

Chapter Three

The ringing was so irritating he buried his head under the pillows. The digital clock on his nightstand read 3:00 a.m. Riley growled. Reaching for the phone he wondered how Desi didn't hear it.

A gentleman with a proper British accent apologized for calling so late, but was doing so at the request of his employer, Bennett Lowe, who required Riley's services immediately. He told him a limousine was waiting outside. Riley put "the accent" on hold, pulled himself out of bed, and parted the drapes. He saw the stretch limousine with its motor running and then walked over to a small desk in an alcove off the bedroom, taking off his wet tee shirt on the way, a residual of his nightmares from days past. He flipped on his computer and searched his "client contact" folder for Lowe's name. Glancing through his notes he recalled the case. Lowe suspected his fiancée of infidelity and retained Riley to surveil her. Riley followed her from Newport Beach, California where she and Lowe were vacationing, to the Malibu Colony in Malibu, California. The "Colony" is a private residential community on the beach primarily occupied by music and film stars and affluent executives. Lowe's fiancée waved to the guard as she drove through the electrically controlled gate.

Obviously, she was no stranger. Fortunately the beach was public, and Riley hoped she was visiting one of the multimillion-dollar homes that faced the ocean. He kicked off his shoes, grabbed his video camera, and walked along the beach. The hot sand felt like

needles. The closer he walked along the water's edge the better he could see into the homes a few yards from him. The ocean was shockingly cold, even though it was August. Riley's eyes searched every window trying to find her. Suddenly, he noticed her walking onto a sundeck at the south end of the Colony. She was standing in front of a man as she took off her three-quarter length bolero top. She was wearing a very revealing bikini. Her figure was unquestionably exquisite. He videotaped her as she gracefully took off her bikini and got on top of a well-developed young man. The following day Riley's apologetic eyes told Lowe what he had expected. Riley handed him the video, and Lowe said nothing as he walked out of the room, pointing to an envelope with Riley's name on it. Riley never heard from him again. The envelope contained ten thousand dollars.

He went back to the phone.

"Is he in Newport?"

"No, sir, in Hong Kong"

"Let's talk about this in the morning!"

Riley looked at Desi sleeping and marveled at how beautiful she was.

"Mr. Riley, we must leave now."

"What's the big hurry? I can't keep my eyes opened."

"I'm terribly sorry. However, this is quite urgent. I've been authorized to pay you a hundred-thousand-dollar retainer. I know this is all terribly inconvenient, and I do apologize. However, Mr. Riley, you can sleep on the plane."

Riley threw some clothes in a duffle and absentmindedly reached for his holster. He retracted his hand, remembering he was traveling to a foreign country and would be arrested if Customs found him with an unregistered weapon.

The chauffeur drove along Imperial Highway and entered through a back way into the Los Angeles International Airport. They pulled up to a secluded tarmac where a 777 was waiting. A "B.L. Group" logo was prominently displayed under the captain's window. One of the most beautiful Chinese women Riley had ever seen greeted him as he came onboard.

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She had long, glistening jet-black hair that hugged both sides of her cherub-shaped face. Her eyes were surgically altered to appear Eurasian. Her figure was perfectly proportioned and prominently displayed in a beautiful serpent print silk dress. There was an unusually high slit up the side that exposed her well-defined, sensuous legs. The scent from her perfume was arousing.

“Good morning, Mr. Riley. I am Lee Ping, your flight attendant. May I get you a cocktail, tea or perhaps coffee?”

“Coffee, thank you.”

“Would you care for something to eat?”

“No thanks.”

“The Accent” greeted Riley. “Hello, sir, I’m Lawrence Morton. It’s my pleasure to meet you, Mr. Riley.”

Morton was impeccably dressed wearing a black linen sport jacket with a starched white on white dress shirt. His initials were embroidered on a silk tie that stopped just above his alligator belt. Riley became irritated as he glanced down and saw Morton’s spit-polished shoes. He never took the time to polish his own.

“Welcome aboard, Mr. Riley. We’ll be arriving in Hong Kong in about fourteen and a half hours. Ms. Ping prepared your bed in the stateroom. Please feel free to retire anytime.”

“Well, Lawrence, seems we’ll have plenty of time for that later. How about you tell me what this is all about.”

“I’m sorry, sir; I’m not at liberty to discuss it. Mr. Lowe will explain it.”

“Was there a reason for waking me in the middle of the morning?”

“Yes, unfortunately. Ours is a non-scheduled private aircraft. The tower gave us this time slot to take off. Otherwise, we would have had to wait until tomorrow”

The cashier’s check Morton handed him when he boarded wasn’t a coincidental sum. It was the precise amount he and Desi applied for to do some remodeling to their home. Bennett Lowe apparently made it his business to know those things.

The engines roared as the plane made its way toward the runway. A few moments later Riley looked down at the sleeping city with

billions of lights and tried to spot landmarks where he had been a few hours earlier. His thoughts turned to Desi waking up and not finding him there. He never apologized, and now he compounded the problem by leaving in the middle of the night without writing her a note. He stood up when the plane leveled and stretched. He had never seen a plane so magnificently designed. The soft leather upholstered chairs and sofas complimented the burl wood interior walls and beige carpeting with their harmonious shades of light pastels. In the bathrooms were bathtubs with showers set in polished emerald granite.

Facsimile machines, printers, computers, modems, copiers, scanners and a bank of telephones were situated throughout the plane. Gold and silver Cartier clocks provided the time on each continent. There was also a chef and bartender onboard. As exciting as it was, Riley was finding it difficult to keep his eyes open. He excused himself and went to the stateroom where his thoughts turned to Desi. He fell asleep, but not without guilt for reviewing Lee Ping in his mind.

A knock on the door woke him. His eyes momentarily failed to remind him where he was. Groggy and slightly disoriented, he opened the door in his underwear, his penis in a full morning bloom.

“I’m sorry to wake you, Mr. Riley, but we’re about an hour from landing. I thought you would like time to bathe and eat breakfast.”

“Yes, I would. Thank you.”

Riley picked his wet t-shirt off the floor. The nightmares wouldn’t even abandon him thirty-five thousand feet above the earth.

During breakfast Riley’s thoughts turned to Desi and how brilliantly she had researched Lowe’s background for him before he accepted the Newport-Malibu assignment. Desi told him that Lowe, among many things, was a prominent industrialist known as a “Tai Pan” meaning chief ruler, a title derived during the 19th century and bestowed upon extremely rich and influential men in China.

There was no discrepancy among the journalists writing financial news articles. Lowe was indeed a multi-billionaire who also owned banks throughout the world, and he sat on numerous boards of

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international conglomerates. His wealth and influence was immeasurable. By the looks of his staff and Boeing 777, Riley assumed Bennett Lowe hadn't suffered any noticeable setbacks.

The landing at Kai Tak, International Airport in Hong Kong was always a frightening experience, even for seasoned travelers, because the plane first touched down on a runway built on top of Victoria Harbor and then gradually made its way onto land. The landing was flawless. The plane headed for a hanger with a "B.L. Group" logo prominently displayed.

A chauffeur stood at the rear door of a 1960 classic white Rolls Royce. Within minutes, Riley and Morton were outside the airport.

So much for Customs and my gun, thought Riley.

They drove along the perimeter of Kowloon and into a tunnel that ran under Victoria Harbor and exited in Hong Kong Island. Riley knew all about Hong Kong after spending nine horrific months there with Desi.

Hong Kong, with its three hundred square miles so encumbered with soaring office buildings, banks and hotels it's a wonder the island hasn't sunk into the South China Sea. Riley noticed the small mountains nestled in the background of Kowloon. Mainland China was just over those mountains. Driving along Connaught Road, the chauffeur stopped for a huge throng of people running toward the ferries that transported them back and forth across the harbor between Kowloon and Hong Kong. Riley grinned when they passed Hollywood Road. One high-rise building had caught his attention because he didn't recall seeing it before. Morton told him that the fifty-story building was called "The Pencil Building" because of its very narrow point at the top.

Farther up the road along the banks of the harbor, the business district faded and was replaced by landscaped roads leading into affluent residential areas. Signs announced their approach to Repulse Bay's Crescent Beach, where homes in this zone were the most exclusive in the world.

The limousine turned up a steep narrow road that twisted around a sheared cliff. Riley noticed a huge twelve-foot wall surrounding

one particular estate with subtle electronic eyes mounted on it, monitoring all movement within fifty feet.

The limousine made a wide turn into the estate inside that wall. They continued up what appeared to be a never-ending winding driveway. A huge wrought iron gate inscribed with a “BL” logo opened electronically, obviously monitored by persons unseen. The landscaping along the driveway was exquisite. The house ran the length of the cliff. Riley noticed two dozen covert cameras and six infrared photoelectric beams installed around the perimeter of the house. Motion detection sensors were behind some of the plants. Farther up the motor court was a five-car garage and a Bell Helicopter resting on its pad.

Morton led the way to the front door, which was protected by a stainless steel gate aligned with vertical airplane cables two inches apart. The only window visible was near the entrance, where a beautiful atrium filled with desert plants was built partially outside and inside the home. A Chinese butler greeted them at the door. The home and view overwhelmed Riley. The farthest wall from the entrance was a floor-to-ceiling butted glass window. Through it, the Kowloon skyline could be seen.

To the left of the entrance was an informal dining room with a two-inch thick beveled glass tabletop resting on a stainless steel sculptured base. The dining room chairs were refurbished antiques from the 1930s. The floors were bleached pecan, and there was a series of skylights above the entry to the glass wall spilling bouncing light into the huge entryway. To the right was a cozy media room consisting of a large, flat digital television with state of the art speakers. A guest has only to sit in any of the dozen chenille-covered chairs or couches to feel seductively comfortable. The magnificent art on the walls and the stunning bronze statues were situated to insure the final seduction. Walking past a huge floor-to-ceiling window, Morton said, “Did you know, Mr. Riley, legend has it that the eight soft peaks of the Kowloon Ridge to the north are dragons protecting the pearl of perfection, which is Hong Kong?”

Riley smiled.

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The butler showed them to the study where Bennett Lowe was standing with his back to them, looking out the window. Riley noticed the window was bullet proof.

“Mr. Riley, I apologize for disturbing you in the middle of the night. I took the liberty of sending your wife three dozen roses with a note saying you were sorry you missed her dinner party.”

Lowe turned to face Riley. Riley looked down at the floor and shifted his weight from leg to leg. Desi would have recognized Riley’s body language to mean he was fuming with anger. Looking past Lowe, deliberately avoiding eye contact, Riley noticed gun-toting bodyguards walking by outside. The brief interlude passed, and Riley maintained his calm. Bennett Lowe looked like he hadn’t slept in days; his lower eyelids were dark and swollen. Although seemingly exhausted, he appeared fit for a man who Riley guessed was sixty-five plus years. His white hair lent a distinguished look to him, as did his red smoking jacket trimmed in black silk. Riley tried desperately to recall the actor’s name Lowe reminded him of. It was the same name he had trouble with the first time he saw him in Newport Beach. When it finally came to him, he felt accomplished. Bennett Lowe could be a stand-in for John Forsythe.

Lowe gestured for Riley to sit, and Morton excused himself. Lowe nodded to the butler, who poured hot tea and set down a sterling silver tray with Limoges plates decorated with petite finger sandwiches. The butler exited so quietly Riley never heard him leave.

“Mr. Lowe, why am I here?”

Lowe’s bloodshot eyes met Riley’s and burrowed into them, causing Riley to feel awkward.

“I admire your directness, but I’m offended by your rudeness. You’re a guest in my home, and I expect you to conduct yourself accordingly.”

“I fail to see where I was rude. I boarded your plane in the middle of the night with a man who acted as if he would be executed if he revealed the purpose of my engagement. After fourteen hours of travel, I think it’s not unreasonable or inappropriate to ask you what you want of me.”

Riley was incensed.

Lowe's expression didn't waver.

"My only child, Peter, turned twenty-five years old two months ago. The morning after his birthday he was found dead in his apartment. The police said he died from an overdose of heroin. I know my son's indulgences; Heroin wasn't one of them. My security staff couldn't find out what really happened to Peter. I'm not accustomed to failure. I believe my son was murdered."

Lowe handed Riley a sterling silver framed photograph of Peter.

"This was Peter when he was a teenager. During that time we had some rough periods, but he turned out just fine. He was bright and was doing quite well running our Vietnam operation."

Riley's stomach knotted as Lowe's voice rose, sounding more irritated.

"The police closed the investigation. Imagine those idiots. Peter loved Saigon far more than Hong Kong or Beijing or, for that matter, anywhere."

"Mr. Lowe, did you bring me here to investigate what happened to your son in Vietnam?" Before Lowe could reply, Riley reached in his pocket and handed Lowe the envelope that held the retainer.

"I'm sorry, I can't help you, sir."

"What do you mean? Isn't it enough? If you want more money..."

"No, it's not the money. I'm not your man. I won't go back to Vietnam; bad memories."

"Bad memories?" repeated Lowe.

Riley saw an inexplicable strength in the tired man's eyes.

"Mr. Riley, I need your help and I would be a fool if I pretended otherwise. I appreciate how you feel about Vietnam and losing your men there and all the other horrors you experienced."

"You have an effective intelligence operation, Mr. Lowe."

"You've been in therapy for years to rid yourself of those memories. It hasn't helped. What will help is for you to return to Vietnam, face your demons, and destroy them. That, Mr. Riley is the only way you'll find peace."

"What makes you so sure?"

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“Don’t question me.”

Riley didn’t respond. His breathing accelerated as he became more angry.

He hated how Lowe was able to intimidate him. No one had ever been able to do that. Why was this man so good at it?

“Perhaps you’re more comfortable on 114th street than resolving the reason behind my son’s death?”

Riley could hardly contain himself. Lowe knew about his psychological problems, Desi’s party, and now he was ridiculing him for conducting the Hanson surveillance. He drew on all of his resources to remain calm.

“Mr. Lowe, why did you choose me for this assignment? There are certainly competent PIs in Hong Kong, and all over South East Asia.”

“Because you worked for me before and performed well. I’m a loyal man, sir. You will come to learn that about me. You know your way around Vietnam and you speak the language. Does that answer your question?”

Riley felt a gnawing that required more information.

“Not quite. What gives you the right to invade my privacy by accessing my doctor’s records, keeping me under surveillance, and having the audacity to send my wife flowers using my name?”

“Please, Mr. Riley, you’re acting like a child. Do you think I accumulated my fortune by not checking into every detail beforehand? Really, you of all people should know what I mean. For heavens sake, your old employer, the CIA, does the same thing seven days a week, twenty-four hours a day. My son Peter was the most important person in my life. I loved him dearly. Had he been killed in an auto accident or died from cancer I could accept it. But someone purposely took my son from me, and that I’ll not accept. Do you have any idea how difficult it was for Peter to grow up with me as his father? He was challenged from the day he was born. He was just starting to forge his own identity. He was becoming his own man. So, back to your question, Mr. Riley, when I want something done right I hire the best.”

“What intelligence do you have?”

“Not much, I’m afraid. We know from his friends where he ate the night he died. We also learned about a short trip he planed for the following day. I know of bars he frequented. My investigators in Saigon are Vietnamese and they won’t reveal anything if it involves one of their own. I thought about posting a reward, but who knows if I would ever learn the truth.”

A halting silence fell upon the room; neither man uttered a word.

Lowe stared until Riley said, “Give me tonight to think it over. I want to help, but I’m not sure I can. Mr. Lowe, I hate that Godforsaken place.”

“I made a reservation for you at the Regent Hotel. My chauffeur will drive you back. He has the key to your room, so there is no need to check in.”

“I appreciate your patience, Mr. Lowe, and I sincerely regret if I caused you unnecessary anxiety.”

They shook hands as the butler appeared at precisely the right time and led the way to the front door.

Lowe called out to him.

“Please take this file and review it at your leisure.” Lowe handed him a file folder.

Riley looked back through the rear window of the Rolls as the estate faded from view, wondering if he should have simply said no without leaving an option open. He never saw a home as elegant, comfortable and serene as Lowe’s. Yet with all the bodyguards and counter-electronic surveillance equipment, Lowe was living in a virtual fortress. Riley was having a difficult time with Lowe seeing his medical records and having him surveiled. Lowe’s people must have surveiled him for about a week. He met a lot of men comparable to Lowe, perhaps not as wealthy but just as devious, who first investigate those they want to engage, only to know what buttons to push. It seemed peculiar to him that with all of Lowe’s wealth and resources he couldn’t learn the truth about his son. He promised himself to look into his own back yard when he returned to Los Angeles for anyone who could have provided Lowe’s people with information about his personal agenda.

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As the limousine wound its way down the cliff, Riley was reminded of another time when patient's records were stolen. A homicide detective friend of his in Washington, D.C. visited him when he was with the CIA. His friend was beside himself over a serial killer who murdered six people, two of which were small children, who he first raped. All the murders took place in Washington, D.C. Hair and blood samples at the crime scenes matched his suspect's DNA. There was no doubt the evidence would bring in a guilty verdict, but during the killer's arraignment an entourage of diplomats obtained the killer's release because he was a foreign diplomat and was protected from prosecution under the Diplomatic Immunity Act. The State Department couldn't prevent his release. The killer walked out of jail a free man. Thereafter, the task force found out the same man was the prime suspect for the murders of twenty people in Moscow. The desperate detective went to Riley, hoping he had a contact in government who could prevent the killer from going free. Riley summoned his closest and most trusted friends in the agency to listen to the detective's dilemma. What sparked their interest was finding out the killer saw a psychiatrist regularly. It was agreed they had to see the psychiatrist's file. They broke into the doctor's office, copied the killer's file, and left not a trace they had been there.

They learned the killer confessed to having horrifying nightmares about dead people chasing him, and the closer they came the more difficult it was for him to breath. He admitted to taking stimulants to avoid sleep. The doctor diagnosed him as a schizophrenic, due in part to the stimulants he was taking. The doctor recommended he be hospitalized because of exhaustion, but the killer refused. It was obvious the psychiatrist didn't know the dead people in his patient's nightmares were those he killed.

The detective had the killer under surveillance for weeks prior to his arrest and knew his daily routine. The killer always went to his apartment at exactly six o'clock in the evening and would go out again later in the evening. With help from a forensic psychiatrist, Riley, the detective, and the selected few at the CIA covertly

formulated their plan. Had any of them been found out they would have faced criminal charges and be relieved of duty immediately. It was the photos of the kids that convinced the team to make certain the maniac never hurt anyone again. The detective gave three photographs of male victims to Riley's team. They took the photographs to the makeup department of a film studio in New York and ask them to duplicate the three faces with latex masks. The artists were thrilled to be doing this for the infamous CIA, so they thought.

Three men were chosen from the D.C. police department who had the same physiques of the deceased. The team called the three stand-ins "the living dead." Uniforms were purchased for them that match those worn by the staff in the killer's building. One was a valet, another an elevator operator, and the third a doorman. Several undercover detectives were scattered in and around the building, just in case.

At precisely 6:00 p.m. the killer pulled into the garage. The valet greeted the diplomat. "Good evening, sir, did you have a nice day?" The killer ignored him.

"Sir! Don't be so rude. I asked you a question."

The killer spun around, furious. As he was about to degrade the valet, he saw his face.

"Sorry, I had something on my mind, I didn't hear you. Yes, I had a lovely day, thank you."

The killer walked rapidly toward the elevator, noticeably shaken. The doors opened. "Good evening, sir, how was your day?" The killer's face went white. He struggled to breathe and began to mumble in Russian while pressing up against the closed elevator doors. He rushed out of the elevator toward the mailboxes.

The doorman confronted him. "Good evening, sir, how was your day?"

The killer began pacing back and forth in the lobby.

"Are you okay? Perhaps a little fresh air would help."

All three disguised agents now stood together in the lobby, staring at the killer and laughing softly. An agent outside was notified by radio. "Let me open the door for you. You'll feel better if

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you get some fresh air across the street in the park. Don't worry, we'll be waiting for you when you come back."

The killer bolted out the door, running toward the park. The car was going full speed when it struck, throwing him a hundred and fifty feet down the street where his limp body landed on the pavement. The car kept going. The hit and run police report stated there were no witnesses.

Riley sank back in the soft leather of the Rolls Royce, trying to relax, but unfortunately his thoughts turned to Lowe's son and what happened to him. Before he knew it, they were at the Regent Hotel. There are dozens of first class hotels in Hong Kong. The two most notable are the Regent and the Peninsula on Salisbury Road in Kowloon, two blocks from each other. Both have beautiful harbor views.

The hotels are within walking distance to Nathan Street, where expensive designer boutiques are found along with world-class tailors capable of making a custom suit or dress overnight. Occasionally, authentic Chinese antiques can be found. Riley was taken to a penthouse suite overlooking the harbor. He tried to see Lowe's estate across the harbor in Hong Kong, but couldn't find it. Below his window the Queen Elizabeth II was moored. Although he was in Hong Kong for nine months with Desi, he hadn't ventured out much. His thoughts turned to her as he watched the neon lights come alive around the harbor. "Fragrant Harbor" is the translation of Hong Kong. It's a reflecting pool for millions of fascinating Chinese and English neon signs flickering in the water while illuminating the city like a rainbow. He wanted so much to be with Desi, and he was terribly concerned how she would handle what he planned to tell her. Glancing at his watch, he calculated it was two in the morning in Los Angeles. How and what could he say to prevent her fury? There were three-dozen roses delivered to her that she knew weren't from him because he always signed "RR." The phone rang once; Desi had been crying.

"Are you okay? Where in God's name are you?" Desi asked.

"I'm fine, and I'm sorry. Murphy never showed up to relieve me;

his wife must have had quintuplets.”

“Rob, where you are?”

“Hong Kong.”

“Seriously, where are you?”

“I’m telling you the truth, Des. Do you remember Bennett Lowe?”

“Rob, how do you expect me to remember anything? It’s two in the morning! Do you have any idea how frantic I’ve been?”

“How was the party?”

“I suggest we not go there, all right?”

“You received the roses, didn’t you?”

“Yes. Who sent them?”

“I’m trying to tell you. Bennett Lowe. Do you remember him?”

“Yes, what about him?”

“He sent the roses as I was flying to Hong Kong on his private jet. His son died.”

“That doesn’t explain the flowers, Rob.”

“The egotistical son of a bitch wanted you to think I sent them for missing your party. The kid was only twenty-five years old, and Lowe thinks he was murdered.”

“I don’t understand, Rob. Where do you fit in? The Hong Kong police are very good.”

“He died in Saigon.”

“Rob, don’t tell me he wants you to investigate his son’s death in Saigon.”

“See why I love you so much. You’re brilliant.”

“Have you lost your mind? Are you on drugs or something?”

“Slow down. I’m not on drugs. Calm down. Lowe made a lot of sense to me. I’ve had twenty years of therapy, and I’m no better off today than I was twenty years ago.”

“Do you realize that you’ll be going straight back to hell? And since when do you discuss your private life and your therapy with a client?”

“Not now, Desi. Listen. If I go back to ’Nam to face my demons, maybe I can destroy them. Maybe, just maybe I can rid myself of the nightmares.”

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“Your therapist is going to be pissed.”

“It wouldn’t be half as bad if you were with me.”

“Please, you know I can’t leave. I’m about to start the biggest trial of my career. Damn you! Where are you staying?”

“I’m at the Regent, but I may have to stop in Bangkok for a day or two. You know where I’ll be staying there.”

“The Oriental? I can’t stand it. I’m jealous”

Desi lit a cigarette and fluffed her pillows. She knew it was going to be a long, sleepless night. Hong Kong. Just the mentioned of it triggered her worst thoughts. She met Rob during recruitment day at Georgetown University. He was recruiting for the CIA.

She was a Chinese language major graduating valedictorian and going on to law school. All she wanted was to make love with Riley, but he kept going on about the Agency’s spy plane missions along China’s borders and how fascinating it would be for her to listen in on the Chinese intelligence operations. Before she realized what she had done, the CIA offered her a position as a linguist specialist at HKOAC run by MI6 and the Central Intelligence Agency. When she arrived in Hong Kong she was given an entirely different assignment. Her superiors wanted her to be a covert operative and a killing machine. Although she was an exceptional student, her handlers had difficulties with her overcoming her contempt for taking the life of a human. They repeatedly drilled her that a millisecond of hesitation could mean her life, and they put her through a myriad of psychological tests. She took numerous advanced martial arts classes, not for a degree, but to learn how to kill.

Her handlers had to be convinced she possessed an animalistic instinct to prevail. After weeks of intense training, she came to despise it all. This was not what she had envisioned when she applied to the CIA. She would have resigned had it not been for Riley and what she perceived would be terribly disappointing to him.

Riley was pacing. He didn’t want to deal with his nightmarish demons. As he stared out the window watching the harbor bounce reflections of neon lights, his thoughts turned to Desi when the

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Chinese released her and flew her to Hong Kong. She was unconscious and near death's door. She was rushed to a private hospital where she spent nine excruciating months' undergoing reconstructive and skin graft surgeries. Riley could never quite get over her courage and tolerance to pain. Very few men could have endured what she had. Most would have swallowed their cyanide capsules. The doctors were astounded by her infrequent use of morphine.

She explained that the narcotics interfered with her ability to concentrate while she and Riley talked for hours on end. She cherished those talks so much. What concerned the doctors most were the blows she sustained to her head. She was experiencing periodic convulsions. The CAT scan revealed two lesions that were applying pressure. They had to be surgically removed, or she would have to try an experimental drug. Everyone opted to go with the medication that miraculously shrunk the lesions. The physicians were hopeful she would live a normal life, providing she stayed on the medication.