a bath.*

“Hey Jo—Miss Phim,” John said, and pointed to the Stanley steamer passing them driven by a man wearing goggles, a plaid cap, a fur-collared cape, and a blue and red scarf that circled his neck and blew behind him. “Straight out of a period British movie.”

John missed the kiosk on a corner that was revealed as the steamer passed on. Joy did not. She gasped, and immediately yelled, “Stop the cab.”

In this era, such a shout from a woman was a command. Hands stuck his head out of his window and yelled at the driver, "Stop. Stop!"

The driver reined in his two Morgan horses and pulled on his hand brake. He ignored the cussing farmer who suddenly had to jerk his wagon around the cab to avoid it, his equally unhappy horse almost bolting.

John stared with raised eyebrows at Joy. She asked Hands as soon as he sat back and looked at her, "How far is it to the hotel from here?"

Hands stuck his head out of the buggy and looked down the street. "About a block or two."

Suddenly remembering her female place in this era, and that John was supposed to be her boss, she turned to him and asked, "Can we get out here? There is something," and she emphasized the last word, "that I want to show you at the kiosk we passed. Then, if you like, we can walk to the hotel from here." After five weeks of lovemaking and her martial arts training, she knew he understood the look she gave him.

John studied her face for a moment. With a dimple forming at the corner of his mouth, he responded, "Well, Miss Phim, that is truly alert of you. It justifies my hiring you as my assistant and translator. I know that you yelled for the cab to stop because you didn't have time to get my permission. So, I will ignore it. Well now, shall we all depart?" He looked at Hands, who seemed amused. "How much will the cab cost?"

Joy blurted, "Are you going to buy the cab . . . Boss?"

Hands looked at Joy, then, shaking his head, he looked at John.

John's dimple had gotten deeper. "For the ride, Hands."

"Maybe twenty-five cents."

John reached into his change pocket for a fifty cent coin, and gave it to Hands. "Tell the driver to keep the change."

Once they were all out of the cab, John stiffened his back and strode back to the kiosk, letting the others follow him a pace or two behind. There he saw the piles of newspapers, and picked out the *San Francisco Chronicle* and *Call*.

Catching up to him, Joy surreptitiously stuck her satin-covered elbow in his side, and pointed to the cover of the November 10, 1906, issue of *The Saturday Evening Post*. "My God! I wasn't mistaken," she exclaimed.

John looked where she was pointing, froze for a moment, and then grabbed the magazine from its upright wire holder. He hastily opened the magazine to read the cover article. He didn't even hear the gray-bearded vendor yell, "Hey, you didn't pay me."

Joy understood John's distraction, but she wasn't going to miss the opportunity to get even. She put her hand over the page he was trying to read and said, not trying to hide the pleasure in her voice, "Hey, boss man, you didn't pay for the magazine and newspapers."

John mumbled something, and asked, "How much?"

"A nickel for the magazine, two for both papers. Can't you read the signs?"

John reached into his pants pocket, drew out another fifty cent piece, and absently tossed it to the man, who had to catch it before it slid off the newspapers onto the wet ground.

Joy stepped on John's boot, and when he looked at her, she nodded toward the three guys, who were staring at them. As time went by, they regarded their new boss more and more as if they were watching a circus.

John cleared his throat. Motioning to Hands, he said, "Please lead the way to the hotel."

He walked beside Hands to the hotel, his head buried in the article. *He must be guiding himself by radar*, Joy guessed. She walked behind them with Dolphy and Sal next to her. Soon, putting his hand up to his mouth to hide what he was going to say from John, Sal asked in a low voice, "Is the boss always like that?"

With "that" undefined, Joy thought of the alternatives. *Preoccupied? Funny? Unbossy?* Unconsciously, she shifted into her own descriptions. *Loving? Handsome? Rugged, tolerant*— She stopped herself and shook her head to clear it. "What do you mean, Mr. Garcia?" she asked quietly.

"Sal. Please call me Sal. The last woman who called me a mister stole my wallet."

"I'm Joy, Sal. I think your wallet is safe from me," she said. As color began to creep over Sal's face, she asked, "What did you mean by 'that?'"

Sal frowned. "What's 'that?'"

Joy gave him a long look. "You're pulling my leg."

Sal grinned, and for the first time Joy saw that tight little grin of his, almost a subdued leer. "Can I?"

Joy burst out laughing, causing Hands to glance back at her. She was enjoying this. Sal would probably be her favorite among the guys. "Can you what, Sal?"

"Pull your leg?"

"You can try, but only if you let me know first where you want to be buried. Now, Sal, what is the 'that' in your question, 'Is the boss always like that?'"

"Nothing."

“Sal!”

“Oh, okay. Does he always give away money like he did to the cab driver and the newspaper man? ‘Keep the change,’ he says. When I get my ten dollars for the week, I hope he gives me a C-note and says, ‘Keep the change.’”

Still smiling, she responded, “I’ve found him very generous, Sal.”

He looked slyly at her out of the corner of his eye. “You must know him *very* well.”

“What are you saying, Sal? Really?”

Sal seem taken aback by Joy’s directness. He got a look of innocence on his face. “Nothing. Only that you worked for him in New York and came here with him. So,” and he let the word linger, “you must know him well.

“Ah . . . what does that finger mean, Joy?”

John

John scanned enough of the *Post* article to mentally exclaim, *It is simply impossible. Impossible. Yet this article is written as though it’s true. I bet it’s one of those spoofs that occasionally some crackpot writer gets published, then, when people are falling over themselves about it, he smugly declares it’s all fiction.*

When John almost ran into a pole, Hands pointed to a hotel a short distance away and, to get his attention, said, “That’s it.”

John reluctantly lowered the *Post* and took a look. The hotel had three stories, and a large marquee with the word *Fairfax* written on a big vertical sign above it. When he entered the hotel with the others behind him, he noticed that the smell in the hotel lobby was not much better than that in the streets. No doubt the two spittoons, one of them located by the registration desk, were making their contribution. And the heavy odor of cigar smoke also added to what flowed in the high front doors when they were opened. He wondered if Joy would notice and glanced at her. She was twitching her nose. *Must be itching*, he thought. *Why doesn’t she scratch it?*

He asked the registration clerk for adjacent rooms for two, and waved toward Joy as the second person. The clerk wore a sour look, and seemed to be looking past them into the lobby. John waited. The clerk finally registered him and with a half-hidden, hostile look, the clerk shoved the registration book to Joy. John put it down to this era’s bias against Orientals.

Joy stared at the registration book. “Look at this,” she told John. “Beautiful Chinese calligraphy. It’s a Khoo Jy-ying in room 305. She’s from Tianjin, China. I want to talk to her as soon as I can. What an opportunity. She may be a contact for our company in China.”

John responded absently, “I’ll leave that to you. You’ll probably want to practice your rusty Chinese.” His mind was still full of what he had read in the *Post* article, and he was in too much of a hurry to return to it to note the three guys waiting for his instructions.

As they were turning to go to their rooms, Joy put her hand on his arm, pointed to the registration book, and said, “You forgot something.” When he turned and looked down at the book, she whispered, “The guys don’t have a place to sleep.”

“Oh, yes.” John turned to the guys standing about five feet away. “You were all living in the warehouse. Well, you’re my employees now, and I won’t have that.” He turned back to the desk clerk and told him, “Give these good fellows each a nice room.”

As he and Joy headed for the stairs with their suitcases, he turned back to them and said, “The cost is on the company. Please meet us in the hotel restaurant at six. Okay?” When they nodded, looking as though they’d won a jackpot without knowing they’d even had a ticket, John turned back toward the stairs.

As Joy passed by Sal, he asked, “Is he always like *that*?”

“Enjoy it, Sal.”

John heard her and asked, “What was that about?”

Joy gave a little grin. “Just small talk between coworkers.”

His eagerness to give the *Post* article a careful read increased with each step up the stairs. And he could not wait to discuss it with Joy. But he knew Joy—she would try to get it from him to read it first. He congratulated himself when he saw out of the corner of his eye that she was about to grab the magazine from under his arm, and folded it into his inside suit coat pocket with a flourish and a little smirk.

He did not see the Chinese woman sunk into one of the lobby’s plush Victorian chairs, staring back and forth between Joy and him. Nor did he see her rise to follow them up the stairs.

Chapter 7

October 21, 1905
St. Petersburg, Russia

Count Sergei Yulyevich Witte

Most cities have a flimsiness about them, a crowded insecurity, as though their tall buildings were thrown up to meet the fancy of a passing generation, and would soon be torn down with the next fad. Not so with St. Petersburg. It has a monumental feel, as though its buildings, like granite mountains, were made for the ages, made to withstand the worst of nature and humanity. Its buildings are mighty, its streets vast, its spaces open, its canals wide and curving as through planned as part of a gigantic park. And scattered throughout are palaces, museums, and schools, many with impressive domes and spires that add a graceful touch to the sold, yellow feel of the city. Yet, while the blue-green dome of the Turquoise Mosque and the gold spires reaching for the sky above the old Admiralty building and others are impressive, there is also a sadness, a falseness, about the magnificence.

It is artificial; it did not follow the natural evolution of a London, Paris, New York, or Moscow. It was built by Czar Peter Romanov, best known as Peter the Great, a tyrant fascinated by the West (and, oh yes, war as well). In 1703 he decided to build an impressive, Western-style capital city on unoccupied marshland in northern Russia. It would provide Russia with an outlet to the Gulf of Finland, thence to the Baltic Sea, and finally to the ocean. Such an outlet was his dream, since as a boy he had been enamored of sailing ships, and even had built one with his own hands.

With no regard for human life, he made virtual slaves of the workers, one hundred thousand of whom lost their lives in just one year alone. He ultimately had built thirty-five thousand buildings of granite and stone that spanned many islands, canals, and swamps. Just one, St. Isaac's Cathedral, used 220 pounds of gold and took forty years to build. Peter the Great did succeed in impressing visitors. Many hundreds of thousands of lives and decades later, after St. Petersburg was completed, no one could see the blood and bones, only the city—it became known as the Venice of the North.

Nevsky Prospect was one of the most impressive streets of all cities, but now, after ten months of massive strikes and street battles, the street was littered with the debris of revolution. On the street corners were the remains of barricades, scattered bricks, and concrete blocks, and the skeletons of overturned wagons, broken carts, sleds, and automobiles. In some places the street had been torn up to use the paving stones. There were no bodies anywhere, not even those of horses. But if one looked closely, some of the buildings' facades were pockmarked from bullets. Some buildings had been gutted by fire. Armed soldiers stood at some intersections, and black-coated militia and mounted, red-coated Cossacks roamed the side streets. Some major government buildings had wood and sandbagged redoubts in front of them, with bayoneted rifles poking over the top.

Traffic was nil on this late afternoon. Only a few wagons, coaches, and mounted horsemen braved the street, and few pedestrians dared walk its icy concrete sidewalks. No travelers wanted to be caught in another sudden outbreak of violence.

Nonetheless, two white horses pulled Count Sergei Yulyevich Witte in his caleche down Nevsky Prospect. Witte was the former finance minister and chairman of the Committee of Ministers. Now the emperor was seriously considering appointing him premier. But, Witte had promised himself, he would not accept the appointment unless the emperor permitted him to handle the revolutionary unrest his way.

Witte was scheduled for a meeting with the emperor the next day to detail his program, and had been consulting with influential high officials about it beforehand. *One more to go*, he thought, *but I think I almost know word for word what his responses will be. Still, it is important to seem to consult and listen.*

He believed the measures being taken against the surviving demonstrators, known social democrats, and strikers were too harsh. Torture, beatings, and summary executions in some cases were just increasing the opposition to the government, encouraging strike leaders and the revolutionaries, and alienating those liberals who still strongly supported the monarchy, but also wanted a Western-style representative government.

This had been a horrible month for the monarchy. Witte did not think it would survive the mass upheaval unless the government's response was deep reform. He shook his head and rubbed the back of his neck, sighing. *The vast majority of the people have gone mad.*

There had been a great wave of strikes and demonstrations in St. Petersburg and Moscow, including a total shutdown of publishers. And Witte found it hard to believe, but the evidence lying along the street was undeniable: there were frequent violent clashes with armed squads of revolutionaries. Shocking, the number of weapons the strikers had. In St. Petersburg alone, they had killed over three hundred Cossacks; over a hundred Cossacks in Moscow.

Witte shook his head. This was going on everywhere. In Revel, 2,300 killed; more thousands in Tomsk. And then Ivanovo-Voznesensk, Kharkov, Revel, Smolensk, Lodz, Minsk, Petersburg, Vilna, Kazan, Tiflis. Peasant uprisings. Another mutiny of sailors in Odessa that was a more dangerous repeat of the *Potemkin* mutiny in June.

Do pizdy—it's a fucked up situation.

He ran his hand over his receding hairline and then down his long thin face, stopping to stroke his black beard. Now, a national railroad strike had hit here, and in Moscow, Nizhnii-Novgorod, Ryazan, Yaroslavl, Kursk, and the Urals; the Okhrana reported that tomorrow it would reach Kiev and Voronezh, and strikers had shut down telephone and telegraph service throughout central Russia. Well over two million strikers. *I cannot believe it, but that is what the Okhrana just told the emperor.*

What to do? What to do? That stupid reactionary Trepov is urging the most drastic, bloody measures to end these strikes and unrest. Witte had warned the emperor not to appoint him assistant interior minister, but he had wanted a clampdown on "All these treasonous revolutionaries." When General Trepov asked him what to do with the twenty-three arrested after a shootout at the railroad station, he'd said, "Shoot them."

Ebanashka—stupid.

Witte's coachman steered the caleche into the wide inner courtyard of Piotr Arkadevich Stolypin's St. Petersburg home. He was governor of Saratov Province on the Volga River, had the ear of the emperor, who thought highly of him, and it was clear to Witte that at some time he would be appointed premier. He was in St. Petersburg at the request of the emperor to advise him on what to do about the serious unrest. Witte was sure that the emperor would not look happily on Witte ignoring Stolypin.

Witte's caleche pulled up to the large, pillared portico. He had made an appointment with Stolypin to consult with him here so that they would not be seen talking together by the court sycophants. The

emperor was much concerned about conspiracies and had told that *nu vse* Trepov to be on guard, what with his full control of the police—he was really the city’s unofficial dictator. Witte wanted the emperor to find out he had consulted with Stolypin only when he told him, and not through the whispered warnings of some prince or count.

As Witte walked up the steps to the massive front doors with their large bronze handles, a footman in a red and green swallow-tail coat, knee britches, and a tasseled red Havelock cap who had been on watch for him bowed and said, “My master has been waiting for you in the study. Please follow me and I will announce your presence.”

Witte followed the footman through the front doors, into a reception hall with statues in niches, up a winding, carpeted staircase, and down a long, stuffy hallway lit only by a few gas lamps. Both walls were lined with oil portraits, beginning with one of Emperor Nicholas II, leading on to Stolypin’s father and mother; presumably the rest were ancestors. All wore expressions so solemn that they looked as though they were at a funeral. The footman stopped at a large, carved oak door, knocked, opened the door, and announced Witte’s presence.

Witte walked in, waved a greeting at Stolypin, and said, “Piotr Arkadevich, thank you for meeting with me.”

Stolypin rose from behind his hand carved desk and shook hands with Witte. “This appointment is a surprise, Count Sergei Yulyevich. Please sit down.” He waved his hand at a leather sofa. He turned back to his desk to turn over something he had been writing, then sat down in an oak and leather armchair near the desk and sofa. He looked at his valet, who was standing by the door, and commanded, “Bring us tea.”

Stolypin looked back at Witte and asked, “Sugar?”

Witte shook his head, and Stolypin nodded at his valet. He clasped his hands over the vest pulled tight across his stomach, and plucked at his gold watch chain with one thumb while he silently regarded Witte for a few seconds.

Witte occupied himself unbuttoning his long coat. The room was stuffy and overheated from the fireplace, and the one large window had been doubled for the winter. Witte looked around at the rich study. He had not been in this room before, although he had attended a soiree Stolypin’s wife held in the drawing room.

Stolypin had narrow, deep-set eyes in an unbalanced face—he was nearly bald on top, with thin sideburns, but he had a black handlebar moustache that was almost as wide as his head. It was the talk of the countesses at court. They appeared barely resist the urge to pull on it.

Below the mustache was a black beard with a splash of gray under his lip. Few subordinates could contemplate the balding pate and the rich mustache and beard below when his attention was devoted to them. All he had to do was stare at them, and they would shake under the lifetime of stern command and authority his steel-gray eyes hurled at them.

Witte was never intimidated by Stolypin's eyes. Nor was he distracted by the dark hairs that grew in profusion out of Stolypin's ears and nose, adding another clump of dark hairs to the top of his moustache. They had known each other for years, and had often given the emperor opposite advice. But they were not enemies. They sometimes sought each other's advice, and at one social gathering or another, they would gossip about court officials and share their love of Russian literature and music.

Stolypin smiled, finally. "I have not seen you since you returned from the United States. Congratulations on negotiating the Portsmouth Treaty with Japan. Due to your ability, we got out of that *Moodozvon*—wacko war cheaply. I think the emperor was right to make you a prince as a reward."

"Thank you. But most of the credit really belongs to the American President Roosevelt. He leaned on the Japanese to make only reasonable demands, in spite of their victory over our Second and Third Manchurian Armies at Mukden, and the incredible, almost absolute destruction of our fleet in the Tsushima Strait. Anyway, thanks for seeing me on such short notice."

"Yes; well, what is this about?"

Witte put one hand on his knee and leaned forward, gesturing with the other. "Bulygin, Durnova, Trepov, Kuropatkin, and the whole bunch of ministers and advisors around the emperor are crazy. What they want to do about the strikers and revolutionaries will further alienate workers, professionals, and especially liberals, who are already pulling away from us. Revolution is in the air and on the streets, and if these officials have their way, it is sure to be successful."

Stolypin's face reddened slightly and he vigorously shook his head. "Sergei, you are hopeless. It's your liberal views that got us where we are at now. If we had clamped down hard years ago and executed the leaders of the social democrats and other revolutionaries, there would never have been a Bloody Sunday. It is treason, and we should treat it as such."

Witte clenched his knee with his hand and frowned. "The current harsh and brutal response to the revolutionaries is dead wrong."

Stolypin waved the thought away.

Witte continued. “The people want a parliament, elections, reform of working conditions—such as an eight-hour workday—and land. Many still love the emperor, and if we respond to their just desires, we will have peace and the monarchy will survive, although not as an autocracy. Is it so hard to see how successful the British monarchy has been at this?”

Stolypin narrowed his eyes. “To use your words, is it so hard to see what happened to the French monarchy? The great terror, all those heads of the aristocrats guillotined. King Louis XVI was too soft, and he lost his head as a result.”

Witte stared a long moment at him. Forgetting how irritating and undiplomatic it would be, Witte waved his finger at him and said, “It is obvious you will be as bullheaded as usual on this. The result will be all our heads, eventually.” Realizing what he was doing, he dropped his hand and clasped both of them on his lap. “I know you hate me for doing this, but after all, I am Chairman of the Committee of Ministers. In that capacity, I’m going to see the emperor.”

Witte hesitated, and then decided to leave unmentioned what he had heard about the emperor offering him the premiership. “I will recommend to him—and he is frightened enough that I think he will follow my advice—that he grant such fundamental civil freedoms to the people as freedom of conscience, speech, assembly, and association. These freedoms must be backed up by a universal franchise for voting representatives to a national Duma. Most important, no law should come into effect without approval by the Duma’s representatives.”

Stolypin gaped at him.

Witte held up his hand toward Stolypin to avoid interruption. “Be assured that I agree with what I know you will argue. We must still repress direct outbreaks of disorder and violence, protect people who only want to go about their daily business in peace, and punish treason and revolutionary violence. Of course. But also, as in the time of Alexander II, the state must again take into its own hands the initiative of transformation. The goal has been set by society; its significance is great and wholly invincible, because there is truth in that goal—freedom, representation, laws beholden to the people. The emperor should therefore adopt it.”

“But—”

Witte shook his head to forestall Stolypin’s interruption, and continued. “Let ‘Freedom’ become the slogan of government actions.

There is no other way the present autocratic state can be saved. The course of historical progress is unstoppable. There is no choice: either assume leadership of the movement that has gripped the country, or abandon it to be torn apart by elemental forces. Executions and rivers of blood will only hasten the explosion. This is what—”

Stolypin abruptly stood and reached across his desk. He took two Turkish cigars from his humidor and offered one to Witte, who shook his head. Holding one of the cigars over the crystal-cut glass ashtray on his desk, Stolypin lifted a German scissor cutter resting next to the humidor and cut off the end of the cigar. He picked up a box of diamond matches and made a big show of lighting the cigar and taking his first, huge puff. Finally he sat down.

Witte was amused— this typical stall had given Stolypin time to think of an answer to assertions he found just too hard to swallow.

Stolypin sighed; he had evidently discarded a nuanced or diplomatic reply. Holding the cigar between his fingers and waving it in the air, he responded, “You are wrong in this. Your policies would mark a dangerous turning point in the political history of our motherland. Although our great monarchy would legally remain in power, it would be castrated. Not only would the emperor lose his unlimited power and the whole aristocracy be subverted but, most important, the emperor would lose his accountability. There would be no one person responsible, no one person to point a finger at for errors committed, no one person to advise and guide us on the right course. Only a gaggle of quarreling, sniffing, cowardly politicians, not one of whom would have the courage to admit error.”

Stolypin inhaled deeply on his cigar and shook his head. “*Hooy na ny*—no fucking way! If I did not know you better, Sergei Yulyevich, I would say you were one of those *opezdo* revolutionaries. These are hard people. They have been assassinating our people. They murdered Minister of the Interior Plehve with a bomb; they killed the governor of Ufa, and,” he pounded his fist into his left hand and raised his voice, “Grand Duke Sergei Alexandrovich.”

Witte’s finger came up again of its own accord. “Yes, and the government has instigated hundreds of pogroms against the Jews and has been assassinating social revolutionaries like Nikolai Bauman, and the heads of strike committees and soviets.” Witte stared into the other man’s eyes. “An eye for an eye is no way to avoid revolution.”

Stolypin shot back, "You and I may already be targeted. All these traitors understand is harsh force, and the emperor should order it given to them."

Witte sat back and took a sip of his tea. It was cold; it had been sitting forgotten on the sofa's side table. He ignored the little dishes of cookies and raisins there and watched Stolypin. Stolypin was one of the smartest men around the emperor and Witte had to consider his arguments with the utmost seriousness.

Stolypin puffed on his cigar, never taking his eyes from Witte. Witte crossed his arms and thought about what had been said. Neither he nor Stolypin was afraid of silence, and it stretched out.

Finally Witte uncrossed his arms, pinched together several raisins, and chewed on them. Then he leaned forward. "Okay, you have a point. It would be persuasive if we were dealing with the hardened social revolutionaries alone. We are not. The thirst for political liberalization, if not revolution, has spread across the country; the idea of popular representation is heard everywhere. It is heard at the political banquets of the liberal intelligentsia. It is heard in the revolutionary strike committees. It is heard in such loyal newspapers as the *Sankt-Peterburgskiy Vedemosti*, *Novoye Vremy*, and *Svet*. It is even heard in the conservative Russian Assembly with the call for the return of the seventeenth century *zemsky sobor*—general assembly—as a kind of national representation."

Stolypin was about to say something, but Witte would not let him. "You and the others around the Emperor that still support autocratic power are isolated," he said forcefully.

Stolypin leaned forward. "You—"

Witte held up his hand. "Let me finish. Especially, we must consider the soldiers and sailors tempted by the fine slogans of the revolutionaries to support their cause; the factory workers who are fired up—not as Bolsheviks or Mensheviks, but as workers—over promises of an eight-hour day and more pay; and the peasants to whom the slogan 'land to the peasant' is like meat to a hungry dog. There is nothing we can do about the core revolutionaries except kill them. It is the mass of excitable and ignorant workers and peasants that I am worried about."

"Ah, on peasants we agree." Stolypin sat back and tipped his head to twirl one of the handlebars of his mustache with the same fingers holding the cigar. "We must do something about the peasants. They must be free to own and sell land, not forced to live in communes,

never able to pass on to their sons land of their own. But as to the workers and revolutionaries, this proposal of yours for freedom and a Duma” He slapped the top of his left leg in unison with his next words. “No, you do not understand human nature. Be tough with them all, and they will shrink back into their shell as they always have. Make them fear the power of the emperor.”

The last words he coughed out with cigar smoke, and his face reddened. He placed the cigar on the edge of the ashtray, and half rose to pick up a snuff box on the corner of his desk. Witte glimpsed the carving of Emperor Nicholas II embossed on the ivory lid as Stolypin opened it. He brought it to his nose, sniffed, closed it, and twirled it in his fingers as he looked back at Witte with his eyebrows raised. “I know the emperor better than you do. He will stick to his convictions as he expressed them in December 1904, on the eve of all this revolutionary unrest. Do you remember? He said, ‘The workers and revolutionaries will not understand a constitution, but will understand only one thing: that his hands have been tied, and they are free to overthrow the government. They will see me as *ti sleepoy*—impotent.’”

Witte knew that nothing more was to be gained by pushing his points. He would only antagonize Stolypin. But he had achieved what he was after—he now had confirmed what advice Stolypin would give the emperor, and Witte could try to counter his arguments directly. He waved one hand in a circle and grinned. “Enough. We are not going to change each other’s minds. You will do your duty as you see it, and I will do mine when I see the emperor.” He shifted to a lighter topic. “By the way, did you hear that Prince Cyril Speranski has left Princess Olga for good?”

Stolypin’s face brightened and he shook his head.

Witte frowned to show moral disapproval of the prince. “He really believed the gossip about her having been bedded by his good friend Georgi Aleksandrovich. So, he gave her his estates near Borodino, and moved out of their home. She was too beautiful for him anyway”



Witte’s caleche was waiting for him at the portico, with his coachman hunched down into the wolf fur collar of his big leather coat and his *Shopkas*—fur hat—pulled down over his ears. It was below freezing, and the horses were stomping and shivering.

Stolypin's liveryman had to shake the coachman awake. Witte climbed up into the caleche, pulled a fur carriage blanket over his legs, and made himself comfortable.

As the caleche pulled out, he reviewed the details of what he would recommend to the emperor, trying to choose the words that would soften him up for the proposal. *The emperor respects me, otherwise he would not have made me a prince. But in terms of training, ancestry, and circumstance, he is more inclined to accept Stolypin's argument than mine. I do have good old Grand Duke Romanov on my side.* Witte smiled. Romanov had told him that he would threaten to shoot himself if the emperor did not follow Witte's advice. *Crazy stuff. But, the duke is still powerful support.*

Witte stared unseeing out the caleche, barely noticing a group of passing Cossacks in their gold and black uniforms, the earrings and silver chains around their necks glinting. They sat their Akhal-tek horses as though horse and man were one.

Much depends on how I put this proposal to the emperor, as shaken and nervous as he is. There is hope—since the revolutionary Kaliayev's murder of Grand Duke Alexandrovich, the emperor has begun to make concessions. Alexandrovich had been one of the most implacable advocates of a hard line autocracy. *Yes, he even signed on to establish an elected consultative chamber like the State Council of years past. Surely this is not the representation the people want.* When the resulting draft law for a State Duma was published in August, nobody had been happy with it. Still, it was a significant inroad on the emperor's power, although nothing much came of it. *Nevertheless, I will use this as a precedent.*

Witte imagined he was in the Gold Room of the Winter Palace, facing the emperor. On both sides of the emperor, at a respectable distance, stood his suite of generals, dukes, and princes, all trying to hear what Witte had to say, some already formulating their counter-arguments. The emperor stood straight, with a glass of Hungarian wine in one hand, and the other behind his back. His lips were drawn and his brows slightly furrowed as he waited for Witte to speak, since Witte had asked for this audience—

Witte's attention was suddenly diverted. The street was ill repaired, what with all the demonstrations, and the caleche's springs tossed Witte to one side. He mechanically tried to resettle himself and ended up looking out of the other side of the caleche. Again sinking deep into

thought, he gazed absently at a man standing outside a big hotel, waiting to help the wealthy guests arriving in their caleches and carriages. He wore a scarlet sash, and a peacock feather adorned his pillbox cap.

Let's see, Witte thought, how will I start out? Hmm. "Your Highness, you can preempt the revolutionaries by carrying out your own apparent revolution"—I should raise my voice on "own" and "revolution." Then I'll point out the window to Nevsky Prospect across from the square and say, "Concede much of what the strikers and liberals are demanding, but retain your control. And if—

Blinding white light, a crushing blast of sound, burning heat.
Oblivion.



A huge explosion ripped the caleche apart, and hurtling the coachman over the heads of the two horses.

The man in the white ushanka hat had followed the caleche at a safe distance. When it burst asunder, he clumsily reined in his black Orlov, dismounted, hitched the horse to a light pole, and walked toward the smoking and already settling ruin.

One horse was down, bleeding profusely from its hindquarters, and uttering an extended cry; the other horse had disappeared with what remained of his harness; the coachman lay in a heap, unmoving. A man hurried toward the coachman, while another in a railroad coat fanned the smoke away from what remained of the caleche, looking for survivors.

"Holy Mother!" the man said, suddenly jerking sideways. He crossed himself and turned to leave, almost stepping on the fur boots of the white-hatted man as he approached. His face sagging, the would-be rescuer glanced at the man and then back into the ruins. "*Pizda,*" he lamented. "Nothing we can do . . . only bloody pieces."

The white-hatted man leaned over to stare into the ruins himself, then straightened and nodded at the other. As he turned to walk back to his horse, his green eyes glittered in the newly lit streetlamps.

Chapter 8

November 14, 1906
San Francisco

Jy-ying

For some reason she could not define, Jy-ying had felt like coming down to the lobby very early this morning. She guessed it was a whimsical urge to study the guests. She was still fascinated by the way people dressed in this age, particularly the women, and how they walked and talked. She could not get used to how the women looked in their bustles—as if they had congenital deformation of the spine. She never would wear one. She had a slim figure, exercised every day, and felt that her healthy, well-formed figure did not need enhancing. But she quickly thought, *As a captain in the Sabah Security Guards, such a triviality does not matter to me anyway.*

Of course, she knew that John and Joy had arrived around ten minutes to two that morning, and would be looking for a hotel room sometime during the day, most likely in the morning. *Surely they would not come here, however.* She laughed at herself when she thought of it. *Let's see, how many hotels in San Francisco would be acceptable to them?* she wondered. *Like this one or better. Say fifty.* Since she did not know where they'd landed, any of the fifty were a possibility. She calculated the probability of them finding a hotel other than this one as .98. *Ha! If that were the probability for a horse to win a race, I would bet all I own on it.*

She'd brought *The Saturday Evening Post* with her, intending to again carefully read the article that had attracted her attention, but she decided that she could not give it the careful read necessary and still pay attention to what was going on in the lobby. She turned to page 20 and the "Thanksgiving" article by Edmund Vance Cooke. *Might as well learn more about this country and its customs.* As she browsed through it, she kept an eye on the comings and goings through the hotel doors. Out of curiosity, of course.

So, she did not miss the group that entered the hotel led by a tall, handsome man with yellow hair curling out from beneath his jaunty Fedora. Following him was— She sucked in her breath sharply and her

eyebrows shot up. A beautiful young Chinese woman followed the man. A woman who looked like her. Yes, it could be John and Joy. Then she saw the three young men behind them. *Sabah be blessed, they could be the three guys John wrote about.*

She watched the man and woman intently, noting their clothes, their movements. The woman pointed to the register and said something to the man, who then got keys for the three men. She was almost positive now that God had come to her aid.

When the two mounted the stairs, she followed them to the second floor. In the hallway, she pretended she was looking in her purse for her room key as she watched them from under the brim of her hat.

She was now convinced that the woman had to be Joy. Caucasian-Asian couples were probably rare in this age here, and then for the couple to appear in the hotel to ask for rooms with three young men—yes, they were John and Joy. And she could not believe how much like her Joy looked. Well, people have doubles, and she had finally run into hers. *But soon there will be a double no more.*

The woman had stopped at her room and unlocked the door while the man did the same one room down the hallway. Then he opened the door a crack and yelled to the woman, “Don’t go into your room yet. Just shove your suitcase in, and close the door.” He then strode down the hallway to her, and she turned to him, her whole body a question mark. He picked her up, tucked her into his arms, and carried her to his room. She put her arms around his neck and kissed him. He thrust his door open with his boot, and disappeared with her inside. The door slammed.

Almost shaking with excitement at her incredible luck, Jy-ying quickly descended the stairs to the lobby and rushed to the registration desk. She looked at the register and saw *John Banks* and *Joy Phim* below her name, and their room numbers. Her head swam; she wanted to dance. Instead she looked at the clerk, who was backed up against the mail slots, as far from her as possible. “Is room 207 vacant?”

“Yes.”

“Give me the key. I will be changing my room to that one.”

She hurried back to the stairs and up to her third floor room two steps at a time. She grabbed the items she’d left on the dresser and put them back in her case, picked it and the red container up, and hurried back down the stairs to her new room next to John’s.

She entered, shut the door, and leaned her back against it. She was hardly puffing; rather, she was trying to shut out her emotions. Her

eyes misted at what she had seen in the hallway, now that she had time to dwell on it, and memories of Shu Kuo suddenly flooded her mind. She dropped her case and put the container on the bed. She sat next to it, opened it, and took out the note Kuo had enclosed for her. Less than two days ago, she had said good-bye to him forever.

I did not know. I really did not know how much I would miss him, not until I saw John and Joy's love for each other.

She wiped at her eyes and took out the document that told her all she needed to know about John and Joy to assassinate them. *Such a nice long, antiseptic word in English. Why not say what it is? Their . . . sha—murder. I would have no difficulty if there were only one time traveler, a man who was himself trained to kill. Yes, no problem then. But lovers? And particularly a historian professor and an Asian woman trained as a warrior. I cannot just shoot them, especially a warrior like her. It is against the warrior code; it is . . . wrong.*

She tried to read the *Remembrance* again, but in a minute or so she heard Joy's orgasmic screech through the wall, and threw the document hard against the carpeted floor. The clip fell off, and the sheets spread in a jumble on the floor.

She took two deep breaths and focused on relaxing all her muscles. When she had calmed down, she got down on her knees, straightened out the papers, sorted them, and clipped them as they'd been before.

I'll wait until they are decent, she thought. *No hurry.*

She picked up the *Post*, leafed to the article that she had read already, and read it again. She looked now for something that would suggest it was a joke. Then she heard the door to John's room open and close, so she risked looking out to see if they both were leaving. Obviously, wrapped in towels as they were, they were headed to the bathroom at the end of the hall to take a bath.

She allowed herself a little grin, her first since arriving in this age yesterday. *I would have done it before.* Then she remembered her and Shu Kuo's last, spontaneous lovemaking in his office. *Almost always before.*

She returned to the *Post* article and just stared at its title, eyes wide. She licked her lips. As she reread the article once more, slowly translating it into Chinese, she kept exclaiming, *God almighty. I cannot believe this. It cannot be true.* She tried to pick out the parts that were most significant to her mission, and to Sabah. Several times she gasped. When she finished she let the *Post* drop to the floor and sat slouched in her chair with her arms hanging over the sides, thinking.

She heard John's door shut, muffled noises, and then much squealing and boisterous laughter. *They are certainly having a good time.*

She took her Taiyang .38 out of her holster purse and sat back in the armchair with the gun on her lap. She put one arm across her stomach, rested her elbow on it, and held her cheek in the palm of her hand as she stared down at the weapon. *So easy to kill them, to kill their love, to destroy their mission. Their room is like my room, and I know how to read its open spaces and furniture clutter. Once I opened their door to shoot them, there would be no escape. They would not be wearing their armor, their weapons would not be near, and Joy would have no time or space to use her karate or judo. Oh, she would react fast. She will have automatically surveyed the room as a battleground when she entered it. As I fling the door open she will instantly head for the best defensive spot, and will try to spring at me when she sees the gun. But I will be prepared for it and nothing she can do will stop the bullets.*

She rubbed one finger along the blued barrel and then down the textured and contoured polymer grip. *There is their mission. And now there is that Post article.*

Her eyes were still on the gun, but it no longer registered in her consciousness. She was putting together the two greatest surprises of her short life here—what she'd read about the two in the next room, and the *Post* article. She put her left elbow on her knee and thrust her face into her left hand. She didn't notice how much time passed.

She didn't know why she waited. She didn't have to. *To allow them some dignity, I suppose.* She grinned for the second time in this world.

She thought about how she had come to this universe-busting moment. She'd been taken under the care of a sympathetic officer in the Sabah Security Guards after the murder of her Sabahist parents by pro-democracy rebels. Continuing her training in Shaolin Wing Chun Kung Fu during her schooling, she'd been accepted into the Security Guards, where she rose rapidly through the ranks.

She'd been so proud when she'd been assigned to secure the time machine project instigated to send a time traveler back to 1906 to save Sabah's life. But she wanted more. She wanted to be the one to save Sabah, and she knew she was better prepared because of her years in Pasadena at the California Institute of Technology, and the results of her tests after volunteering for the mission. But she was a woman, and the National Council of Clerics refused to allow a woman to replace a man. So she had maneuvered her lover, Kuo, the director of the project, to place her as second alternate. When one of the men ahead of her had

a heart attack, and the other an accident—she felt bad about that, but she was the better prepared and the more dedicated to Sabah—she was the one sent.

She listened for a moment to her breathing, and focused on the Taiyang .38. *It all comes down to you and that*, she thought, staring at the *Post* on the floor.

Time, she breathed. *No more delay.*

She took the Taiyang in hand. Her body felt heavy when she lifted herself from the chair, and she stood for a moment, feeling almost dizzy. For, with a mental click, her two surprises and her mission fell into logical alignment, and in an instant she made her final decision. She nodded her head vigorously. *Yes, yes, I must.*

She began her preparations, first making sure her Taiyang was ready for what she would do. She took her dark blue Security Guard uniform out of her suitcase and put it on, wrinkles and all; next she put on her mirror-finished porometric Security Guard shoes. She would have preferred her boots, but there'd not been room for them in her case. She had brought her uniform to wear for her assassination of the time traveler, to make it official. This was very important to her, since otherwise it would have been plain murder. She knew it was a subterfuge, but it mattered. She puffed out her captain's cap with her hand, admiring its two little gold leaf clusters and the mirror-like blue-black brim that shone in the room's light, and put it square on her head. She felt good in these clothes. As a woman in a man's Islamic world, she had more than earned them. And they gave her a feeling of authority and control for what she must now do.

Hiding her gun behind her, she opened her door and checked the hallway. Then, head high, back straight, she strode quickly to John's door. She tested it to make sure it was unlocked, quickly turned the knob, flung the door open with a bang, and stood in the doorway, gun in hand.

Chapter 9

November 10, 1905
Geneva, Switzerland

The short, stocky man said it again: “The time could not be better. The revolution has matured, and needs only the final push.” His goatee quivered with his excitement at finally returning to Russia to lead the revolution. His pretty wife, close advisor, and fellow revolutionary never tired of hearing such exclamations, for she agreed, and had advised him of the timing. They had waited for the right moment, and now they had the urgent, coded telegram from Bronstein affirming this:

Now is the time. With Witte assassinated, the czar has appointed Stolypin premier. Stolypin has offered no concessions to striker’s just demands, immediately meeting out summary executions—Stolypin’s neckties—to mutineers and strikers, and to demonstrators caught with weapons. The czar has declared martial law throughout Russia; many troops, sailors, liberals, and Mensheviks are joining us. Your arrival is prepared; you will be guarded on the way to the St. Petersburg Soviet.

“I never thought that telegram would come,” she sighed. “I was right about waiting. Too early, and, with the Okhrana on the lookout, you would have been arrested at the Baltic Station when you arrived. Too late, and you would be blamed if the revolution failed and sidelined if it were successful.” She put her hand on his arm. As the telegram said, “Now is the time.”

Bundled up in their Russian fur coats, the two waited in the cold Cornavin Station for the train that would take them from Geneva to St. Petersburg via Berlin. Since they traveled frequently, they traveled light; their three heavy suitcases, one loaded with books and papers, rested beside them. The Lunacharskys, both husband and wife, dedicated Marxists and Bolsheviks, were going with them, as were their comrades Plekhanov, Kamsky, and Orlovsky.

They didn't realize anyone had approached them from behind until they heard in French, "Excuse me, are you Vladimir Ilyich Lenin?"

The man with a goatee turned and looked without recognition at the beardless stranger. He wore a long black coat and a narrow brimmed green hat with an orange feather in its band. On either side of him stood alert policemen with their peaked hats square on their heads.

Lenin drew his "Oui?" out as a question.

The man then looked at Lenin's wife and asked, "Are you Nadezhda Krupskaya?"

She hesitated for a moment, looked at Lenin and then back at the man, and finally responded, "Oui."

The two policemen moved closer. The man stood stiffly and said, "In accordance with Article 34 of the Cantonal Department of Justice, and by order of the Geneva Chief of Police, I am informing you that you are under arrest for embezzlement and fraud."

The policemen split up, one gripping Lenin tightly under the arm and the other Krupskaya. The rest of their party immediately protested, and at first Lenin resisted, bumping his sable hat off in the attempt. Plekhanov picked it up and handed it to Lenin. With his free hand, Lenin jerked it down on his balding head. Then he shouted to his comrades in Russian, "Go. We will settle this ridiculous accusation and catch the next train."



Lenin and Krupskaya sat at a square table in the interrogation room on the second floor of police headquarters. The man across from them had a full, graying beard, a protruding brow that almost hid his deep-set eyes, and a sloping forehead. His intimidating appearance was softened by a pink-tinted bow tie and his cleric-style corduroy suit. He kept a half-smoked Cuban cigar in one side of his mouth, tilting his head to keep the smoke out of his eyes as he scanned several documents before him. So far he had not said a word, even though Lenin had sat on the edge of his uncomfortable straight-backed chair and protested the arrest.

Finally Lenin pulled his pocket watch out of his vest pocket by its gold chain, and looked at it. "*Blin*," he swore in Russian. His face reddened, and he hissed to Krupskaya, "This is taking too damn long."

Jutting his goatee at the man on the other side of the table, Lenin speared the other man with his small eyes and pounded the table as he

barked in badly accented French, "This is all a mistake. Ridiculous. We have done nothing. This is political. You are doing this on behalf of the enemies of Russia."

He puffed himself up. "*Vlip*—you're in deep shit," he said in Russian before reverting to French. "I demand that you release us immediately, or I will protest to your chief of police."

The man looked up at Lenin, and then at Krupskaya. He raised his eyebrow at Lenin, and in an oddly feminine, almost old woman voice, he said in French, "I am Inspector Rulf of the Geneva Cantonal Special Investigations Department. We have evidence that you committed a serious crime. Be still or I will have you handcuffed and gagged." He stared at Lenin until he subsided in his chair, and then went back to his reading.

Lenin raged inside. He was sure this was political. The timing was just too good. Someone was trying to prevent him from returning to Russia. But who? The Okhrana? Unlikely, since they had little influence in Switzerland, and the czar was generally despised. Who, then? *I bet it is the Mensheviks. They will never let us win. They must have combined with the liberals for a soft revolution, and have pulled strings with supporters in Geneva. Or maybe it's Bronstein. If I do not return, he has the revolution to himself. No, although he has wavered between the Mensheviks and us, he has become a loyal supporter. Hmm. Still, the prospect of power will derange men. When I get back to Russia and the revolution is successful—which it will be, with or without me—I am going to launch a thorough investigation of this . . . stupid frame-up.*

Lenin was sweating in the overheated room. Rulf looked up quickly and watched him with narrowed eyes as he took off his overcoat and shoved it to the back of his seat. He could feel the cast iron radiator against the wall nearby heating his face.

Rulf returned to his reading.

Lenin scratched his sweaty crotch.

Finally Rulf picked up a document, leaned toward Lenin, and pointed to the signature at the bottom. "Is this yours?"

Brows knitted, wide mouth a thin line compressed tightly enough to make his mustache quiver, Lenin stared at the illegible, flowing signature. "Absolutely not!" he shouted. He waved his fist across the document.

Rulf pointed to a stilted signature below the flowing one, and looked at Krupskaya. "This is your signature?"

She narrowed her eyes, enhancing the oriental look created by her tightly pulled back hair. She waved her palm toward him. In good French, she responded, “No. I would be embarrassed to have such an ugly signature.”

Rulf sat back and put the document down. “Your names match those on these documents. You are foreigners and may flee the country at any time. So, I’m going to keep you both in our hospitable cell while I investigate this.”

Lenin leaped to his feet, his nostrils flaring. “How dare you. I have very important business in Russia. It cannot be delayed. This is all a mistake.” He waved his fist at Rulf and yelled at him in Russian, “*Shob tebe deti v sup srali*— I hope your children shit in your soup.”

The inspector pressed a button on his side of the table and two policemen immediately came in to stand behind Lenin. Rulf pushed his chair back and shook his finger at Lenin, who now had both fists on the table and was leaning toward Rulf, his goatee threatening to stab Rulf in the heart. “You likely have committed a most serious crime. You both have defrauded the Geneva Bank.” He pronounced the name in a reverend tone. “You borrowed fifty thousand franks from the bank with false collateral and false documentation about your Swiss citizenship, and with counterfeit seals on your false documentation. Each of these is a serious crime here. And through a tip, we caught you at the train station trying to flee prosecution.”

He looked at Krupskaya. “You are equally guilty, since you co-signed the fraudulent loan.”

She stared at him open mouthed. Lenin began stuttering in Russian.

Chapter 10

November 14, 1905
St. Petersburg

The tall man wearing the Cossack hat consulted his map again to be sure of the location of Rastrelli 2 Square. Crossing the Alexandrovsk Bridge over the Neva River, he walked toward it, his boots crackling on the icy snow. Fortunately, it was on the eastern edge of St. Petersburg, at the edge of the river and distant from the major streets around the Winter Palace, Admiralty, and associated government buildings where large demonstrations and violent clashes took place.

Entering the square and standing at its edge, he studied the Smolny ensemble of buildings, including the century-old Smolny Institute. Its facade formed a straight line for hundreds of feet, and an ell at each end formed an elongated court.

Until the summer, the Institute had been a school for young ladies of noble birth from all over Russia, but the Institute had now been taken over by the St. Petersburg Soviet, with a sufficient bribe to the proper officials, and an exorbitant rent. The students had been crowded into the Smolny Convent snuggled into the north ell. For a few minutes, the man admired the convent's dull blue dome with its silver stars.

The square was busy with the coming and going of wagons, carts, coaches, horse-drawn sleds, mounted men, some Hussars and Cossacks, and a few smoking automobiles. The front entrance to the Institute was protected with a well built fortification manned by soldiers with rifles and fixed bayonets on their shoulders. They guarded a narrow passage that allowed a constant stream of people to enter and leave.

Carefully watching the traffic, the man in the Cossack hat walked across the square and passed through the fortification and the high doors of the Institute.

Inside, the tumult of excited activity stirred up the man, and he decided to walk around the building to observe a revolution in action. He had just enough spare time. He looked down one vast, stuffy hallway after another. Sparse electric lighting barely subdued the darkness, and

the formerly white polished floors were now muddied by the heavy felt boots of soldiers, sailors, revolutionaries, factory workers, and peasants, the shiny black leather boots of professionals and government officials, and the soft cloth boots of the heads of strike committees and deputies from the soviets in Moscow, Riga, Samara, Tula, Kazan, and elsewhere. Everyone seemed to have hurried business here.

Here and there were stacks of literature, including *Iskra*—the *Spark*, *Nachalo*—*The Beginning*, and the Soviet organ *Izvestia*—*The News*. These were snatched up by passersby and could be found on tables and benches everywhere.

Bone-weary soldiers and revolutionaries slept where they could, some on benches and chairs in the rooms, others against the walls in the hallways. The man knew some had been on their feet for more than twenty-four hours.

He came to a large, columned cafeteria, and walked in. A long line of people, each holding a bowl in one hand and a large wooden spoon in the other, waited for a slice of black bread and a ladle full of steamy cabbage soup. Some, disheveled and wearing ragged clothing, were obviously very poor. The Institute was clearly open to the hungry of St. Petersburg. Around the hall were long, rough wooden tables and wooden benches at which people sat to eat. No one looked gloomy or unhappy. Serious expressions dominated, but he saw occasional smiles and scattered laughter. At a few tables, groups of men and a few women appeared to be engaged in heated discussions.

The place reeked with the acidic smell of too many unwashed bodies mixed with the oily, steamy odor of food. He quickly turned around and returned to the hallway before he retched. At least here there was only the stench of bodies.

Off another hallway near the entrance was a large, white room with marble columns, a central crystal chandelier loaded with candles, and silver candelabra scattered about—a former ballroom. Now it was the central meeting place for speeches and meetings of delegates from the soviets all over Russia. As the man in the Cossack hat looked in, he saw a crowd of people listening to an emaciated, haggard, and unkempt peasant standing on a rostrum at one end of the room. The peasant was nearly hysterical, his voice shrill. The man suspected this was his first speech ever. A peasant cap covered dirty, straw-colored hair that hung halfway to his shoulders, and his beard stuck out in all directions.

The man moved closer to the rostrum so he could hear the peasant.

“I tell you the truth. We are still starving to death by the thousands, and the newly dead are being sold for food by scavengers. I saw it with my own eyes. I tell the truth. We are slaves to landowners. We are slaves to the rich. I tell you, we have had enough of this. We want food. We want land; we will die for it. We want freedom. I tell you the truth. We will not wait any longer. *Tavarishi*—friends. We join you. We will fight.”

He bent over coughing into his hand, and it came away with blood on it. Someone stepped onto the podium and helped the peasant to a seat. After a loud murmur of voices, a worker mounted the rostrum. Waving his arms, he began to speak so rapidly, his words ran into each other.

“I work at a Putiloff factory and I, with all my comrades, took it over and tried to run the factory, but the owners and managers and foreman all sabotaged the machines so that we could do nothing, and they have shut down the mills so we will starve or submit to them and again be beaten and whipped and work twelve hours a day for less than one ruble, and my wife and children are dying for I cannot buy enough food, and we live with three families in one room. We all have met, and we will fight them”

The man in the Cossack hat left the room and climbed the wide stairs to the second floor. He looked into one classroom after another. In all of them, people were busy at or around tables, with the rare wall telephone ringing or being used. In some, men and women clacked away on Russian converted Underwood typewriters, slapping the carriages back when little bells signaled that the carriages had reached their stop. Men ranging in dress from formal suits and vests to loose peasant shirts tied at the waist with a sash constantly came and went with papers in their arms, some with sheaves of telegrams. Armed soldiers and a few civilians with rifles stood guard at the doors of the more important rooms.

On the top floor, the man found a variety of offices. Apparently every significant group involved in the strikes or the revolution had an office here, as did many middle and a few upper officials of government. Even more guards stood by on this floor. The man thought it strange that he had been able to go from one floor to another, and even look into classrooms and offices, without anyone stopping him.

Here also was Bronstein’s Military Revolutionary Committee, in Room 27. It was responsible for everything from dispersing weapons and organizing takeovers of government buildings to dealing with cap-

tured officials and soldiers who remained loyal to the monarchy. It seemed to be the busiest room in the building, what with the constant flow of prisoners and suspects, petitioners, couriers, soldiers, and government officials. A genius must have been keeping everything in order.

In Room 24, a large room where tea was served night and day, Bronstein operated the strategic and tactical center for all of the St. Petersburg Soviet's activities. The man in the Cossack hat handed a note with *50.000.000* written on it to one of the two guards at the door and asked him to give it to Bronstein.

The guard came back and let him in.

The room was dim, except where Bronstein stood hunched over a pile of telegrams laid out on a conference table, writing replies and instructions on a large pink pad. Two green-shaded lightbulbs hung high above the table, and a wooden telephone box was on the wall directly behind Bronstein, with a young boy standing there to answer or make calls. All communication workers were on strike, except for Bolshevik party members at the telephone and telegraph offices, who would only forward calls or send telegrams to and from Smolny. Two young couriers waited by the table.

A small group that included Bronstein's second wife Natalia Sedova stood before a map of St. Petersburg hanging on the wall, arguing.

The man waited by the door, not wanting to disturb Bronstein, whose face looked fatigued and pale; his eyes were bloodshot, from lack of sleep and overwork, Cossack Hat guessed. He could not help noticing that the room stank of too many cigarettes and cigars and what now seemed an imbedded characteristic of the Institute, too many bodies left unwashed for too many weeks. The window, not yet doubled for winter, was open a crack at the bottom, but it didn't help. Cossack Hat wrinkled his nose and stifled the desire to cover it with his handkerchief. Trying to ignore the smell, he watched the activity, looking from one part of the room to another.

Finally, apparently just remembering the note the guard had brought him, Bronstein looked up and squinted in Cossack Hat's direction, trying to see him in the dimness. "*Privet*—hello, comrade," he called, his voice hoarse. "What a good time for you to come. I hope you are satisfied with what your incredible help has done. The revolution is coming to a conclusion." He smiled wanly. "I haven't left this spot for weeks. I eat and sleep here."

He suddenly grew excited. "Look," he exclaimed, picking up a telegram from one side of the table. "Moscow is ours. Its military governor has surrendered to the Moscow Soviet." He picked up another telegram and waved it. "Rather than follow the czar's orders and attack the peasant army approaching the city, the Kollontai Regiment has joined them. And most important," he reached for a message on paper that was wrinkled and almost torn from being passed through many excited hands, "the 9th Imperial Guards have joined us and blockaded the road from Tzarskoje Selo. The czar is at Alexander Palace and cannot return, although it is only sixteen miles away. Because of the strike, he cannot even take the Imperial train here. He might as well be a thousand miles away. This means—"

"Lvov, Lvov," a breathless courier yelled as he ran into the room, hands wildly gesturing. "He has abdicated in favor of his brother. The emperor, Czar Nicholas II, has abdicated. I have his full announcement here."

A cheer went up, followed by yelling, but Bronstein took the message and held it directly under the light to read it. He read no more than a few words before he banged the table and, holding up the telegram, shouted for quiet. "I have the czar's Decree of Abdication."

Bronstein

As Bronstein began to read aloud the telegram, his hoarse voice wavered at first, but grew stronger as he read:

Decree of Abdication: In this aftermath of the war against the Japanese and their continued ambition against our fatherland in the Far East, the Lord God has been pleased to send down on Russia a new heavy trial.

Internal popular disturbances threaten to have a disastrous effect on our future ability to defend ourselves and will only encourage Japan in the East and those in the West who intend to break up Russia. The destiny of Russia, the honor of our heroic army, the welfare of the people, and the whole future of our dear fatherland demand that these disturbances be settled peacefully.

In agreement with the Committee of Ministers and the Holy Synod, We have thought it well to renounce the Throne of the

Russian Empire and to lay down the supreme power. As We do not wish to part from Our beloved son, We transmit the succession to Our brother, the Grand Duke Michael Alexandrovich, and give him Our blessing to mount the Throne of the Russian Empire.

We direct Our brother to conduct the affairs of state in full and inviolable union with the representatives of the people in the legislative bodies on those principles which will be established by them, and on which he will take an inviolable oath.

In the name of Our dearly beloved homeland, We call on Our faithful sons of the fatherland to fulfill their sacred duty to the fatherland, to obey the czar in the heavy moment of national trials, and to help him, together with the representatives of the people, to guide the Russian Empire on the road to peace, welfare, and glory.

May the Lord God help Russia! Signed, Nicholas II; counter-signed, Minister of the Imperial Court. Dated November 17, 1905.

There was a moment of silence and then the loud cheers broke out again. Bronstein sat down heavily in a nearby chair, and started writing furiously on his pad while mumbling to himself. When he finished, he tore off the sheet of paper and handed it to the courier. "Under a white flag, take this to Grand Duke Romanov at the Winter Palace. Him and no other."

The courier looked at the message, touched the brim of his military cap, and ran out of the room.

Bronstein's whole body fell into unaccustomed relaxation. He felt the muscles in his face fighting to display a mixture of fatigue, acceptance, triumph, and happiness. Not so those who had been in front of the map and now circled the table. Even in the dim light, their eyes shone with victory, and they looked as if they could barely keep from jumping up and down.

Finally Bronstein stood and lifted his cup of cold Kazak tea. A solemn quiet settled over the room. Bronstein waited while each of the others grabbed what they could—a tumbler of water, a ration of vodka or rum, or tea. He saw Cossack Hat retreat into a dim corner to watch. *Strange man.*

Bronstein straightened his back and stood tall. "My dear wife Natalia and my comrades, Anatoly, Leonid, Julius, and Lev. It is almost

over; the end of the Romanov Dynasty is assured. With the abdication of the czar, I have just sent a message to Grand Duke Alexandrovich. If he accepts the crown from Nicholas, I have threatened that the cruiser *Aurora*, which our sailors now control with sympathetic officers, will break through the ice to reach the Winter Palace and bombard it. They no longer have the loyal forces to oppose us, especially with the abdication of the czar. I am sure that when we next hear from Grand Duke Alexandrovich, he will be announcing the government's resignation. Comrades, to the revolution!"

They lifted their glasses high and shouted, "The revolution," swallowed what remained in their glasses and cups, and then threw them down to shatter on the floor, yelling, "Hurrah!" Two of them started dancing; they looked like fat bears being stung by bees.

"Now." Bronstein's voice took on a new seriousness. He clapped his hands to quiet the others again and draw their attention. "We have a national government to organize, power to consolidate, and a fight against counterrevolutionaries and monarchists we will have to carry to every square inch of the empire." Bronstein's seriousness spread swiftly to the others in the room. "We must think in these new terms immediately. To work, comrades. We have no time to waste."

In the thoughtful quiet that resulted, Cossack Hat walked up to Bronstein and shook his hand. "Congratulations. This is a monumental victory for you, a victory for the people of Russia, and a victory for humanity. I have never been so happy."

Bronstein tried to smile and could not. There were not enough muscles in his face to handle all the emotions he felt, and the thoughts that weighed on his mind. This victory was the easier part. What came next would be the hardest; already ideas, strategies, and tactics for this new world fought for attention in his mind. More than anything else, he needed time to be alone for thought.

"Stay, and let us talk later about the future," Bronstein said, gazing into those eerie green eyes, now misty with tears.

The man shook his head and, enunciating carefully in his odd accent, he demurred. "No, I have work to do, but I am very happy to be present at this great, truly historic victory. Centuries from now, historians will still be writing about this moment." He took Bronstein's two hands in his own. "I wish you the very best, and if I do not see you again, good luck."

When the man opened the door to leave, Bronstein heard people in the hallway cheering and dancing at the news that had just reached

them. He was tempted to join them and give a triumphal speech, but he shook his head and turned back to his table. He had much work to do, and too little time.

Chapter 11

November 14
San Francisco

Joy

The door flew with a bang against the wall. Joy, instantly awake, ripped herself out of John's arms and jerked the comforter up enough to roll from under it onto the carpeted floor. Then an oddly familiar voice with a Chinese lilt stopped her.

"Do not be silly, Joy. It would never work."

Joy jerked her eyes toward the door. She immediately saw the gun. The sight instantly kicked in a lifetime of training and an explosion of silent and invisible action: her warrior's subconscious *self-two* invoked from memory the dangers and opportunities in the room, relative distances, and the ways this woman could shoot and attack from the doorway. That occurred in a second; in another, a battle-calm settled over her, and she focused on the woman as though her life hung over a chasm by a thread. What Joy would do depended on what she saw in the woman's eyes, and the smallest movement of the woman's hands, feet, and center of gravity. Joy slowly tried to position her legs so she could launch herself at the woman, and knew that John would do something from his angle to distract her.

John yelled, "Who the hell—" and tried to roll out of the bed on his side to attack her, but his legs were twisted around in the comforter.

"You would not make it either, John," the woman told him.

Joy's battle-poised *self-two* conceded a small space to her mind, and she looked at the woman beyond her weapons and stance. And gasped mentally. *You're dreaming. Everything today is too crazy. That can't be me standing there in that stupid uniform with a gun in my hand.*

Then Joy realized that the woman was real, an Asian woman who closely resembled her. No matter. She had to be disarmed or killed. In her peripheral vision she saw John's legs sliding free of the comforter. One more instant, Joy gauged. She focused all her energy—

"Before you two try to take this gun from me, you can have it." The woman let the gun twist around her trigger finger, and tossed it grip first onto the bed.

Joy took a second to look at the gun. It was a strange weapon that she had not seen before; it looked as if it belonged outside of this time. She hoped she'd have a chance to take it apart. Then she realized that she had taken her attention from the intruder. She looked back at her just as the woman held her hands palm out in front of her. She bowed to Joy, and then to John.

"May I close the door?" she asked.

"Please do," John said in a husky voice. "Nice of you to drop by. Are you selling something?"

She pushed the door shut behind her with one foot, and looked at John with the hint of a smile. "Yes, John—myself." Then she added, totally mystifying Joy, "You do not disappoint me."

"My god," John exclaimed, "you look like Joy." He waved his hand in Joy's direction.

She bowed again to both of them. "I am Captain Khoo Jy-ying of the Sabah Security Guards in China," she said. "I was sent by my government from the year 2001 to . . . assassinate you both."

The words "assassinate you" again triggered Joy's body for combat. No matter that she was on the floor; she could fight from any position—and movement would be easier, being naked.

The woman seemed to know this and remained stone still, her hands in front of her. Only her lips moved. "My uniform will attest to my official purpose, and you have my gun on the bed. All you need to do, Joy, is look at it and I am sure you will recognize that it is from the far future. As is obvious, I no longer intend to kill you. I could have done that easily. I want to join with you. What we both want the future to be is now threatened by that *Post* article you have on the table. Let us talk. John can pick up my gun and keep me covered, Joy, if that will assure you of my good intentions."

As what the woman said sank in, what most surprised Joy at first was the woman's familiarity with their names. She spoke as though she knew them intimately. And then, that she was from the future . . .

Without taking her eyes from the woman, Joy skidded on her bottom over to the bed and reached over the top for Khoo's gun. It was unusually light. She felt for the safety without taking her eyes from the woman, but there was none she could find with her finger. She settled back and held the gun pointing just over the woman's head as her *self-two* released her body and mind and went into alert semi-readiness.

"Okay Khoo, come join us. The chair is yours." Joy's first words to the woman sounded flat, almost mechanical. "I hope you don't mind if we get dressed. Oh, apparently you know my partner, John Banks."

Still seated in the bed, John began to put his hand out, then jerked it back. Eyes wide, he cleared his throat, and his words fell out in a jumble. “Um, glad to meetcha, Miss Khoo.”

Joy sat on the edge of the bed with the gun still pointed above Khoo’s head as she moved further into the room. She stopped near the chest of drawers, took off her cap and dropped it upside down on the chest, took the pins out of her hair, and let it fall with a shake of her head. Then she sat in the chair. She crossed her ankles and rested her hands palm up on her lap.

John let out a “Jesus!” and Joy stared, her jaw hanging. Khoo bore more than a resemblance to her; she looked like her twin. *If it weren’t for that scar on Khoo’s cheek, people would have a hard time telling us apart.*

Joy took a deep breath, handed the gun to John, and told him, “Keep her covered, but be careful. There is no safety.” Then she skittered off the bed behind him so as not to block his view of Khoo. The moist, chilly air finally got to her and, with one eye on Khoo, she was happy to take out of her suitcase her white cotton panties, gray sweat-shirt, and Levis—clothes she could not wear outside of the room—and put them on before she started shivering. She didn’t want Khoo to misinterpret that.

She picked up the jockey shorts, pants, and shirt strewn on the floor and tossed them onto the bed next to John. Then she took the gun from him and sat on the edge of the bed facing Khoo while he got dressed under the comforter. When he finished, he got out of the bed and came around to sit next to Joy. Eyebrows raised, they both stared wordlessly at Khoo.

Khoo glanced from one to the other with little grin. “Call me Jy-ying, please. Now that we have gone through our introductions and small talk, on to the serious stuff.”

Out of the corner of her eye, Joy saw John return a bigger grin. She did not.

“I know about the message you received this morning about Sabah, the nuclear destruction of the democracies, and the world victory of his son.”

That’s new, Joy thought immediately. *The message said it was his father Abul Sabah’s victory.*

“I know about your successful interventions. I know that, but for those nuclear attacks late in the century, you did prevent World Wars I and II and many other wars, and you saved millions from murder by one dictator after another.”

“So we found out from the message,” John said. He glanced at Joy and asked the most natural question, without thinking about whether they wanted to hear the answer. “What happened to us, ultimately?”

Jy-ying

Jy-ying realized she had handled this badly. She had not planned ahead of time what she would reveal, and now realized too late that she had been asked a question she could not answer, for their sakes. Yet if she was to have their trust, she could not appear to be hiding something vital. She leaned forward and reached for Joy’s hand, and raised an eyebrow. “I think you can put that gun down; do you not think so?”

After a moment, Joy nodded and put the gun behind her. She held out her hand to Jy-ying with a caution that only another warrior would see.

Jy-ying held out her other hand toward John. Lips pursed, he took her hand and held it loosely.

Looking from one to the other, Jy-ying said softly, “You two created a miracle. You two alone saved billions and billions of lives. I say this, even as I must add that you have deprived billions and billions of souls of God and Paradise.”

She tightened her grip on their hands. She had to be careful. There was no purpose to disclosing their tragic end, to revealing that John had killed Joy to stop her from committing more murders, and that he’d committed suicide to join her. *Now for a little white lie that won’t change anything*, she thought. “After you achieved almost all you could, you were killed together by a terrorist bomb in the late 1930s.”

“Oh, no!” John exclaimed, jerking his hand from Jy-ying’s. He sat with his eyes tightly shut and every line of his face suddenly downcast, before opening them enough to reach for Joy’s hand.

Jy-ying kept her eyes on Joy. She could see that Joy believed her.

Joy turned to John, saw the pain in his eyes, and told him calmly, “We had to die sometime.” Her voice fell to a soothing whisper. “We died together, dearest, together. And we died after accomplishing our mission. I cannot imagine a better way for us to go.” Then her calm disappeared and she choked up. “That makes me the happiest of all.” Eyes wet, she leaned over and hugged John to her. He put his arms around her.

Of all the things that could have happened when she invaded their room, Jy-ying felt this was the best of all. She had thought that their

cooperation would be that of enemies uniting against a common foe—“an enemy of my enemy is my friend” kind of thing—but now she was not so sure if they really were enemies. She had immeasurable respect for their bravery and accomplishments, but that was the respect one warrior feels for another, even as they fight to the death. What she felt now was a strange closeness to Joy, as though this enemy and destroyer of her religion were her sister. She didn’t understand it. It did not make sense. Not for the tough and hardened security guard she thought she was. Perhaps it was Joy’s instant warrior reaction when she’d burst into the room. Perhaps it was what she had read about them through John’s eyes, and having all those words turned into living, breathing human beings before her—she had a real taste of John’s humor already. Perhaps it was that she was beginning to like and react as a woman toward John. Perhaps it was the moving moment she’d seen between the pair just now.

Strange, she thought. *I have never been so suddenly affected by other people this way.*

Also, with the danger of her sudden appearance in the room now past, she again realized how remarkably like her Joy looked. *Incredible. We almost could be twins.*

With his arms still around Joy and his eyes bright, John asked, “Why are you telling us all this? I don’t understand what you’re doing.”

Joy pulled herself from John’s arms and wiped her eyes with her hands. “Okay, Jy-ying,” she said, “time for background.”

Jy-ying nodded. “This is the easiest part.”

She told them that, after the nuclear destruction of New York and the Joy Phim Democratic Peace Institute, and after Sabah’s son Turghun had taken over the United States along with other democracies, the head of Sabah Security in California discovered that the Institute’s Santa Barbara affiliate had sent a message back to a time traveler in San Francisco. This was the message Joy and John had received when they arrived that morning. Security had to assume that the message was about Sabah’s takeover, with the instructions to assassinate Abul Sabah as a child.

“The message mentioned nothing about assassinating Sabah,” John said. “They left what to do up to us.”

Jy-ying asked, “Did you plan to assassinate him?”

Joy nodded. “Yes.”

Jy-ying then told them about the effort by the Sabah government of China, really now the ruling world government, to develop a time

machine to send someone back in time to kill the recipient of the message. Since they could not develop a machine to send back more than one person, they assumed that only one time traveler had received the message.

“You should know me as I am,” she told Joy and John, and described how she had maneuvered to be on the list of alternates to be sent, then contrived to move up to be first on the list, in spite of objections from the Muslim ruling Council of Clerics. “I was proud to be the one to go. I am a strong believer in Sabah as the Holy Prophet, and I would have assassinated you two to save Him.” She hesitated, then added, “But for that.” She pointed to the *Post* on the bed’s side table.

Joy asked softly, “How did you find out about us? We are here. You were in the future, and only arrived recently—what, two days ago?”

“Yes, I arrived then, and as with you, there was a document waiting for me. It was from those who sent me here, and it included everything I needed to know to locate and kill the time traveler who would assassinate Sabah—you two.”

Joy’s brows knotted together. In an exasperated tone she said, “I don’t understand how they knew all this about us. Was there a traitor among us?” Her voice rose. “Was it one of the three guys John hired?”

“*We* hired,” John was quick to say.

Jy-ying shook her head. “First, you have to understand what universes we now are in—have already created.” Looking at the *Post*, she corrected herself. “Or, what universe has been created for us.

“I will call the universe you came from, whose major twentieth century wars and democides you tried to eliminate, the First Universe. You succeeded, and thus created a Second Universe in which those killings never occurred, and in which democracies made up most of the world, and were united. But there was for democracies a fatal flaw, an advantage for us Sabahists. They grew confident and lax about their defenses in a world they thought they totally dominated.

“Sabah seized power in Uighuristan, controlled Middle Asia, and finally engineered a coup in China.” She was careful to keep the triumph out of her voice. “Sabah was an old man by then, and his son took over most of his power. He used China’s nuclear energy plants to build many nuclear bombs, and eventually used them in a successful attack on the democracies. You know all this from your message. And, as you now know, that message is why I am here—to save Sabah, the Prophet of God, from you. And, God be praised, to save the world he and his son created.

“So, we are now in a Third Universe, one involving the message to you, my arriving here, and the message I received from uptime. Were it not for that article in the *Post*, all this should be obvious. But that article clearly shows that the Third Universe you and I and our messages created has become, or is becoming, a Fourth Universe. What this means is—”

“Jy-ying!” John gave the finger crossing sign for a time out. “Tell us. How did those who sent you the message know about us?”

“Oh, easy.” She looked at John. “You wrote a remembrance of your and Joys’ successes in creating the Second Universe. Very detailed, but partly burned in a fire. There had been rumors about it. Our security searched for it, and finally discovered it in the files of the San Francisco Fire Department.”

“I did?” John exclaimed. “How stupid. I must have been addled with age. I’m totally against ever divulging our time travel. The existence of time travel is all evil rulers need to . . .” John stopped and his face reddened, but he continued to look Jy-ying in the eye.

Joy glowered at him. “I can’t believe you did that, John. You warn me all the time never to keep a diary or preserve documents that would reveal the possibility of time travel, and yet you—how could you be so . . . mindless?”

John looked sheepish, and asked Jy-ying, “Why did I?”

Jy-ying looked at John and then at Joy. Again she was touched by the real reason, and tried hard to keep her voice level and her face non-committal as she looked back at John. She shrugged. “The *Remembrance* did not say.”

“Can we see it?” John asked.

“No,” Joy insisted. “I don’t want to. It would change our behavior. Who can act naturally—spontaneously—when they know their future? And it could be dangerous. Because of your dumb *Remembrance*, we might deny our good sense and prepare for an attack from X when we should realize it will come from Y.”

John became interested in a callus on his palm, and started picking at it. “Joy’s damn training—ruined my hands,” he muttered.

Head tilted, Joy stared at him for a couple of seconds. Then she brushed her straight, jet black hair away from her face and looked back at Jy-ying. She opened her palm and gave a little wave of her hand, nodding as though sharing a secret about men.

Jy-ying gave her a look of understanding, then firmed her voice and said, “Now, really—time to get serious. I want to talk about the *Post* article.”

Chapter 12

November 14
San Francisco

John

Jy-ying looked at John, tilted her head, and asked him, “Did you read the article in the *Post*?”

My God, John thought, she could be Joy asking me, “Did you read what I gave you on Judo?” The same tilt of the head, the same look, the same hair, almost the same voice, except for the accent.

Joy tapped him on the leg. “Are you awake?”

“Oh, sorry, I’m still digesting what Jy-ying told us. Ah, yes, I’ve read the article, and planned to study it later. Joy hasn’t been able to get it away from me, but I summarized it for her . . . ah, when we . . . arrived.”

John noticed Jy-ying’s odd grin when he said that, but it disappeared when she asked, “What do you think of it? You are a historian, so your *Remembrance* told me, and I am not.”

Joy muttered, “Oh no, a John lecture,” and looked up at the ceiling for a moment. Jy-ying looked at her with raised eyebrows.

John pointed at Joy and told Jy-ying, “She’s jealous that I know so much more than she does not only about weapons and martial arts, but also about history.”

Then the seriousness of the question sank in and, feeling foolish, he told both of them in an apologetic tone, “I’m sorry. This is too serious to be taken lightly. Joy knows me, Jy-ying, but you don’t yet. Humor is like a scotch on the rocks to me, if you know what I mean. It carries me over the rough spots of life, and explains what an utterly calm, balanced—”

“John, get on with it,” Joy urged.

“Okay, the article.” John picked up the *Saturday Evening Post*, rapidly flipped to the article, and noted solemnly, “This article has been compiled by the *Post* from telegrams received from their Russian reporter” John looked at the article for the name. “By Vasilii Kubikov. He was a hero. He risked his life to reveal the truth to the

world and was executed as a spy by the *Cheka*—Trotsky’s secret police. Kubikov’s wife and three children subsequently escaped to Berlin with the help of anticommunists.”

John stopped and bowed his head for a moment. It was more than out of respect for the reporter; it was a sudden realization of the risk that Joy and he would be running once they started their planned intervention to change the course of history. The risk of death might even be greater than Kubikov’s.

Joy misunderstood his silence. “Every revolution has their heroes. At least his bravery is recognized, and his family got away.”

John jerked his attention back to the article. “Ah . . . I have yet to fully absorb this incredible departure from our history—”

“My universe—” Jy-ying tried to interject, her brow knitted.

He could not be stopped, neither by Jy-ying nor the roof caving in. “Unbelievable, but it is true that now Trotsky is President of Russia and Chairman of the Communist Party that controls much of the country. And Lenin is Interior Minister and Minister of Justice, while his wife Nadezhda Krupskaya is Minister of Education. Aside from these portfolios, it is true to what Lenin did in 1917 with the Communist revolution in our universe. Trotsky’s victory proclamation is almost identical to Lenin’s of that time, and . . . here, I’ll read Trotsky’s from the article:

The abolition of landlords’ property rights, and workers’ control of production, is now assured. We have arrested all ministers of the czar’s government and the heads of the police and Okhrana, and the Okhrana has been declared an illegal organization. All landlords’ property rights are henceforth abolished. We will begin immediately the expropriation of landed, crown, and church property, the imposition of workers’ control of industry, and the complete democratization of the army and navy.

John shook his head. “Wow. How better to assure the Red Terror and the civil war that is now chewing up the lives of millions of poor Russians.”

He stopped to take a long breath, and Jy-ying saw her chance. Flashing her hand back and froth in front of him to get his attention, she pointed out, “My universe began splitting from yours with your arrival in this time. So, up to then, your bloody, violent, brutal uni-

verse was mine also. I do not remember much of the European part of history, but was there not a bloody Russian revolution in 1904 or 1905?"

Joy's face shifted from hopeful to resigned. "That's a yes or no answer, John."

"Well," John replied, shifting his position on the bed to make himself more comfortable and darting a "you must be kidding" look at Joy, "there was a Bloody Sunday, and that is in fact what it was called; the czar's troops did fire on the workers; the Cossacks did use their sabers. The toll was something like a thousand or less killed. Workers who had formerly refused to be led by the revolutionaries were outraged at the killing of peaceful, patriotic workers, and this gave the revolutionaries their chance. General strikes occurred all over the nation, and soviets were formed in many cities and towns. But the czar's troops remained largely loyal and the clever, so-called October Manifesto of Witte's that the czar announced over his name helped calm things down. And as a newly appointed prime minister, Witte appeared to satisfy the less radical demands of workers and liberals, which tended to reduce the hostility and anger of peasants and workers.

"Oh, there were plenty of strikes still, and a mutiny or so, and there was a civil war in Moscow in which a good part of the city was shot up by artillery and burned down, but the soviets there and in St. Petersburg could not overcome the general loyalty of the army. In November the whole St. Petersburg Soviet was surrounded by the czar's troops and police, and realizing they could not fight them, Trotsky surrendered the soviet. All there were arrested, and Trotsky was tried and exiled to Siberia in 1906. In that year Witte also resigned as prime minister over the czar's repressive policies, and was replaced by a nonentity, who himself was replaced by Stolypin in July 1906. His subsequent harsh crackdown broke the back of the revolution."

"Thank yo—" Jy-ying began, but John was relentless.

"By March of 1917, the losses and hardship of Russian participation in World War I had soured many soldiers and workers on the czar. This brought about his downfall and the end of the Romanov monarchy. A provisional government under Prime Minister Prince Lvov was appointed by the Duma, and in July a new provisional government was set up under the democratic socialist Kerensky. Not widely known, it seems, is that the Bolsheviks came to power by a coup in October, 1917, against an inept, disorganized, provisional government, and not the monarchy."

While gathering his breath for another discourse, John took a quick glance at Joy. She was playing with a thread protruding from the sleeve of her sweatshirt. He looked back at Jy-ying, whose eyes were wide with interest. Encouraged, John sat up straighter and went on, his sonorous lecture drone now fully matured. “The Red Terror, the famine, the concentration camps, the destruction of agriculture due to Soviet policies and requisitions, and the civil war all happened, but between 1919 and 1923, not in 1906. Not as the *Post* article describes the terrible bloodletting now underway. Also, Trotsky led the Red Army from 1918 on, while Lenin headed the Soviet government. Trotsky has been credited with the rapid buildup and organization of the Red Army and its eventual success against the White—the anticommunist—Armies.”

John picked up the *Post*, swung it into the air as though displaying an exhibit in a courtroom, and exclaimed, “As for the bloodbath now underway, it looks like it could exceed the rivers of blood of the Russian Revolution of 1917 to 1922. Then—or now, if the *Post* article is at all reliable—Russians will die from so many causes or be murdered by the communists or their opponents for so many reasons, it will seem as if the devil had the country in his hand.

“There was the communist Red Terror in which clergy, businessmen, landowners, the rich, royalists, critics, and resisters, among others, were shot both en masse and one by one—some five hundred thousand people were murdered. There were the peasant uprisings, literally a Bread War, due to the forced requisition of peasant livestock and food. Another five hundred thousand died. In addition to the murder and deportation of ‘rich’ landlords, the nationalization of estates, and the ravages of the civil war, this Bread War caused a famine that starved to death or killed by associated diseases about seven million people. Then there were the thousands killed in rebellions in cities and towns when people came to recognize the full meaning of the ‘dictatorship of the proletariat’ and the extent of the Red Terror.

“More people were killed in forced deportations. New concentration camps killed—I remember this detail for how small it was in contrast to the Stalin years—thirty-four thousand. Finally, there was the civil war itself, which killed over a million people.”

“How many overall?” Jy-ying slipped in.

John drew in a long breath. “The Russian Revolution of 1917 to 1922 killed about nine and a half million people, over three million of them murdered. This total is larger than the World War I dead of our

universe. Incredible. We must not, we cannot, let this happen again. This is why we're here. We must stop what Trotsky and Lenin are doing to Russia. Russians deserve better."

John hesitated, mentally shifting to another section of lecture notes. "Consider that—"

Jy-ying clapped loudly twice, breaking John's concentration. "John," she said, "thank you. That was . . . helpful." She looked with a little grin at Joy, who now was winding the thread around one finger.

Joy looked up, and cupped her hand to hide her mouth from John. "See?" she whispered.

Still grinning, which John interpreted as appreciation, Jy-ying turned back to him. "That is what I thought. This defeats both our missions, mine to save Sabah and his victory—although without the nuclear attacks—and yours to end major war and democides, and foster Godle . . . ah, democracy.

"You see, you were successful in preventing the Russian Revolution of 1917, and Russia eventually became democratic. Many of its imperial possessions were given their independence. China also became a democracy, thanks to you, and Uighuristan declared independence. It was never again invaded and taken over by China or Russia. However, if the 1905 communist revolution in Russia reported in the *Post* article is fully successful, China is unlikely to become a democracy, regardless of what you do. And democracy was the condition which made it easy for Sabah to take power over China in a coup. Russia or China now will probably seize small Uighuristan, even though the Uighurs will fight them. I doubt that Sabah's parents would survive the bloodbath to bear Sabah, and if they do, whether the boy himself would live long. Even were he to do so, he would not be able to seize power there, and be the father of . . . my religion." She swallowed and stared down at her clenched hands.

"It's clear," Joy said, "that our mission is changed also. We can still intervene in Mexico to prevent the Mexican Revolution, but interventions in China and Europe are questionable because of the many political changes that will now occur there. We might as well flush down the toilet our First Universe early twentieth century history of these countries. And as to preventing the Russian Revolution, one of the most important interventions of our mission, our hope of preventing all those murders by Lenin and Stalin is now a ha-ha. The revolution has happened. The murders are happening."

John was pleased that Joy had really been listening carefully to him. He had to say what was now obvious. “We are in a new universe not of our making—one created in Russia or even elsewhere before 1905. This 1905 revolution may only be the result of prior historical changes rippling through time. Maybe a meteor hit Russia a century or so ago, and caused enough destruction to change political events there with the consequences we now see. You know, so much of our world is the result of the smallest random events having large consequences. The slightest change in the motion of a trout may cause a millimeter movement of a stone at the bottom of a stream, and as a result a horse steps on it enough offside to slip and throw its rider, a general, who hits his head on the rocks. And a battle is lost, and thus so is a nation’s independence. This is a counterpart of the idea that when a butterfly flaps its wings in a tropical forest it may be the cause of a huge storm—”

Joy grinned again at Jy-ying. “We get the idea.”

John was too well along on this stream of thought, and ignored her. “The question is whether the revolution in Russia is the culmination of past changes, or a change introduced in or just before 1905. To help determine this, we can look at current political events elsewhere. If this Russian Revolution is only the consequence of historical change occurring well beforehand, then those changes also should appear in Europe, Asia, and the United States in some way. If the Russian Revolution is the first change in our universe, then there should be no or little change from our chronology of events.”

“Let’s do this right away,” Joy suggested. “Jy-ying, I imagine you are well trained in the chronology of late 1906, especially for the United States. Have you a newspaper?”

She shook her head.

Joy got up and retrieved the two newspapers John had bought from the chest of drawers. She gave one to Jy-ying, gave John the back sections of the other paper, and took the front section herself.

“Hey,” John complained, “I should get the front section.”

“No,” Joy replied, “your incredible grasp of even the smallest historical details, like the name of the Japanese admiral who defeated the Russian navy in the 1905 battle of something strait—”

“Admiral Togo led the Japanese fleet that destroyed the Russian navy in the Battle of Tsushima Strait,” John said smugly. “It was a disastrous defeat for the Russians. Of the forty-five ships in the Russian fleet, only two destroyers and the light cruiser *Almaz* reached the Russian port of Vlad—”

Joy raised her voice. “—means that you are best suited to the small details of the back sections.”

John grinned; Jy-ying chuckled. He suggested that, if they came across a suspicious news item, they should mention it to see if it didn't ring true for the others, too. “We should keep going until someone says, ‘That's not right,’ or something like that.”

Jy-ying and Joy nodded, and they all began to scan the newspapers.

In minutes John read aloud, “Karl Nessler demonstrated the first permanent wave for hair, in London.”

The old wooden hotel creaked.

Jy-ying rustled her newspaper and said, “The SOS has been adopted as a warning signal by the First Conference on Wireless Telegraphy.”

John glanced at Joy. Seeing that she was about to speak, he blurted, “You know, last month Henry Mathewson of the New York Giants walked fourteen men. Wow.”

The voices of hotel guests came through the door as they passed down the hallway.

Joy put her finger on an item and noted, “Ethiopia was declared independent in a tripartite pact, and divided into British, French, and Italian spheres of influence.”

Newspapers rustled as Joy and Jy-ying turned to the next page.

John sighed, “How sad, Bill Rufus Shafter died. He was terribly overweight, you know.” He glanced back and forth between Jy-ying and Joy. They had their eyes focused on their papers. He went on. Louder. “He died at his daughter's home from pneumonia. He was buried next to his loving wife at the Presidio. Only a few of us historians know of this great man. In March of 1863 he spent several months in a Confederate prison, you know.”

Joy and Jy-ying seemed not to hear him. *Have they been trained in the same female academy?* he wondered.

He raised his voice even more. “Afterward, Bill became part of the regular army and was an officer in the Seventeenth United States Colored Infantry. He fought in the battle of Nashville in December, 1864. He was commissioned a lieutenant colonel after the war, you know, and went to Louisiana—”

Jy-ying raised her voice even higher than John's. “This month is Sun Yat-sen's birthday—he was born in 1866, and was very influential in China's democra—”

John spoke still louder. “Hey, Princeton is the NCAA Champion at 9-0-1.”

Joy yelled, "President Teddy Roosevelt is on his way to visit Puerto Rica and Panama. He will be the first president to visit a foreign coun—

John was breaking up as he tried to raise his voice even higher. He tried to suppress his laughter. "The Dow average for the last month was 94."

Joy grabbed the newspaper out of his hands. She bunched the pages together and tossed them at his head. He ducked and finally let the laughter out. Jy-ying and Joy joined him.

"I think we're all agreed," he said, chuckling, "that this was not a good idea. We don't have our chronologies, and the news items we're seeing don't seem odd or displaced in time. We will have to do this at the library with our chronologies, and work from the events listed there for a particular date, comparing them to the news in the newspapers for the days following."

Jy-ying leaned over and removed a sheet of crumpled newsprint that was draped over John's head—John saw Joy's sudden look at her—and noted, "It was fun. Anyway, I found some interesting items. There is a woman here operating a mission for Chinese girls, especially those who were enslaved in . . . oarhouses, I think you call them."

"Whorehouses," John corrected.

Jy-ying continued. "She breaks into them with helpers and takes away the young girls that have been forced to be sex slaves. She cares for them until they can handle their own lives."

"Cut out that item," Joy said. "Maybe we can help the woman out. Oh, I found something also." She picked up the page she had been looking at, and read, "'Grand Jury begins investigation of the houses of assignation known as French Restaurants. These included Marchand's, Delmonico's, The New Poodle Dog, The Bay State, and The Pup, all of which featured supper-bedrooms. Mayor Ruef had acted as attorney for French Restaurants during liquor license renewal in 1905.' Well," Joy added, "this tells us what places to avoid."

John blurted, "Yes, keep that item also, so we know what evil places to . . . ah, avoid."

Joy looked askance at him, one eyebrow raised, but John ignored her and clapped his hands once. "Okay, girls, we're off topic. We will have to go to the library tomorrow. I think we are all too tired today. In the meantime, we have to plan what to do about this, assuming that the changes in this universe began with the 1905 Russian Revolution—unless the library research proves otherwise.

“Joy and I had planned to take a long nap before your surprise visit, Jy-ying. We are scheduled to meet our first hires, three guys we met when we landed here, and if you will join us, I’ll introduce them to you. Then afterward, I want to discuss tentatively what we should do. Where are you staying, Jy-ying?”

Jy-ying pointed to the wall that separated her room from John’s. “The next room,” she said.

“You were there for a while before you . . . surprised us?”

“Yes.”

Joy reddened slightly, and John thought, *Now she does know everything*. He quickly asked, “I imagine that you have all the funds you need for your mission, as you know we do. But you will be working closely with us on our new mission, and you’ll need a cover for our working as one.” *Oops, not well put*, John realized with a quick glance at Joy, whose face was clouding up. *Working with Joy and Jy-ying together is going to be complex*.

John softened his voice, tilted his head at Joy, and rested his finger on her arm. “Joy, what kind of cover can we give Jy-ying?”

Joy hesitated, put her hand over John’s, and then looked directly at Jy-ying. She said in Mandarin Chinese, “I’m sure you speak this language. Do you speak others?”

Jy-ying answered, “Yes; I understand Hakka and Cantonese, among others. As a security guard, I had to learn all the major Chinese languages.”

“Good.” Joy turned to look at John with the hint of a smile. “She can work under me as my assistant and, for show, my translator.”

“Perfect,” John replied. *Just what I wanted*.

He leaned over and started picking up the papers on the floor. “We’re going to take a nap,” he told Jy-ying. “Please meet us at the hotel restaurant at six.”

“Oh, one more thing, Jy-ying,” Joy said. “I saw your beautiful calligraphy in the registration book, and the room you listed was on the third floor. You changed rooms?”

“Yes, as soon as I saw what rooms you two had. But then, I was going to assassinate you.” Jy-ying stood, hesitated, and then stepped over to Joy and shook her hand. She did the same to John. “To *our* mission,” she said.

Joy lifted Jy-ying’s gun from the bed, took a quick look at it, and handed it to Jy-ying. “Nice gun, but too light. I’d like to take it apart sometime.”

Jy-ying turned at the door and grinned at Joy. "It's light because it's not loaded," she said, and left.

Chapter 13

November 14, 1906
Berlin

Rosa Luxemburg

Rosa was alone in her two room apartment, writing at her oak table by the light of an electric lamp with a gray lace lampshade and a grotesque gargoyle base that sat in the middle of the table surrounded by scattered notes, newspapers, and telegrams. Magazines and books, some lying open, were strewn amidst the papers. This was how Rosa worked. It appalled visitors, but she always seemed to find what she was looking for in seconds. Her mind was organized; what lay on the table was its debris.

The apartment itself was chaotic. A ceramic gas stove stood in the corner on a stone base, its flue rising straight up to disappear through the blackened ceiling. Partly eaten food lay on the counter in the small kitchen; unwashed dishes waited in the sink for days until she had nothing to eat on, and washed them; clothes were draped across a davenport, now converted to a bed; and next to a smelly armchair against one wall, clothes spilled from two open suitcases.

And she took a bath maybe once a month. She did not have time.

She was used to temporary lodgings, and would be leaving this one in twenty-four hours to travel by train to Warsaw. She wanted to help and be with her lover Leo Jogiches, who planned to launch a Polish revolution modeled on Trotsky's in a month.

Although Trotsky had promised the independence of Poland, the czar's Russian governor-general of Poland was still in control and seemed very reluctant to relinquish power. Leo's sympathetic contacts in the governor-general's headquarters were sure he was on the verge of making himself the president of Poland, declaring Poland free of Russia, and fighting the Red Army if it tried to take back the country. So far, the Russian-Polish Army was still loyal to him. But Rosa had the telegram from Trotsky's German lieutenant: the new Soviet government of Russia was just too busy, too shaky, too threatened by the White Armies to bother at this time with Poland, but if a successful

communist revolution seized control from the governor and his lackeys, then Trotsky would welcome Poland's independence and collaboration in the international war on capitalism and bourgeoisie society.

Rosa and Leo had declared themselves Bolsheviks in February, but to conform with the name change in St. Petersburg, they now called themselves communists. Her lover now headed the Polish Communist Party in Warsaw that he'd founded.

They were still short of arms, but the Warsaw Grenadier Corps would come to their side. In one month the revolution would be launched with massive general strikes. Most helpful was the announcement in today's telegram that comrades had assassinated two Russian and one Polish general, all major bulwarks of traditional Russian control.

She was bone tired. Although only thirty-six and in good health, she had not slept for a full day. She had to get this article finished for the German social democratic newspaper *Vorwärts*. And she still had to attend the meeting with Karl Liebknecht about setting up a German Communist Party in Berlin out of the unhappy left wing of the Reichstag's social democrats. Events were moving so fast it was hard for any of them to keep up—all seemed out of control, as though they were leaves in the wind of a magnificent global communist revolution.

There was a knock at the door. She ignored it.

The knock came again, heavier.

"*Gówno—shit!*" she exclaimed in Polish. She rose heavily and cocked the door open. "Yes?" she said to the tall, solid-looking man standing on the other side.

The man wore a white Cossack hat with the flaps up; his open greatcoat revealed a brown corduroy suit and a collarless gray shirt. He had a heavy wool scarf tossed over one shoulder. "Are you Rosa?"

Rosa edged to the back of the door, ready to slam and lock it. She had been warned about German Freikorps assassins ready to work their way down a list of prominent revolutionaries. She had a suitcase of her essentials ready and had prepared an escape route out the apartment's rear window and down an alley. He could not be German, however, not the way he dressed and mangled the language.

An American?

The man held out a folded piece of paper. "This is from Leo and introduces me to you. I just left him this morning in Warsaw. The code word is Spartacus."

"Excuse me?" she answered, shaking her head.

“S.P.A.R.T.A.C.U.S.,” he spelled out, but his pronunciation of the letters was hardly easier to understand.

Nevertheless, she understood. “Ah, Spartacus.” She opened the door and waved him in, holding out her other hand for the message. While he closed the door behind him, she took the message over to the lamp and read it.

She stared at him, and then plopped into her chair, quickly expelling air through her teeth. “You did this for us?” She ran her hand through her hair. “All that money.”

She reread the message, looked back up at him, and almost shouted, “Welcome, comrade, to the revolution! Come, sit down.” She got up and dragged a chair around the table to a spot next to hers. “I don’t have any schnapps or beer to drink. Could I make you tea?”

“*Nein*,” the man said, and tried to pronounce his next words carefully. “I cannot stay long. I have too much to do, and so do you. I came here only to give you this.” He handed her an envelope. “It’s the number of a bank account at Dresdner Bank, and it’s in the name of Katharina Schluter. You will also see in the envelope the ID and false birth certificate that will enable you to pass as that person.”

“How much is in the account?”

“Fifty million marks.”

She gasped and jerked back in her chair, eyes wide. “What am I to do with all this money?”

“Use it wisely to promote a Bolshevik-communist revolution in Germany. It will take time and much organization, but I know you are at the center of the revolutionaries here. I’m also sure that after Trotsky consolidates his power in Russia, he will help you. Two more things.”

Rosa strained forward to understand him, her eyes still large and her mouth hanging open in shock.

“I know that your Polish revolution will be launched in a month. One week before that, a revolutionary will assassinate the governor-general of Poland. Since he has monopolized power, this will leave his government not only leaderless, but powerless. The army and police will not know what to do. You and Leo can prepare for it.”

“How can you be sure?”

“You can count on it. But, even if you prepare for it and I am wrong, you lose nothing if he lives. Second, the workers here do not understand or support revolution. The whole union movement is oriented toward peaceful reform and social democracy—evolutionary social democracy. Move slowly and organize and be prepared. For

there will be a war with Serbia, France, and England. Soviet Russia will remain neutral at first. When that war occurs, and it will be bloody, the workers will be yours, as well as mutinous soldiers and sailors. I cannot be sure of when this will happen. Maybe in a decade or less.”

She stared at him again, this time as though he were an alien being. “A war?”

“Yes. It will be a bloody one, and one destabilizing Germany to your advantage.”

“But what can cause such a big war?”

“An assassination, an ultimatum, the fear of being at a disadvantage when other powers mobilize, and what everyone thought would be a small war will escalate into a war involving all of Europe, and ultimately may even involve the United States.”

“The United States? Now I know you are joking. Why should Americans stop chasing Indians to send their cowboys way over here to make war on . . . who? Will they be on Germany’s side?”

“No, they will fight with the English and French against Germany, Austro-Hungary, and Turkey, and a few East European nations. I think Trotsky will declare war on Germany after he sees the opportunity for communism here, and will help destroy the Kaiser. It will give you your greatest opportunity for revolution.”

Rosa cleared her throat. “You sure have an imagination.” She pinched the bridge of her nose before continuing. “I do not want to insult you, and I respect your great help, but you should leave the politics and predictions to us Poles and Germans, who have lived in this political culture our whole life. Anyway, I know great changes and opportunities are coming. It is in the air. It is in the streets. It is in the union halls. It is in the Reichstag. And we will be ready.”

“That is all I digest,” the man said, mixing up the German “suggest” with “digest,” but Rosa understood.

He stood and headed for the door.

Rosa got up to follow him. Her knees felt weak as she remembered the fortune he’d given her. At the door, she asked, “What is your name?”

“No matter,” he said, meeting her gaze with green eyes filled with respect. “Just think of me as a rich comrade.”

Chapter 14

November 14, 1906
San Francisco

Joy

As soon as the door closed behind Jy-ying, Joy said, “We have to trust her. The ultimate proof is that she could have burst into your room with a loaded gun and shot us dead, and didn’t; since her gun was unloaded, she also risked being killed by me—”

“Us,” John interrupted.

“—and she knew it.” Joy paused, then suggested, “Let’s go to my room. I’m uncomfortable knowing that she is on the other side of that wall.”

John smiled. “Even in your room, baby, my lovemaking would make your screech loud enough for her to hear. Even if she were walking down the street. Or, possibly on the ferry to Oakland.”

“I see. Well, so much for lovemaking.” *Ha-ha, I got him with that.* Feeling smug, Joy picked up her suitcase and headed for her room.

John followed her, muttering, “Stupid, stupid.”

Once they were settled on Joy’s bed for a nap, Joy asked, “What do you think about our new partner?”

John stretched and put his hands behind his head. “I see no reason to doubt her. She told us about her mission to kill us, she was frank about her religion and her desire that Sabah be saved somehow, and she knew about the message we received from her future—which means she knew, as did those who sent her, that we had to be planning to kill him.” His voice trailed off at the end. He turned on his side and put one arm over her. “I’m sleepy, baby.”

“She could be me,” Joy said.

“No woman could be like you.”

“She looks like me. She acts like me.”

John whispered, “You are unique.”

“If she were naked, you might think she was me.” She turned her head to look at him. His eyes were closed, and he was breathing lightly. She sighed. *So much at stake. So many lives to save. Such a responsibility. And now, Jy-ying.*

She caressed the locket she wore containing her mother's photograph. She felt again her terrible loss—she would never see her loving mother again. She let the quiet tears flow. Then she thought, *But I have my dearest*. She leaned over and kissed John on the cheek.

In minutes, she was asleep.

She did not see John open one eye, make sure she was asleep and, with a dimple forming at the corner of his mouth, fall asleep himself.

Jy-ying

Jy-ying waited at the entrance to the hotel restaurant. She wore the checked gingham jumper that fit her tight at the waist and hips, but no hat. The day was too serious for anything but her usual braided circlet of hair on the back of her head. And no makeup, of course.

Three fellows walking past her suddenly stopped and stared at her. Then they seemed to notice something about her that made them relax, and the tallest of them said, "I'm sorry for staring at you, miss. I thought you were somebody we knew."

"I am. Almost," Jy-ying responded with a little bow, looking at each of them. "I am waiting for John Banks and Joy Phim. You must be the three gentlemen we are joining for dinner." She knew all about them, since they played such a prominent role in John's *Remembrance*.

The three stood straighter. That may have been the first time in their life they were called gentlemen. The tall one doffed his hat. "I'm Hands Reeves," he said, and introduced the other two. "We work for Mr. Banks and his assistant Miss Phim. You're right; we're supposed to meet them here for supper."

Nice looking man, Jy-ying observed. She smiled. "Ah, yes, John . . . Mr. Banks invited me to join you. I am happy to meet you. I am Khoo Jy-ying." Without thinking, she added, "I am Joy's sister. I will also be working for the company, with Joy."

"Hey, that explains why you look so much like her," the man named Sal said. "I thought there could be only one beauty like her in the world." Then he added, his eyes shining, "Are there more?"

Ah yes, she thought, *Sal. The funny, oversexed, brazen, disrespectful one. How come we do not have anyone like him in the China of my time?* Jy-ying grinned at him. "Thank you, Mr. Garcia, for the compliment. No, I have no other sisters."

“You and Joy . . . ah, Miss Phim, sure sucked up all the beauty. Nothing left for other women but plain or ugly.”

What do Americans call this? Ah, yes, a line. Jy-ying raised her eyebrow at him.

The one named Dolphy Docker punched him in the shoulder. “You must excuse my friend,” he told her. “He’s just wowed by you and Joy.”

“And I’ll hit him myself if he doesn’t mind his manners,” Reeves said, glaring at Garcia.

Jy-ying chuckled, feeling good about these men. “He is a nice man, Mr. Reeves. I have never been so complimented.”

Garcia beamed and hit Docker back on the shoulder. Reeves smiled at Jy-ying and told her, “I’m Hands. You can call us all by our first names, Khoo, since we are coworkers.”

“Khoo is my last name. For Chinese, last names come first. Call me Jy-ying.”

Then she saw John and Joy coming down the lobby stairs. She tried not to stare at John, but in his well-fitted diagonally worsted coat and pinstripe pants, with his wild blond curls framing a square, rugged face, he was a handsome and graceful man. But, she thought, if she had anything to do with it, he would not wear that maroon bow tie. Even so, she flushed, and her heart fluttered.

No good, she told herself, and jerked her gaze to Joy. Even at a distance she could see that Joy had been watching her stare at John. *Especially, no good.*

John

John joined them with a smile. “Hello, everybody. I see you’ve met the guys, Jy-ying.” Turning to them, he asked, “Have you introduced yourselves?”

They nodded.

“Fine, let’s eat.”

There were no empty tables for six, so John picked one table and dragged over another. He sat at the head of the two tables, with Jy-ying on his right side. Joy walked around to the other side and sat on his left. John was speechless for a moment, wondering how that happened. He glanced at Joy. She was looking at Jy-ying—was that the hint of a glower?

He cleared his throat. Looking at the three guys, he asked, “Did Miss Khoo tell you that she is your coworker? She will be Miss Phim’s assistant and translator—”

Joy kicked him under the table. She told the guys, “I can’t stand this. I’m Joy. Boss-man is John.” She pointed to John, then pointed to each of the others in turn and gave their first names.

“Thank you, Joy,” John replied with a grin. “You see, she is my assistant and translator.” He emphasized the last word.

Sal had been staring back and forth between Joy and Jy-ying with his mouth open. He finally told Jy-ying, “If you hadn’t told me you and Joy were sisters, I would have guessed it. Are you twins?”

John was taken aback for a moment. Sisters? Then he realized what a good idea that was. It was a convenient answer when people wondered about the two women’s resemblance.

“No, we—” Joy started to answer, but John interrupted.

“No, not as you mean it, but they’re fraternal twins. Jy-ying just joined us from New York. Her room is next to mine.”

Dolphy asked, “What’s a fraternal twin?”

“Ah,” John tried to answer, “they come from different ovum . . . ah, female reproductive cells. Eggs.”

Dolphy colored slightly and saw something interesting to look at on the wall. Hands seemed engrossed in the tabletop. Sal looked from Joy to Jy-ying and grinned. “Yeah, I thought so.”

They spent several minutes studying their menus. “Everybody ready to order?” John asked. When they nodded, John looked for the waiter and realized that he had been ignoring them. He glanced at Joy and Jy-ying, recalling the prejudices of this period. *Time for a little speech to remind everyone that we’re all immigrants*, he thought.

Before he could rise and call for attention, Jy-ying stood and walked over to the waiter, oblivious to the gazes of several male customers. She tapped the waiter on the shoulder, put her hand on his arm, leaned toward him with a smile, and said something. The waiter took a step back, his face aghast, and then immediately came to their table to take their order. Jy-ying followed him, and sat back down without a word.

Almost obsequious, the waiter responded to their orders with, “Yes sir. Yes ma’am. Is there anything I can get you? Coffee or tea?”

When the waiter left, everyone looked at Jy-ying. Finally Hands asked, “What did you say?”

“Oh, simple. I said that if we did not get waited on in five seconds, I was going to put my arms around him and give him a big kiss in front of everybody, and say loudly, ‘Thanks for the fun night.’”

The three guys clapped; John grinned. Joy’s face was stony. John suspected she was still unhappy that Jy-ying had not asked her before claiming they were sisters.

Sal asked Jy-ying, “If I don’t pass you the salt and pepper, will you give me five seconds also?”

Everyone laughed; Joy released a little smile.

Joy

Joy felt foolish, and couldn’t help chiding herself during the rest of the meal. *What’s the matter with me? Jy-ying is doing nothing more than what I would do. She’s just admiring a good-looking man, but she’s no competition for his heart. We now have a terribly important mission to do together, and this stupid, trivial jealousy cannot interfere. It’s that she looks so much like me. Any other woman, and I would not have given it a thought.* The “it” needed no reference. *Okay, goddam it. Enough.*

She used her warrior skills to relax herself, and when she felt she could look at Jy-ying calmly and without a tendril of jealousy reaching out from her heart, she smiled at Jy-ying and asked during a break in the conversation, “How ya doing, Sis?”

Jy-ying responded with a smile of her own. “Great. So nice to be with you again.”

Joy heard John let out a long breath. Under the table, he lifted up her dress with the toe of his boot and gently rubbed the side of her leg.

After the meal, John warned the fellows that he would knock on their doors around eight the next morning to start working them “like slaves.”

“Oh,” Hands responded. “Like peasants.”

When Dolphy appeared to take John seriously, Joy laughed. “Joke, joke,” she told them. “Remember, I’m the translator.”

Jy-ying nodded, and Dolphy gave her an embarrassed grin.

They said good night to the guys. On the way to John’s room, Joy stopped at her own to get the laptop computer she had packed in her suitcase. John also picked up the room’s lone chair and carried it into his room for additional seating, and the trio settled in John’s room.

Before John could begin, Joy, seated on the edge of the bed with the laptop next to her, looked at Jy-ying. "Calling us sisters was clever. Now if people comment on how identical we look, we can simply say, 'We're sisters,' and they will move on."

Jy-ying replied, "Except for men like Sal, who will find it a good opening . . . line, is that what you call it?"

"Yes," John said, "and I would have used it myself, on Joy."

When Joy and Jy-ying raised their eyebrows, he hastened on. "As I mentioned, tomorrow we will do research in the library, seeking any changes that have taken place in current events. But since we did go through the newspaper—or tried to, until Joy lost her usual admirable control," he added with a laugh, "we can assume that a new universe began in Russia in 1904 or 1905 with the events that led up to the successful revolution of November, 1905."

Joy frowned over that. "It's not right. If a new universe were created in 1905, how could we land in this new universe in 1906? Remember, John, our scientists were unable to find a way to cross universes, which is why we could never return to 2001—our arrival here would create a new universe."

"You have to be right, Joy," Jy-ying said. She looked pensive, and then raised a finger. "How about this? It cannot be possible that a change in one tiny part of the world, like our little part of San Francisco, would be instantly transmitted all over the world. It must be that such changes introduced into the time stream radiate out like ripples from a pebble tossed onto the still surface of a pond. Those time-ripples from the revolution in Russia have yet to change this tiny and remote part of the world. So, when we landed here, we were still in the universe to which we'd been sent."

"More like a boulder rolling off a cliff into a still pond," Joy said.

"In any case," John replied, "a theory of incrementally changing universes. I'll buy that. In history, one can always find cases where—"

Joy sensed a lecture and hastened to respond. "I agree. Now that we have that behind us, what do we do about the changes that have occurred, and will eventually reach us here?" She looked at Jy-ying. "You want to save Sabah and your religion. We want to prevent the major twentieth century wars and democides by intervening at historical turning points, and globalizing democracy to end the possibility of these catastrophes. Maybe there is a way to achieve both our missions, without the nuclear holocausts of Abul Sabah's son."

John pushed his hand through his wild hair. “We should leave that until a later time. Regardless of how we deal with our divergent missions—except for killing us, of course,” he gave Jy-ying a little grin, “the more important thing is what to do about the vast political changes now taking place.”

Joy faked a somber look. “Yes, after giving it some thought, I agree with John. Killing us is out. And, right—we have to do something about the changes. But isn’t it more important to find out what’s causing these changes first?”

“Let’s deal with that in a moment,” John said. “I can’t exaggerate how important the Russian revolution of 1905 is, particularly because Trotsky led it. He is now the most powerful man in Russia, more powerful than Lenin. This gives Trotsky the chance to pursue his idea of permanent revolution. He believes that, for a communist revolution in Russia to be secure, the revolution must be spread to other countries. He will not wait for a powerful, industrial Soviet state to be created first, as Stalin would have done—this was the major conflict between Trotsky and Stalin. As soon as the revolution is consolidated, that is, the White Armies are defeated and his control is extended over all Russia, he will try to use all means to create communist revolutions in other countries. He’ll do this first among his neighbors, and then their neighbors, and so on. I’m convinced Germany, which has a strong social democratic, union movement, will follow Poland.”

Jy-ying looked at Joy. “Did he sneak in a lecture?”

She nodded, trying to look mournful.

John ignored them. “I suggest, Joy, that we temporarily put aside all our plans to intervene in Mexico, Japan, and China. All that we do now should be concentrated on Eastern Europe, Poland, and Germany.”

Jy-ying interjected, “No, China cannot be forgotten. It is very important to prevent communism in China, regardless of whether or not the fall of the Manchu dynasty creates a democracy.”

Joy leaned forward, put her elbow on her knee, and rested her chin in her hand. “With what is happening in Russia, I can’t imagine still going ahead with the other parts of our mission. Yes, Mexico and Japan have to be out, for a while. But I would stick with our China mission. Trying to prevent communism and the rise of a fascist Nationalist Party in China is what underlies our intervention to promote democracy there.” She looked at John, eyebrows raised. “Your moment is up.”

Frowning, John looked back at her. “My moment is up?”

“Yes. You said, ‘Let’s deal with what caused these changes in the Russian time path in a moment.’ The moment is up. Maybe we would have a better idea of what to do if we knew what was causing these changes.”

Before John could answer, Jy-ying pointed out, “It cannot be a meteor, volcanic eruption, earthquake, or another natural catastrophe. All such would be fixed in time and place regardless of the changes in our universe or the one that the 1905 revolution created—is creating.”

John looked thoughtful. “It has to be a man.” Joy scowled, and he hastily corrected himself. “Rather, a person; a he or she; someone.”

Good man, she thought, and added out loud, “I agree. Some person is behind this. What I don’t understand is how they were able to remove themselves from the historical flow of this universe to affect such an incredible revolution, and I mean that in both the political and physical senses.”

Jy-ying shook her head. “No person, he or she, or someone could. Neither could an alien of whatever sex, or lack thereof, since . . . it . . . is part of the same universe.”

Joy was amused; she saw the mischief in Jy-ying’s eyes. She was beginning to like her.

She was even more amused when John looked from Jy-ying to her and said, “You two have been putting me on. You are really sisters, aren’t you.”

He held his hand up before she could reply. “It’s obvious, once the idea has been mentioned, that one or more time travelers, probably with resources similar to ours or better, have intervened in Russia. They are trying to do for communism what we want to do for democracy.”

“And Sabahism, John. Do not forget my mission,” Jy-ying added softly.

“As long as it doesn’t include our deaths,” John replied.

Jy-ying’s expression turned grim. She got up, knelt before John and Joy, and put out her hands for theirs. When she had their hands, she said in a firm voice, “You have mentioned that twice John, and Joy did once. I do not blame you for your worry. I do not blame you if you do not trust me. I want you both to know I could no longer kill either of you, even if I thought it would save Sabah. How do you say it? That is off the table? Forever.” She gave Joy’s hand a squeeze. “Anyway, Joy is my sister. How could I kill my sister?”

John replied, “But I’m not related to you. At least, not as far as I know.”

“Yes,” Jy-ying replied, “but you are Joy’s lover, and in her heart, her husband.”

Joy thought she had shown the green monster the door, but when Jy-ying said that, it was as though a wet blanket had been removed from her body and the sun was shining on her. Other than acting toward John as any woman would naturally, Joy was sure that Jy-ying would not betray her.

With that, Jy-ying got up and returned to her chair. Folding her hands on her lap and looking back at Joy and John, she said, “I’m back to where I started. I came to this age to find a time traveler. Turns out it was you two. Now, again, I have to find one or more time travelers. But I will not be alone. I am now part of a team of three. I will call it the Banks Team.”

Joy smiled at her—genuinely smiled at her for the first time. “Welcome, Jy-ying.”

John got a thoughtful expression on his face. “How do we catch this or these communist time travelers? Why, we make them come to us. Here, to San Francisco, where we can trap them. Where it would be easiest.”

“How do we do that?” Joy asked.

“Look, girls, I solved our problem. Do I have to do everything? The little details are up to you two.”

Chapter 15

November 15, 1906
San Francisco

Jy-ying

They were sitting in Sam's Grill on Bush Street for lunch. John had dismissed the three guys for the day, and wanted this chance to talk with Joy and Jy-ying about their plans. They had found nothing amiss in the big events in the United States and elsewhere outside of Europe, but there was considerable middle-level activity in Congress and the State Department about the revolution in Russia. State had recalled its ambassador to Russia for consultation, and had closed down several consulates, including the one in Moscow, because of the danger to American officials during the Red Terror and the civil war. Intervention was much talked about; some prominent senators were calling for American help for anticommunist forces, including President Pro Tempore William P. Frye, but Secretary of State Elihu Root was opposed. President Roosevelt had called an emergency cabinet meeting, and pundits were predicting that a major aid program for the starving Russians would be recommended to Congress.

John voiced their conclusion: "The political changes in this universe must have started in Russia in 1905." He asked them if they had any suggestions for finding the one responsible for these changes.

"Yes," Jy-ying said, "we do."

John nodded and sat back to listen as she detailed their suggestion.

"For purposes of discussion, we will assume the communist time traveler is one male, although it's probably a female, the stronger sex."

John pursed his lips, waved the thought away, and motioned for her to continue.

"We discarded going to Russia or Germany and searching for this person," Jy-ying said. "We do not know the countries; we do not have contacts in Europe yet. Our Tor Import and Export Company is not in business yet, and provides no cover. We reluctantly concluded that you are correct—he will have to come to us." She looked at Joy. "How am I doing?"

“Couldn’t do better,” Joy replied.

Jy-ying continued. “So, how to bring him to us? Do we appear as huge Bolshevik-communist supporters with tons of money to give to major revolutionaries in Germany? Joy says, ‘No way do we aid the communists, even as a trap,’ and I agree.”

Joy nodded emphatically.

“Do we seem to provide aid for reactionary or conservative causes or people? We agreed that we would likely find ourselves blown up by a revolutionary, if not the time traveler. And so on, for many different strategies, until we ended up with the one and only good one.”

“I got that much,” John said, rolling his eyes. “Now, what is it?”

Joy answered, her voice silky. “Well, since you can’t figure it out, I guess we’ll just have to help you.” She then got serious.

John’s eyes got wider and wider as she explained their plan. When she finished, he smiled and nodded. Then he sat back, looking pleased. “My compliments, ladies. Good thinking.” Glancing at Joy and then Jy-ying, he asked, “Who thought up this brilliant idea?”

“Actually, both of us,” Joy replied. “While you were having the three guys run all over the library newspaper section checking out the current events in both our chronologies, Jy-ying and I threw some ideas back and forth. You said you wondered what happened to us. Well, we found a quiet table and talked about it. Don’t you remember? You left the details to us.” She grinned.

“It is a matter of sheer brilliance applied in a deductive manner,” Jy-ying explained.

“Oh,” John said, “I thought this idea came from you two.”

“Ha! Sheer intellectual jealousy,” Joy said, looking smug.

Jy-ying could not believe where her new levity came from. Clearly, it was encouraged by the barter between John and Joy, but it had to be latent in her. In her career as a Chinese commissioned officer, she would not have dared to display this side of herself. Everything had to be serious. Even what one did with lovers and at home was a matter of religious concern by the clerics, and prying eyes and tell-all jilted lovers and mates were an ever present danger. She was enjoying this new freedom, and it lightened the deadly seriousness of their new mission.

John mulled the idea over, and then leaned on the table toward Joy. “Let’s work on it. Time is of the essence, since it’s probable that more than a couple thousand Russians are being shot, starved to death, or dying of disease every day. I’ll do the draft, and then both of you should go though it to add or subtract. We all can’t be doing this at the same

time, so I suggest we also set up our company at its temporary business location in the warehouse where we landed. Then we will have to hire someone to help us with the publication and marketing, but I'm willing to sink many millions into this.

"I'm going to start writing as soon as we get back to the hotel. I'll leave it to you two to schedule all the other things we have to do." He looked from Joy to Jy-ying. "People, we're off and running."

Chapter 16

November 16

Joy

It was about one in the morning when John woke her by getting into bed. Eyes half shut, she mumbled, “How’s it going, dearest?”

He yawned and pulled the covers up to his chin. “I’ve got about fifteen or twenty pages done so far. They’re going fast, since it’s almost all off the top of my head. Only occasionally do I need to consult the chronology. I can’t believe how tired I am. And cold. It must be about 45 degrees in here.”

Joy felt more awake. “Do you know how long we’ve been in this age? In an hour or so, it will be two days. Two days. I can’t believe all that we’ve done and all that has happened to us in that short time.”

John snuggled close to her and draped his arm over her chest.

“Hey, you’re like ice,” she yelped.

John pulled her tight against him. “We share and share alike, including your heat.”

Now wide awake, she felt relaxed and comforted in her lover’s arms, despite his chilled body; she actually enjoyed the feel of his cold flesh. Her mind idly roamed over the day. “Do you realize,” she babbled, “that we landed here, found a message from the future waiting, you saved me from suicide, we met the three guys and hired them, we got our first rooms at this hotel, had an unusual meeting with Jy-ying, found out about Trotsky’s victory in Russia and the civil war there, did research on whether that was the first or a sequence of changes, determined that there was one or more communist time travelers at work in this time, and found a way to lead him or them to us—all in less than forty-eight hours? Can you believe it?”

Silence.

She turned her head and looked at him. He was asleep.

“Wait until he finds out what more I have to tell him,” she told herself. “Then again, maybe he’ll find out before I say anything.”

John

Something startled John awake. He sat up and looked around. Joy was still sleeping, so it couldn't be anything dangerous. Any threat, and she would be wide awake and crouched at the door, ready to punch her fist through it. He looked out the window and saw that it was barely light outside; fog pushed against the glass pane and water dripped from a gutter somewhere. He lay back, spooned Joy, and was almost asleep in the comfort of her naked warmth when he heard it again.

A dog barking somewhere.

Not unusual. Dogs always bark somewhere, he thought drowsily. He'd almost slid back into sleep when the dog barked again. It was in the next room, he was sure. But that was his room. It had to be in the one next to his. But that was Jy-ying's.

Now he was awake. He kissed Joy's bare shoulder. "Hey, sleepy head. You going to snore all morning? We have work to do."

Joy opened her eyes, looked at him, and then jerked to a sitting position and covered her breasts. "Who are you? I don't think you gave me your name."

John felt his eyebrows waver for only a second. "I didn't? I am Euscrawami, the Greek janitor. I make the rooms hot."

He laughed as Joy threw the cover over his head. From under it, he yelled, "And there is a dog in one of the rooms down the hallway. Can't be Jy-ying's, can it? If so, as the janitor, I will have to kick it out."

Joy giggled. "You can't do that."

"Why not?"

"Because she owns the hotel."

John stuck out his head out of the covers. "Why?"

"She came to the hotel to get a room to stay in while she looked for us. She didn't know that we would rent rooms here also. Where we stayed was not in your dumb *Remembrance*. Anyway, the hotel would not rent rooms to Orientals."

"She bought the hotel just because they wouldn't rent her a room?"

"Yes."

John shook his head. "That's ridiculous. She could have gone elsewhere."

"Dearest. They wouldn't have rented rooms to us, either. I'm also Oriental; you must know that by now, as much as I've tried to keep it from you."

John sat up and put his hands around his knees. “I wonder where we stayed in the other universe. But then, I don’t see why Hands would direct us to this hotel in this universe, and another hotel in the other one. We must have come here. But then, I don’t understand why she had trouble and we didn’t, and why she would do such a stupid thing as buy the hotel for that reason.”

Joy was sitting more erect, and her eyes had a little more sparkle to them. “We don’t know that we didn’t,” she pointed out. “I know you, John. If we were turned away because I’m Oriental, you would have insisted, and if they didn’t rent rooms to us, you would have bought the hotel. Just as Jy-ying did.” She grinned. “Yup, I’m sure of it.”

“I would? Well then, there would be a good reason for it.” John quickly ransacked his mind for such a reason. He knew there had to be one. He grabbed what he found waving for attention from a corner. “Ah, yes, of course; I would want a place for our business visitors to stay, and for the three guys until they got settled. But Jy-ying had no such reasons. She was being ridiculous.”

“Sweetheart, you’re precious,” Joy said with a loving smile.

“Did you forget about the dog?” John asked.

“I bet you didn’t even know we went out in the late afternoon to do some shopping. You wouldn’t have known if San Francisco had another earthquake,” she teased.

“On the way back, we passed a line of garbage cans outside a restaurant, and there was a skinny little dog looking for food in one of them. When he heard us and looked around, he was so sad looking. His pert ears, black eyes, black nose, and little red tongue immediately won Jy-ying over. She picked him up, carried him into the restaurant, and paid a nickel for a big steak bone. She gave it to him outside, but when we walked away he followed with the heavy bone in his mouth—it’s a wonder his back end didn’t tip up.

“He wouldn’t go away when we reached the hotel. Finally, Jy-ying picked him up and took him to her room. I don’t think dogs were allowed in this hotel before Jy-ying bought it. She simply walked up to the desk clerk and told him, ‘You now allow one handsome dog in this hotel. This one.’ And she pointed to the dog she carried. She left the clerk standing against the mail slots as though he were pinned there.

“So, his barking is what you must have heard this morning,” Joy finished. “Oh yes—she says we are now a team of four.

John shook his head and gave her a dour look. “I don’t know, baby. Our new mission is immeasurably important, and we can’t have pets distracting us from that.”

Joy got up and started getting dressed. “You forgot one thing.”
“What?”

“Dogs hear what we can’t. They smell what we can’t. Helpful for protecting us, don’t you think?”

John scratched his jaw, where he was letting his hair grow. “I thought that was your job, as you told me when you vamped me into volunteering for this mission with you.”

“Vamped? All I did was hint that we would be intimate. I can’t help it if you were besotted by lust. Anyway, consider a dog Jy-ying’s weapon augmentation.”

“Why hers and not yours? You’re the warrior.”

“Would you believe that she is a martial arts specialist, as I am? Judging by some of the simulated moves she showed me in her room, I think she will be my equal. Or close to it. You have two of us, dearest.”

John got out of bed and looked for his pants. “Jeez. I haven’t even stepped out of the room and my head is full.”

Jy-ying

Jy-ying sat on the bed and watched Little Wei—“little one full of presence,” she now called him—gobble down the sausage links she’d brought from the hotel restaurant as soon as it opened that morning. She had been up late washing the dog repeatedly in the bathroom at the end of the hall, and deticking and defleaing him each time. He had been good about it. No barking. No whining. But by the third wash, he cringed into a ball when she picked him up. He came out of it when she finally dried and fluffed up his long, chalk-white hair with a towel.

Now he was a clean, soft white. He had urinated on the carpet by the door, and she used the hotel towel to soak it up and then scrub the spot. Before the restaurant opened, she had taken him for a walk until he relieved himself. She knew she would have to set a routine for this, but she really didn’t care. She loved dogs, but had never been able to have one of her own because of her profession. Little Wei was too good to be true.

When he finished eating and drank his fill from the universal washbowl of this era, she told him, "Time to show you off, my little guy."

She'd already decided she would buy a red leash and collar for him later, when she took him to a veterinarian for a thorough checkup. Now, she would trust that he would follow her as he had outside at daybreak.

She opened the door to her room for him, and he ran into the hallway and started sniffing the floorboards. When she closed the door behind her, he looked up and tilted his head. "*Guo lai*—come here," she ordered. He could have no idea what those sounds meant yet, but her hand motions must have translated for him, for he followed Jy-ying to Joy's room, where she knew they were now sleeping. She smiled to herself when she thought of the reason why.

Joy opened the door when she knocked. "Good morning, Jy-ying," she said, and immediately looked down at the little dog sniffing her feet. "And good morning, little one," she cooed. She bent and picked him up, and carried him into the room. "I want you to meet our boss, Mr. John Banks." She tossed Little Wei on the bed where John was sitting, now fully dressed.

Immediately, Little Wei began sniffing him. John picked him up and held him at a distance from his face to look into his eyes. "You now work for me," he said. "Starting pay is two dollars a day, take it or leave it. What say you?"

Little Wei stared at him, then back at Jy-ying as if to say, "Should I humor this big guy?" John put him on the floor with a chuckle. "Jy-ying, you're right. We are now a team of four. Let's get breakfast, and then I want to work all day on what I'm writing. You two—excuse me, you *three* will be working on setting up the business and all that. But if you have any trouble because you're Asian—I found out this morning, Jy-ying, that Joy is Oriental—let me know."

He's at it again, Jy-ying told herself. *What did Joy call it? Ah, yes; John's humor, pronounced as though it's a disease.*

Jy-ying raised an eyebrow at Joy, who grinned broadly. "He discovered my, ah, you-know, is—" She made a horizontal slice with her hand. "Rather than—" She swept her hand up and down. She giggled and Jy-ying joined her as John turned red. Jy-ying had been shocked to learn during her studies of the culture of this age, particularly that of San Francisco, that white men thought the vaginas of Asian women were horizontal.

John went for the door. "I'll get the guys. Meet you all in the restaurant." He escaped in a flash, leaving even louder giggles behind him.



Jy-ying carried Little Wei in one arm as she and Joy approached the two joined tables with John and the three guys. She was about to sit down with the dog on her lap when the morning shift waiter rushed over.

"I am terribly sorry," he told Jy-ying, "but we do not allow dogs in our restaurant."

Jy-ying had one simple response to that: "Ha!" She stood straight, tilted her head back, and gave him an icy stare. Waving her free hand toward the men at the table, she asked in a steely voice, "My good man, are you calling my friends at the table *dogs*?"

The waiter stammered, "No, no . . . ma'am. I'm referring to him." He pointed at Little Wei.

She held the dog up to the waiter. "To him? To Prince Ho Chi-wei of the Manchu Dynasty? You are calling the prince a *dog*. If this were China, I would have one of his guards cut off your head." She waved again at the men trying not to laugh as they watched from the table.

The waiter stepped back. His shoulders collapsed into a submissive slump and his eyes grew round. He struggled to say something. "I . . . I . . ."

Jy-ying softened her face and instructed him in a soothing tone, "Just serve us. I will forgive you this time." She turned to the others and lamented loud enough for the waiter to hear, "Americans! So ignorant of China." She sat down with Little Wei on her lap. Ignoring the furor he'd caused, Little Wei looked around, seeking the sources of the restaurant's many interesting odors.

Shaking with laughter, Hands had his forehead resting on the table, and Joy hid her face with her menu. Except for undecipherable cackles, wheezes, and thuds, no one spoke for a while. Jy-ying sat in their midst, wearing a big smirk.

When they calmed down, Jy-ying introduced Little Wei. But only Joy referred to him as Little Wei during the meal. To the others, still smiling even as they ate, he was now known as Prince Wei. And that was what he became.

Chapter 17

November 21

John

It was late, and John was exhausted. But it was done—125 pages. It did not have to be long. Joy and Jy-ying had each gone over it and made some changes, and he had tidied up the spelling and grammar on his laptop and then printed it out on their laser printer. The printing was too good for the age and might elicit questions from the publisher they picked, but they couldn't hire a typist to type a copy—the typist would expect a handwritten copy to work from, and John was not about to write it out in longhand.

The writing had been the easiest part. Now they had weeks of preparation just to make sure it was published as they wanted. But first they had to decide on its title.

They sat around a portable card table that Joy had bought as a work table for John. The manuscript lay in the center, with the simple working title *The Manuscript* on it. Joy insisted on neatly aligning the pages as a confirmation that it was finished. Prince Wei was asleep on the bed, his legs sticking up in the air.

In a weary voice, John said, “We all have been thinking off and on about the best title. Now we have to assign one. Joy?”

“You're tired, John. Why not sleep on this? A day or so won't matter.”

“Yes it will. Thousands more people will die. We've got to stop this killing as soon as we can, Joy. I'm okay. Let's go ahead.”

Joy gave him a long look, then finally nodded and said, “It has to be something dramatic, something that will grab the attention of that time traveler. Once he looks at the book, he should be seeking the author immediately. What about ‘Looking Forward: The World, 1914–2000’?”

John pursed his lips and looked at Jy-ying.

“I do not know,” she mused. “Would that attract the time traveler to the book? He might think that it was just more stupid forecasting and ignore it, although reference to 1914, when World War I in your First Universe began—do I have the year right?” When John nodded, she

continued. "It might catch his eye for a moment. He is a Bolshevik, a communist. Maybe this: 'The Future of Communism: Victory and Defeat, 1914–2000'?"

John scratched his chin under his growing beard; he hoped the itching would stop soon—it was getting irritating. He propped his elbow on the table and his bristly chin in his hand, and stared at the manuscript. He asked, "What are the two names that would immediately attract his attention?"

"Hitler and Stalin," Joy suggested.

"Yes," John said. "Stalin has had no public role in the 1905 revolution in this universe, judging by the *Post* article, nor did he in the First Universe. In 1905 he had just met Lenin, who was impressed by his ability to steal money. Up to that time, he was a small-time criminal and agent of the Okhrana, turning revolutionaries in to the Okhrana to save his hide. No one in this age, especially someone writing from San Francisco, would be expected to know his name. So, let's put Stalin in the title. We should also use Hitler's name somehow."

Jy-ying was writing on a notepad. She looked up at John. "When did Stalin die?"

"In 1953. He was probably poisoned with warfarin by Lavrenti Beria, his minister of internal security." With a little grin and a quick glance at Joy, John tried to go on. "But I don't think the truth—"

With her own grin and a knowing glance at Joy, Jy-ying interrupted with a raised finger. "Then maybe 'Stalin's World: Victory and Defeat, 1914–1953'? For anyone of that universe who knows about major events, it would be a shocker to see the precise dates for the beginning of World War I and the death of Stalin used."

"Not to mention Stalin's name," John added, waving his own finger higher. "You know, Stalin fought Trotskyism, and in 1940, after many tries, he finally succeeded in having Trotsky assassinated in Mexico. Come to think of it, that Trotsky rather than Lenin is the victor in the 1905 revolution can only mean that this time traveler is a Trotskyite. The battle between Trotsky and Stalin was fought—"

"John!" Joy exclaimed. "I thought you were tired."

"Sorry," John said. "Never too tired to improve people's minds. That's why I was the professor and you were the—"

"Move on," Jy-ying said with such command, John jerked his head toward her, as did Joy. They saw her grinning.

Waving his thumb at Jy-ying, John asked Joy, "Have you been teaching her?"

Joy gave Jy-ying a thumbs-up. "There is nothing I could teach her that as a female she does not already know. Now, back to the title. I think Jy-ying is onto it. How about making it 'Communist Victory and Defeat, 1936–1991: Stalin, The Great Terror, World War II, and the Cold War'?"

"That is it!" Jy-ying exclaimed, and added, "Even though I do not know what the Cold War was."

John nodded slowly. Even he heard the exhaustion in his voice as he explained, "The Cold War was the long period from 1948 to the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 when Soviet, Chinese, and their communist surrogates tried to spread communism by all means possible. Countering that was an American-led Alliance that tried to contain communism and deter a world war. Anyway, as to that title, I think the time traveler would kill to get that book." He hesitated, then added, "We still have not used Hitler's name. Joy's title is great, but now my suggestion is the coup. We can make the author Adolf Hitler."

He looked at Jy-ying. "Hitler was the one who launched the Second World War in Europe by invading Poland. During the war, his henchmen tried to murder every Jew the Nazis could get their hands on. They murdered over five million of them, plus maybe fifteen million non-Jewish Poles, Russians, other Slavs, Frenchmen—"

"Incredible, incredible," Jy-ying blurted. "What a blood-soaked century you lived in. No wonder you are here to prevent it from happening again." She sat back and looked from John to Joy. "And to use Hitler's name for the author. God be blessed, we are brilliant."

"Yeah," Joy responded, "and John helped also."

John half smiled at her and tapped his hands together. He felt good about this and wished he had a better way to show it. Ever since he had read the *Post* article, he had been afraid that their mission was dead, that there was nothing they could do—that all their plans were a shambles. And ultimately, he feared that Joy would be so broken by their failure to achieve what those who sent them here—her mother, especially—had hoped that she again would attempt suicide. He had hidden his deep, trembling pessimism from Joy. *But now, there is some light.*

John looked at the women. In a soft voice he told them, "Okay people, we have it. It doesn't much matter how well organized the book is, as long as it contains some essential facts about the old uni-

verse that only someone from there could know. And it doesn't matter how attractive the book is to publishers, since we will be paying for the publication and publicity."

He rubbed his hand through his wild hair and let it drop into his lap as he slouched back in his chair. "We can advertise it as a future history based on current events, and leave it at that. I did write it as though it were a textbook for students in an undergraduate class in history in the year 2000. The title belies that it looks backward, but it doesn't matter."

"One thing," Jy-ying pointed out. "The author—Hitler—is so obviously a come-on, as is the whole title, that he will know this is an invitation, a trap."

Joy nodded. "Right, but he has to find the real author. He will know that he's in danger, and so is communism, from our possible intervention. He will be forced to find the person who wrote the book."

Jy-ying was on the edge of her chair. "Yes, and he will also know, from what John wrote in the book, that the author is anticommunist. And obviously, as a time traveler, the author must have the resources to intervene to try to defeat Trotsky and prevent such revolutions elsewhere."

"Yes," Joy said. "I think we must now work on two tracks. First we have to do all we can with our resources to get this book published and into European and Russian hands as soon as possible. Second, we have to deal with his knowing that he is being led on. And then, when we have him here, what do we do with him?"

"Then we kill him," Jy-ying stated.

John had stretched out his legs and leaned back against his chair, closing his eyes to rest them. As if from a great distance, he heard Jy-ying stating the obvious, but he had avoided thinking about that. He didn't want to think about it now. He let his head rest on his chest. The air seemed heavy, and their voices . . .

Joy

"He's asleep," Joy said. "I don't think he slept more than an hour in the last two days. We can't leave him like that. Help me put him to bed."

Joy pulled back the covers on the double bed and she and Jy-ying each put an arm around him and half-walked him to the bed while he muttered something. They laid him out, and Joy took off his shoes.

“Can you help me undress him?” Joy asked. “I don’t want to sleep against his scratchy clothes.”

Jy-ying hesitated. “But, won’t he be embarrassed?”

“Only if I tell him,” Joy said, unbuckling his belt. “You work on the top and I’ll do the bottom.”

It took a little while and the usual mechanics, but they finally had him naked and under the covers.

Jy-ying’s face had a little color to it. “He’s a handsome man,” she said. “I envy you, Joy. But do not worry. I know in his heart he is yours, and we have a mission to do together. I will not defeat it by trying to . . . ah, what do you call it?”

“Steal my man.”

“Yes, steal your man.” Jy-ying went to the door, stopped and turned around, and bowed deeply to Joy. “You can trust your sister on that.”

After Jy-ying left, Joy crawled into bed next to John, but it was a long time before she fell asleep. It was a small thing, but it brought the green monster back: Jy-ying hadn’t said she would never steal John. She had said, and Joy kept turning this over in her mind, that ‘We have a mission to do.’ It seemed that, for the mission’s sake, she would not go after John. But what about when—or if—they killed the time traveler, and that part of the mission was done? Or, did Jy-ying also consider what they would do regarding Sabah part of that mission? Joy sighed. *Well, I’ll have to trust John, and I do.* She put her arm over him, rested her head against his shoulder, and fell asleep.

Chapter 18

December 20

Joy

After weeks of preparation for the appointment they'd arranged, a fascinating train trip finally brought them to New York. They took one of the new Renault taxis to the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel on Park Avenue where, for appearances, John had reserved one of the executive suites for Joy, and an ordinary room for himself, in case anyone checked.

They had a full day before their appointment. Almost immediately after their arrival, they went to bed in the suite. Although the train trip had given their body clocks four days to gradually adjust to the time difference, John wanted to make sure he was well rested and alert for what he had confessed he was dreading, even before their departure.

Neither could sleep. So John sat up on one elbow and told her what she already knew. "I'm really nervous, baby. I can't believe what I'm going to do. I was brought up lower middle class, and know almost nothing about high society or the rich. Now, I'm about to meet James L. Stimson. He's powerful. He's rich. He owns Stimson Publications, and his family owns Stimson Oil and Stimson Steel. His father was a U.S. senator. I bet his family considers him an underperformer. He only owns a New York publishing house, four magazines, and Stimson bookstores, with branches all over the country. I never could deal well with people of such high authority or wealth. I always feel shy when I'm with them, and I don't know what to say. I'm afraid I'm going to flub this."

"I'm not worried, dearest," Joy assured him. "I've seen you handle this kind of people, and you do very well."

"Maybe outwardly, but my insides are quivering like Jell-O."

"So? Who sees them, anyway? It's the impression that counts, and you project confidence, control, and even, when called for, haughty arrogance."

"Really? Like Jy-ying?"

"Yes, exactly."

John lay back and rolled over on his side toward her. He rested his hand on her arm. She didn't feel the least bit sleepy and knew he was still wide awake. She thought it best to get his mind off the appointment. In a soft voice she mused, "I miss air travel. In 2003 we could have been here on a four-hour direct flight from San Francisco airport. I was surprised by our train trip, though. This first time, I actually liked it. I saw so much more of the United States in a way we've never seen it before. I'd always flown from one coast to the other, except for that trip to the Midwest when I checked you out for the mission—it was awful. I had to sit through your . . ." she gasped ". . . lectures at Indiana University. Why, I even had to look interested!"

John was up on his elbow again, now almost leaning over her, faking the insulted look she knew so well. "Is that so, student Phim. It couldn't have been that bad. You did get all sexed up later to lure me to your mother's party."

She sighed. "It was all for the mission, sweetheart. Sacrifices had to be made. Ah, what was I talking about before we got onto your lectures? Oh, yes, the train trip. I was awed, sitting on the train watching for hours, and then days, the passing mountains, rivers, plains, and forests. It's hard to believe how large and varied the United States is. Also, those Pullman coaches were great for sleeping—"

"And lovemaking," John interjected.

Joy smiled at the memory. "Yes, dearest, until you fell off me, out of my berth, and into the passageway—naked. Right in front of that couple trying to climb into their own berths. I don't know why that bothered you so. I was ready for you when you climbed back in, but you couldn't get it up."

John leered at her. "Now that we're on solid ground, in a great New York hotel suite, you had better be ready for me . . . er, after the appointment . . . ah . . . tomorrow night."

"Ha! You'll be so tired, old man, that I'll have to tie it to a chopstick."

"There isn't one long enough." John beamed at his riposte.

She responded simply, "We'll see."

John

Joy's "old man" quip the previous evening wasn't far off. John had makeup applied in his room by Gaston Yseult, the makeup artist of the

New Victory Theatre, for whose famous skill he had paid fifty dollars. He looked twenty years older, with graying, sandy brown eyebrows and a small, matching beard, neatly trimmed. Silver-yellow hair was combed back from deep-looking wrinkles across his forehead; wrinkles also radiated from the corners of his eyes, and furrows ran from his nostrils around his mouth to disappear into his beard. His eyes were shadowed and their depth emphasized, his mouth firmed and thinned, and his cheeks and nose grayed. Overall, he now had a steely look, one of long command and authority.

Age made a huge difference in this era.

Their appointment was in a half-hour, in the Whitehall Building at 17 Battery Place, West Street. They would take a Rolls-Royce Silver Ghost "limousine" that had on the right front fender the American flag, and on the other the Chinese flag. To allow him to attach the flags, he had paid well the new "Luxurious Motor Car" rental company.

Joy had never looked better. For her time travel, Jy-ying had packed special clothes so that she could pass herself off as a Chinese princess, if need be. Although Jy-ying was a little shorter than Joy, Jy-ying's clothes still fit her well. So for two hours, John helped Joy into Jy-ying's borrowed clothes and adjusted them as needed: a silk brocade, ankle-length *qi pao* in stunning red and yellow imperial colors with a mandarin collar and keyhole, cap sleeves, and frog closures; from the left shoulder to the right ankle, it was richly embroidered in the imperial phoenix and dragon pattern, and each side of the dress had a modest slit suited to the era. Her headdress was a phoenix tiara, worn only by an empress, princess, or imperial concubine; it was decorated with jade and pearls, and tassels hung down on both sides of Joy's face and over her forehead.

It was cold outside, almost freezing, so for the short trip Joy donned an imperial jacket made from quilted silk mousseline with a mandarin collar, frog buttons, phoenix and dragon embroidery (of course), and female mink fur trim. On her fingers she wore large imitation diamond and ruby rings that only an expert jewelry appraiser could tell were not real.

When they were finished, Joy posed for him, and then slowly turned around. John just stood back, awed by her stunning elegance. When he finally could speak, all he could say was, "Damn it to hell, I don't have a camera."

Joy responded in a subtle, seductive tone, "But dearest, you have me."

"Hold that thought until tonight," John replied huskily.

While it was appropriate for Joy to dress richly, middle-class bureaucrat was best for John. He dressed in a three-button, single-breasted, worsted herringbone weave suit. Of course, there was only one suitable color—dark gray. Underneath he wore a white shirt, white linen collar, but no bow tie. This scam required a strong maroon four-in-hand, a suitable necktie for a high-middle bureaucrat.

John plopped on his head his new nutria fur fedora, picked up his elegant Moroccan leather briefcase, and said, “Lets go.”

Over her arm Joy slid the black satin drawstring cord of her princess silk purse, which also repeated with jewels the imperial phoenix and dragon embroidery of her dress. She walked to the door and stood regally while John opened it for her.

They left the suite, John one step behind and to the right, carrying the briefcase. They were the only ones in the curlicued cast-iron elevator. They walked through the palatial lobby, where conversation in almost every group they passed stopped as they walked by. Joy strode with head high and back stiff, while John moved as though he would walk over any hotel guest who got in his way.

It was almost precisely 10:00 a.m. Their Silver Ghost waited in front of the revolving entrance door. The green and white-liveried captain of the doormen opened the high door to the back seat of the limousine for Joy, who immediately moved to the other side. John got in beside her, and the captain bowed and closed the door.

Joy’s dress and elegance had so distracted John in the suite that he had forgotten about his fears. Now, with the appointment time getting close, his nervousness returned. As the driver supplied with the Silver Ghost pulled out, John took Joy’s hand and held it, hoping his was not shaking.

She turned to him and gave him a huge smile that caused his heart to flutter as though the high school beauty queen had consented to attend the prom with him. She was so beautiful, he almost told her never to take off the coat she was wearing, or the princess tiara, or to undo her special hairdo for which she’d paid sixty-five dollars at a Chinese salon. Then he remembered what was to come this evening. *On the other hand, she will take everything off.*

The Silver Ghost pulled into the front portico of the Whitehall Building and a blue and red-liveried front door captain opened the door for them. Joy slipped her jacket off and left it in the back of the car before they emerged. The captain bowed and then, without a word, led them to the revolving front doors.

They entered the main lobby and were immediately greeted by an elderly man who stood with his hands clasped in front of him. "Are you Princess Tz'u Li Poh?" he asked Joy.

"Yes," she said, and gave him a small bow. "You pronounce my name well."

Without acknowledging her compliment, John's presence, or introducing himself, he said, his handlebar mustache twitching with his words, "Please follow me." He led them to one of the elevators, which had been waiting with its doors open with another man guarding it to keep out other passengers.

The elevator took them to the eighteenth floor. Their escort led them through the elevator's doors, held open by an operator standing at attention, and past a large counter with a bearded young man behind it. Behind him, almost covering the wall, was a large Mercator projection map of the world, with each country set in a different kind of wood. *Stimson Publications* ran across the top in red, white, and blue embossed letters. The escort gave them a moment to be impressed by the map, and then took them to a private elevator to the left of the counter.

John's knees were shaking. It helped to look at Joy, who, throughout all this, walked and looked like, well, a princess.

When they got off the elevator at the next floor up, they were in a luxurious split-level apartment. John was overwhelmed. On his left he saw a luxurious apartment straight out of some tycoon's home movies; on his right he saw a sumptuous office. A very large, semi-round walnut desk dominated the office area, behind which was a floor to ceiling window looking out on Manhattan.

From behind the desk a rotund, tall man emerged and strode up to them. Apparently he had just been notified that they were coming, for he stopped in front of Joy, bowed deeply, and said something in Chinese. Joy tilted her head back, looked down her nose at him, returned his bow with a perfunctory one, and said something in Chinese in return, lofting her voice in some peculiar way that John assumed must be the way Manchu royalty met commoners.

With that out of the way, John stepped up alongside Joy and the man turned to him and put out his hand. As John shook it firmly, the man looked him in the eye and said, "Please forgive my Chinese. I represented my family's interests in China for many years. We were not going to let the British and Germans have the country to themselves.

But then I went into publishing.” He waved his free hand around the office. “Even though we now have a subsidiary in China, I get almost no chance to use my Chinese here.”

When Stimson released his hand, John said, “Thank you for seeing us on such short notice. I have some documents for you that verify our identities, if I may put my briefcase down somewhere.”

Stimson pointed to a carved mahogany coffee table sitting between two puffy, white leather sofas in the apartment section of the high-ceilinged room, and led them there. He waved for them to sit down on one of the sofas, but Joy stepped instead to the white leather easy chair at the head of the two sofas and sat down gracefully. John waited for Stimson to sit; with an awed look at Joy, he settled on one of the sofas. John put his briefcase on the hand-carved French coffee table and sat on the other sofa. From the way the sofas looked, he thought he was going to sink into the cushions up to his armpits, but they had a comfortable firmness to them.

Having oriented the briefcase so that Stimson could see into it, he took out a key and unlocked one flap lock on the left. As he was doing that, Joy opened her opulent princess purse, took out another key, and gracefully held it out to him with two fingers and a raised pinkie. John took it gently, unlocked the lock on the right, and then lifted the lid. Within was a file labeled *United States Department of State*. John reached under that for a file with *top secret* written in large red letters diagonally across it. He put the file on his lap, closed the lid of the case, opened the file while ostentatiously hiding what was inside from Stimson, and pulled out two documents.

He handed the first one to Stimson, saying, “This one is from Secretary of State Root, establishing my credentials. I doubt whether you have heard of my Agency of Foreign Security. Take a moment to read it, but I must have it back.”

Stimson read it, then handed it back with raised eyebrows. He leaned over to the humidior close to his edge of the table, took out two cigars, and offered John one. As John was taking it, Joy sat straight, clapped her hands loudly once, and barked something in Chinese. Stimson jumped, reddened, and almost jerked the cigar out of John’s fingers. He put both of them back in the humidior and shut the lid with a clack that sounded loud in the quiet office-apartment. He sat back, holding the hand that had held the cigars with the other as though he had caught it in a door.

This moment was priceless, and John took his time looking down at the other document until he had his expression under control. Then he handed the document to Stimson, saying, "This is from the Empress-Dowager of China Tzu-Hsi, establishing that Princess Tz'u Li Poh is secretly here on her behalf and wishing that we, the United States Government, respect her request and treat it with due confidentiality."

Just the sheer richness of the thick, gold-edged paper on which the document was written in the best English calligraphy virtually established Joy's credentials. John gave Stimson only a moment to look it over, appreciate its beauty, note the queen's name and her Imperial Seal at the bottom. Then he held out his hand for its return. He slipped it in the top secret folder, opened his briefcase, and placed that folder again beneath the top one.

"Now, before I go on, Mr. Stimson, I must have your pledge that what you have seen and what you will hear, if the princess decides to go ahead, is between us. No diary, no notes, no confiding in assistants, your wife, or your mistresses."

Stimson's eyes were wide. His face was getting blotchy.

John was merciless. "We are on dangerous ground, Mr. Stimson, and if you do what we request, we cannot risk word getting out. This is for the sake of American foreign policy, for the sake of the empress-dowager and especially the princess, for my humble sake, and for your sake as well. Do I have your agreement?"

"But what am I to do?"

"I will tell you when I have your assurance."

"I am a patriotic American, sir. I will do what the government requires of me."

"Very good," John said, and lifted the lid of the briefcase again. He reached underneath the topmost folders for a thick folder that also had *top secret* written on it, and placed it on the table. Then he reached into a slot in the briefcase and pulled out a small Gideon Bible. He closed the case, opened the folder, and pulled off the top an impressively printed document about a secrecy act. Stimson's name and that of his company were printed in the midst of the governmentalese, and at the bottom was a place for Stimson's signature, and that of the witness Bruce Sylvester—John's pseudonym.

John picked up the Bible and told Stimson, "Please place your hand on the Bible and repeat after me." He then swore Stimson to secrecy

regarding the documents he had seen, all that transpired in the office, and the project he would undertake. When he finished he said, "Please sign here," and pointed to the space for Stimson's signature.

When he'd signed, John signed "Bruce Sylvester" underneath, with a flourish. Then he put the signed document on top of the folders in his case, and the Bible back in its slot.

"Ah, don't I get a copy?" Stimson asked.

"No, only the original will ever exist. Don't you understand yet, Mr. Stimson? We operate in absolute secrecy. If we could, we would even pump the air out of this room and hide it in a vault."

Stimson slouched back, nodded slightly, and his pressed his lips together.

"Now," John said, "with the necessary preliminaries over, I have a manuscript we wish you to publish with the greatest speed." He pointed to the thick folder. "We could use the government printing office, but then there could not be the secrecy we demand. Also, it could not do what we require after the printing."

John took two sheets of paper from a file slot in his case and handed them to Stimson. From the inside of his suit coat he took a roll of bills and counted out ten one-hundred dollar bills and put them next to the folder. "The money is only to show our goodwill." He indicated the papers Stimson held. "Now, the paper on the top is to prove I gave you the money. Government accounting, you must have guessed; not even secret work can avoid it."

Stimson took out a Waterman silver-nibbed pen and signed the paper.

John put the signed paper away, then said, "The remaining paper gives the specifics of the distribution we require. You are to publish a total of one hundred thousand copies, half of them in English. One-half of those are to be distributed in the United States and Canada, and the other half in England. Twenty-five thousand copies are to be printed as German translations and distributed in Germany; the other twenty-five thousand are to be Russian translations and distributed in Russia. I know that with the civil war there, this will be difficult in the southern and eastern regions, but you should be able to sell them in St. Petersburg and Moscow, as well as other major cities in the west and north.

"Advertise the books to the maximum in the major papers, and by leaflets where that is best. You surely know how to do this well. Along with the manuscript, you will find an author's biography and the flyleaf

description for the book. Also included are short blurbs of various lengths that we want—not recommend, Mr. Stimson, but want—you to use in your advertising.”

John stopped and gave Stimson a long look until he began to squirm. “If anyone from the government or publishing industry asks you who the author is, you are to say that you dealt with him through his lawyer, the man is an eccentric, and Hitler is not his real name. You only know his P.O. box number in San Francisco.

“Of course, you are most interested in your reimbursement and fee.” John pointed to the paper listing those specifics. “You will also find a bank number and an account in your name at the Bank of China, San Francisco branch, for one million dollars to cover everything. All royalties are yours.”

John suddenly feared they had overdone it and the man might have a heart attack. He had turned rigid, his hands had splayed out on his knees, and he stared unblinkingly at John. He seemed to be in shock.

Finally his mouth moved and words spilled out. “One *million*? We keep the royalties . . . my God, man, that’s a goddam lot of money. No book has ever been underwritten for even a tenth of that amount.”

John let out his breath without realizing he had held it. He tried to keep his voice level. “We want no statement of sales; this will be our only contact. You should know that we will be following with great interest your distribution of this book through your company accounts, public and otherwise.” John let that sink in for a moment. “And there is the publishing industry’s statistics of record. And we have our agents here and there. You will not know them. One might even be that mustached gentleman who brought us to you.”

Stimson pointed a trembling finger at the folder holding the manuscript and asked, “This is in English?”

“Yes.”

“I don’t understand what this has to do with China or the queen, or the State Department, for that matter.”

“Mr. Stimson, “Joy said haughtily. “Do you not understand? This not for you to know. This secret business. You must understand.” She turned to John and looked down her nose at him. “Is this right man?”

John gave Stimson a lingering look, and then looked back at Joy, his head slightly bowed, his voice subservient. “Yes, Princess Tz’u Li Poh, I think he can be trusted. He was just surprised at this. He is American. He is not used to this kind of secrecy.”

Joy stared at Stimson for a moment, then said, “All right. But you understand that American government only arrest you and do something to your knuckles—knock on the knuckles. But I have you kidnapped to China and beheaded.”

Stimson turned white and stammered something in Chinese.

Joy ignored him and stood. “We done, Mr. Sylvester?”

“Yes, Princess.”

She turned without another word and headed for the door, then stood by it, head held somewhere near the ceiling. John closed up his briefcase and put out his hand to Stimson.

Stimson took it limply and blurted, “The government can trust me, sir.”

John turned, unobtrusively wiping his hand on his coat, and joined Joy at the door. He opened it for her with a bow, and she whooshed through it. The mustachioed escort was standing back from the door waiting for them, and he immediately led them to their waiting White Ghost.



Back in the hotel lobby, Joy said, “I like this. Take me to the hotel bar, Mr. Sylvester.”

John put his hand on her arm to stop her from moving in that direction. Bowing a little so observers would think he was about to give her some information, he told her, “Don’t be stupid. If there is a high Chinese official there he might want to make himself known to you, or exchange pleasantries on hot sour soup in Peking. No. We’ve been successful so far. Don’t push it. Princess.”

Even on her most beautiful, made-up princess face, he could read the laughter in her eyes. “Ha, Mr. Sylvester, you such kill joy.” Then with a delicious wave of her hand, a lovely sign of dismissal, she uttered in a high and mighty whisper only he could hear, “I only fuck you once tonight.”

John almost doubled over in what he hoped looked like a coughing fit. People stopped to look at him with concern, and a red-suited bellhop rushed over to see if he needed help. John waved him back, took a handkerchief out of his suit coat pocket, and pretended he was coughing into it. He knew from how hot he felt that his face was red from the effort not to howl outright.

At last calming down, he looked at Joy, who stood nearby looking snootily around the lobby as though she feared she would get her manicured hands and white-furred Chinese shoes dirty. He took a firm grip on his briefcase and whispered to her, "To your suite. Before I collapse on the floor."

With John close behind, Joy led the way to the elevator. As people entered she stood immobile, chin out, staring straight ahead, ignoring everyone, and refusing to move to the back. When the elevator operator asked her for her floor, John had to lean over her shoulder and give it. Standing behind her, he could tell from their admiring expressions and the pains they took not to touch this highly aristocratic Chinese woman that the people were awed. Someone this elegant and aloof had to be royalty.

By the time the elevator reached to top floor, it was empty except for the operator and John and the princess. She strode out with John behind, and when she reached her suite, she waited regally while he unlocked the door. Then, back perfectly straight, she walked inside.

She approached the bed; as she was about to turn around, John gave her a big kick in the buttocks, knocking her flopping onto the bed. Her tiara flew one way, her purse another. Her hair came partially loose, and her Chinese *qi pao* gathered up her legs.

"Oh, my," John said. "I'm sorry, Princess Yu Luk Fun'e. My foot slipped." As she started to get up with a scowl, he jumped on her, covered her body, and held her hands flat. "I want my promised fuck," he whispered, and then he rolled off of her with a guffaw and held his stomach.

He finally could laugh at what Joy had done to him in the lobby, he could laugh at what regal Joy looked like on the bed, but overall, he knew he really was not made for this kind of con game. He was a professor dedicated to truth, and any kind of fakery would have driven him out of his profession. But he'd done it. And now it felt as though a bank safe had been lifted off his back. He felt light-headed, and so he laughed also in overwhelming relief.

Joy was laughing with him. She leaned over him and said, rubbing her behind, "How can American government do this to Chinese princess? I complain to sister Princess Jy-ying and consort, Prince Wei."

While John settled down, Joy stroked his little gray artificial beard and told him, "You did very well, dearest. It was convincing. I will no longer trust what you tell me." She laughed again.

Almost breathless, John asked, “What did you tell Stimson when he was going to light a cigar?”

“It’s not easily translatable. Something like, light it and you’ll eat it. To Chinese royalty, commoners are like dogs—they eat dogs, you know. Having lived in China, he knew I was speaking in character.”

John was now preoccupied.

“John, what are you doing?”

“You made a princess promise, and now I’m cashing it in.”

It took mechanical wizardry to take off all her royal Chinese clothes of this era, except for her inevitable white cotton panties. She found it much easier to take off his clothes. But not quite; neither could wait until she finished.

Chapter 19

January 2 , 1907

Jy-ying

Jy-ying picked Joy and John up at the San Francisco terminal in her new 1906 Silver Ghost. She had received their telegrams about their success, and about their relaxing, touristy days and Christmas in New York once they were no longer under the pressure of time. Their last telegram informed her that they would be arriving at 1:14 p.m. on track five.

She could not wait to show them her surprise. They had talked about it before leaving, but they'd left it to her to do while they were gone, if she wanted.

She'd parked in the station parking lot on the north side of Townside Street along with the buggies, horses, and other automobiles, and met Joy and John when they got off the train. Joy came to her with arms open and they hugged each other. "Welcome home, and happy New Year, Joy and John," Jy-ying said, also looking over Joy's shoulder to include John in the sentiment. She gave John a little peck on the cheek, and noted his sandy beard had grown some. "Nice beard," she said, then added, "And thank you both for your telegram about your success."

"Happy New Year, Jy-ying, and nice to be back," John said. "Two train rides is enough for this era. I'm ready for a high-speed commercial jet. Maybe I'll invent it in my spare time."

"I'll help," Joy said.

Putting her arms through both of theirs, Jy-ying added, "Do not forget me. I'll just stay here until you get it running."

As they approached her car, she saw John looking around. "How did you get here, Jy-ying?"

"I drove."

John's face lit up with interest. "You have a new car?"

"Yes. And there it is." She pointed to her deluxe Silver Ghost.

"Wow," John said, "I'm impressed. I think that's the best car made in 1906. We rented one in New York to impress the locals."

"Mercedes," Joy said.

“Who’s she?” John asked, the dimple at the side of his mouth showing.

“Hu Chi?” Jy-ying said, trying to duplicate John’s nearly straight face. “Is she from China?”

Joy shook her head at both of them. “You two will never make it as stand-up comics. You know I mean the car. The Mercedes is the best.”

“Well,” John said, grinning, “we’ll just have to get one and see, won’t we?”

“That’s a promise, John.” She smiled broadly. “You know we keep our promises to each other.”

As they approached Jy-ying’s car, Jy-ying could hear Prince Wei barking. Then she saw him jumping up and down against the window. He wore a red collar, and she had washed his hair and fluffed it. “Prince Wei missed you,” Jy-ying said to Joy. *And I missed you both, especially you, John*, she thought, still feeling the warmth that came with seeing him come off the train. Then she mentally stamped her foot. *No, Jy-ying. Do not ruin our mission.*

She tried to zero her mind back to Prince Wei. Before Joy and John had left on the trip, Jy-ying had the dog checked by the vet. She found out he was a West Highland Terrier, a currently rare registered breed. He must have been mistreated by his owner and escaped, the vet suggested. But he was in good health, aside from malnutrition.

John cranked up the car until it started, and Jy-ying drove, with John in the passenger seat watching her drive with obvious envy. Joy sat in the raised back seat playing with Prince Wei on her lap.

“Where are we going?” John soon asked, realizing that the roads she was taking were not the way to the hotel.

“You will see.”

A half-hour later, noting fewer buildings, more expensive-looking homes, and more acres between them, John shouted over the car and wind noise, “We’re leaving the city. Are you kidnapping us?”

“No good,” Jy-ying said. “Nobody to pay ransom.”

Within minutes, she stopped at a large gate. A guard emerged from a little guard shack, saw Jy-ying, tipped his visored blue cap, and said, “Good afternoon, Miss Khoo.” She nodded at him and he went back into the guard shack to pull down the large electrical switch that opened the gate.

John was speechless, and Joy was leaning forward with her arms on the back of the front seat. As Jy-ying drove them through the gate and along a flower-lined driveway, she asked Jy-ying, “Visiting a movie star?”

They approached the high columned portico of a large, three-story brownstone mansion on a low hill. All around was grassy acreage scattered with trees spaced widely apart. Jy-ying glanced at it with familiarity. She had walked the whole acreage of this estate, checking out the ten foot wall topped by broken glass that surrounded the property, and looking for secluded spaces where an intruder might hide, or gullies and bushes that might be used as concealed approaches to the house. And she had walked the little stream that meandered around the base of the hill and exited at almost the opposite point in the wall from where it entered. In both cases a strong metal gate under the wall let the stream enter and exit, while preventing any intruder from doing the same thing.

She pulled up to the portico and announced, "This is our new home. I named it Fort Hope—hope for the success of our trapping the time traveler, hope for the success of our joint mission."

"What a great name. And our new home?" John said in wonder. "You mean we no longer have to crowd into a hotel room? I was thinking of getting an apartment building and fortifying it, but this is much better." He got out of the car and looked around at the surrounding acreage. "I'm no expert like you Jy-ying, but this sure looks more secure than we could have made an apartment house."

Joy had released Prince Wei to roam and moved to stand beside John. They looked over the property and the outside of the mansion. This far south from San Francisco, there was no fog; the sky was a clear, sunny blue, the still air a comfortable near-60 degrees. As John took off his overcoat to put over his arm, Joy asked, "Who did you kill for this?"

Irritation at the question instantly welled up inside Jy-ying. *She thinks I would kill to take someone's home.* But in the next instant, she remembered it was a typically stupid American saying, and she felt chagrined at what she had thought.

Jy-ying waved her hand at the huge property and said, "I wrote down what I wanted for a secure headquarters for us, and went to the Luxurious Real Estate Company, the most prominent real estate firm that buys and sells property for the rich—the big sneezes, you call them." After her misunderstanding of Joy's comment, she was pleased at this little show of her English slang.

"Cheeses. Big cheeses, Jy-ying," Joy corrected.

Stupid language! Jy-ying exclaimed to herself, and hastened on. "A pompous old man asked me how much I was willing to pay. He dared

look me up and down, raised his eyebrow at me, and said, ‘We deal in hundreds of thousands and even millions of dollars.’”

Warming to her story, Jy-ying continued. “I had gone to a bank to prepare for just such arrogance. I took out of my purse one roll of bills held in a large diamond clip, and slowly counted out a hundred one-thousand dollar bills, in groups of ten. Then I showed him another big roll. The man instantly became my servant; I am sure he would have kissed my feet if I asked. I completely ignored him and called over a young man, probably new to the firm, who had been watching. He showed me around, and this was the fourth place I looked at. It belonged to railroad tycoon Robert Q. Harrington. He was paranoid that his former partners were out to kill him for swin . . . swin-something—”

“Swindling,” John said

“—from them, and built this fortress to live in with his wife and daughters. He died from a heart attack, and his family had to sell it, furnishings and all, to pay off his gambling debts. They could not do anything with his company. His former partners sued the Western Pacific railroad company and a judge put its assets in . . . hiding.”

John helped again. “Escrow,” he said. “How much did all this cost?”

“Two million dollars. I paid already. No big deal.” That was honest. She did not feel it was anything to be amazed about, given the funds with which she’d been sent to this era. Her time machine alone had two million stored in it for immediate emergencies, and the National Council of Clerics had directed that she be sent about 250 million in American real and counterfeit bills, jewels, and gold. She could augment that wealth at any time by betting on horse races and playing the stock market. She had the day-by-day wins and losses filed on her laptop computer.

John looked at Joy. “How much is that in year 2002 dollars?”

Joy’s eyes emptied for about twenty seconds, and then came back to life. “Oh, not much. Just about forty million, three hundred thousand dollars.”

Frowning, John looked at Jy-ying. His voice was insistent. “That’s a fortune, and I am not going to let you do this alone. I’ll reimburse you for two-thirds of it. I am your boss and I have spoken.”

Jy-ying stepped back. She did not know what to say. She looked at Joy, who wore a slightly amused expression. She glanced back at John, who had put his hands on his hips and looked like he was about to accuse her of stealing his wallet.

She looked back at Joy, who shrugged and told her, "He boss-man—big bark, no teeth." Joy must have seen how confused Jy-ying was, for she turned toward the doors and asked, "Aren't you going to show us in?"

Jy-ying led the way, and John followed with the warning, "Two-thirds. You are not going to get away with paying the whole thing. Humph."

At the ornate, high front doors, a man stood waiting for them in a traditional butler's pinstripe trousers, vest, and black coat. Jy-ying introduced him as "Andrew Slater, the butler. This is Dr. John Banks, your master, and Joy Phim, your mistress."

The man bowed deeply and smiled at them. "I am happy to be your servant," he said to John.

Jy-ying told him, "Thank you, Slater. I will show them around." And with Prince Wei at her heels, she led the way through two large carved doors into a tiled foyer with a coatroom, and then into a huge ballroom two floors high, with a magnificent electric crystal chandelier, oiled teak parquet floor, and carpeted stairs that curved up to the second floor bedrooms.

"We play tennis here," Jy-ying said. She was pleased with the gasps from Joy and John. *Just wait*, she thought.

She led them to the right wing, which began with a gym and exercise room. "Harrington thought it a good idea to get some exercise, but never did. But his daughters used it often and thought they would be gymnasts at one time. Then they got married. It will now be our martial arts practice and sparring room." She eyed John mischievously. "It is also a good place for a beginner to learn elementary techniques."

John suddenly yelled, "*Hyaaiii!*" and grabbed Jy-ying by the arm. He so surprised her that she lost a second while her defensive training kicked in, and John used that time to throw her, swirling dress, cape, and all on a mat. She rolled in spite of the ankle-long dress constricting her legs, and sprang to a crouch with fists ready. Prince Wei somehow knew this was play and, lowering his chest and raising a rear end that shook with the wagging of his tail, he started barking at John. He wanted to participate.

John looked nonchalantly at Jy-ying, brushed his hands against each other, and pointed out, "You need practice."

Head tilted, hands on her hips, Joy looked at him. "Not bad," she said loudly enough to be heard above the barking, "but you didn't swing her high enough off your hip." She quickly grabbed John by his

suit coat and tossed him next to Jy-ying, who immediately put one foot on his chest to stop him from rolling to his feet. Prince Wei seized his pant leg in his teeth and started shaking it vigorously.

Still lying on his back, John appeared to relax, lifting his arms to put his hands behind his head. Instead, he grabbed Jy-ying's foot and tossed her backwards to land on her stomach with a whoosh. Joy and Prince Wei were on him almost before Jy-ying landed. As he tried to stand and fight Joy off with all he'd learned from her, she got him twisted around and sat on his back with an arm lock around his neck and her knee in his back. Prince Wei now shook his coat sleeve. Jy-ying rose and, while Joy held John down, she tickled him. John squirmed away from her fingers, but Joy held him tight in spite of his greater weight.

Finally he yelled, laughing, "I give up."

Jy-ying looked at Joy as she released John. With a raised eyebrow, she asked, "Does English have a word for someone who is lower than a beginner?"

"Let's see. 'Novice' is still too good. So is 'greenhorn' and 'neophyte.' I guess we'll have to invent a word. I know. We'll call those lower than a beginner a *John*."

"Ha-ha," John said as he straightened out his coat and pants, and then petted Prince Wei. "It took two of you so-called experts to down this man."

"Yes, my *John*," Joy answered, laughing.

Jy-ying laughed also, and felt warm and fuzzy, almost light-headed. This was the first time she and John had touched like that, and the areas where his hands had gripped her seemed almost electrified. To distract herself, she hurriedly led the three of them to the next room, which was a library complete with French doors, books lining every wall, a sliding ladder, and, in the center, a large library table with six hardwood armchairs. "Our study study-room," Jy-ying said.

Next to the library was a paneled study with an entrance from both the library and the ballroom; the study contained its own glass-enclosed bookshelves, lush beige carpeting, a mahogany desk, a brown leather sofa, and matching easy chairs. "*Our* room," Jy-ying said, grinning.

Off the study was a large file and safe room. "For our time machines and supply capsules. As you can see, I already have moved my capsule and time machine in. I keep the door double locked. I suggest that you bring your supply capsules and machine here as well, from

wherever they are now. The wooden flooring lies on a concrete bed and that on bedrock, since the room was meant to hold all kinds of heavy file cabinets and a large safe.”

As she spoke, Jy-ying mused, *They've kept the location of their capsules secret. Quite rightly. They would have been stupid to put such absolute trust in me at this stage. But now there can be no secrets. Our lives and our joint mission are at stake, once John's—our—book is published.*

She led them back through the ballroom to a bar and billiards room, and then into the left wing where the cook's quarters (“I kept on the cook and her assistant”), large kitchen (“We cook rice here”), dining room (“We eat rice here”), lower lounge (“Our talk-talk, war room”), and finally, the drawing room (“Here we chat-chat with guests”) were located. “There is an upper lounge on the second floor, overlooking the ballroom and across from the bedrooms,” she added.

What they'd seen since leaving the gym left John and Joy speechless. Jy-ying remembered her first tour of the house, and knew how they felt. She took Joy's hand and, with John and Prince Wei following, she headed for the stairs and led them up to the second floor bedrooms. She stopped at the door to the grand master bedroom, and told Joy and John to enter.

Inside, they saw a huge room furnished largely with Victorian furniture, all dominated by an incredible four-poster bed that Prince Wei jumped up to sit on, panting. The hand carved corner posts and the bed itself were handcrafted from solid hardwoods and cherry veneers. It sat on a lush white carpet. On the wall behind the headboard was painted a large Japanese landscape, with low, wispy gray clouds encompassing the sharp contours and hidden peaks of several forested mountains; in the foreground, a small white boat with a red rectangular sail tacked against the breeze on an aquamarine lake.

The mellow tones of ancient ivory and old satin finishes glowed from a marble, veneer-topped nightstand, a hand carved dresser and chest, beveled landscape and floor mirrors, chests, an armoire, and a beautiful mahogany writing desk. The floor was a teak parquet similar to that of the ballroom, and around the door to a balcony were rich velvet draperies topped with a box pleat valance.

On one side of the room, a door opened to the sitting room and walk-in closet; another open door revealed the gold plating of the bathroom's plumbing.

“Hot water?” John asked, his voice breathless.

"Of course," Jy-ying answered, as though she had been asked if the mansion had electricity.

"Very big tub?" Joy asked, glancing at John.

"Of course," Jy-ying answered levelly, but she didn't hide her little grin.

John took another look around the room, then, obviously trying to keep a straight face, he asked Jy-ying, "Where is Joy's bedroom?"

Jy-ying answered, "There is no bedroom suitable to her elegance and grace. So she will have to sleep here until we redecorate one of the bedrooms. Perhaps you can move in another bed."

All three laughed.

"Where is your bedroom, Jy-ying?" Joy asked.

"Mine is down the hall, the wife's bedroom. It actually is the next room, and there is a private door between it and this room so Harrington and his wife could get together without anyone knowing." She pointed to the door.

"Oh, I forgot," John spoke up suddenly. "What about the three guys? Are they still living at the hotel?"

"I sold the hotel back to the previous owner."

"Did you get a good deal?"

"Yes, the previous hotel owner was more than happy to buy the hotel back, except for a one thousand dollar exchange fee he said he had to pay the government. I did not believe him, but that is okay."

"Where did the guys go?" John persisted.

Jy-ying pointed up.

John paled. "They're dead?"

"No, silly. They are in guest bedrooms upstairs," Jy-ying answered.

As John sighed, Jy-ying looked at Joy. "Is 'silly' the right word?"

"Yes," Joy answered, nodding with pursed lips. Then she raised her eyebrow and observed, "We will never be able to keep this place clean."

"Not to worry. I have hired a cleaning company that specializes in mansions like this. They will come in once a week and clean only the rooms we use, which I calculate is about one-third of them. There are twelve bedrooms alone, only eight of which we will use. Two are for the cook and her assistant."

"Any other helpers?" John asked, seeming reluctant to use the word "servants."

"I have hired the same guard company that maintained security here before, which keeps four men on duty at all times, two of them

continuously patrolling the wall and grounds. They also have three Doberman pinschers on duty. There is a kennel behind the house, by the stable, and I've already introduced Prince Wei to them. They gamble—”

“Gambol,” John corrected almost absentmindedly as he continued to stare around the bedroom.

“—all over the property with him. I think he intimidates them. Also, he has come to realize that they guard the outside, and the inside is his responsibility.” She paused. “Let’s see, what else? Oh yes, we have a stableman to take care of the five horses we have. On property like this, there are many jobs that the horses do best. And we have a gardening company as well that uses the horses.”

John’s jaw was gradually dropping.

“You met the master butler. He is also a live-in, with his wife, who does the odd jobs that always need to be done around here. In counting bedrooms, I forgot that he also takes up one. He manages all the help, including the people that the various companies send to us.”

John asked, “Is there a garage?”

“Yes, in the rear, next to the stables, with six cars already parked in it. There is an American Mercedes, a Buick Model F, and three Fords—two Model C and one Model K. I also park my Silver Ghost there.”

Joy yelled, “I get the Mercedes!”

John looked startled. “No way.” Joy gave him an intense stare, and he added, “Not without tossing a coin.”

He then asked, “Did you give the three Fords to the guys?”

“Yes John, of course. We also have a mechanic whose workroom is in the garage, although he is not a live-in.”

“What does the butler use for transportation?” Joy wondered.

“He will not drive. He only uses a horse and buggy.”

Joy was beginning to look as dumbfounded as John. “Is that it?” Joy asked, as though yet another plate of food had just been put on their overloaded table at a Chinese feast.

“I think so. But I probably forgot something.” Jy-ying bounced with satisfaction over Joy and John’s reception of all she had done. She was surprised at how accepting they were. She had expected arguments about the size of the house, about the three guys living with them, about their vulnerability through the hired help, about the total cost, about her doing all of this without consulting them. *At the very least*, she thought, *they will question the total cost of the companies I’ve hired, and the salaries of the live-in servants . . . rather, help.*

As if he'd picked up her thought, John rubbed his hand along his growing beard and asked, "How much do all these companies and the hired help cost in upkeep?"

Jy-ying had that figure ready. "They cost seven hundred dollars per month."

"Not bad," John said. "Remember, we pay two-thirds. Is there a basement?" he asked.

"Yes, but the butler calls it the downstairs and the rest of the house the upstairs. It seems to be some kind of status distinction. There is a gigantic gas hot water heater in one corner." Then she said, "Oh, you will want to get settled. The butler will bring your luggage to the master bedroom from my car. At 4:00 this afternoon I will introduce you two to the whole staff, including the foremen of the various companies we have working for us. For all this to operate smoothly, I had to tell them our rank in relation to one another. Then they know whose orders take precedence, and whose are so low in status that their orders can be virtually ignored."

"Oh," Joy lamented, "poor John."

Jy-ying looked askance at John, who seemed about to tweak Joy's nose. Then she went on. "So, I have told them that John is the master of the house."

"Ha!" John exclaimed.

Jy-ying quickly added, "They think, Joy, that you are John's unofficial wife—you two could not get married because your royal Chinese parents objected, but you command John—"

"Of course," Joy interjected.

"—but you're second in command in the household and at his business. I am Joy's live-in sister, so the servants better obey me as well, by virtue of that. And the three guys are John's business employees, honorable guests here, and thus not to be trifled with."

She waited, but John and Joy seemed more than impressed. She continued with, "At six the cook will announce that dinner is to be served. The butler will oversee it in the dining room."

"Jesus," John exclaimed, "the first thing I'm going to do in the dining room is blow a fart."

"And I'm going to barf," Joy added.

"That's okay," Jy-ying said, chuckling, "I have already told them all about you two."

Chapter 20

January 5, 1907

John

John parked the Mercedes in front of the mansion, leaving it to their mechanic to drive the car into the garage. Gripping the newspaper in one hand, he hurried into the library, where he knew he would find Joy and Jy-ying studying Russian or German, or practicing their Russian and German on each other. It was too late for their language tutor to still be there.

He entered through the open door and immediately noticed that something was wrong. Joy was pale and seemed to be trembling. Jy-ying's eyes were large, and as he got closer, he could see tears in them.

I hope they haven't been fighting, he thought. *If it becomes violent, I'll have to rebuild and restock the library. Time to distract them.* "Bad news," he yelled. "Poland has—"

Joy jerked, looked around at him, held her palm out toward him, and silently shook her head.

He had never seen that look on her face before. It stopped him cold. He didn't know whether to put his arm around her, or leave and close the door on what was an utterly private matter between the two.

Joy said nothing to him. It was as though he was not there. She turned back to Jy-ying and reached across the table. Jy-ying took the outstretched hand in hers, and both of them started weeping. Prince Wei had been asleep under the table, but the crying woke him, and he ran over to Jy-ying and began jumping on her house dress.

John quietly turned around—*It's a woman's thing*—and headed for the door.

Joy sobbed, "Don't go."

John turned around as both women got out of their chairs and came around the table. They clasped their hands together and stood staring through tear-filled eyes at each other, as though studying an alien being.

"I'd better go," John said, feeling like a man at a woman's social tea.

Joy and Jy-ying whispered in unison, "Stay."

John just did not feel like sitting down while both women were standing there crying, so he just stood uncomfortably where he was, not knowing what to do in the face of this female emotion. It was beyond man's understanding.

A minute went by.

John cleared his throat. He heard one of their guard dogs bark, and Prince Wei perked up his ears and his tail stood straight up as he listened, then he went back to trying to attract Jy-ying's attention.

Finally, still staring at Jy-ying, Joy nodded toward John. Hand in hand, they came to stand in front of him. He had never seen Joy's face like this. It looked torn between elation, disbelief, shock, and love. Love? John was totally confused.

Joy held up Jy-ying's hand toward John, and tried to say something, but the words kept breaking into sobs. "I want . . . you to meet . . . the real . . . J . . . Jy-ying."

Chapter 21

July 14, 1907

Rosa

She was unhappy at leaving her lover again, but he could not come with her. Consolidating the new communist government of Poland was too important, and the mutiny of the garrison at Bydgoszcz had to be put down. He had wanted Rosa to take over the job of economic minister, but as much as she wanted, she just could not. True, she was Polish by birth and in her heart, and she was thrilled at the independence just granted Poland by Trotsky—Lenin had come to Warsaw to personally declare Polish independence from Russia “forever.” *Yes, he had even used that word*—but, as she told Leo, she was an international citizen and communist first, and the job was now revolution in Germany.

What a blow to capitalism that would be. Communism seemed victorious in Russia, with all its incredible resources and intellectual skills, and now Poland. Next, Germany. Maybe not next year or the year after, but surely in less than a decade. France would be easy after that, and nothing could then save England. Europe would be theirs, and already they had contact with communist activists in China. If China went communist, Asia would follow, then South America, and the United States and its lackey Canada would be isolated in a Red world. They would have to succumb.

What a future. And she was part of it—more than a part. She was contributing to this final victory of the working class.

Those happy thoughts filled her mind as she unlocked her small apartment. She immediately was overcome by the apartment’s oppressive stuffiness, and the acidic smell of old clothes. She dragged her two suitcases and large handbag into the apartment, then unlocked and opened the two windows looking on the brick-walled apartments next door.

Her German lieutenant, Karla, had a key to her apartment, and had piled messages and mail on her round working table in the middle of the room. These would be the important pieces for her eyes only. All the other communications would be in her office at the new Spartacus League headquarters.

She sighed and dropped onto the bumpy floral couch. *I am tired. I am hungry. I miss Leo already. We had so little time together. And this place is hot.*

Leaving everything the way it was, she lay back on the couch, fitting her body around the bumps, and stretched her heavy legs out. She needed a nap before throwing herself back into the organized chaos at headquarters—telegrams and phone calls to handle; commands to give; articles, pamphlets, and newspaper articles to write and edit; meetings and more meetings to schedule and lead; visitors to welcome; egos to caress and weaklings to stiffen She let one foot fall toward the floor and was asleep before it hit.



The bloody reactionary German Freikorps were beating on her door with a fire axe, and she ran to the window to see if she could jump out. Below, men with guns watched her window. Certain death. She ran to the bathroom where she always had her weapons hidden under her dirty clothes, but they were gone. She was caught. She was dead. She knew this would come eventually, but she had hoped she would see the German revolution succeed first. It was too far along for the capitalists and their bourgeoisie supporters to stop now. Even with her death.

She rushed back to the table and scooped up her messages, mail, and telegrams in both hands, then ran back to the bathroom and started tearing them up and tossing the pieces into the rust-stained toilet. The beating on the door got louder. She flushed everything down the toilet, and walked back into the other room.

There was nothing she could do now. She stood near the table, facing the door. Waiting for death.

The axe had broken through to slit the door in several places. In one spot, it had smashed a small hole through the wood.

She recalled their victories. *Next Germany. We are unstoppable. I will die happy.*

With head high, she focused on the hole as the axe enlarged it. They would get no screams or tears from her. A hand darted through the hole, opened the door, and two men with guns rushed in. One knocked over the round table, sending the lamp crashing to the floor with a knocking sound . . . knocking sound . . . knocking.



The heavy sound of knocking on her door startled her awake. Her heart raced, pounding within her body, and she was sweating. “*Kurcz’—damn. Kurcz’*,” she said in Polish. “Again, that *Pierdolony* nightmare.” She rolled off the couch and stood swaying for a moment before stumbling to the door. “Wait,” she shouted. She cooled down her emotions and straightened out her clothes. Then she opened the door a crack and saw the green-eyed man standing there.

As the biggest benefactor of the Polish revolution and Spartacus, he was always most welcome, anywhere. She tried to smile, but her nightmare still lingered. “Please come in,” she said, opening the door wide. “I just returned from Poland and had been taking a nap.” She rubbed her hand over her face. “I had something of a nightmare.”

She straightened up and went to the table. She pushed her messages and stuff to the back of the table and covered them with an open newspaper. “I am sorry about the condition of the apartment, but as I say, I just returned from Poland. I have no food or drink to offer you. But, I can give you a seat,” she said with an attempt at a smile, and pulled a second chair close to the table.

The man wore the same clothes he had on the last three times he visited her. But he did not smell, so he must get them cleaned, or he had duplicate clothes. *Odd I should notice such a trivial thing*, she immediately thought, *but the man is strange*.

He sat down with surprising lightness for his size, and said in his impossible German, “Good to see you again. Your lieutenant told me when you would arrive, so I came to get your view on your revolution in Poland, the reactionary war waged against you there, and the progress of Spartacus.”

In the next hour she brought him up to date with well-organized details. It came naturally to her. She had a doctorate, was a writer by trade, and therefore in seconds could easily organize complex events into a coherent monologue. And monologue it was, since Green Eyes asked no questions, but only looked at her intently, with an occasional nod. It actually became disquieting, since he gave so few clues to indicate whether he understood her or not. Since his spoken German was poor, she began to wonder if he understood more than a word here and there.

“That is it in general,” she said. “Is there anything you want to know about in more detail?”

“No,” he said. “That was a good summary. I assume you are okay regarding funds.”

“So far,” she said. “We are not even able to spend what you so generously gave us as fast as I’d planned.”

He nodded and replied, “I want you to know that I am very happy at the your and Leo’s progress. Keep in mind that if you need more funds, I can supply them. Just make a note of it for my next visit.”

“Can you tell me when that will be?”

“No. I have much to do, and cannot stay in one place for too long. It would only be a guess as to when I would be free to see you next. Maybe in a month or two.”

He got up to leave, and Rosa was about to join him at the door when she remembered something. She went over to her traveling bag instead and pulled out a thin book in German.

She handed it to him. “I read that on the train. It’s a crazy bunch of predictions about the future of Russian communism. It is sheer guesswork without a shred of knowledge or understanding of Russian communism, but it’s entertaining for that—”

She stopped as she saw his face. It had turned white and the book was shaking in his hand. The other hand he had put up on the door, as if keep himself from falling. He seemed mesmerized by the title. He whispered something in a foreign language; all she could make out was the author’s strange name, “Hitler.”

He came out of it, grabbed her arm roughly, and almost dragged her back to the table. He pushed her into a chair. Standing over her, he slammed the book down, still visibly shaken. He demanded to know something, but his German was too mangled for her to understand.

She was getting frightened of this man. He was a stranger. She knew nothing about him except that he was a communist supporter and benefactor. He could be a wild and dangerous man when excited. And the book had clearly excited him beyond all reason.

He took two deep breaths, and his body slumped visually as he relaxed his muscles. “I know this supposed author,” he hissed. “He is a fascist.”

“What is a fascist?”

“He is a German socialist, but one of the greatest enemies of communism and Russia. If he could, he would kill every communist in the world, and every Jew. He tried.”

“He tried? I never heard of him. I do not understand. Why did he write this stupid book?”

“He did not.”

The man grabbed the book and rushed to the door. He flung it open and threw more gibberish over his shoulder as he hurried to the stairs. All she could get out of it were the strange names “Joy” and “John.”

Chapter 22

July 14, 1907

John

John parked the Mercedes near the hitching post at the San Francisco Post Office, with a clear view of the entrance. He had his H&K on his lap, and Joy was sitting beside him with her Magnum out. Jy-ying, or rather who he thought of now as Joy 2, was in the back, presumably with her own weapon ready. They varied the time that they parked at or near the post office according to a random formula Joy had worked out and passed on to the Simpson & Small Detective Agency working for them.

At precisely 3:00 p.m., a common looking working man in drab corduroy cap and farmer's baggy dungarees came out and looked around. Seeing John's Mercedes—this was the day for the Mercedes—he strolled over, quickly dumped on John's lap a pile of letters and a package from their post office box, and then unhitched and mounted a bay nearby.

Besides picking up what was in their box for them, John paid the detective agency what was a small fortune in this age to keep a three-man surveillance schedule on the P.O. box. If anybody loitered near the box or acted suspicious, they were to tail them when they left and find out who they were and where they were staying. John was the front man to the detective agency, but it was Jy-ying who drew on her Sabah Security Guard knowledge to make sure through John that the detective agency did this surveillance properly.

To make sure the agency knew the seriousness of this, John explained that he and the two women were secret agents, working for whom he could not say, and they were trying to break up a dangerous spy ring. They could not work through the government's security apparatus because the ring seemed to have a traitor high up in it. John warned the agency, which upped their bill considerably as a result, that its agents should be well armed, but able to defend themselves armed or not. He also had them sign a secrecy pledge like that he'd had Stimson sign.

John gave the package to Joy who, with one glance at the return address, yelled so that Jy-ying could also hear, "It's from the publisher."

"This must be it. What the hell took them so long getting it to us? The telegram to the P.O. box I received in June said it was out then. Typical way publishers treat authors, I bet," John complained.

Before driving off, he wanted to see the book himself, but Jy-ying, always the most security conscious, insisted that he get away from the post office. "Immediately, John. Like now."

Muttering that he could no longer tell Joy and Jy-ying apart, he holstered his gun, then drove into the chaos of horse riders, horse-drawn wagons, automobiles, and bicycle traffic on Market Street. To make it worse, John kept glancing at Joy as she sucked in her stomach, lifted her tactical knife out of its sheath under the waist of her skirt, and cut the heavy twine around the package. She also cut the wrapping paper away, revealing three slim books. She whooped and Jy-ying leaned over the front seat to see.

Joy shouted into the Mercedes and traffic noise, "*Communist Victory and Defeat 1936–1991*, by Adolf Hitler." The cover—done in the garish, poster style and limited publishing colors of the age—showed the hammer and sickle overlaying an illustration of an execution: a prisoner was being shot in the back of the head while other prisoners stood in line, some praying, some making the sign of the cross, some on their knees obviously begging for their lives. She held one of the books up for Jy-ying to see the cover. "You did a nice job of creating that cover from our video of twentieth century wars and democides."

"Thanks to your fantastic Photoshop program," Jy-ying responded.

Joy picked up the other two books, and warned John when he had to brake hard to avoid a bicycle, "John! Watch the road. You don't want to make that time traveler's job easier, do you?"

Jy-ying yelled at him, "Pull over, sweetheart, and I will drive so you can look at the books."

"Yeah," Joy shouted at him. Turning to Jy-ying, she hollered with a grin, "One-track mind."

John ignored them, but did concentrate on the traffic.

Joy looked back at the books and yelled, "One is in Russian, the other in German. I can read much of them now," she added with a touch of pride in her voice. She passed them both to the back. Jy-ying gently shoved Prince Wei off her lap to take the books, and began to

leaf through them, looking from the English pages to the German and then the Russian, as though she were comparing the translations. "I'm a genius to have thought this up," she crowed.

"I thought of it," Joy blared. "You only refined it."

Keeping his eyes on the traffic, the exchange between the two women again refocused his mind on what really had never left it since they'd told him. Again he thought, *I'm living in a dream world. None of this is real, and I'm going to wake up soon.*

Multiple moving images then flooded his mind and his driving became mechanical, eyes to hands to feet without mental intervention. He had not forgotten about the books, but beyond his hearing Joy and Jy-ying were now chattering about them, Jy-ying in the rear leaning forward on the front seat, Joy angled against the front seat, with their heads close together so they did not have to shout.

He glanced at them, and shook his head for the thousandth time over what he had found out that day in the library. *Yes, from then on I've been in another world.* Then, as certain images he now knew so well pushed the others from his mind, he felt a semi-erection pushing against his trousers.

January 25

Fort Hope Library

Joy held up Jy-ying's hand toward him, and tried to say something, but the words kept breaking into sobs. "I want . . . you to meet . . . the real . . . J . . . Jy-ying."

John was utterly mystified.

Crying also, Jy-ying wiped her eyes with one hand, and spoke almost too quietly for John to hear. But the shock and elation, the happiness of discovery, and the disbelief at what she was saying filled her soft, trembling voice. "Joy and I were discussing our childhoods in more detail than we had ever spoken before. I knew she was found alone on a boat and almost dead when she was about four years old. I knew her parents apparently had tried to escape persecution in Vietnam and were killed by pirates. I knew her foster mother Tor named her Joy and adopted her."

I knew all that, John thought. *What's so important about it?*

Jy-ying turned to look at Joy, who nodded. "Today, just out of interest, I asked what she remembered of her childhood before then. She

remembered very little, of course, but she was able to vaguely recall the name 'Tien Yen.' I could not believe it. I pressed her for more names. I used word discovery tricks of association, and finally the name 'Hua' came out, and then she told me it was associated with a vague image of what must have been her mother. I could not speak, I was so shocked."

Joy had control of herself now. She put her hand on Jy-ying's arm and told John evenly, but still with a sense of wonder, "I was astounded by Jy-ying's behavior. Finally she asked me, 'Do you remember your real name?' I told her that I vaguely remembered several names. Especially something like 'Tang,' or maybe 'Jy-cheng,' maybe for a baby sister."

Jy-ying turned back to Joy, and took the hand on her arm into hers. Her voice wavered. "John. Joy is me and I am Joy."

"I can't believe it," John blurted. "Impossible. Scientifically impossible."

Jy-ying went on as though she hadn't heard him. "Our mother was of the Chinese Hua family, one with a long history. Her mother's parents immigrated to Vietnam, where her mother met and married our father, a Chinese man named Shihao. Joy also vaguely recalled his name. Our sister was named Ting. In my universe, our father died with our mother in the 1984 rebellion against Sabah; Ting was killed months later by anti-Sabah rebels. Our parents were in the secret police and fought for Sabah."

In spite of their obvious sincerity, John stepped back and crossed his arms. "Okay, you two, game's up. Nice try, with all those false tears and such, but you can't fool me. I've read enough to know that time travelers could not meet and shake hands with themselves." He pointed to their clasped hands. "Or hold hands."

Joy compressed her lips. Jy-ying pointed to her, saying, "Joy is from the First Universe. I am from the Second Universe. We are now in the Third Universe. This makes it possible."

Joy added, "It has to be possible, John. We are standing here, both of me."

John uncrossed his arms. "Really?"

They both said, "Yes."

Chills raced up his spine, and he had goose bumps on his arms at the enormity of this. "Excuse me for being dense, but I still don't understand. Jy-ying has a scar, but that could happen to either of you. It's that she doesn't look completely like you, Joy. And she is an inch or so shorter."

Jy-ying's voice was steady now. "The Vietnamese government forced all first and second generation Chinese to return to China. There were so many such refugees in China and so little aid that many of us suffered from diseases and malnutrition. I lived in a refugee camp with little food. In the United States, Joy had a much healthier diet than I did, and grew taller.

"When I was five, I caught noma, a gangrene that affects the mouth and face. Fortunately, it was a mild case—if it had been severe I would have had extreme facial disfigurement and could have died from septicemia or pneumonia. Still, as mild as my noma was, it scarred my lower face. My foster father, who in effect adopted me after my parents were killed, was a high official in the Sabah Guards. When I was sixteen, that age when teenagers are most sensitive about appearance, he had a sympathetic Security doctor perform a series of plastic surgeries on me. The small scars from the surgery are almost hidden under my chin."

Thoughts tumbled about in his head. John felt weak and cold. He pointed to the table and almost rushed to it, then dropped down in a chair and leaned on his elbows. He waved Joy and Jy-ying to the chairs on the other side of the table.

Jy-ying picked up an anxious Prince Wei, and let him lick her wet face.

John cleared his throat, and went as usual for humor to get him over this stupendous emotional shock. "Gee, if we could only bring me back from Jy-ying's universe, we would have Joy-Joy and John-John. What a foursome that would be." The words dropped off at the end, and he didn't smile.

Neither did Joy and Jy-ying.

March 19

It had been impossible to accept at first that the woman he loved so deeply was also Jy-ying. But, in so many ways, she was. Leaving aside what Jy-ying's security profession and her religion introduced into her life, her personality matched Joy's. Almost all the things he loved in Joy he began to find in Jy-ying when he started looking for them—the banter, the lip, the femininity, the strength, the dedication, the honesty, the willpower, and the sexuality.

Strangest of all, Joy would now talk of Jy-ying intimately, and when she noticed Jy-ying giving John a lingering, half-lidded look, no cloud crossed her face. He felt good about that. But then he didn't. It made him feel . . . odd.

One after another, the guys had gotten up the courage to romance Jy-ying, but except for a short spurt with Hands, whom she told Joy she liked very much, she remained single. When John brought it up with Jy-ying, she shrugged her shoulders as Joy would have done.

The double Joys distracted him. No, they obsessed him. He knew also—he couldn't miss it—that something was obsessing Joy, and it wasn't simply that Jy-ying was her. And it was getting worse. She put things off. They had yet to start their import and export company. They had agreed to change the name he and Joy had planned in honor of her adoptive mother Tor. She still loved her no less, but Hua had been both Jy-ying and Joy's real mother, and they'd decided therefore to name the new firm the Hua Import & Export Company.

John understood. He thought.

They kept the three guys busy with odd jobs, things that needed to be done around Fort Hope, and they didn't seem to mind. They had a job where they had none before, a great place to live, free food and automobiles, and John treated them very well. And there were two gorgeous women to stare at, which they did often enough for John to have to explain to them that Joy was his, and not up for grabs, so to speak.

About two months after Joy and Jy-ying found out about each other, the problem Joy was having, and that John had hidden from himself, became clear. They were laying naked in bed, the way they always slept together, and John got aroused. Joy held and massaged him, and murmured, "Poor Jy-ying. She hasn't been getting any sex, dearest. Not with anyone she can love. It's not good. She is, like me, a loving and sexual woman."

John was not in the mood for conversation. He sighed, "I thought she and Hands slept together," and nibbled on her earlobe.

"No," she whispered, eyes half-lidded. "She didn't want to."

John tried to foreclose on this distracting conversation with some foreplay. Joy gently pushed his hand away. "She couldn't because she loves you."

John felt the heat flow away, as did his erection.

Joy got up on one elbow and looked at him. Her tone still intimate, she confessed, "She is me and her love for you is what I feel. It's natural. I love you very much, dearest—both of me."

John turned on his own elbow to face her, and put his bearded chin in his hand. He lifted his eyebrows and asked, "Where is this going, baby?"

Joy pulled him down next to her and kissed him. The heat was coming back. But then she said, "I want you to make love to me."

Finally, John was again more than ready, and was about to get on top of her when she stopped him with her hand. "Not this me. The other me."

John lost it again. "You want me to make love to Jy-ying?"

"Yes, but you must understand that she is not a different woman. She is me."

"I can't do that, baby. No way. It would be wrong. Like having an affair. I would not feel right about it. No. I can't believe you would ask me to do this." He gulped without realizing it. "It's disloyalty to you. If there were another me and you were bedding him" He realized he was protesting too much, but couldn't help it.

"It's okay, I'll be with her."

"What?"

"I'll be with her with you. You will have us together as one, which we are."

"That's group sex, Joy. I've never done that. It's . . . ah, perverted." He did not have the vocabulary for this.

"Don't be silly," Joy murmured.

Joy got up and put on the embroidered red silk robe that Jy-ying had bought for her, and left the room. Five minutes later, Joy returned with Jy-ying wearing the same kind of robe, but in blue. She looked uncomfortable as John hurriedly covered himself. Prince Wei was right behind her.

Joy sat on the edge of the bed, leaned over to him, and gave him a peck on the cheek. "Here I am, dearest. Both of me," she purred. She stood, took off her robe, and lay down almost next to him, leaving room for Jy-ying.

Prince Wei jumped on the bed and began to sniff Joy's crotch. Jy-ying grabbed him, put him on a cushioned chair, and commanded him in a husky voice, "*Liu*—stay."

Joy had been momentarily distracted by Prince Wei. Now she turned back to John, her face flushed. Her voice soothed and caressed him. "Jy-ying and I have discussed this several times and we agree, dearest. But my being with her this first time is a surprise for her." She motioned to Jy-ying, who also took off her robe and stood with a shy smile looking into John's wide eyes.

Jesus Christ, I'm dead, and on my way through the heavenly gates.

He looked at Jy-ying and saw for sure what he had wondered about since he met her—yes, she had an equally gorgeous figure, the same as Joy's, down to the breast deformity and the bush.

His last rational thought for the evening was, *Yes, heaven's gates.* For Joy ripped the covers off him, looked, fingered him, and meowed to Jy-ying, "We're going to have to work on him a little."

Prince Wei watched from the chair. He had never seen such interesting human behavior before. And his mistress was right in the middle of it.

Fort Hope Cook

Insulated and painted to be unobtrusive, the plumbing from the upstairs master bath descended along a corner in the large kitchen and through the floor to the basement. The plumbing was not completely soundproofed, however. Early the next morning the cook heard the sound in the pipes of the upstairs bathtub being filled and emptied, filled and emptied, a little filled, a lot emptied. Accompanying this was a lot of thumping on the ceiling—the bathroom floor—and in the bathtub. It only touched her consciousness, however, much like the snapping of wood in the fireplace.

But when Master Banks, Mistress Phim, and her sister Miss Khoo beat their three guests to the table for breakfast, she did notice the rosy glow on their faces, as though they had been jogging around the property in the spring chill, which those crazy people did almost every day.

When she brought in the links, scrambled eggs, and the rice both Joy and Jy-ying insisted on, she used the new word she had learned from them. She asked, "Have a good jog?"

"Oh, yes," Master Banks said. He looked at the two women, his grin cutting his face in half. "Wasn't our jog great?"

The cook didn't understand why the ladies reddened slightly at that, nor why they wore such peculiar grins of their own when they both answered, "The best ever."

She was totally mystified when Master Banks spewed coffee across the table and Mistress broke out in laughter when she commented, "Well, you all look petered out." She was glad to see, however, that Miss Khoo looked as puzzled as she was.

Chapter 23

July 14, 1907

Jy-ying

Jy-ying looked around the library table and wondered again if they had done all they could to protect themselves if attacked, all they could to capture or kill the time traveler who had wrecked the universe in which they'd landed. As soon as they returned to Fort Hope from the post office, they had come to the library to carefully go over the books they had received and to review their notes and preparations. Now they all sat at the large library table with the three books, their laptops, note paper, newspapers, and the many books in which they had been doing research, some still open, some with scraps of paper sticking out to index something important.

They had decided to put off starting the Hua Import and Export Company until they dealt with the time traveler. But there was one more decision to be made. "We' have to do it," Jy-ying finally said. "It hurts our security for them not to know. They won't be alert to danger, otherwise. And the additional six eyes and ears would be a significant help."

John looked thoughtful, and then he held up his finger. *Joy was right, Jy-ying thought, it is a hateful finger.*

"I've been troubled by keeping them ignorant of what we're doing," he said. "Their lives may be at stake also, especially if we're attacked here. They'll soon be finished with the listing and inventory of all the important and export companies in and around San Francisco, so they'll be around more. But, there's a risk. One or all of them may think we're raving lunatics, and run off telling the world what crazy people we are. How better for the time traveler to find out about us?"

"I don't think so," Joy responded. "I've been impressed with their character, and we were extremely lucky in that. Of course, it depends on how we tell them. This we should plan carefully."

"Also," Jy-ying added with a little grin, "they may have a girlfriend or two with them. We did tell them that this is their home, and to feel free to bring their friends here, as long as they tell the cook well ahead of time if for supper. Or breakfast."

“There are the butler and other help—” John still could not call them servants “—although there is no special reason that they should know.”

Joy looked thoughtful for a few seconds. “That brings up another problem. We don’t know whether the time traveler is man or woman—”

“Has to be a man, to have had such success,” John interrupted, without even a smile.

“Yes, our man,” Jy-ying said, her smile wide with the happiness she felt over their new love. She looked at Joy, smiled, and nodded her head toward John.

Joy smiled in return, and continued. “So, if it’s a woman who is young like us—”

“And beautiful like you two,” John broke in again.

“And incredibly patient about being interrupted,” Jy-ying responded, and went on with, “She has an entry through all our defenses by vamping one of the boys.”

Jy-ying picked up Prince Wei, who was sleeping at her feet, and stroked his back while he resumed sleeping on her lap. “That decides it, does it not? They must be made aware of the danger, even of girlfriends.” Jy-ying looked at John. She had gotten to know him well enough now to almost anticipate his humor. She knew it was as natural as breathing to him.

“Yes,” John said, tapping his pencil on the table and looking at Joy from under his brows. “All us males must be aware of that danger.”

The telephone on the wall next to a book stack gave two quick rings. John rose and picked up the receiver. After a moment he replied to the caller, “I think the cook will be relieved not to have your elephant-sized stomachs to fill. Enjoy yourselves.” He hung up and told Joy and Jy-ying, “Guess we won’t be telling the guys tonight. They’re going out to dinner and then to a nickelodeon. I bet we’ll have at least two more women under the roof afterwards.”

“You mean under *them*,” Jy-ying said, smirking.

Straight-faced, John added, “Or two or more under one of them.”

“Beast,” Joy yelled, crunching up a sheet of paper and throwing it him.

“Pervert,” Jy-ying shouted and, rolling up a newspaper, she reached over the table and bopped him on the head.

John was laughing so hard he could hardly speak. “Girls . . . girls, you must learn to control yourselves around me, as hard as it is.” He doubled over in his chair.

Joy pushed him off the chair and jumped on his chest with a loud hoot, and Jy-ying raced around the table and fell across his thighs. They both almost doubled up with laughter themselves as Prince Wei tried to kill John's trouser leg.

In three tries, John finally stammered out, "No, no, not in the library."

July 16

Joy

Two nights later, while John, Joy, and Jy-ying lay naked in bed together with Prince Wei sleeping at their feet, Joy mused about their success with the guys. "They now know everything. Everything, but one thing. They know about our mission and why, since we showed them the video of twentieth century wars and revolutions. They know about the nuclear attack on the democracies—"

Jy-ying, who had been sitting against the back of the bed reading on the other side of John, put her Russian history book down. She looked over at Joy, and her face sagged. "I am sorry for the distraction of my sobbing. I could not help it. All those people killed, all that history destroyed, by my religion. No one in China, not even in Security, was ever shown pictures of the destruction. It was all abstract. If I had seen then what I saw today, I would have resigned my commission and fled the country."

Joy nodded. "That is exactly what I would have done. And I would have fled to one of the new Muslim democracies you told me existed at that time. Anyway, your crying and my tears are what finally convinced the guys that we were telling the truth. They have this thing about us being iron ladies, especially Sal. He keeps asking me to arm wrestle."

Joy turned on her side, leaned on her elbow, and idly played with a light blonde hair on John's chest. "They took it well. No hysterics, no 'You're crazy.' Just 'how can we help you?' I was surprised."

"Yeah," Jy-ying said, also leaning on her elbow to tweak one of John's chest hairs. She chuckled. "With the hundred dollars John gave them to arm themselves, they must have bought half an armory. They came in clanking this evening. A good gun only costs a couple of dollars, so I expect they each have a handgun or two, a shotgun, and probably a rifle."

She waved her hand along John's body. "Well, there is one thing they do not know about us. It's lucky that the previous owner and his wife wanted a door between their rooms so they could quietly get together."

Joy replied, "Lucky for us, and too bad for John. Have you noticed how tired he's been lately? Why, I found him the other day sleeping in his study, with his head on the desk."

Jy-ying frowned and rubbed her fingernail down John's chest. "I think he may have only two or three more good years."

"I don't know." Joy tweaked his nipple. "He can hardly stand up straight in the morning now."

Jy-ying pulled on another hair as though to see how long it was. "You mean on his feet?"

While Jy-ying held the one hair up, Joy tried to twist another hair around it. "I'm afraid that's all I'm going to mean, soon. You know," Joy mused, "men are like automobiles. Great when they're new—they ride very well. But as they age they get bumpy and rattle, and you get less mileage for the gas. They rust, their engines begin to go, and before you know it they can't even be steered well. And finally, they go poof."

John's face had turned red. No longer able to hold the laughter in, he finally let it out, put his arms around both of them, and pulled their heads to his shoulders. "I love you two."

"I love you too," they both said.

Joy felt warm and contented. She was more at peace with their love than ever before. The world was perfect, there was no other universe, there was only the three—rather, the two—of them. She sighed and whispered huskily, "Prove it. If you're not too tired, that is."

Chapter 24

July 23, 1907

Green Eyes

T*his is ridiculous. Where could they be hiding?* He knew what they looked like, he knew John had bought the Fairfax Hotel. Hands' biography of them had made that plain. But when he went there, the owner said John had never bought the hotel, although when he described them, the owner said they had stayed there. No forwarding address.

He knew from John's *Remembrance* that by this time they had set up the Tor Import and Export Company, but it wasn't registered, and there were no business ads in the paper associated with that name.

He knew they'd landed in a warehouse, address unknown, and had bought it the same day they landed. He systematically checked all the major banks, spilling counterfeit money around like pennies, and finally located the sale of the property. But when he appeared inside the warehouse, weapon ready, it was empty. He could tell from the clues—disturbed places in the dust and the scuff marks where objects had been dragged, among other things—that their capsules and time machine had been there.

He knew they would buy an apartment house, but no one resembling the pair had bought an apartment house or a house in the last six months.

He knew they would buy a car, given what he'd read about Joy's driving. He checked all of the automobile distributors. No one had sold anyone like them a car.

He felt the anger growing again. It welled up from his guts and heated up his thoughts. "Shit, shit, shit," he said in a language that would be oddly familiar to English speakers. "I never thought they would be onto me. Damn them."

Well, he had tried to take the fast route to them. Now he would just have to play the patient detective. He did not want to take the time. The time he was spending here was increasingly dangerous for him. He had

been lucky so far, but he now risked being caught. It was okay to drop in for a short visit, do what was necessary for the revolution, and then return. But he had been here a while and his human auric—energy field—was bound to be picked up eventually.

He moved to the passenger seat of the stolen Buick and unfolded his neutronic screen. He activated it and by voice command moved from one robot fly-view to another. The robot surveillance flies he had brought with him were now on the walls around “Hitler’s” P.O. box. He spoke a few words and the screen went through the ten hour consolidated holo of the activity around the box as recorded by the flies.

It automatically stopped fast-scanning when a man approached the box and opened it. He took out a pile of letters, put them in a case, and closed and locked the box. The man was not John.

“Son of a bitch. More waiting.” He spoke a series of instructions toward the screen, and in the post office one of the robot flies flew to wait just above the box. To preserve its proton energy it would make no holo until activated as it had been commanded.

Now I have to wait another shitty day or so.

April 24

He returned to within contact distance in a stolen Ford, and after unfolding his screen, he checked his special robot fly. The fly’s holo had started immediately when someone unlocked the box. It flew to land on the person’s coat near his collar with a front view of what he was doing.

He ordered a fast scan. The holo zoomed forward until the fly was carried to a Buick. He saw the mail dropped onto a man’s lap. As instructed, the fly flew into the car and attached itself upside down to the car’s roof. The holo on the screen automatically righted the three-dimensional image, and went to wide-angle view. John’s face came onto the screen as he said something to his passenger.

He had seen that face in the hated photographs and paintings he’d grown up with. He ordered the holo to switch to a view of the passenger. He gaped as Joy came into view; she was even more beautiful than her pictures. He noticed the scar, and was surprised. But that may have been powdered over in the photos.

I was right. It’s that goddam John and Joy who are after me. Well, fuck them. They’re dead.

The fly did not take a holo of the back seat. It had not been ordered to do so. It flew out the open window and did a fast fly around the automobile and back into the window to again attach itself upside down to the automobile's roof, such that it had a clear view of the road ahead. John drove off, and the man could see in what direction John drove, but then within a mile or so, the fly was out of range.

He'd seen the car they were driving, but the damn cars had no license plates in this era. It was a Ford, but he didn't know the model number and for all he knew, it might have been stolen. *Shit, now it will take longer.*

He put his screen on search and alert, and slid into the driver's seat. He put the idling Ford in low gear, and jack-rabbed into traffic in the same direction John had gone.

He drove straight southwest on Market until it went south around Twin Peaks and then changed into Portola Avenue. With increasing frustration he followed that until he reached Ocean Ave.

No signal from his special fly. *Where the hell did they go?*

The robot fly would sense when it was out of range and go into its sleep mode until the screen came back into range, when it would awaken, ready for new instructions.

He pulled into the lot of Hardy's Food Store. He directed his remaining robot surveillance flies to fly to the limit of their contact range in a search pattern looking for the one robot fly, and then to repeat the search along a different segment of the distance on their return. He was in effect doubling the range of his screen.

He waited. No contact with the fly in the car.

The flies returned, and he drove further south, and tried again.

Nothing. Another try.

Nothing. His surveillance flies were losing their proton energy, his screen warned him; their power supply would be depleted in one more go-around.

He again found another location, sent out his flies, and waited.

Contact. The special fly was activated again and communicating through the surveillance fly that had found it. It was still upside down, attached to the interior roof of the Ford. He could see that the Ford was parked in a large garage. He instructed the robot to fly out of the garage and to the front of what looked like a very big house.

But then there was a sudden shift in perspective, a collapsing of the views, darkness, and loss of contact. He tried various commands. Nothing. He smacked the dashboard with his hand and raged, his hot anger turning his shout into a scream: "Where is that goddam house?"

Fort Hope Mechanic

The Ford had been out on the road; it was dirty, and had to be cleaned. The house mechanic unlatched the top from the windshield and pushed it back to lie in a pile of folded canvas behind the back seats. He never heard the soft crunch of the tiny robotic fly as it was caught in a folding strut.

He then unstrapped the top from the rear latches and, with a grunt, lifted the top off and to the ground. He would open it there later. It was easier for him to clean the canvas on the ground than crawling around and leaning over the high top when it was attached to the Ford, especially since it would not hold his weight.

Chapter 25

July 24, 1907

Jy-ying

Jy-ying sat in her favorite easy chair in her room; Prince Wei slept on her lap. John and Joy were napping in the master bedroom. She didn't feel like a nap herself, so she'd told them she had some things to do in her—now really her and Joy's—room. Since she almost always slept with them, she had turned her bedroom into a study-prayer room, a place where she could sometimes be alone with Prince Wei and with her thoughts. Sometimes Joy also used the room to be by herself, while Jy-ying and Prince Wei slept with John.

She had completed her afternoon prayers but, troubled by them, she was trying to determine the problem, and indeed, again think about their joint mission.

The heat and passion she'd felt with John, now surely the love of her life, and the initial—she had trouble with a word for this—“strangeness” of group (but not really group) sex, had almost settled into a routine, though it was no less pleasurable. That passion, and their lovemaking, had almost completely dominated her mind. It was bound up inextricably with her discovery that she and Joy were one and the same person, with her new love for John, and with her love of self—Joy. What was left of her thoughts involved their security and stopping the time traveler.

Now that the great passion, the great heat and lust, had settled into a routine of joyful lovemaking—she stopped and told herself with a chuckle, “Ha. I made an unconscious pun. Good thing John didn't hear that”—now she felt relaxed enough to deal with what had been trying to insert itself into her thoughts.

Her Sabahism was an increasing strain for her. Joy was agnostic, tending toward Buddhism. John was agnostic, tending toward atheism. She performed her prayers five times a day, time stolen from the many things she had to do—maintaining their security, her practice sessions and sparring with Joy, her jogging and weight lifting, helping Joy train John further in the martial arts and weapons, and now training the three guys, now officially their guards. She grinned. *Not to mention bed time.*

She rubbed Prince Wei's back, finding pleasure in the feel of his hair, and feeling good about his unconditional loyalty and love. Half awake, he rolled on his back to have his stomach scratched, which she did with delight, happy to see his pleasure.

She leaned over and kissed his black nose, then sat back and idly scratched Prince Wei's stomach again. It was so quiet she felt she could almost hear the dust fall on the room's Indian wool carpet. She sighed. "I feel disloyal," she told him. "Disloyal to the prophet Sabah, disloyal to Islam, disloyal to my religion. I no longer have the same intensity of obedience to the religion." She'd been missing some prayers, and had given no thought to what was an awful fact from the perspective of her religion—not only was she intimate with Joy and John, but she didn't try to convert them at all.

"I think that video of Sabah's—his son's—nuclear destruction of the democracies to globalize Sabahism was like a knife plunged deep into my beliefs. I'm not in China now. There is no Imam friend to persuade me otherwise, as there was when I was about to give up the religion after hearing rumors of the destruction. Now there are only my doubts, and they have returned in full force."

Prince Wei, asleep again, lay stretched across her lap on his side. She stroked his side. "The worst of it, from the point of view of my . . . religion, is not my increasing apostasy, but what has happened to my mission." She shuddered involuntarily. "To think I was going to kill John and Joy. Now I could no more do that than I could kill you, my little Prince. Worse, I now love a non-Muslim more than anything in this world. Like Joy, I would die to save his life. And non-Muslim Joy's." She grimaced, feeling chilled. "To kill her would be killing myself."

She tried to climb out of this gloomy line of thought. *The mission! Yes, the mission to save Sabah and Sabahism.*

She put her feet up on the redwood coffee table and turned Prince Wei to lie along her legs. A mosquito flew across her vision and jittered above her head, and she reached up and clapped it between her hands. When she looked at the palm of her hand, the corpse was bloody. *My blood*, she thought idly as she wiped her hand on a piece of tissue paper.

"The mission. Do I still want to save Abul Sabah, once we get the time traveler and stop or turn around the communist revolutions sweeping Europe?" She smiled at the megalomania of that. "Yes, just the three of us. That idea is what John calls a 'ha-ha.' But, if the three of us do succeed, as remote as that is, what about Sabah?"

She sighed again, deeper. *I don't know. I don't know.* Children were sold in his part of the world; they could buy him from his parents and adopt and raise him. But would the angel Gabriel then communicate with him on behalf of God? And even if he did, how could Abul create Sabahism without the power he had in Uighuristan, and eventually, in China?

She rested her hand on Prince Wei's side. "It's moot anyway. That damn time traveler and his revolutions have so changed the future that probably there will be no Sabah, and even if there is, he will not become the Prophet. There is probably no decision for me to make. My mission probably disappeared with these revolutions."

She felt better. The emptiness in her stomach had disappeared.

"That's it. I don't need to make a decision now, not for years. I will just—"

There was a knock on the door to John and Joy's bedroom, and Joy opened the door. Prince Wei jumped down and ran over to jump up and down on her red robe. No one disciplined him for this greeting of his; he always received a caress or so, and even sometimes a stomach scratch.

Joy announced, "We're up. We're going to the kitchen for the left-over mochi I bought at Yamishiro's yesterday. And green tea." She turned and yelled into the room behind her, "You hear that, John? Green tea for a change. Not that English tea. Not coffee. Incredibly savory green tea." She turned back to Jy-ying. "Join us?"

"Sure. How could I say no to green tea?" Jy-ying joined Joy at the door. She was surprised at how light she felt now. She might even forgo her late evening prayers.

Chapter 26

Morning, April 25, 1907

Green Eyes

Each time he used surveillance flies he had to get a judge's warrant and make a report to the judge on the results of their use. What made it worse was that their proton nodes had to be changed. This was recorded at the armory and a copy sent to the judge. And the loss of a surveillance fly was considered so serious that unless there was a very good reason for the loss, there would be an internal investigation.

He had lied. He had created false documentation. *I'm up to my nostrils in shit now, and I'll soon go under, unless . . . unless what?*

He let out a deep breath of frustration. No matter what happened to him, he reminded himself, he had launched the revolutions. The one in Russia was bound to succeed. Poland's was on the cusp of success, if the mutiny at Bydgoszcz could be put down. But Germany was still a question. Rosa needed time she might not be granted, because of the reactionary forces collecting against Spartacus.

Maybe I will never return. Maybe I'll live in Germany and work with Rosa for the revolution there. She could sure use my skills and knowledge. And when she's successful, I'm sure she would set me up well. Maybe as a minister. Yes, that would be a great idea. I know how to hide in time, and they would never find me.

If it were not for those fucking meddlers, John and Joy. They had succeeded in destroying the November, 1917, Russian Revolution; they had succeeded in preventing World Wars I and II. Now they might still succeed in stopping these current revolutions and rolling them back. All my risk-taking, all my planning, would then be for naught. Except, and he smiled at the thought, not even they could bring that evil Stalin to life again.

He was desperate now. If he did not find and eradicate them very soon, he risked plunging mankind back into the exploitive hands of the capitalist plutocracy of moneyed greed. He could not stand to do that. Even as a boy he had questioned why there were rich and poor, why all

could not be equal in employment opportunities and income. Especially income. It was fundamentally wrong, he had thought for over half his life, that his parents could receive a hundred times that made by his best friend's parents, with all the advantages in life he had over his friend as a result. It was wrong, and he would make sure this new universe recognized that. He could not let communism die as it had in John and Joy's universe.

But unless he hurried, unless he succeeded in eradicating them soon, he would be caught, and maybe—just maybe—his dream defeated.

He had driven around the area where he knew their house was located in a stolen Dolson automobile, but he'd seen no house whose rear might resemble the one the fly had holoed. For legal reasons and to avoid confusion among competing buyers and real estate firms, a central record was kept at City Hall of all houses bought and sold in the area. It was a public record, and he had eaten up more precious time going through those records. He could find only three expensive houses in that locality that had been bought within the last seven months, and none had been purchased by a Banks or a Phim. Of course, they could have used false names, so he'd written down the addresses.

Now, in a stolen telephone truck with the telephone repairman shivering under a canvas in the rear, he drove to the Wilgur Pinson house first.

A long, winding driveway led to the mansion's entrance. When he climbed down from the cab, he had to adjust the repairman's blue and white uniform so it didn't look too tight. As it was, he could only button the bottom three buttons on his denim pants and then button the heavy service coat so that the opening in his pants would be hidden. There was a yellow raincoat in the back of the truck, and with a little salute to the man lying trussed up on the floor in his underwear, he put it on. Carrying a bag of tools and wires, he approached the mansion's door.

A maid answered his knock and he said, "I am from the telephone company. We are having line trouble with your phone. I am here to check it out and repair whatever is necessary."

The maid tilted her head and looked carefully at his unbearded face. "You're a foreigner. You speak funny."

"No, I am from New York."

"Oh. Come on in."

"Where is your telephone? You have just one?"

“No, two.” She led him to the kitchen.

“This is one,” she said, nodding to the wall phone. “I’ll take you to the other.” And she led the way to the study, where she pointed to a wall phone near a desk. “I have work to do. You know your way out, don’t cha?”

“Yes, and thank you.”

As soon as the maid disappeared, he checked the photographs on the desk, the painting of a handsome woman over the fireplace, and the desk drawers. Easy decision. *No John and Joy here.*

The next house had a guard and a gate. He gave his explanation, and was surprised when the guard called someone from the guard shack and, watching him, spoke into the phone and listened to the response. He put down the phone and stepped to the truck. “I’m sorry. You will have to wait while your company is called to verify your request.”

This is their house, he thought. Only they would exercise such security.

He waited a few moments, then called the guard over. “I have other jobs to hurry through. I’ll come back later.”

Without waiting for a response, he tried to back up the truck, something he had not done before—he didn’t realize he had to readjust the spark and throttle. He backfired and jolted backwards, almost stalling. He got turned around while the guard stared and, with another loud backfire, got the truck moving forward in first gear. Then he shoved it into second with a clash of gears, and disappeared down Crocker Road.

He drove several blocks, then down a side street, and then another, and parked the truck at the edge of a forest. He walked back toward the mansion, and soon noticed the tall wall that surrounded it. The wall hid the precise location of the mansion. He had to have that.

He found a tree well back from the wall—evidently they had cleared all trees and bushes within twenty feet of the wall, and no branches were allowed even close to overhanging it. No matter. He climbed a paper bark tree until he could see the mansion, then secured his feet against the soft branches while he pulled an instrument that looked like a small telescope from his pocket. He put it to his eye and scanned the outside of the mansion. He looked carefully at the French doors, the rear windows, and the solid-looking side door. He checked the half-glass door off a small balcony on the second floor and an adjacent picture window. That was where he would enter.

He adjusted several recessed small knobs, took the instrument away from his eye, and pressed a button to fix in its memory the three dimensional coordinates shown in a little window in the instrument’s side. He

counted to one hundred, which gave him the minute movements in the earth's rotation and the relative change in the location of the star's x-rays that he needed for the double-check. He could not make a mistake, otherwise he might end up cut in half by a wall or a floor. He again put the device to one eye, and went through the same procedure. Then he subtracted the first coordinates from the second, and with a result of zero he was satisfied.

He returned to the truck, drove it about a mile away, and parked it on a small side street. He went to the rear, took off the telephone man's clothes and his gray metallic belt, and changed into his own clothes, putting the metallic belt on over them. After loosening the rope tying the telephone man's feet and hands, he told him, "You should be able free yourself in an hour or so. As to me, nobody will believe you."

He touched something on his belt and disappeared.

Chapter 27

Evening, April 25, 1907

Joy

Sitting comfortably in bed with her back against a pile of pillows, Joy was trying to read Tolstoy's *War and Peace* in Russian. She had her knees up and the covers pulled over them up to her lap. Beside her were two Russian-English dictionaries.

John was in the library trying to refine Jy-ying's German. He could speak and read it, and was using flash cards to increase Jy-ying's vocabulary. The guys had taken their girlfriends to see the new silent movie *The Golden Beetle*.

They all were on alert, but Joy felt safe in the bedroom—safe enough to reach her magnum in seconds if the house, John and Jy-ying in the library, or the bedroom were attacked. She had her holster purse hanging off the chair close by, and her throwing and tactical knives on the chair seat. And she had drawn the curtains to the balcony as well. *Can't be too cautious*, she thought.

"Gospodi pomily?" She underlined the phrase in Tolstoy, and went to the open dictionary to look it up. "Ah, 'Lord have mercy.' That makes sense," she told herself, and went back to her reading.

An area by the balcony door shimmered. Joy caught it out of the corner of her eye. A man's shape began to form. Tolstoy went flying as Joy tried to do a quick roll to reach her magnum. But the covers restrained her, and by the time she had one foot on the floor and her hand on the magnum, the man was fully materialized. He held a small tube in his hand.

With the magnum in her hand, Joy tried to twist around on one foot to get a fast shot at the man. The tube flashed. A wide beam encompassed her whole body, partially paralyzing her instantly. She tried to fight it, drawing on all her strength and focusing it on the simple act of moving the hand with the gun and sighting on the man. Her whole body shook with the effort, but she could do no better than slow motion. No good.

As she again drew on all her energy and willpower, using every trick she had been taught to force her hand to sight the magnum on the

man, he just walked over to her, stood to the side of her gun, and put the tube back into his belt. With two hands he jerked the magnum out of her hand. He emptied its cylinder and slid the gun and the cartridges under the bed, out of reach.

He waited while she slowly got her other foot under her, but she was so sluggish she almost toppled. He took her arm and held her up until she was stable.

Snail-like, she straightened her body, and let her useless hands lazily drop to her sides. Her eyes could move freely, and she tried to gauge the man and her danger as he went to the door and locked it.

He came back and looked at her carefully. His smile was huge, showing even white teeth, and his green eyes sparkled with anticipation. Her robe hung open and she had nothing on underneath. He stepped up to her, removed the robe from her shoulders, pulled the sleeves from her arms, and tossed the robe away.

Joy gradually straightened her back even more, and slowly tilted her head back, chin out.

He walked around her body, studying it. He caressed her buttocks, and then stood in front of her, looking her up and down. She stared unblinking into his eyes. She would make not the slightest move to cover herself, even if she could.

“Interesting. John never mentioned in his *Remembrance* that your left breast was half the size of your right one.” He put his hand over the right one and massaged it, and pulled on its soft nipple. He took several steps back to get a better full view of her. “God, you still are gorgeous,” he exclaimed. “Your photographs were just imperfect reflections of your true beauty. Even seeing those photos when I was a teenager made me want you. And later, after I studied Marxism and the history of communism, and how you and John destroyed its great promise in my universe as Stalin did in your original universe, I wanted to destroy you.”

He gave her a huge, toothy smile. “Now, I have succeeded. Trotsky will win. His world, his communist revolution will win. I will be there, and there will be nothing,” and he spit the words into her fiery eyes, “*nothing* you can do about it. The great, progressive era of Marxism-Trotskyism is here. The age of bloodsucking capitalism and all its evils is over.”

Joy ignored what the man was saying and doing. She had known from the very beginning of their mission that her life was at great risk, the probabilities against surviving long. So, one evening while John

slept, she'd quietly composed her death haiku. Now that she could see that her end was near, there were only two things to do. First she imagined John with his smile, his sparkling eyes, his unruly hair, and his loving voice, as she repeated to herself her haiku:

*In death I hug you
With my last breath I kiss you
Souls to meet again*

Take good care of him, Jy-ying, she thought. I'm sorry Mom; so sorry.

The final thing, and she had also been trained in this, was called the death trance. Samurai used it when committing *seppuku*—ritual suicide—or after losing a good battle, while they stood weaponless, waiting for the enemy's final cut. With a final image of John filling her mind, she invoked the trance, and killed all her emotions—all but a stream of utter hatred and contempt that she hurled at the man through her eyes. Last, she closed down her mind. She would now know nothing. She would feel nothing. But for her eyes and what was in them, she was dead already.

She stood, head high. She waited, but that had no meaning for her. She was simply there.

He looked her over again, and then in one step he pushed her backwards onto the bed. She fell on her back, her legs hanging off the bed, her body under no control, the scorching fire in her almond eyes filling her face and blazing at him. He reached down with two hands, spread her legs, and then started taking off the work pants under his odd metallic belt.

Jy-ying

John held up the flash card that said in English *Impossible*. Without hesitation, Jy-ying said, “Unmöglich.”

John was a natural linguist and in becoming a professional historian he had learned to read and speak German, French, and Spanish. But Russian he did not know. So, this was his turn with the flash cards, and when the deck was finished, Jy-ying would pick it up and test him.

Amazingly, Joy was further along than either of them, and Jy-ying thought that must be due to her being conversant in Japanese, although

what that might have to do with it she had not the vaguest idea. But they were so much the same in natural skills, and that was the only language difference; it had to be the explanation. Anyway, Joy wanted to read Tolstoy while John and she caught up.

John lifted another flash card: *rate of exchange*.

“Der Wechselkurs,” Jy-ying answered.

He was about to show her another card when Prince Wei, who was stretched out on the floor sleeping, raised his head, looked toward the library door, and growled. He suddenly leaped up, ran through the open library door, and stood in the ballroom growling. His ears were flat against his head, his hair bristling, his tail down.

Jy-ying had her Taiyang .38 out in a second, and rushed after him, stopping at the edge of the door. John was a second behind her with his H&K in both hands; he stopped on the other side of the entrance.

Jy-ying crouched, then swung into the opening, gun pointed at the top of the stairs.

Nothing.

John stepped out and while he covered the upstairs, she leaned over, put her hand around Prince Wei’s muzzle, and squeezed it to quiet him. He knew what that meant—she had made sure by training him. No matter what else he learned, that had priority.

She kicked off her shoes, and then covered the upstairs with her gun while John sat on the floor and quietly removed his boots. His face was pale, his brow knitted with concern, Jy-ying knew, for Joy.

When he was ready, she signaled for him to follow her, and rushed up the carpeted stairs to the master bedroom at the left of the stairs. John and Prince Wei were right behind her. She flattened herself against the wall to the right of the bedroom’s door, while John did the same on the left. Prince Wei stood in front of the door, bristling, his whole body rigid and leaning toward the door, ready to attack.

As soon as John was in position, she reached out and slowly turned the doorknob, while pushing gently inward. Had there been the slightest click and movement in the door, she would have flung it open and thrown her body inside, scanning the room with her gun. But it was locked.

“Locked,” she lipped to John. “Watch the door.”

She edged along the wall to her own bedroom door. She slowly checked if it was locked. The knob turned. Gun at the ready, she quietly opened the door a crack, then wide enough to check the room with her gun. Empty.

She rushed inside, and over to the door to the master bedroom. She slowly tried the door. It was unlocked. She looked down at Prince Wei. He was at her feet, staring at the door, his whole body trembling to attack. She picked him up and put him behind her feet so she wouldn't trip over him.

She took a deep breath, cleared her mind, and focused all her energy on what she must do. In no more than a second or two, she became a pure weapon with five human senses, her gun an auxiliary extension of her hands.

Green Eyes

He stood up panting and looked back down at her body. He had tried to avoid her eyes, her whole face. She had looked like she wanted to tear him apart with her fingernails and chew on the bloody pieces. He had never been looked at like that and it had gotten to him.

The first time he entered her, he'd looked at her eyes, and he lost his erection immediately. He had covered her face with her robe and tried again, but he lost his erection before he could come. He got it back by playing with her body, then he tried not to think of her eyes when he entered her a third time, but he could not get out of his mind the image of their fiery repulsion and loathing. He had wanted to try her mouth, and that gave him an erection when he thought of it, but with that look she gave him he was not so stupid, even as partially paralyzed as she was.

He realized he was running out of time. He had to get this over with, and there was still John to find, but that would be easy. So would eliminating him, as well.

He slid the robe off her face without looking at her eyes.

He unclasped his metallic belt so he could pull on his baggy pants, and he put the belt back on.

He did what he had planned.

And, with a last, lingering look at her body, he headed for the hallway door.

The side door flashed open and hit its stop with a bang. The sound blasted his reaction time into high gear; in a blur he snatched the tube out of his belt, jerked his head toward the sound, and was about to spit out the signal for his protective shield to activate around his body when he saw Joy—Joy?—leaping into the room with a gun pointed at him.

Something white and low to the floor hurtled toward him at a velocity too slow for the shield to stop, and he hesitated for another split second. As he started to point his tube at it, his insides exploded, his hands splayed open, the tube fell, and he could only gasp as the hazy face of Joy and her smoking gun receded into darkness.

The scar. I forgot about the scar. The one on the bed does not . . . have. . . .

He collapsed to his knees, and slowly toppled over onto his back.

Prince Wei was at his throat, ripping out flesh. But the man was already dead.

John

John heard the shots and grabbed the doorknob, twisting frantically. Still locked. He skipped a step back and threw his shoulder at the door, but it wouldn't give. He kicked it—useless. He bolted down the hall and almost fell as he skidded into Jy-ying's room. He dashed through the door into the master bedroom.

Someone was on the floor, blood pooling around him. Prince Wei stood over him, looking at John with a bloody muzzle.

He saw Jy-ying over Joy's naked body. She was doing something to her eyes, and then she felt for a pulse. John flew onto the bed and crawled toward Joy. He reached her head, and screamed, "JOY. JOOOY!" He kissed her lips, her eyes, her cheeks, and whimpered, "Please God, no."

Jy-ying put her ear to Joy's chest, listening for a heartbeat. In a minute, she raised her eyes to John and shook her head.

John screamed, "No, no," and broke down in body-wrenching sobs. Jy-ying pulled the covers up over Joy's body except for her head, which John now held in his lap. He was shaking uncontrollably.

Prince Wei jumped on the bed, sniffed at Joy, and started an undulating howl.

After doing what she had to do, Jy-ying let her own control go. She pulled Joy's dead hand to her cheek, kissed it, and slowly slid down the edge of the bed holding it to her lips. She moaned at her loss, at the death of this great warrior in her prime—her death—and John's heartbreak. Finally, the flood of tears came.

Chapter 28

November 14, 1907

John

They were on their way to Bremen on the *Kaiser Wilhelm II*. John felt as though he was being rocked to sleep in a cradle as the ship rolled gently in the calm, cold Atlantic. He was stretched out on a deck chair under two ship's blankets. Jy-ying lay beside him on her own chair, sound asleep under another ship's blanket, her head moving back and forth against the deck chair with the roll of the ship. Prince Wei was curled up on her lap under a towel, also asleep.

His mind drifted as he stared out at the ocean swells. They were as ready as they would ever be for this. Jy-ying now spoke passable German and Russian, and John spoke Russian well. They had finally got their company going and named it after Joy—the Joy Import & Export Company.

The revolution in Poland had been overthrown by a military coup. First Secretary Leo Jogiches of Soviet Poland and all the top officials he appointed had been executed, and all others in the Warsaw Soviet had been arrested. John and Jy-ying had nothing to do with it.

In Germany the nonradical social democrats, with the help of their traditional unions, had maneuvered the Kaiser's government into attacking the Spartacus League. Rosa Luxemburg had been assassinated with an axe in her apartment by Freikorps killers. John and Jy-ying also were long distance bystanders. As John said, politics took its natural course.

Trotsky still controlled the Red Army and St. Petersburg and Moscow, but more peasant rebellions were occurring, and the success of the White Armies, particularly those in Siberia, was growing. Soon there would be major battles on the road to St. Petersburg.

John had made contacts through expatriate Russian democrats in Germany and France, and was about to offer half his and Jy-ying's great wealth to them. Their aim was to assure, when the final victory over Trotsky occurred, that it was the democrats and not old regime royalists who took power.

Once they turned over this massive political funding, they would travel to St. Petersburg under forged identities as important American and Chinese communist activists wishing to establish secret soviets in their countries. They had been guaranteed an appointment with Trotsky by the Russian embassy in Washington. Trotsky, John was told, was very interested in furthering revolution in both countries, and would provide all the secret help he could. He would die from poison within one week of their appointment, giving them plenty of time to escape.

He sighed. Joy would have been happy at the progress they'd made.

Joy. He could almost think of her now without the anguish, the grief. Jy-ying had helped; after the first days, she had dampened her own pain at losing herself to help him through his heartrending mourning. He would not have survived without her, and in fact had come close to shooting himself that horrible evening and again the next day.

He looked over at Jy-ying again. *I love her for herself, so I've found out. Not because she seems so much like Joy. She is that, but she also is different. She could never replace the real Joy, nor should she. My love for Joy will never die, nor will my love for Jy-ying.*

He had a Banks crypt built at Cypress Lawn Memorial Park, and he'd bought a beautiful ceramic urn painted with a bouquet of flowers, vines, and birds, all in a balanced harmony of color and shapes. He imported it from China, knowing Joy would love it. It was also big enough for his and Jy-ying's ashes, when their ends came. Jy-ying had cried when she first saw it.

He had hung Joy's golden locket around the urn, and put a photograph of her on the wall behind it.

He pushed the heartbreak away. He could do that now.

He also was able to touch on that night, and recall what Jy-ying had told him. He had been paralyzed with grief, but Jy-ying had collected herself and met the butler as he was coming up the stairs in his robe. He'd been carrying a lantern, to check out the shots he'd heard, he told Jy-ying.

She thanked the butler for his worry, and told him that John had been shooting at rats he saw on the balcony. Coincidentally, Joy had just then received a phone call from Western Union. An emergency telegram had arrived from her father. Her mother had died that day, and she would be leaving the next morning for New York to take care of her frail father, and their business. John was broken

up over her leaving, she said. When the butler looked totally confused, she admitted that she and Joy were not sisters and she would explain in a day or two.

When the butler returned to his room, she had waited, giving in to her tears, for the three guys to come home. Dolphy was staying at a friend's apartment for the evening, but she explained to Hands and Sal what had happened. Shocked and horrified, they'd called Dolphy, who drove back to Fort Hope immediately. They all commiserated with John, shed their own tears, and then helped Jy-ying bury the strange man that night.

Hands had searched him, and put in a pile all the strange equipment and devices he had secreted on him in one place or another, especially in his odd metallic belt. They found his police badge in one of its compartments. His name was Michael Livingston. He was born in Toledo, Ohio, in 2303, and he was a time police officer of the United Democracies. That's all they could get out of the strange, three dimensional badge. They buried it, his belt, and all his devices and clothes with him. Two days later, when Jy-ying checked, the grave was open and empty.

The day after Joy's murder, Jy-ying pretended she was Joy, and dressed in black clothes the guys had hurriedly bought downtown. She wore a black mourning hat with a black veil pulled down over her face. To be sure she was not recognized, she had heavily powdered her scar.

When she said a quick good-bye to the staff, the heavy sadness in her voice was no act. When her voice dropped to a stuttering whimper, Hands repeated on her behalf what she had told the butler.

Hands, who took over the male role in the household until John recovered, explained to all that John's devastated and broken look was the result of a drinking binge he'd embarked on when he found out about Joy leaving. He was afraid it was for good, Hands explained.

Jy-ying's travel trunk that the three guys had carried out to the waiting carriage had Joy's body in it, wrapped in canvas.

Jy-ying paid thousands to have Joy's body cremated. She played the role of an immigrant Chinese princess, and Joy was her royal sister who'd died mysteriously in her sleep. She haughtily explained that she was not going to have some white American coroner mess around with her sister's body, and so she lacked a death certificate.

Jy-ying knew the servants were mystified about Jy-ying staying while her sister Joy returned to the east to be by their father's side at

their mother's funeral. She'd convened the staff and confessed to them her lie about being Joy's sister. She explained that was the simplest way of handling their remarkable likeness. She told them she worked for John's business because of her knowledge of China and its languages, and also acted as a stand-in for Joy when needed. She left that unexplained.

John let his head fall back against the deck chair and closed his eyes.

Each day after that day, and "that day" it would always be, cost Jy-ying. She ate little, her eyes seemed to sink into her face, and she stopped both jogging and her martial arts practice. He knew she stopped praying also. Each evening they cried together, he until there were no more tears to shed. But she always had the caressing hand, the soft, sympathetic tone, the commiserating hug for him.

She slowly came out of it in a month. He wasn't able to put the worst of it behind him until before this trip abroad.

He opened his eyes briefly to look over at her again. Yes, he was sure, she'd gotten him through it.

The rocking was getting to him; he was falling asleep. It was so warm under the blanket, the rocking so gentle. So A breeze caressed his cheek.



"Hello, dearest."

"Joy! I don't believe it. Is that really you, baby?"

"Yes, dearest, I came to visit you. That was me touching your cheek."

"I'm dreaming this, aren't I?"

"Maybe, but does it matter?"

"No. I don't see you; where are you?"

"Here I am," and she appeared in her Levis and gray sweatshirt, with her red headband, and her hair in one long pigtail.

"Strange that you should appear like that. I would have preferred you dressed in that tight blouse, golden choker, and taupe skirt you wore when you first came to my faculty office. That's when you vamped me."

"That wasn't really me, sweetheart. This is me."

"Oh, so you finally admit you were dressed to vamp me."

"Yes, dearest, and I couldn't be happier as a result."

"I miss you, baby. I want our souls to be together again, as they were when you were . . . here."

“They will be. That will come. And then there will no longer be two of me, but only one.”

“Jy-ying saved my life, you know.”

“I know. She loves you, John, as I do.”

“I love her too. But you and I are special. Our first days together, your training of me, our first lovemaking, our fights, our time travel together, finding the message—all that is you and me. It’s special, and that she cannot share.”

“I know.”

“Is there a way I can call on you when I need you, baby? A secret code of some kind?”

“No, that’s not needed. I am always here, in your heart as you are in mine. We can never be separated.”

“But, can I call on you?”

“You do when you think of me, my dearest.” Joy smiled and tilted her head. “I have one favor to ask of you, my darling.”

“Anything.”

“Please treat Jy-ying as you treated me. You’re too serious with her. No banter. None of your awful humor. None of your boring lectures. No precious endearments. It’s as though the real you died with me, and all that remains is a stuffy companion. You haven’t made love to her since my body’s death, have you.”

“No.”

“Dearest, she is me. Treat her so.”

“I cannot.”

“Why?”

“My heart did die with you.”

“Please, John, I live through her. Think of that. I live through her. Now be yourself, John, or I’ll have to rip off your arm and beat you over the head with the bloody stump.”

“You and what army?” John hesitated, then smiled and said, “I can’t get into the spirit.”

“That’s the spirit. Take care, my love.”



John woke up, stretched, looked over at Jy-ying. She was awake and looking at him, her eyes reflecting the sunlight off the ocean. And something else.

He reached out and took her hand, and for some reason he was the happiest he had been since that day. He felt full of love for this woman, and felt like showing it.

“I love you,” he told her. “Let’s go to our cabin. I want to show you how much.”

Jy-ying looked at him askance. “Yes, my man, that is exactly what I had in mind.”

“Of course you would, sweetheart.” He leered at her. “What red-blooded, beautiful woman wouldn’t?”

Jy-ying was startled. She stared at him wide-eyed for a moment, and then the tears started flowing from her eyes. She wiped at them with her hands, and said with a happy grin, “Can it, John.”

Epilogue

2004

Roosevelt College, San Francisco

"Introduction to Modern World History"

Completing her class segment on the Russian Revolution of 1905–1907, Professor Shirley Becker pointed out that with the death of Trotsky, the White Armies were able to defeat a dispirited Red Army in the famous battle of Tocho. St. Petersburg then lay open to the victorious White Army led by General Rayevsky and a military dictatorship followed. One year later, that was overthrown from below by a democratic rebellion throughout Russia.

A male student put up his hand, and when the teacher called on him, he said, "I read that a woman did him in."

"A woman?" she asked, frowning.

"Yes, I read that here." He waved at a cheap copy of *Outline of Modern Russian History* on his desk. "It says that she was his Korean mistress, Jan Ping. Trotsky wrote her love letters. She was a Korean spy and assassinated him."

The teacher was silent for maybe ten seconds. She had not looked at the outline, and distrusted it. It was not on her bibliography for the class. She finally responded, "No, she didn't do it. Her secret British lover Ron Hanks did. Then they both disappeared, and historians can find no trace of them since. It is rumored that they were caught in Siberia while fleeing to Korea, and executed."

One of the brightest students in the class put up his hand. She nodded to him and he held up a thin book. "My uncle died and in his possessions my father found this old book. I've looked at it and wonder if you've read it. It's got crazy stuff in it. The title is *Communist Victory and Defeat 1936–1991*."

"Oh yes. That book became famous as one of the first alternative future history novels, and famous for the absurdity of Hitler's imagination in writing it. It has no relationship to history, but it is interesting for the kind of crazy universes that people can imagine, if they really let their minds go. And, I should add, when they forget what we have learned from history as well. Read it just for fun.

“Anyway, class, read Chapter Fourteen in your anthology about the globalization of democracy and peace in the early twentieth century. It’s a classic by John Banks, an independent millionaire-scholar of the 1930s. Class dismissed.”

Afterword

The attentive reader of more than one of these novels in this series may have noticed a few inconsistencies. I know they are there, but what am I to do? We know so little of this vast universe of which our minute planet and its sun are but one of billions of stars in our galaxy, itself one of billions of galaxies in our universe. We cannot even pride ourselves in this universe of matching the size of a bacterium on a slide in our everyday world. Nor can we assume that our knowledge of the universe is any greater than our size in it.

Thus, an infinitude of things must go on in this universe that are not only incredibly beyond our understanding, but of which we have no knowledge whatsoever. And here we are, with less than bacterium-sized knowledge, sending people back in time, creating new universes, and monkeying with the nature of the universe. That things happen to our intrepid time travelers that look like inconsistencies from one novel to another are but inexplicable workings of the universe. I could try to impose our mini-knowledge on all this and override these inconsistencies; or I could say that, in sending people through time, some anomalies occur in their atomic restructuring in the past; or I could say there is a burp in the universe. But we really don't know. All we can do is live with what the characters believe is really them when their transition to a new time is complete.

Even that which we will all experience, death, is an unknown. True, we can say our physical body dies, but what of our soul, our spirit, that which is the conscious "me"? Does it survive in some way? Could dead Joy brush her lover's cheek as a breeze, and ask a favor of him? It would be arrogant and far beyond our itty-bitty knowledge in this boundless universe to say, "It cannot be." Let's be honest. We don't know.

Then again, Joy did appear, didn't she?



On more worldly affairs, in Chapter 1 and elsewhere I mention that Stalin was an Okhrana agent provocateur who reported to the Okhrana on revolutionary activities, but he also was a criminal who stole money and participated in murder. This is almost heretical in some quarters,

and in any case, virtually unknown among many historians. The best source on this is Roman Blackman, *The Secret File of Joseph Stalin: A Hidden Life* (London: Franck Cass, 2001).

Much of what has been described about the Bloody Sunday massacre on January 22 (new calendar) actually happened. Bloody Sunday was not as bloody as portrayed here for the purposes of the fictional project of Green Eyes. But in reality, czarist troops at various intersections and bridges and at the square in front of the Winter Palace did open fire on peaceful demonstrators, who carried no weapons and were intent only on an appeal to “their father,” Czar Nicholas, for reforms, not revolution. And cavalry and Cossacks with whips and sabers swinging were unleashed on them (there was no use of Maxim machine guns). The death toll has never been established, but according to various reports, it may have been between 150 and 200 killed, with between 800 and 1,000 casualties overall.

The assassinations, strikes, and mutinies described before and after Bloody Sunday actually occurred (except for Witte’s assassination; he was appointed Russian premier in October of 1905 and resigned in disgust in April, 1906, at the czar’s refusal to implement more liberal policies; he died in 1915). Russia was in a revolutionary state, and what saved the monarchy at that time were the reforms initiated by Witte in the face of the czar’s increasing opposition. They damped the revolutionary spirit of the workers and liberals, and the harsh crackdown on radical revolutionaries by Witte and Interior Minister Stolypin, and especially by Stolypin when he was appointed premier in July, 1906.

The military largely remained loyal to the czar, and in December of 1905 Trotsky and the whole St. Petersburg Soviet were arrested. Trotsky was tried in the autumn of 1906, and sentenced to life deportation to Siberia.

Nonetheless, in this 1905 revolution the Bolsheviks learned much. When the opportunity came in 1917 with nationwide revolutionary unrest over the lack of deep reforms, the heavy losses in World War I, the resulting collapse of the Romanov monarchy, and its succession by a weak social democratic government, the Bolsheviks struck. And succeeded.

On Gapon and Bloody Sunday, there are a number of studies available, many by Marxists and hardly objective. Among the best, and one I recommend is Walter Sablinsky, *The Road to Bloody Sunday: Father*

Gapon and the St. Petersburg Massacre of 1905 (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1976). If you prefer an excellent fictionalized account, there is Emily Hanlon's *Petersburg* (New York: Ivy Books, 1988).

The Red Terror, Civil War, Bread War, and famine following the fictional successful 1905 Bolshevik Revolution described in Chapter 11 actually occurred after the 1917 Revolution. My account in John's words follows very closely the actual history of this bloody period.

Some writers have focused on Stalin's control of the Soviet Union from 1928 to his death in 1953 as the bloodiest period of communist rule over the Soviet Union. True, Stalin was a megamurdering tyrant under whom perhaps 43 million people were murdered (the figure often given is 20 million, but this ignores those murdered by Stalin during World War II and up to 1953). But Lenin should not be ignored as he is. Yes, John is correct. Incredible as the number is, during Lenin's absolute dictatorship from 1917 to 1922, the years of the Red Terror, Civil War, and famine, overall about 9.4 million Russians died, were killed in battle, or were murdered—more than died in the preceding World War I. If Lenin had stayed in power as long as had Stalin, he might well have killed as many if not more people.

Few would deny any longer that wherever it's been in power, communism—Marxism-Leninism and its variants—has meant in practice bloody terrorism, deadly purges, lethal gulags and forced labor, fatal deportations, man-made famines, extrajudicial executions and show trials, and genocide. It is also widely known that as a result, millions of innocent people have been murdered in cold blood. Yet, amazingly, there has been virtually no concentrated statistical work on what this total might be.

In my own research on this (see my *Statistics of Democide* at www.hawaii.edu/powerkills/NOTE5.HTM, and my book *Death By Government* [New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 1994]), I have tried to get some quantitative understanding of the cost of communism, especially as compared to those murdered by other types of regimes. Of course, any figures can only be rough approximations. Even were we to have total access to all communist archives, we still would not be able to calculate precisely how many the communists murdered. Consider that even in spite of the archival statistics and detailed reports of survivors, the best experts still disagree by over 40 percent on the total number of Jews killed by the Nazis. We cannot expect anything near

this accuracy for the victims of communism. We can, however, get a probable order of magnitude and a relative approximation of these deaths within a most likely range.

With this understood, the Soviet Union appears the greatest megamurderer of all, apparently killing nearly 61,000,000 people. Stalin himself is responsible for almost 43,000,000 of these, as mentioned. Most of the deaths, perhaps around 39,000,000 of them, are due to lethal forced labor in gulags, and during transit to them. Communist China up to 1987, but mainly from 1949 through the cultural revolution, which alone may have seen over 1,000,000 murdered, is the second worst megamurderer with 39,000,000 killed. Then there are the lesser megamurderers, such as North Korea (1,663,000) and Tito's Yugoslavia (1,072,000).

Obviously the population that is available to kill will make a big difference in the total democide, and thus the annual percentage rate of democide is revealing. By far, the most deadly of all communist countries has been Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge. Pol Pot and his crew likely killed some 2,000,000 Cambodians out of a population of around 7,000,000 from April, 1975, through December, 1978. This is an annual murder rate of over 8 percent of the population; the odds of an average Cambodian surviving Pol Pot's rule were slightly over 2 to 1.

In sum, the communists probably have murdered something like 110,000,000, or nearly two-thirds of the nearly 170,000,000 killed by all governments, quasi-governments, and guerrillas from 1900 to 1987. Of course, the world total itself is shocking. It is several times the 38,000,000 battle-dead killed in all of the last century's international and domestic wars. Yet the probable number of murders by the Soviet Union alone—one communist country—far surpasses this cost of war. And the murders of communist China almost equal it.

How were all these people killed by communists? Many of the deaths were due to terrorism like the Red Terror—that is, the murder of specific individuals by assassination, extrajudicial executions, torture, beatings, and such. Many were massacred, killed indiscriminately en masse by soldiers machine-gunning demonstrators, or entering a village and killing all of its inhabitants. Much genocide, or the killing of people because of their ethnicity, race, religion, or language, was carried out. Many more were murdered in deportations—forced mass transportation to distant regions, and the resulting deaths from starvation or

exposure. And there was the democidal famine, which was purposely caused or aggravated by a communist government or which was knowingly ignored, and aid to its victims withheld.

Then there was the particularly deadly communist forced labor. It not only accounts for most deaths under communism, but is close to the world total, which also includes colonial forced labor deaths (as in the German, Portuguese, and Spanish colonies). Communists also committed genocide, to be sure, but only nearly half of the world total. Communists even used a quota system. Top officials would order local officials to kill a certain number of “enemies of the people,” “rightists,” or “tyrants.”

How can we understand all this killing by communists? It is the marriage of an absolutist ideology with absolute power. Communists believed that they knew the truth, absolutely. They believed that they knew through Marxism what would bring about the greatest human welfare and happiness. And they believed that power, the dictatorship of the proletariat, must be used to tear down the old feudal or capitalist order and rebuild society and culture to realize this utopia. Nothing must stand in the way of its achievement. Government—the Communist Party—was thus above any law. All institutions, cultural norms, traditions, and sentiments were expendable. And the people were the lumber and bricks to be used in building the new world.

Constructing this utopia was seen as a war on poverty, exploitation, imperialism, and inequality. And for the greater good, as in a real war, people are killed. And thus this war for the communist utopia had its necessary enemy casualties—the clergy, the rich, the bourgeoisie, capitalists, wreckers, counterrevolutionaries, rightists, tyrants, landlords, and noncombatants that unfortunately got caught in the battle. In a war millions may die, but the cause may be well justified, as in the defeat of Hitler and an utterly racist Nazism. And to many communists, the cause of a communist utopia was such as to justify all the deaths, just as it was for the fictional Green Eyes.

The irony of this is that communism in practice, even after decades of total control, did not improve the lot of the average person; it usually made living conditions worse than those before the revolution. It is not by chance that the greatest famines have occurred within the Soviet Union (about 5,000,000 dead during 1921–23 and 7,000,000 from 1932–3) and communist China (about 27,000,000 dead from 1959–61). In total, almost 55,000,000 people died in various communist famines and associated diseases, a little over 10,000,000 of them from democidal

famine. This is as though the total population of Turkey, Iran, or Thailand had been completely wiped out. And that something like 35,000,000 people fled communist countries as refugees is comparable to the countries of Argentina or Columbia being totally emptied of all their people. This was an unparalleled vote against the utopian pretensions of Marxism-Leninism.

But communists could not be wrong. After all, their knowledge was scientific, based on historical materialism, an understanding of the dialectical process in nature and human society, and a materialist (and thus realistic) view of nature. Marx had shown empirically where society had been and why, and he and his interpreters proved that it was destined for a communist end. No one could prevent this, and standing in the way would only delay it at the cost of more human misery. Those who disagreed with this world view and even with some of the proper interpretations of Marx and Lenin were, without a scintilla of doubt, wrong. After all, did not Marx or Lenin or Stalin or Mao say that In other words, communism was like a fanatical religion. It had its revealed text and chief interpreters. It had its priests and their ritualistic prose with all the answers. It had a heaven, and the proper behavior to reach it. It had its appeal to faith. And it had its crusade against nonbelievers.

What made this secular religion so utterly lethal was its seizure of all the state's instruments of force and coercion and their immediate use to destroy or control all independent sources of power, such as the church, the professions, private businesses, schools, and, of course, the family.

But communism does not stand alone in such mass murder. We do have the example of Nazi Germany, which may have itself murdered some 20,000,000 Jews, Poles, Ukrainians, Russians, Yugoslavs, Frenchmen, and other nationalities. Then there is the fascist Nationalist government of China under Chiang Kai-shek, which murdered nearly 10,000,000 Chinese from 1928 to 1949, and the fascist Japanese militarists who murdered almost 6,000,000 Chinese, Indonesians, Indochinese, Koreans, Filipinos, and others during World War II.

And then we have the 1,000,000 or more Bengalis and Hindus killed in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) in 1971 by the Pakistan military. Nor should we forget the mass expulsion of ethnic Germans and German citizens from Eastern Europe at the end of World War II, particularly by the Polish government as it seized the German Eastern Territories, killing perhaps over 1,000,000 of them. Nor should we ig-

nore the estimated 2,000,000 deaths in Mexico from 1900 to 1920, many of those poor Indians and peasants killed by forced labor on barbaric haciendas. One could go on and on to detail various kinds of noncommunist democide, as I have done in part in previous novels of this series.

But what connects them all is this. As a government's power is more unrestrained, as its power reaches into all the corners of culture and society, and as it becomes less democratic, then the more likely it is to kill its own citizens. There is more than a correlation here. As totalitarian power increases, democide multiplies until it curves sharply upward when totalitarianism is near absolute. As a governing elite has the power to do whatever it wants, whether to satisfy its most personal desires, to pursue what it believes is right and true, it may do so whatever the cost in lives. In this case power is the necessary condition for mass murder. Once an elite has it, other causes and conditions can operate to bring about the immediate genocide, terrorism, massacres, or whatever killing an elite feels is warranted.

Finally, at the extreme of totalitarian power we have the greatest extreme of democide. Communist governments have almost without exception wielded the most absolute power and their greatest killing (such as during Stalin's reign or the height of Mao's power) has taken place when they have been in their own history most totalitarian. As most communist governments underwent increasing liberalization and a loosening of centralized power in the 1960s through the 1980s, the pace of killing dropped off sharply.

Communism has been the greatest social engineering experiment humanity has seen. It failed utterly and in doing so it killed over 100,000,000 men, women, and children, not to mention the nearly 30,000,000 subjects who died in its often aggressive wars and the rebellions it provoked. But there is a larger lesson to be learned from this horrendous sacrifice to one ideology. That is that no one can be trusted with power. The more power the center has to impose the beliefs of an ideological or religious elite or impose the whims of a dictator, the more likely human lives are to be sacrificed. This is but one reason, but perhaps the most important one, for fostering liberal democracy.

The Society knew that, as John Banks did. And that is why they sent John and Joy back to 1906 to . . . well, you know the story. But, yet, not all of it.