

HOWARD TURK

THE
SHANGHAI
BOX





Shanghai, 1929. Jake Greenberg, the owner of a fashionable casino, is drawn into a daring British plot to steal a Japanese Enigma machine. The plan fails. Agents are murdered and Jake pursues the traitor who killed them.

The Shanghai Box

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The Shanghai Box

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First Edition

Three

Captain Tanaka quick-walked down the wide hall of the Japanese military annex as fast as his stubby, slightly bowed, legs could move. His face was set and grim, his fireplug body was rigid. He turned into General Okura's outer office, hurried past the secretarial staff, hardly looking at them, and came to a halt in front of the general's door. He adjusted his uniform, and knocked.

"Enter," Okura called out.

Tanaka closed the door silently behind him, snapped his heels together with a loud click, and saluted. He tried not to show the anger he felt. He had vital information and that simpering idiot, Mizuno, the head of the diplomatic section, was sitting across from the general.

Okura beckoned him forward and pointed to a second chair in front of his desk. "What is it, Tanaka?"

"Secret information, sir," implying as strongly as he dared that the general should get rid of Mizuno. He never trusted diplomats to keep secrets. It was in their nature to talk too much.

"We have nothing that Diplomat Mizuno can't hear," the general said with a slight smile toward the diplomat. Okura was big for a Japanese with a round, flat face, and hair flecked with gray, cut short in the military way. His thick glasses and smooth mild voice gave him an intellectual air, but he had earned his rank in the field, fighting the Russians and ruthlessly putting down a Korean uprising.

"Go on Tanaka," the Okura continued.

"Agent Blue has reported some disturbing information."

"A source with access to British secrets," Okura told the diplomat.

"He reports," Tanaka continued, "that there is a traitor among us willing to sell information on our cipher machine."

"Our coded messages are not secure?" Mizuno asked, clearly alarmed. He turned to Okura. "We must take some action! Our most important cables are sent through the machine." He shook his head. "I've never liked the change. Handwritten codes are the best."

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"Of course the cipher machines are secure," Tanaka said, trying to keep the annoyance out of his voice. Mizuno was a moron in stripped pants, Tanaka thought. If we had to dance to the diplomat's tune, we'd be kissing the Westerner's asses every day. "We have four machines. They are kept in a special room and guarded around the clock by a select group of Imperial Marines." Ignoring Mizuno, he spoke directly to the general, "The fact that they are so interested in our machines means that our cables are not being broken."

Okura nodded. "That is possible. Could this be a British trick? Perhaps Agent Blue has been compromised."

"He has been very accurate in the past."

"The past hasn't been too long, captain. Has he learned anything about the death of Captain Ozaki? Tokyo is very interested in him and our security."

"Nothing, sir." Tanaka felt himself getting warm. Why was the general probing him this way in front of Mizuno? "He passed on only what is generally believed. That Captain Ozaki was killed in a boat accident."

"What else has Agent Blue sold us?"

"That a man named Greenberg, Jake Greenberg, has been designated by the traitor as a sort of middleman--to pass money to him and receive whatever he is giving the British." Tanaka pushed on quickly. He was determined to be seen as a strong leader. "I propose that we eliminate Greenberg."

"What do you mean?" Mizuno almost shouted. The diplomat's face was suddenly pale.

"Kill him," Tanaka said, enjoying the diplomat's discomfort. "We break the connection before it begins and gain time to find this traitor among us."

"You can't do that," Mizuno said, turning to Okura. "All of them--the British, the Americans, and even the French--are hardly speaking to us now. They have a very bad opinion of our new government. To kill one of them could be catastrophic. Prince Nakashima will never approve!" Unsaid was that Nakashima, the consul general, was Mizuno's cousin.

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"There is a problem only if we are implicated," Tanaka said. "That can be avoided. But even if we are caught, it will blow over. In the meantime, we can stop this leak."

"How would you deal with our problem?" Okura asked Mizuno. "You said yourself that the security of our messages is very important. I know for a fact that the highest levels in Tokyo are...concerned."

The diplomat tapped his lips as he looked off into space. Finally he said, "I would have to consult with the consul general. This is a very sensitive matter."

Tanaka smiled to himself. Okura won this round. He doubted that Mizuno would use up some of his political capital by taking this little skirmish to the very aristocratic prince. It was an interesting lesson in office maneuvers.

General Okura slipped off his glasses and polished them with his handkerchief. "Then let us handle it, Diplomat Mizuno," he said hooking his glasses behind his ears.

"Certainly this issue is outside the authority of the diplomatic section. I know my section doesn't have the resources or the experience, but beware of the implications. Until the consul general takes up the matter, it is on your shoulders, general."

"Never fear, we will be prudent." Okura stood up. Tanaka quickly got to his feet, Mizuno took his time. "Captain Tanaka's idea will be studied. We will discuss it another time. For now, Captain Tanaka's security section will search personnel records. Perhaps we can uncover a clue to our bad seed there. Thank you for coming."

Tanaka strode to the office door and held it open for Mizuno. He was about to follow Mizuno out when Okura called out, "Ah, Tanaka, there is another matter we need to discuss."

Tanaka closed the door. "Yes, sir." That was more like it.

Okura glanced out the window. Out on the river a gray, low-slung American gunboat, black smoke pouring from its single smokestack, was going down stream toward the Yangtze. "The Americans are sending out one of their river patrol units." He turned from the window. "You are completely right, Tanaka. I think it best to kill

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Greenberg, but our hand must not show. Hire someone locally. Is this Greenberg an important businessman?"

"According to Blue, he is part owner of a casino, the Wheel House. He is well known among business people."

Okura smiled. "Tell whoever you hire to make it look like a robbery or a bungled kidnapping."

"I will, sir," Tanaka said trying without success to suppress a grin. He liked direct action and the general knew it. "Do I have your permission to have this Greenberg followed?"

Okura shook his head. "I don't think that's wise. Our traitor is not likely to meet with him at this stage and we don't want to take the chance of our men being seen. Greenberg might be a professional under deep cover. Is this casino open to Asians?"

"I believe so."

"Perhaps you could visit it and identify Greenberg." Okura toyed with the letter opener on his almost empty desk. "See who of interest frequents this Wheel House Casino."

Jake was the first to arrive at the American Restaurant. The American was more a coffee shop than a restaurant. It was deep and narrow, squeezed between a shoe store and a real estate office. It was just a block from the Daily, at the corner of Museum Road and Hong Kong Road, and their popular menu of waffles, ham and eggs, and as much coffee as you could drink attracted an early morning crowd of reporters and businessmen. The waitresses were the owner's three daughters, all of whom towered over their parents.

As he opened the door, the rich, comforting smell of strong coffee, toasting bread, and frying meat floated out to greet him. The place was almost full as it was most weekdays.

"Good morning, Mr. Jake," said Frank Yang, the owner, who acted as the receptionist. Frank was a diminutive busy-bee, and his even smaller wife, Betty, manned the cash register near the front door.

"Ni hao," Jake replied to Frank. "Lovely as ever," Jake said to Betty as he walked by her station and she, as usual, burst into giggles.

Jake threaded his way to the back of the restaurant through a narrow path between customers sitting at small white tables and those

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on stools eating at a long counter. He picked out one of the larger tables and settled in with a mug of coffee and the Shanghai Daily. Jake had shaved and showered. That helped, but he hadn't slept. He would try to catch a nap in the afternoon, but his sleep was a chancy thing. It had never returned to normal after the war. Sleepless days and nights and catnaps in the cold and mud of the trenches had broken something. Even when he did sleep now, it was usually thin and restless, sprinkled with war dreams that woke him up soaked with sweat. Luckily, Claire slept like a log. He didn't know how she could stand being with him otherwise.

Jake was deep into reading the Daily when he was kissed on the back of his neck.

"Not here, Kuan," Jake said.

Claire Turner laughed and kissed him again. She was tall and willowy. She had dark hair, blue-gray eyes, and high cheek bones in an oval face. Claire's grandfather claimed some Indian blood, but her very starchy mother in Cleveland had told her that was absurd.

Claire and Jake were a one of many unconventional couples in Shanghai. Most were sub-rosa relationships, theirs was open and well-known. Invitations to dinners and social events had long stopped being sent to them individually. They came addressed to one or the other for both of them. Claire called it, "The Shanghai Game," where people chose to see what suited them. In their case, society and Claire's employer chose to see them as single, which allowed her to work as a reporter and columnist for the Daily. Conventional Shanghai, the very ones who invited them to their garden parties, exerted enormous pressure on employers not to hire married Western women for any meaningful work. The proper roles for married white women, conventional Shanghai decreed, were to make a home for their husbands, raise children, and entertain.

Kuan strolled in a minute or two later looking fresh and bouncy. He kissed Claire on the cheek and sat down. "What have you gotten us into now?" he asked Jake.

Jake ignored him and spoke to Claire. "Just because I interrupted a tender moment he's cranky."

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"We were sleeping. Tender moments were long past. It was five in the morning!"

"I needed to talk to you before you wandered in at noon."

They ordered from a cheerful Yang daughter named Liberty. Jake waited until she moved away and told them about his night visit to Milford's castle--the offer of some unknown person to sell secrets to the British, him being named as a middleman by the author of the letter, and the pressure to accept the role. He concluded with, "My feeling right now is that I do it. Any thoughts?"

Kuan opened his mouth to speak, then shut it abruptly. The incredibly skinny Miss Yang had arrived with their orders. While she passed out their food, Jake looked around the restaurant. Mostly newspaper people and Western businessmen. None close enough to eavesdrop.

"We don't know," Kuan said, "if the secret service has enough oomph with the Licensing Board to close us down."

"I'd assume they do." Claire said. "It's five white men with businesses of their own, working on the board part-time. Even if they were rocks of Gibraltar, which they certainly aren't, they could get lots of pressure on their businesses. You know, a tax audit, a visit by the fire inspector, health inspector. There are all kinds of things."

"We could fight it," Kuan said. "Go to Uncle, he's gotten bigger in the Chinese community in the last year." Kuan lowered his voice to a whisper. "He is also tighter with the Greens. But I don't really want to do that. It's a chip I'd like to save for a really rainy day."

Jake nodded. "That's where I come out."

"Why should there be anybody in the middle?" Claire asked Jake. "Why doesn't this person deal with the British directly?"

"I'm presuming it's a man and he knows me. Maybe he just wants an amateur in the middle. Or just doesn't trust the British."

"How dangerous do you think this business is?" Claire asked.

Jake glanced at Kuan for an instant. "If it goes by the script, I'm just a delivery boy. I pick up whatever he has; make sure, as much as I can, it's the proper stuff; and leave money. I would think he'd use a dead drop or some other cut-out method--so we never come face to face."

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"Why you?" Claire asked Jake.

"He's probably the dumbest white guy the man could think of," Kuan said.

"Seriously. Why you?"

"I have no idea," Jake answered, "or who it could be." He shrugged. "A Japanese guy not too happy with his government who knows me from somewhere. I can't imagine any non-Japanese having access to secret stuff."

"Do you think it's someone playing at the Wheel?" Kuan said.

"That's the most likely angle. There's about a half dozen more or less regulars I think are from the consulate. Possibly six or seven more come in once in a while. But I don't think I've spent more than a minute or two talking to anyone of them and that was just welcome-to-the-house chit-chat." Jake turned to Claire. "Outside of the Wheel, I can't recall any kind of real contact with the Japanese. Do you?"

Claire shook her head. "They're an awfully tight group and language is a problem with a number of them. Outside of a few big things--those gigantic lawn parties that get thrown for the fourth of July or the king's birthday--I don't recall us talking to many. In fact, they seem pretty skittish about talking with us even at those things." Claire glanced at her watch. "I have to run. Tell you what. Give me a call at work. I can check out the names of Japanese playing at the Wheel."

A lumbering red Renault bus pulled to a stop where Avenue Joffre, the wide, most fashionable street of the French Concession, met Avenue Haig. Here, at the end of the bus line, the shops were far from elegant, mainly open-fronted Chinese stores dealing in food, cheap clothing, and pawn shops. Across Avenue Haig, Frenchtown ended and China began.

Eng Tai-wu, known as Lucy Eng, was the only passenger to step down from the bus. The act of getting off the bus made her breath come hard and she looked with dismay at the distance to the entrance of Fuh Tan University, a quarter mile away. I am falling apart, she thought, as she rested, supporting herself against a lamp post. A fat, middle-aged Chinese man in a long gown and a Western fedora

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walked by, looked her over, and mumbled something she only half heard. No, she wanted to scream at him, I am not a whore, just a poor, sick woman.

Lucy had just turned forty. She once had a pretty face and a nicely rounded figure and thick, shining hair. She could read, write, do calculations, and speak fairly good English as well as a little Japanese. When she was young, Lucy had been allowed to go to the foreigner's free boarding school because it would mean one less mouth to feed. Her teacher, a lean, stern, but kindly woman from Maine "doing God's work in China," told Lucy she was highly intelligent and had a talent for languages. It was the first words of encouragement she could ever remember. Despite those two near miracles: her tenant farmer parents allowing her to go to a missionary school and the foreigner schoolmaster accepting her, she was destined for a hard life. Her intelligence counted for nothing. Her fate had been determined by the twisted foot she was born with and the poverty of her family.

A crippled girl without a dowry had almost no marriage prospects. Her education made her even less desirable to eligible farmers, who saw it as a sign of rebellion. It was only when she was twenty-one, well past prime marriage age in their small village, that a scruffy, unemployed office worker agreed to marry her for \$25 American dollars, enough to pay off his debts and take them to Shanghai. Her parents considered themselves lucky to be rid of her.

Lucy, a name she gave herself in more hopeful days, was now deathly pale under her makeup. She knew she was seriously ill, but doctors cost more than she could afford. It didn't take a doctor to know that she had something seriously wrong with her lungs. The cheap makeup, the only money she spent on herself, was necessary to keep people from seeing how sick she was. Without it, she would lose her miserable job and any chance of helping her daughter.

Even though she had no watch, Lucy knew it was close to the time. She let go of the pole and hobbled toward the campus with a rolling gait she hated. She was sweating heavily despite the cool weather when she reached "her" bench at the edge of the campus. Lucy sat down heavily, a little dizzy, and prayed that she was not late.

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Despite a fit of coughing that spotted her handkerchief with blood, it thrilled her, as always, just to see the well-tended lawn, the beautiful stone and concrete buildings, and all the healthy students. This was the life she wanted for her daughter. Every hour's work at her menial job she hated made this possible for Cynthia. For Lucy, it was all worthwhile.

Her eyes swept back and forth looking for Cynthia among the flood of students walking across the campus. It was lunch break, but Lucy knew Cynthia always looked for her at the bench when she came out of class.

There she was! Lucy saw her and waved. Her heart seemed about to burst with happiness at seeing her running across the grass toward her. Lucy quickly slipped her spotted handkerchief into her purse. Lucy knew that Cynthia had been worried about her health. No amount of makeup or loose-fitting Chinese dresses could completely hide her deterioration. But Lucy had exercised all her motherly powers to deflect Cynthia's concern.

Cynthia Eng was a slim eighteen year old with a delicate, sharply-defined face, big, bright almond-shaped eyes, and blue-black hair cut short in the modern style. Her Chinese name was Eng Mai-wu. When she was ten, mother and daughter picked her English name out of a magazine, turning pages together while Cynthia read names aloud. They decided that Cynthia flowed gently. So Eng Mai-wu became Cynthia Eng when she began foreign middle-school.

Lucy hugged her daughter, then held her at arms length. "You look tired. You need more sleep."

"It's exam time, Muma. I'll sleep more when it's over. I'm fine."

"Your grades are good?"

"I'll get a partial scholarship for the next semester."

Lucy beamed and kissed her cheek. Without the scholarship there was no hope of having enough money for Cynthia's schooling.

They talked of personal things and school matters. Lucy sensed that Cynthia wanted to ask, but she avoided the subject of her health. Lucy wanted to know the details of her daughter's life in the foreign world. Cynthia was living out Lucy's dream and her pride in her daughter buoyed her spirits, almost putting tears in her eyes. She was

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awe-struck just listening to Cynthia talk about her friends, Chinese and foreign, and her plans for the future. Her daughter, the daughter of a worthless cripple, was a confident, modern woman.

Lucy blinked back her tears. "I must tell you--."

"Are you ill?" Cynthia interrupted Lucy.

"No. No. I'm fine," Lucy lied. "I just wanted to say that you are not to worry about money for the next semester. There is enough."

"From your family?" Cynthia looked hard at her mother, a tinge of suspicion in her eyes.

"Of course. You don't think that miserable father of yours will provide for you. I will have it soon. Perhaps enough even for school in America." Where the money had come from was a patchwork of lies Lucy had concocted years ago and had added to over time. She had no family that sent money. Both her mother and father had been killed by bandits pillaging their small village a few years after she left. All the money had come from Lucy, saved from her pay one copper at a time.

"You must thank them again for me," Cynthia said.

"I will. I must go now," Lucy said. She patted her daughter's hand. "Remember always that I love you."

"What do you mean?"

"Just remember," Lucy said.

Each noon in the Cathay Hotel's spacious club room, a Chinese jazz band played American songs. Mr. Tota Saito, economic consul, second class, of the Japanese Consulate sat alone at a tiny table near the back of the room. He was a small, fine-boned man of middle age neatly dressed in a dark blue suit, white shirt, conservative tie, and highly polished black shoes. He had a pleasant, slightly sad smile, thinning hair, and ears too large for his small face. Despite his jangled nerves, his foot tapped along with the rhythm section, a drummer and a bass, setting the pace for Sweet Georgia Brown. Saito had served two happy years at the San Francisco consulate and had become a secret admirer of jazz. Secret because anything these days, Western, particularly American or British, was frowned upon by his government.

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Saito had chosen the club room as a meeting place because the noon concert attracted a wide mix of patrons, but never any Japanese. The last thing he wanted was to be seen by someone from the consulate. He nursed his ginger ale, and kept watch on the door hoping he was doing the right thing.

His stomach lurched when he saw her at the door. He knew in an instant this was the wrong place to meet. In her cheap cotton dress, her cheeks painted an unnatural pink, Lucy was being noticed. Fool, he said to himself. Saito could see heads turning, looking her over and wondering what she was doing here. Saito quickly peeled off some bills and threw them on the table.

"Come with me," he said taking her arm and leading Lucy back out the door into the marble and polished wood corridor. "I made a mistake. We call too much attention to ourselves in there."

Saito led her to a sofa in an out-of-the-way hall that led to the toilets. He glanced right and left, then kissed Lucy on the cheek.

"We must do it today, Tota," Lucy said. "We can't delay any longer. The British will ignore you and we will lose our chance. Call him."

Saito studied her pale face. He wanted to kiss her again, but he was afraid of being seen. He was disgusted with himself, with his shyness and his fear of doing what was right. He was fifty-one, still a bachelor, yet he had not pursued Lucy for fear of rejection. With her health going bad, it was too late now. He felt she was no longer interested in romance. All they had now was their plan. Still, an ember of hope was alive in him. Maybe, he let the thought bubble up, it was not really too late for them.

"Very well, Lucy," Saito said.

"Do it now."

Saito stood up and walked quickly to a phone booth. He didn't want Lucy to see his hands shaking or the beads of sweat forming high on his forehead. Saito closed the phone booth door and stared at the instrument for a long moment before he picked it up and dropped in three large English pennies.

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The telephone jangled and Jake's eyes flew open. He had fallen asleep in his big office chair with his feet propped up on an open desk drawer. As he sat up, a book he had been reading fell to the floor.

"Do you want me to take it, Sleeping Beauty?" Kuan closed the ledger book he had been working on.

"No." Jake shook his head to clear the haze from his mind. "It might be the man," he said reaching for the receiver. "17798. The Wheel House Casino. Greenberg speaking."

"Mr. Greenberg," the voice began tentatively. "I'm the one who wrote the British. Are you willing to help?"

Jake snapped his fingers and pointed to the telephone on Kuan's side of the desk. "Yes, I am."

Kuan eased his phone off its cradle.

"Good." The voice seemed to grow stronger. "I suggest that you do not try to trace this call. I am calling from a public telephone and will be gone soon."

"Wouldn't think of it." He had, of course. But Jake's friend at the telephone company, a supervisor of operators, had told him that tracing, aside from being illegal, was usually too slow to be useful.

"I hope not." The voice spoke very precise, slightly nasal English with only a touch of an accent.

Jake listened hard. "What do you want me to do?"

"Please contact the British and tell them I have information in hand on the latest Japanese enciphering machine. It is the operating manual. The price is \$500 American dollars. I will be in touch with you again. If they are interested, we'll work out an exchange. This is not the big item I wrote about. That will come later if this works out."

"When can I expect your call?" Jake asked.

"I...it will be very soon."

Jake wanted to keep the man talking. "Why did you choose me as the middleman?"

"I decided you were relatively honest. Good-by, Mr. Greenberg." The phone clicked off. Jake put the receiver back in its cradle. "What do you think?" He took a sip from a mug of now cold green tea.

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"He seemed refined and a bit nervous," Kuan said. "I couldn't get the accent. It sounded a little American, but not native. And I had the feeling he hadn't done this sort of thing before."

Jake nodded. "He sounded a bit American, I thought, but there was more underneath. I don't think our boy is either an Englishman or an American. Maybe spent some time there."

"Unless he's good at accents."

"Right." Jake picked the book off the floor, laid it on the desk, and walked to the windows at the end of the office. The room was a sunny rectangle, an addition they had built on to the back of the square brick townhouse that was now the Wheel. It extended out over an oriental garden and small parking lot and had big windows that let in the sun. Jake looked down at the garden wondering if he was a fool.

"Are you changing your mind?" Kuan asked.

Jake turned from the window and shook his head. "No. It's the best play." He walked back to his side of the double desk and picked up the receiver. "Time to make the call." He read the numbers on the card the colonel had given him. "Here we go," he said as he waited for the operator to put the call through.

Jake left the Wheel at six.

"Good night tonight, Boss," Kirpal, the Wheel's doorman, said as he closed the front door behind him.

"Hope it keeps up." Kirpal was speaking of the number of customers, not the weather. The Sikh kept close watch on the flow of business. Like all the staff, he was looking forward to a big New Year's bonus. Business had been good despite a serious stock market crash in New York last month. Tourists still filled the cruise ships and the locals continued to play big. How long that would last was the big unknown. After a strong six year run, both Jake and Kuan were looking ahead to leaner times.

Woosung Road was filled with automobile traffic made worse by rickshaw pullers dodging in and out of traffic. The air was heavy with exhaust fumes. It was going home time, and, as always, people were in a hurry. The shops along the road, operating out of old, gracious

two and three story wooden buildings, were closing, taking down their advertising flags. It was a bad time to travel, but Rod had called Jake back and set up a meeting.

Jake looked for Li. His rickshaw was parked on the sidewalk next to the Wheel where Kirpal could watch it. Li usually kept it in sight as well. Rickshaw stealing was common and Li's black deluxe equipped with pneumatic tires was a tempting target.

Jake was about to ask Kirpal where Li was, when he came strolling down the road holding a bowl of steaming rice to his face and shoveling it's contents into his mouth with chopsticks.

"Ho, Fat Foreigner," Li said rubbing bits of rice from around his mouth with the back of his hand. "Have you eaten today?" It was the traditional Chinese greeting.

"Better than you, Old Dog," Jake replied in Shanghai dialect. They had been trading insults for a long time. Of the important people in his life, Jake had only known Kuan longer. It was early 1922 when he met Li.

Li was then and had remained a fiercely independent man. Even in his thirties, old for a rickshaw man, he had not mellowed. He was a bit over average height for a Chinese, lean, and leathery-skinned, browned by the sun. He could read a little, which was uncommon for rickshaw men, enough for basic Chinese newspapers. He had strongly-held left-wing political views. He also had vague ties to the Communist underground as did many members of the rickshaw guild, but party discipline was not for him.

They had first met outside Shanghai's railroad station on a warm, sunny afternoon, unusually pleasant for that time of year. Jake remembered the weather because it contrasted with the dirty, sour-faced warlord soldiers who prowled around the station with rifles on their shoulders making everyone a little apprehensive. The station was in Chapei, part of Chinese Shanghai, just outside the International Settlement. China was in a chaotic state. Provincial warlords controlled the country and one of the richest plums was Shanghai. Although Westerners were not generally bothered by the soldiers, it was considered wise not to linger around the station. Jake had just arrived by train from Nanking and had walked out of the

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terminal looking for a rickshaw to take him to his hotel. A crowd of rickshaw men were at the curb waving their hands and yelling out their prices when a pair of soldiers waded in and began beating one of them for no apparent reason. Suddenly, Li pushed through the crowd and began yelling at the soldiers to leave the man alone. The two stopped and turned to Li, who stood his ground. One soldier worked the bolt of his rifle to put a round in its chamber. The crowd moved back. As the soldier raised his rifle, Jake shouted, "You!" He pointed at Li. "Take my bag!" The soldier stopped and looked confused and glanced at his partner. Li glowered at Jake, but took his bag. "I go to the Astor House. Chop-chop," Jake said loudly. Li nodded, turned away from the soldiers, and led Jake to his rickshaw. When they were well away from the station, Jake said in Chinese, "You have more courage than brains, my friend." Li glanced over his shoulder and grinned. "So-so."

"Where we go?" Li asked finishing his small bowl of rice.

"Fat Anna's Restaurant."

Li shook his head and grumbled. "Chapei bad now. Maybe go later." He banged his chopsticks against the bowl to clean it and then stowed the bowl and sticks in a small compartment under the rickshaw's cushioned seat.

"I have to go now," Jake said. "I could get a decent rickshaw man if you don't want to do it."

"So-so, Big Nose." Li held down the traces of his rickshaw with his foot while Jake climbed in and settled against the soft cushions. "We go meet Missy Claire?"

"No. Later maybe. I have a meeting with the English."

"Fat Anna's? Strange place meet English," Li said over his shoulder as he edged into the flow of traffic. "Foreigners not go there."

"These are very strange people, Old Man. I don't trust them."

Using alleys and streets too narrow for automobiles, Li reached Soochow Road quickly. There he turned right and ran parallel to the smelly mud banks of Soochow Creek exposed by low tide. At water's edge, the sampans and barges of the city's boat people rocked gently

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at their anchorages. Beyond them, sampans and junks in mid-stream were busily churning up and down the creek.

Jake tried to sit back and relax, but his mind kept grinding away at what little he knew. Okay, he said to himself, assuming the letter from the mystery man and the call were legit, why did the seller pick him as the middleman? It seemed very odd. Possibly someone steered the seller to him. But there would have been a "heads up" or a feeler of some kind to see if he would do it. Then there was the chance that the Japanese were using the seller as a provocateur to gauge how much the Brits knew about their codes. It was a ploy the British used successfully against the Germans in the Great War. Finally, it could be the Brits with some scheme. He had no faith in their word and he certainly didn't trust the colonel. But he couldn't see what they gained from playing games with him. Jake shook his head. Enough stewing. He'd find out soon enough.

At Honan Road Li swung left, forcing his way into a flood of rickshaws going over the creek on the low-slung Honan Bridge. He jogged straight up North Honan Road, a wide but heavily used commercial street. Bad here, Jake thought as he glanced at his watch, but Chapei was going to be worse.

They crossed the border into Chapei just east of Shanghai's sprawling Victorian railroad station. Chapei was Chinese territory--the streets were narrow and twisting, snaking between tenements and three or four story business buildings, and crowded with far too many people.

Around the station, Li turned into Jukong Road and had to slow to a walk. Food vendors' carts and heavily loaded wagons along the curb had narrowed the winding street to one precarious lane. Cars, rickshaws, two-wheel carts piled high with produce and pulled by coolies, wagons, and even a few trucks struggled to move ahead. At the same time, everyone from bent old men to ragged little urchins zigzagged through the traffic. To Jake it was an endless show. Overhead and on both sides of the street, there seemed to be thousands of signs and advertising flags of all colors fighting for attention.

"Not good, Boss. Use alleys?"

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Jake glanced at his watch again. The alleys of Chapei were far worse than those in the International Settlement or the French Concession, where there was at least a basic level of trash removal and sanitation. "You'd better. I need to get there soon."

Li nodded and pulled into an alley only wide enough for his rickshaw, his straw sandals splashing through small puddles of standing water. He emerged to briefly use a less crowded street, then back into another alley that was unpaved and so foul with garbage Jake had to hold his breath. They came out on busy Chung Kung Road, turned past the Tailor's Guild building with its temple-like stone columns, and stopped at the end of a short street. Fat Anna's restaurant, an old building with a gull-wing roof, was at the end.

It seemed safe enough for Li, Jake thought. There were three rickshaws waiting for customers and lights blazed from the restaurant's windows, lighting the short cobblestone street. "Do you want to stay?"

Li looked up Chung Kung Road at the busy street scene. Jake followed Li's gaze, trying to spot thugs among the peddlers, coolies, shoppers, and those just idly watching it all as cheap entertainment. It all looked normal to him.

As an elder of the rickshaw guild, Li knew the territory and had an eye for the dangerous streets outside the Settlement. Chapei was officially run by a former warlord, now a general in Chiang Kai-shek's National Army. But not much had changed. The general was paid handsomely, everyone knew, by the gangs who controlled the district.

Li nodded. "I stay."

"If there's a problem, come for me or get back to the settlement," Jake said. They probably wouldn't bother a foreigner, although that was less certain these days, but young gang members regularly roughed up rickshaw men and stole what money they had.

Jake walked up the steps, past the twin white marble devil dogs that guarded the door of the restaurant, and went inside.

Fat Anna, a small, round lady of unknown age looked up at him through her round black-rimmed glasses. Behind her a Chinese screen

Howard Turk

of white cranes and green flowers on a gold background separated the reception area from the noisy, smoky dining room.

"So, Mr. Jake, no Missy Claire come. Maybe she no love you no more. Maybe you marry me."

"Business, tonight, Fat Anna. Anyway, I don't think I'm man enough for you. I've heard stories."

The little woman poked Jake in the stomach with a handful of menus and grinned. "All true. All true." Fat Anna stepped back. "You meet with foreigners in private room?"

Jake nodded.

Fat Anna spoke in rapid-fire Chinese to a beautiful hostess in a sleek blue silk dress slit up to her mid thigh. The young girl smiled at him. Turning to Jake, Anna said, "Miss Chee will take you. Only look, no touch." Fat Anna laughed heartily and waved him on.

"This way, sir," Miss Chee said. "Please follow."

"It will be a pleasure, Miss Chee," Jake said, and was rewarded with an impish grin.

The young beauty led him up stairs to the second floor and down a short hall. Around Jake was the happy chaos of a good Chinese restaurant--large round tables crammed with platters of food where three or four generations ate, shouted at each other, laughed, and where small children ran amok among the tables. The warm smell of soy and sizzling meat floated in the house, but the noise was an assault on his ears, although none of the patrons seemed to mind. As a meeting place, Jake had to admit, Fat Anna's private room was a pretty good choice. Certainly it would be hard, if not impossible, for someone outside the room to hear what was said inside. He and Claire ate at Anna's often, but Anna sat them in quieter alcoves where she had her smaller tables. What she called her "lover's tables."

Herbert Thompson sat with the others around a table filled with steaming platters of Fat Anna's food and pots of black tea. He didn't take part in the conversation, nor eat the Chinese food. Thompson didn't like Oriental food. He carried what he needed in his pockets. When he was hungry, which wasn't often, he nibbled on Higgins Water Wafers, the only brand that suited him, and apples imported

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from America. After an intensive search he found that both could be bought at the Sanitary Provisions Company on Bubbling Well Road along with canned fruit juice from England and safe, pasteurized milk from Steys Dairy, an English-owned farm on Edinburgh Road.

He gnawed at the nail on his left forefinger, the only one not bitten back to the quick, and tried not to look at Rodney Lattimore. He was attracted to Lattimore and furious with him too, for misjudging his attempt at friendship for something more. He wished he could make conversation like the others, but small talk was something alien to him and his attempts were almost always painfully awkward or worse.

Thompson wanted desperately to have something happen--either have Greenberg show up or the colonel send him back to his mathematical work on Japanese intercepts. When his mind wasn't occupied, his problems back in London settled on him like a black weight. He had had a serious misunderstanding with a young man in the toilet of the Tate Gallery just before he left England and, according to a letter from his mother, the police came by their house talking about solicitation. She wasn't too clear about what the police wanted, but she said he needed a barrister. Who would I get? He wondered. He didn't know the first thing about barristers and neither did his mother, he was sure. And what would it cost? They certainly didn't have much money. He gave her his paycheck and she was always complaining about how little they had.

He gave up gnawing on his fingernail and scratched his arm pit. Colonel Godfrey glanced at him disapprovingly. He stopped scratching and sighed. Thompson was opening a small package of wafers when there was a tapping on the door.

"Come in," the colonel said, rising out of his chair.

Jake Greenberg stepped into the room and closed the door behind him. Thompson had tried to picture Greenberg from his voice on the speaker that night at Milford's. Greenberg was bigger than he had thought--strong looking, distinctive walnut-colored eyes, and short, dark brown hair. A handsome man, he concluded, but not as attractive as Rod Lattimore.

Howard Turk

The colonel shook Greenberg's hand. "You know Lattimore, Milford, and Blackwell." The colonel pointed to Graham. "You probably know Deputy Commissioner Graham."

Greenberg and Graham shook hands. "I've seen your picture," Greenberg said, "but I don't think we've ever met."

"Whitey's the name."

"Mr. Graham represents the police in our group. Mr. Milford, as a council member, is our liaison with the Settlement government." The colonel turned toward Thompson and McCain. "These two gentlemen are our technical experts."

McCain had to quickly put down his scotch to free his right hand and shake with Greenberg.

Then Greenberg shook Thompson's hand. Greenberg's hand felt unpleasantly big and hard. Thompson liked long, thin hands. What his mother called pianist's hands.

"Have a seat, Mr. Greenberg, and let's get down to business," the colonel said.

The colonel looked at Jake with cold little eyes. "You know more now than we ever intended. Frankly, we expected our mysterious source to be less explicit on what he was selling us." The colonel shifted his eyes to Blackwell.

"We would like you to sign this," Blackwell said, pulling a document from a briefcase beside his chair. "It puts you under the Official Secrets Act. It's routine in these matters." Blackwell slid the document across to Jake.

Jake scanned the small, dense print on page one and turned to page two. He looked at Blackwell and then at the colonel. "Not on your life, boys. I said I'd be your bag man, but I'm not that much of a fool to sign this."

"I signed it," Carl Milford said angrily. "And so did Whitey."

The husky policeman nodded. He seemed to be sizing Jake up as if he were a murder suspect. "If it's good enough for me, why not for you?"

"I've dealt with these guys before, Whitey. Not the colonel and Blackwell specifically. But the British Secret Service." Jake glanced

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at Rod out of the corner of his eye, but he was poker-faced, not showing anything. "And I don't trust them." He didn't add that the same went for cops on the take. Jake slid the document back to Blackwell.

"We'll let that rest for now, Simon," the colonel said to Blackwell.

Blackwell nodded, and put the document back into his briefcase. "All right, then, let's take it from the top. How did he contact you and what exactly did our Mr. X say?"

"He called me at the Wheel a little past noon, about 12:15. He said he was calling from a public telephone. I didn't hear any background noise. So I guess he was calling from a phone inside a building. He asked for \$500 American for the latest operating manual for a Japanese enciphering machine. Said he would contact me again and, if you guys were interested, he'd set up an exchange."

McCain took a sip of his drink and put it down. "Nothing else was said? He didn't say anything about the machine itself?"

"Nothing about the machine. He said this was not about the "big item." That could be coming later." Jake let his eyes move around the table to Milford, to Rod, who sat stone-faced next to Blackwell, to the scruffy Thompson, who seemed disinterested, and finally to the gray-haired colonel. "That's it. What do I tell him when he contacts me?"

The colonel turned to McCain. "Five hundred for an operating manual. Is it worth it?"

Before McCain could answer, Milford said, "How can you turn him down? He's--."

"Mr. Milford," the colonel cut him off. "Of course, we are going to do it. I merely asked if the price is a reasonable one."

"I think so," McCain said. "It will tell us a great deal about the wiring."

"Tell him he has a deal," the colonel said to Jake. "Set it up as soon as you can."

"Why is he doing this?" Thompson said suddenly and a little too loudly as if the thought just burst out of him.

Jake shook his head. "It was a short conversation, Mr. Thompson. All business. Just what he had to offer and how much he wanted. I think he was afraid of having the call traced."

Howard Turk

Whitey Graham chuckled. "Fat chance of that happening. He'd have to talk forever."

"So you think this man is an amateur?" Milford asked. "He seems like it."

The colonel stood up, ignoring Milford's remark. "Very well, Mr. Greenberg. We shall wait our man's move. We must be ready to move quickly." He turned to Rod. "You will be our contact man as soon as Mr. Greenberg's part is finished."

Rod's face registered shock. "Fine, sir," he managed to say.

"The sooner, the better," Jake said.

"Mr. Lattimore, you will be on the scene to backup Greenberg and you will be armed. The colonel half smiled. "Welcome to field work."

No one spoke for a long moment, then Jake said, "Do you need me for anything else?"

"No, Mr. Greenberg," the colonel said. "I trust we will be in touch shortly."

Jake turned toward the door, stopped, and turned back to the colonel. "Do you have a name? I'm getting a little tired of this no-name business."

The colonel looked at Jake coldly. "It is Godfrey. Colonel W.H. Godfrey."

"Thank you, Colonel Godfrey."

Rod, elated and a little frightened by his new assignment, kept his eye on the colonel. It was the first time he had seen anyone question Godfrey.

Godfrey stood silently, his lips in a tight line, staring at the door Jake had just closed. Finally, he turned to Blackwell. "Simon, please see that no one is lurking about in the hall. I want to tell the group about the matter we discussed."

He means, Rod thought, Blackwell is to make sure Jake has really left. Godfrey and Blackwell don't trust him. Do they think he's working with the mystery man? Rod couldn't believe that.

As Blackwell slipped out of the door, Godfrey turned to the others in the room. "I have just received a cable from London.

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Headquarters wants action. We are to press forward to acquire a Japanese cipher machine. Do it any way we can and as soon as possible. The Navy is vitally interested. They are willing to pay up to 30,000 American dollars or its equivalent in pounds or francs."

"Good God," Rod exclaimed and was immediately sorry he spoke out.

Godfrey's brow furrowed and his glare bored into Rod. "Yes?"

"Sorry for interrupting, sir." It was ten times what he made in a year. A man could live well on the interest.

Godfrey nodded. "That figure is most secret. But it shows the degree of interest in this project."

"It's a huge sum," Milford said. But if a machine is stolen, they will know and change the codes. So what good does that do us?"

"Mr. McCain," Godfrey said. "Explain the situation please."

The pear-shaped man sighed as if it was a great bother. He took a long pull on his drink and set it aside. "It's like this. For some time we have been able to break their simple, low-level codes using language analysis. Some, shall we say, more advanced thinkers, like Thompson and myself, have gone beyond that to using statistical analysis, mathematics, and, of course, a bit of intuition on their more difficult ones, particularly the army and navy codes. However, the Japanese have switched to a cipher machine. And now we are blind. We have not been able to read their messages. We need to know what kind of machine they are using. It won't tell us everything, of course. They will be able to vary the settings, I'm sure, and perhaps some of their wiring. But having the machine is a huge piece of the puzzle. They can't change all that much and we'll have a working model to experiment with."

"If nothing else," Godfrey added, "it might buy us time. Force them back to the old pencil and paper system that we can read. In any case, our mission is of the highest importance."

Rod expected Milford or Whitey Graham to ask how they acquired the Japanese transmissions, but they didn't. They would one of these days and he wondered how Godfrey would answer that one. It was most secret, but very simple. All international cable traffic in and out of Shanghai was handled one of three British companies.

Howard Turk

Each had secret service men on their staff. There was also a group in Shanghai that monitored Japanese radio frequencies. Japanese surface mail was scanned by SIS men at the post office. He knew other countries were also monitored, but none as closely as the Japanese.

Jake pushed open the front door of the Shanghai Daily. He gave the uniformed guard a two-fingered salute, and walked slowly down the hall. His knee was hurting him again. The pain came and went without warning when the bits of shrapnel moved. The doctors didn't get it all when they operated on him during the war. They had wanted to do another surgery, but once was enough for Jake. He'd take the pain. The leg worked okay most of the time and there was no telling what a second operation would do.

At the end of the hall he opened the door to "the pit." The usual haze of cigarette smoke hung over the big open room where the reporters, rewrite men, and editors worked. It was 7:30 in the evening and room was fairly empty, except for the editors at the far end of the room. Most of the reporters and rewrite men had finished their work for tomorrow's morning edition and were down the street at McGinty's or Maxie's having drinks and telling lies. After all this time, Jake knew Claire's newspaper's routine almost as well as his own.

It was her newspaper work that had brought them together. Claire was writing a story on a warlord friend of Jake's who was murdered in front of him on the steps of the Wheel. Claire pursued Jake for an interview, which developed into a joint effort to find the trigger man and the people behind the murder. That was in 1923. They had been together ever since.

Jake walked between the desks of National and Society. Claire, the only woman reporter in National, was in a serious discussion with her buddy, Willard Smith, one of the old time China coast reporters. Willard was around fifty, a short, skinny, bald bundle of energy, who had taken Claire under his wing when she started on the paper. Claire was sure he knew everything that went on in the city. If he didn't, she claimed, his Chinese wife did.

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Jake kissed Claire and shook hands with Willard, then slipped into a chair beside their desks.

"I think you owe Willard a drink," Claire said. "Maybe two."

"You're always on for a drink or two, Willard. Why this time?"

"He helped me sort through the list you gave me." Claire looked at Jake meaningfully. "And no questions were asked."

After breakfast at the American Restaurant, Jake had sent Li to the Daily with a list of Japanese who were more or less regulars at the Wheel.

"No wonder your wife keeps you," Jake said.

Willard took off his fedora, which he wore all the time, and rubbed his bald head. "It wasn't hard. Only seven guys from their consulate. I know a couple of them. They buy me lunch and try to plant stories every now and then. We found stuff on three more in the paper's morgue. Some we got from a couple of Claire's sources."

"All in a days work in the big city," Claire said.

"Is this going to get me a story?" Willard asked.

Jake looked around. There was no one close enough to hear. He shook his head. "I wouldn't count on it. This one could cost you. I'd say it's a story you don't want to know about."

"International intrigue?"

Jake glanced at Claire. "Complete with a dead reporter if he's not careful. Let's just say I've a real strong interest in these fellows."

"Okay," Willard said. "I didn't get this old being stupid." He slipped his fedora back on, and pulled it down to a rakish angle. "See you tomorrow, gang. I'll take you up on those drinks, Jake, one of these days." Willard picked up his coat, stuck a late edition of the Daily in his jacket pocket. "Tonight it's home and hearth and, maybe, try to make another baby," he said over his shoulder as he strolled toward the door.

"There goes a happy man," Jake said, watching Willard leave the pit.

"One of these days, big fella."

Jake laughed. "Sure. Lots of talk, Slim."

Howard Turk

"Well, we found information on six of the seven names on your list. But first, what's happened since this morning? Did your mystery man call?"

"He called and I had a meeting with a bunch of Brits. The real deal is about a Japanese code machine. The guy who called wanted five hundred dollars for a manual. He said this was a test of sorts. The big item, which I figure must be the machine itself, comes later."

Claire took a deep breath. "This could get beyond delivery boy business very quickly."

"I still think it's the best way to handle it. At the meeting the boss named Rod as the contact man when I'm out of it. That's hopeful. What did you and Willard come up with?"

"Well, knowing about the code business puts a new light on those names. Two of them are basically public relations people. The chances of them having access to that kind of material are pretty low. Three of them are military types. Two majors and a colonel. They're possibilities. Could be secret service. One is a diplomat, in the economic reporting section; the other is a commercial attaché. Those might just be cover jobs."

Claire flashed Jake her Cheshire cat smile.

It was a look that usually came before some interesting bit of information. "And what else did you find?" Jake asked.

"A man, named Tanaka, who's very interesting. He's not on your list. There is no background information on him at all. No little mention of his arrival in the paper that their PR people put out. He's not even listed in the Pink Sheet, the list of consulate people. I only found out about him from a Japan-watcher friend at Shanghai University. I called her just to touch base and see if she had anything new on the Japanese. Seems my friend spotted Tanaka on the street a few weeks ago. She thinks he's an espionage man or counter-espionage man, a spy hunter. He used to be in Peking. Very tough guy, she said."

"I wonder if he's here to plug a leak at the consulate." Jake paused. "Something else. I've been thinking about the mystery man's voice ever since he called. Did any of those men ever serve in America?"

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"I think one did," Claire said as she turned pages in her notebook. "Yes. The economics man, Saito. Mr. Tota Saito. Served two years in San Francisco, 1925 to 1927." She tapped her notebook for a moment with her pencil, then said, "How could he have access to their equipment?"

"I could be completely wrong about the accent. But, you know, as smart as the Japs are about so many things, they are really bad at languages. Have you met many who speak good English or Chinese?"

"Aside from a few attachés, no."

"That brings it back to this Saito. He's a diplomat and he's served in the States and he's a regular at the Wheel."

"Is this deal the real thing?"

Jake shrugged. "I don't know. If it's not, the Brits are wasting a lot of time and talent on it."

"Maybe that's what the Japanese want."

Jake made a "who-knows" motion with his hands. "Oh, almost forgot. Two more names for the British list--Herbert Thompson and Donald McCain. They were introduced as technical people. They looked pretty shaggy, not secret service types at all. And Whitey Graham, the cop, is in the group."

"Why Graham? He's a crook."

"He's their connection with the cops. Milford is the channel to the government. They seem real serious about this business."

"Graham," Claire said again, making a sour face as she scribbled down a note and put it away in her desk drawer. She tapped her pencil on her desk for a moment. "I could try to do a story on the consulate. Get in and interview some of those people on the list."

Jake shook his head. "You probably wouldn't get much beyond the public relations people. Let's see what develops. Right now how about dinner?"

"It's a start."

Tota Saito paid his rickshaw man, added an extra large tip, and stepped down onto the sidewalk. He hesitated, wondering whether he should go in. He could feel the doorman watching him. Yes, he said to himself, if he suddenly stopped coming, it would be suspicious. He had played roulette at the Wheel for over a year, every Tuesday and

Howard Turk

Thursday night, never winning or losing much. Early on, he decided it was the atmosphere he liked at the Wheel as much as the little thrill he got gambling. The easy mixing of races, not found many places even in an open city like Shanghai, and the tone of quiet class made him feel like he was a member of a good club. After each session, he would go back to his tiny flat with a better view of the world. At least, until he went to work the next day. The Wheel and an occasional American movie were his only escape from a job which had become more and more difficult under the new government in Tokyo.

Saito walked up the three steps to the front door of the Wheel. Unlike other times he had come here, his stomach was fluttery with nerves and he hoped it didn't show on his face.

"Good evening," Saito said to the Sikh doorman holding the door open for him. He nodded to the young man in a tuxedo, who sat behind a fine antique French-style desk, in the large foyer. Saito didn't know the man's name, but they knew each other by sight. That was enough. He had thought it best not to introduce himself, although there were many times he longed to be greeted by name like many of the Wheel's patrons.

Beyond the receptionist's desk, Saito strolled to his right, across the marble entrance hall to the bar. As was his habit, he ordered a scotch and water. He allowed himself only one drink per night, fearing that he might not stop if he drank more. Saito took a sip and let his eyes roam around the smoky room. Good, he thought, all seemed normal. No one paid any attention to him. Yet the fluttering in his stomach wouldn't stop.

Despite what he had told Lucy, he didn't know what he was doing. Up to now he had been puffing himself up like a peacock. Saito, the man of principle. Saito, the sophisticated internationalist. Now that he had taken the first step, he felt like he had jumped off a cliff into the unknown. His career, built on the protocols of diplomacy, was of no help. All he knew of espionage was from a few novels and silly movies. In fact, last night he stayed up late re-reading Maugham's *Ashenden* hoping to glean some bit of procedure. He sighed and left the bar, glancing up the wide staircase to the second

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floor where Greenberg and Kuan had their offices and where, he had heard someone say, high-stakes card games were played.

Carrying his drink, Saito walked to the gambling room in what he hoped was a nonchalant manner. Ceiling fans, which turned above the roulette tables, hardly dented the cloud of cigarette smoke. Saito rested his drink on a small table for a moment and lit one of his own. He loved the smell of fine tobacco and expensive perfume. He looked for Greenberg, but he wasn't in the room. The trim middle-aged Chinese man in a tuxedo, called Mr. Hsiang, seemed to be in charge. Saito thought of him as the man with the moving eyes. As far as Saito knew, Hsiang was the only Oriental in such a position in the city. It said things about the Wheel that he liked.

"Good evening, sir," the pudgy croupier said as Saito found a space next to him at the table.

"I hope it will be good," Saito said as he placed a small bet on 31, his age, minus twenty.

"All wagers down," the croupier called, waiting to spin the wheel.

This year thirty-one was always his first wager of the evening. Saito didn't know why he did it. He couldn't recall ever having won his first bet. Usually he played only odd or even. Watching the little white ball skitter over the numbers, he wondered if he would get to play 32 and what would happen to Lucy. He worried about her. Lucy's health was poor and getting worse.

"Thirty-five," the croupier called softly.

The croupier's voice jolted Saito out of his reverie. Fool! He said to himself. Be alert. Saito glanced over his shoulder at the crowd behind him. All clear in that direction. He placed a bet on even and looked across the table. His stomach sank. He found himself looking into the eyes of Hokida, the consulate's chief propagandist. Saito managed to keep his face neutral and bow his head in recognition. Hokida did the same. Calm yourself, he thought, the tiny rat-faced man was a regular here. Saito avoided him when he could. Hokida was dangerous--very ambitious and a toady. Saito was sure Sugihara, the junior naval attaché, was also around. Those two were rarely seen apart.

Howard Turk

He slid a larger than normal amount of chips onto odd and lost. Saito just wanted to lose a little quickly and leave. Seeing Hokida had unraveled his nerves. He lost twice more and was picking up his chips when he saw Tanaka, the head of consulate security, enter the gambling room.

Saito turned away from the table hoping to lose himself in the crowd of taller Westerners and get away before he was seen. He felt clammy and began to sweat heavily. His heart pounded in his chest. Tanaka had never come here before. Something was wrong, Saito was sure of it.

Kuan's cousin, the dapper young man who had manned the reception desk, hurried into the Wheel's office. "Saito is in the gambling room."

He was called Student, named by the kitchen staff because he had gone to Shanghai University. His Chinese name was Kuan Li-shan, Larry Kuan some places.

"Did he speak to you?" Kuan asked.

The young man shook his head. "No, he never does. Just nods. Friendly enough, but he never says anything. He has no idea, I think, that I know his name."

"Any others?" Jake asked. He had had Student and Hsiang, the gambling room boss, looking for Japanese regulars.

"Two--Hokida and Sugihara." Student looked thoughtful. "I don't know if you care about this, but another fellow came in tonight, I think for the first time. Looks like Japanese military. You know, strutting little bastard with a military hair cut. He didn't look like a guy out for a nice evening."

Jake nodded. There was no love lost on the Japanese, especially among Chinese of college age. They called them the "yellow dwarfs." Jake pushed back his chair and stood up. "I think I'll look our newest boy over. See if he wants a check cashed." Check cashing and credit lines were some of the ways they developed information on their customers.

Student, who had been sitting in the visitor's chair by the side of the partner's desk, stood up too. "I'd better get back to work."

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"Thanks for the sharp eye," Jake said

"It's nothing," Student said, looking a little embarrassed by the compliment.

Jake waited until Student went out of the office, before he turned to Kuan. "A real coincidence, huh. I get a call from the mystery man and a new Jap shows up."

"Don't like it at all."

"Me neither. It smells like a hell of a lot more complicated deal than my secret service friends let on. Not surprising, given their track record." Jake got up and went to the office safe. "Let's see what we have on these guys." He took out a box of note cards that had information on the Wheel's regular clients arranged alphabetically. He stopped at Saito's card. Good, he said to himself, they had a fair amount on him. According to the card, Saito was a small bet roulette player, who lived in Hongkew, at 16 Hannen Road. If he remembered correctly, it was a modest neighborhood. There were other data. Jake scanned Saito's bank, his position at the consulate, and when he started playing at the Wheel, then moved on to check the other Japanese.

Kuan waited until Jake was done. "You could drop out and see what happens. The Brits could be bluffing about the license."

"No. I'll go along with it, at least for now," Jake said. "But I may need backup somewhere along the trail."

Kuan nodded. "Just let me know when." Kuan rarely carried, but he was cool in tight situations and a better shot than Jake, favoring the accuracy and reliability of a five-inch barrel revolver to the man-stopping power of Jake's .45. In addition to a university education at Columbia, Kuan had worked two years in New York's Chinatown for his uncle's illegal gambling syndicate. The syndicate, which was connected to the Hip Sing, the largest tong in the city, gave Kuan plenty of shooting experience. Much more, he told Jake, than he wanted.

It was a little after midnight when Jake walked downstairs and into the gambling room looking for Hsiang. Jake, who handled gambling and security, had hired Hsiang away from the biggest casino and fan tan club in the Portuguese colony of Macao. Just

Howard Turk

across the Pearl River estuary from Hong Kong, Macao was the gambling center of south China. It attracted hordes of Chinese players from Hong Kong, who crowded steamers every day for the two hour trip, as well as foreigners from all over the world. Hsiang had gone as high as a Chinese could at the foreign-owned casino, which was not very high, and was delighted to take Jake's offer of a generous salary and a small piece of the action. As far as Jake knew, Hsiang was the only Chinese floor boss in the city and it gave him great stature in the Chinese community. It was, Jake thought, a personnel move made in heaven.

"What's with the new Japanese guy?" Jake stood next to Hsiang and casually glanced around the room. Hsiang had a mental file on all the regulars and Jake knew that he would be subtly keeping his eye on the new man's action.

The dignified Hsiang, who could pass for a bank president in his tuxedo, smiled as if Jake had said something amusing. "Roulette table two. He's a deadhead, not a player, Jake. He does small bets and doesn't seem interested in the play. Keeps looking around. I can't tell what his game is. Could be he is hunting a pigeon or is checking us out for a con?"

"Has he tried to move to a past post spot?" Past posting, meaning to move a bet as soon as the grifter sees the winning number, was a crude, risky, but often successful small con. The trick, Jake and Hsiang knew, was for the cheat to find a place at the table, usually down at an end, where the croupier's eyes didn't often go. The instant the ball lands in a slot and the croupier's attention was on the wheel, the con would make his move. Even with a second croupier at the table, Jake had seen cons pull it off.

"He's stayed in the middle of the table," Hsiang said. "Maybe he's hoping for more of a crowd."

"I don't think he's a con. Did you make an offer?"

Hsiang nodded. "Both ways, a small credit line and check cashing. No interest in either one. He bought his chips with cash and told me planned to play small. Telling me, in effect, to bugger off."

Normally Jake would let Hsiang handle it, but the new man worried him. "Who's the best pickpocket in town?"

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Hsiang broke into an honest grin. "Ah so, Mr. Jake. Catchee chop chop Jap fella what is what. This b'long number one," Hsiang said in Pidgin English, the street language of the city, meaning, "That's a good way to get fast information on the Jap."

Jake laughed. "What fashion no can?" he replied, saying, "Why not?"

"The best pickpocket would be Light Hand Chow," Hsiang said. "He has been the best for years. I believe he has been in prison only once and that was when he was a very young man."

"Is he presentable?"

"Very. He dresses well and so do his helpers. Usually he works with a man and a woman. He's never tried to operate here. Light Hand knows better than that."

"Do you know where he's working now?"

"Sorry, Jake. No idea. The last time I heard, it was a few months ago, he was working the better tourist hotels. I haven't heard that he's been nipped. So he is probably still in the city."

"If Mr. Light Hand is around, Li will find him. Li knows all the low-life in town."



Shanghai, 1929. Jake Greenberg, the owner of a fashionable casino, is drawn into a daring British plot to steal a Japanese Enigma machine. The plan fails. Agents are murdered and Jake pursues the traitor who killed them.

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