

1937. Jewish refugees flood Shanghai. One of them, a Jewish scientist carrying stolen Nazi secrets, is pursued by the local Gestapo. He, his young daughter, and a brave American woman must escape violence and intrigue and get to America.

Lost in Shanghai

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# **Lost in Shanghai**

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## **Shanghai, the International Settlement, August 5, 1937**

The Mirneau was in a shabby section of the Settlement, an unlikely place for such a discreet and expensive restaurant, far from the bright lights of Nanking Road. It was found with difficulty through winding little streets, and this made the Mirneau a favorite of illicit lovers, deal-makers, and publicity-shy politicians.

Jake Greenberg had been there for half an hour, waiting for his friend, slowly drinking his way through a tall Campari and soda, and watching the lights come on in the lowering darkness outside. When telephone rang at the maitre d's station and the little man glanced his way, he knew the evening wouldn't work out well. How bad it would go, was something he would think about later.

With a little bow and a click of his heels, the maitre d' leaned toward Jake and whispered, "Deputy Police Commissioner Reilly telephoned, sir. He can not join you tonight. He sends his regrets."

"I'm not surprised, Julian. Thank you."

"I hope it is not *trouble*, sir."

"Just routine police business, I'm sure,"

"Of course, sir."

He didn't believe any part of that and he was pretty sure Julian didn't either. War was in the air. His friend had been keeping strange hours these days, going over planning with the Municipal Council and Shanghai's various military organizations.

The Chinese and the Japanese had been fighting in north China for a month now, and rumors of murder, rape, and looting were flying through the ex-pat community like whirlwinds. Peking had fallen to the Japanese and most foreigners believed Shanghai was their next target. Some Westerners hadn't waited. They packed up and took the first available ship, leaving their servants to box up furniture and household goods. Many others lived semi-packed, ready to run at the first sign of the war spreading south.

Stay or go? It was a question he and his wife had been wrestling with for weeks. Claire, seven months pregnant with their first child, was for staying. This was their home, not--like many foreigners-- just a place to make money. Usually, he made snap judgments and she was the deliberate one. This time, he wasn't sure what to do. Fatherhood was already pulling at him.

"Was something unsatisfactory, sir?" the waiter asked in painfully labored English. Jake was so focused on his thoughts that he was startled when the waiter materialized at his side. The waiter was a tall, lean, balding man with deep set dark eyes and a pronounced five o'clock shadow. "The maitre d'..."

"It was nothing," Jake said. "My friend couldn't join me. I'll take the check now." Jake finished his drink, and glanced out the front window. Ward Road was now brightly lit and busy despite the rain. Coolies, balancing twin loads on their shoulder poles, shuffled by, and rickshaws, pedicabs, and autos crept through the narrow street. Every now and then a Westerner would stop at the window and look longingly inside before moving on. That had become normal now. So many penniless Jewish refugees had come to Shanghai from Europe in the last year, charities had been overwhelmed.

\* \* \*

Across the street from the Mirneau, a Westerner stood with his back against a brick building at the mouth of Wickham Lane. His hands were stuffed into the pockets of a black raincoat, his collar was up against the drifting rain, and his black fedora was pulled low over his forehead.

The man suddenly decided he had to make sure Wickham Lane was clear. He turned and walked a few steps to his left. The lane, one of many that branched off Ward Road, was typical of overcrowded Hongkew. It was filthy and smelly, lined with gray two-story row houses so old they seemed to lean against each other for support. Except for two almost naked little Chinese children splashing in puddles amid the piles of garbage, there was no one about.

Satisfied that his get-away route was still open, he turned back to Ward Road and studied the elegant restaurant with disdain for a moment or two. Then he shifted his attention to the flow of traffic. The evening rush had peaked and it was starting to thin out.

No one took notice of him. He knew they wouldn't. Ward Road had become the center of Jewish refugee life in Shanghai, and many men without family wandered the streets just to be out of their tiny, fetid rooms.

The man shifted his weight from one foot to the other. He pulled his left hand out of his pocket and checked his watch. It said 8:20.

"It's time," he mumbled to himself. His bowels felt loose. His right hand, clutching the automatic in his pocket, was slick with sweat, but the hard, rough surface of the grip felt strangely reassuring. His thumb rested on the safety lever, ready to release it.

Release the safety, aim using the sights, squeeze the trigger gently, the man recited to himself over and over, like it was his morning prayer.

\* \* \*

"Please come again to the Mirneau, Mr. Greenberg," the maitre d' said as Jake was passing his station on the way to the front door. Jake said he would and stepped outside. Standing under the restaurant's portico, he paused for a moment to adjust his hat and turn up his collar against the rain.

He was about to move off when a group of three men came out of a narrow service alley along side the restaurant. Two younger men were talking together in German, like old friends. The third man, in his forties and taller than the others, lagged behind. There was no doubt they were refugees, each of them was wearing a heavy European suit, far too warm for Shanghai.

Jake stepped aside to let them pass. As he did, a gunshot boomed out and the restaurant window behind him shattered. Without thinking, Jake dove behind a parked car. Big caliber gun he said to himself. He pulled his own pistol out of his shoulder holster. "Down!" he shouted.

The three men stood rooted in place, looking around in shock.

"Get down!" Jake shouted again. There were screams from inside the Mirneau.

Three more shots boomed out in quick succession. One of the young men clutched his chest and fell backward onto some shards of glass that had fallen on the sidewalk. His friend grabbed his side and flopped down on the sidewalk, sitting with a puzzled look on his face, watching the blood ooze through his fingers. Jake reached out, grabbed the tall,

fortyish man by his coat sleeve, and hauled him down as a round slammed into the car. Another shot exploded the windshield. This time Jake saw the flash and fired back. As he did, the man he had pulled down scrambled to his feet and ran up the street.

"Get down, you fool!" Jake yelled. But the man never slowed. Turning back to where he had seen the flash, Jake peered over the hood of the car. Nothing moved. The street was totally still.

Six shots, Jake said to himself. Is he reloading or does he have one or two more in an automatic? Seconds ticked by. The spot where he had seen the flash was empty. Nothing moved. Then suddenly, men and women, who had thrown themselves into doorways and behind anything offering protection, began sticking their heads out, looking around. Another moment passed, and then two or three people began running away. Others followed. Restaurant patrons poured out into the street--some hurried away, others gathered about the two men on the ground.

Jake stood up. Only then did he begin to breathe deeply, pleased with himself that he wasn't crumbling inside. His hands shook a bit, but that was all right with him. That was normal. It had taken a long time to get to this point. Almost twenty years ago Sergeant Greenberg of the 48th Highlanders, Canadian Division, Fifth British Army, was carried off the line at LaFlaque with a leg ripped open by shrapnel. It had taken more than half that time to stop getting the shakes and sweats at sudden noises, and even longer for the nightmares to stop.

\* \* \*

Jake pushed through the crowd. Jake's waiter with the five o'clock shadow, his apron smeared with blood, was

kneeling next to a man lying on his back on the pavement. The waiter was pressing a towel against the entry site in the man's side. There was a lot of blood on the sidewalk. The waiter glanced up as Jake knelt on the other side of the man. He noted the .45 in Jake's hand before returning to the wounded man.

Without looking up, the waiter said, "I was a doctor in Austria. The other one is dead. Massive chest trauma. Probably gone before he hit the ground." He looked up. "Get me some more clean towels," he shouted at the crowd. "Now. And call for an ambulance."

## Two

Nathan Borenstein knew the bullets were meant for him. He ran down Ward Road and turned south into Chusan Road, his long gangly legs flailing, his thin shoes pounding the sidewalk, his mouth open, gasping for air. At Chusan and Wayside Roads, in an area called "Little Vienna," he turned into a dark narrow lane littered with garbage spilling out of bins, and smelling of everything evil—rotting garbage, urine, feces, possibly dead dogs and cats. He breathed through his mouth, but that didn't help. The smell was overwhelming. Something dark and small scurried across his path, but he didn't slow down.

At the fourth house in the lane, an old wreck of a Victorian that had been cut up into tiny rooms, he pounded up the stairs to the third floor. Without pausing for breath he lurched against the door at the top of the stairs and rattled the door knob violently.

"Open the door, Anna! Quickly!"

Nathan heard the key turn. In a heartbeat he was inside the small room, locking the door.

"What is it, Papa?" Anna asked, clutching the book she had been reading to her chest. She was a thin, pretty girl of twelve, with dark brown pigtails, and glasses that hid serious brown eyes.

"Pack, my darling girl," Nathan said trying to slow his breathing and speak calmly. He reached under his bed for his suitcase. "I'll explain later, *Strudel*. Take everything."

Anna looked at her father for a moment, biting on her lip, then she quickly knelt down and pulled her small suitcase out from under her bed. From a rough wooden shelf,

she took down her second dress, two pairs of cotton panties, a little bag with toiletries, a book of poetry, and a tattered guide book entitled *All About Shanghai*. Anna quickly, but carefully, put them in the suitcase. All that remained was a small framed picture of her, with her mother and father, taken in the summer of 1935 at the Bodensee. She wiped a bit of dust from the picture, slid it under her clothes, and fastened the lid. "Ready, Papa," Anna said, standing up.

In ten minutes they were on the street walking fast. Nathan had his suitcase, a cheaply made Chinese model, in one hand, and a bulging old leather briefcase that he had carried with him from Germany, in the other.

"Do we have to walk so fast, Papa? You have such long legs I can't keep up."

Nathan smiled down at her, forcing himself to sound calm. "I'm sorry, *Strudel*. I forget."

"Is it the Jewish shelter again?"

Nathan glanced over his shoulder at the road behind them, but saw nothing suspicious. "No. We must find another place for tonight."

"Good," Anna said, relief in her voice.

"What's to like there?"

The Jewish shelters, financed mainly by wealthy Jews who had come from the Middle-East decades ago, were swamped by the influx of refugees from Europe. They were scattered around the city and thought of as temporary housing. But in fact, many people with no funds and nothing to sell, lived there for long periods. Mostly they were located in large buildings, hastily rented or purchased, with the actual running of the shelters left in the hands of charitable groups. Typically, half of the building was used as an eating area, the other half divided up into cubicles with cots, which

were separated from each other by curtains of sheets or blankets. Toilets were pots emptied each morning and bathing was very limited. Worse, father and daughter agreed, was the smell—a combination of boiled cabbage, urine, and body odor.

Nathan had spent almost all of his money renting their room, counting on his earnings from dishwashing for food money. He couldn't go back to the restaurant to collect his pay now, and didn't know what he would do.

"I thought we would be safe in Shanghai," Anna said interrupting his thoughts. "You said we would be."

"I had hopes," Borenstein said. "It's more difficult than I thought."

He shook his head and told Anna about everything that had happened outside the restaurant. He had always spoken to her as an adult, even when she was very young. Anna, his only child, was like him, bookish and quiet, and seemed older than her years. He felt a sudden stab of guilt. Perhaps he and his wife had emphasized her intelligence too much. But he felt he was preparing her for life as a Jew in Germany, where Jews had to be better than others to succeed. Parties and pretty dresses, he had thought, could come later. That was past. Now all he could think of was keeping her alive.

"Perhaps they were not shooting at you at all," Anna said.

"Perhaps. Very likely. In fact, the correct hypothesis," he said with more confidence than he felt. "However, we can't take the chance," he said as he stopped and put down his suitcase. "At least this is not Germany." He forced a

smile and tapped the side of his head. "Here we can use our noodles and outwit them."

"I'm sure we can, Papa."

"We will find another place to live."

Ignoring the rickshaw pullers and pedicab drivers shouting for their business, they walked in silence through the crowds along still busy Seward Road. But what if they *were* trying to kill him? He asked himself. How would they have known he and Anna were in Shanghai? He glanced down at his daughter and wondered if she was thinking the same thing.

One person, his cousin, Mendel, who got them their exit passes from Germany, knew for sure they were here. Only Mendel knew the false names they used. Probably his wife had heard enough around the house to know that Shanghai was their destination. Or, perhaps the Gestapo had guessed. After all, Shanghai was the only place in the world one could come without a passport or a visa. Mendel, he knew, was living dangerously, helping too many people. Someone would get caught one day and the trail would lead back to him. Unless he stopped, it was just a matter of time. Had it happened already? Then there was his wife. He tried to avoid the thought, but it was possible she had turned them in. In the last few months she had become more German than the Nazis.

When they reached the covered pavilion of the Hongkew Market, Borenstein fingered the coins in his pocket, wondering if they could afford a pedicab and have enough left over for a little food. The smell of frying meat, ginger, and hot rice from vendor's carts lining the curb made up his mind for him.

"Let's eat a little here, *Strudel*, and walk to the railroad station. We can stay there tonight and store our bags in Checked Baggage, if it doesn't cost too much."

"Oh yes, Papa. I'm so hungry, I could eat a horse."

Borenstein nodded and thought to himself they might just be doing that.

"Tomorrow I will try to get visas for us at the British Consulate."

"But how will we get money for the ship even if you do get the visas?"

"If I can get the visas, the money will come. Don't worry about that."

### Three

Jake watched the ambulance take away the dead man and his wounded companion. "What do you think his chances are?" he asked the waiter.

The man lit a stub of a cigarette and inhaled deeply. "Not good that one. Much blood was lost."

Jake put out his hand. "Jake Greenberg is my name."

The waiter wiped his hand on his blood splattered apron and shook Jake's hand. "Klein. Leo Klein. Once Dr. Klein of Graz, Austria. Before the Nazis came. Now I am just Klein, the waiter."

"Fortunes change, Doctor. I came here with very little and did okay."

Klein nodded. "Perhaps," he said without conviction. "I must go inside and see what I can do."

Jake took out his wallet and gave Klein ten dollars. "For treating the wounded man."

Klein took the money and smiled a small smile. "Thank you. My first medical fee in Shanghai."

"Do you know who those men were?" Jake asked, as Klein turned to go into the restaurant. "There were three of them. Two were hit, and the third ran away."

"Kitchen help. I don't know their names. They come and go. The cook might know."

Jake glanced inside the Mirneau. The waiters and bus boys were cleaning up the shattered glass and righting chairs knocked over by fleeing customers. "Is the owner around?"

"I haven't seen him tonight. He would know the men, I suppose. I must go, Mr. Greenberg. I need this job." Klein

snubbed out what was left of his cigarette, put the butt into his shirt pocket, and hurried inside.

\* \* \*

Ward Road swiftly returned to normal. Pedicabs and rickshaws reappeared, gliding along with their passengers while pedestrians hurried along hardly noting the shattered window or the patch of blood on the sidewalk. Shanghai, Jake said to himself, is one tough town. Some called it "The Paris of the East." He always thought of it as an Asian New York--rough, hard, and lively as hell. He waited for an automobile to pass, then stepped into the street. Where he had seen the shooter's gun flash, he found a spent shell in the gutter near the entrance to Wickham Lane. It was .45 caliber. An ejected shell meant the shooter used an automatic. Probably from the same type of gun that I carry, Jake thought. There weren't many .45 automatics around, except the U.S. Army Colt. Millions of those had been made for the Great War. He walked in a circle looking for more shells, but found only one more.

"Mister." A Chinese boy of about ten held four shells in his small hand.

"I'll buy them for a dollar," Jake replied in Shanghai dialect.

The boy nodded, a wide grin on his dirty face, and dumped the shells into Jake's hand.

\* \* \*

"Ho, Big Nose Foreigner," a thin, dark-skinned pedicab driver stopped beside Jake. The man had a smile on his weathered face. "Somebody try kill you again? I hear gun shots. I come look for you. Carry fat body home to Missy Claire." The pedicab driver's name was Li, a friend Jake had

known since Li was a poor rickshaw puller and Jake a "Griffin," a green newcomer to Shanghai. Li had brought Jake to the restaurant and had been waiting for him a short distance away at a tiny bit of greenery the Chinese called, "Jew's Park," because it had become a gathering place for refugees.

Jake went over the events in front of the Mirneau. "So, Old Dog any talk on the street about killing foreigners?"

"You crazy? People no care about big noses. Everyone talk about monkey men, and maybe war come here."

"What about your communist friends?" Jake asked. While too prickly and independent to be a party member, Li had always had close ties to the Chinese Communists. It was also rumored, but never proven, that rickshaw coolies and pedicab drivers were used by the communists as message carriers.

"I hear nothing about killing you people. You think, maybe Greens?"

"We haven't had trouble with the Green Gang for years. Let's go find a telephone. I have some calls to make."

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