

## One

The midnight blue Chrysler 300 stood just a few feet away when Kwong and Matson got out of the elevator on Parking Level C. They had just dropped thirty-six stories in one of Tung Chung's Citygate towers after interviewing a potential witness on a missing persons case. Kwong climbed into the passenger seat with the help of his silver-headed cane and settled his bulk into the leather.

"Complete waste of time," he said, tapping the tip of his cane on the floor. "A situation that I'm afraid you'll encounter all too often, Matson. A person reads about a case in the paper and decides that they'd like to see the police, even if they know nothing."

"Yes, Inspector," agreed Matson "And driving all the way out here to Lantau Island for no real information."

Kwong looked at his watch. "It's just eleven thirty. Since we're here in Tung Chung, what would you say to some wonderful whole cracked crab in curry sauce, served Thai style?"

"That sounds good to me."

"Not far from here there's an excellent restaurant called Melody Thai. I think you'll like it."

Matson pulled out of the garage and turned onto Yu Tung Road, heading southwest. The radio receiver came on. "Abducted child. Last seen being driven by his estranged father in a white 2007 Toyota Wish, Hong Kong license plate KA 5229. All units respond if you see the car."

The stoplight ahead turned red, and they pulled to a stop. A small child looked out the rear window of the car in front of them and smiled and waved.

"That youngster seems to be enjoying himself. Pity some parents can't work together to raise healthy children," commented Kwong.

"Inspector, look at the license plate! KA 5229! That's the car the police are looking for, right in front of us."

"Then put the blinker on the roof and pull him over when we cross the intersection."

Matson rolled down the window and put the magnetic blinker on the roof of the Chrysler. When the light turned green, he turned the siren on, and the white Toyota jumped forward, then the driver put on the gas. It was obvious that he didn't want to be stopped by any police.

Kwong picked up the mike as Matson put his foot down to follow the fleeing car. “This is Inspector Kwong. We’re in Tung Chung, following the Toyota Wish, license number KA5229. Suspect is driving southwest on Yu Tung Road, and we are in pursuit. Cancel that. He just turned northwest onto Shun Tung Road, heading toward the Chek Lap Kok Bridge.”

The Toyota ran two red lights ahead of them, and Matson followed him with the siren clearing the way. At the second light, he had to brake until a panel truck crossed out of the way. They reached the circle at the south end of the bridge, where the other driver raced around twice, deciding where to go. Instead of the bridge, he headed east on Tung Chung Waterfront Road. Ahead of them, The North Lantau Highway rose to the overpass to the island which held Hong Kong International Airport. The Wish sped under the overpass and continued east. Matson and Kwong, in the bigger, more powerful car gained on him until he suddenly swerved left and turned onto the Chung Kung Ferry Terminal pier. Matson slammed on his brakes, barely making the turn.

“That was a big mistake,” said Kwong, catching his breath. “He’s found a dead end, where we can arrest him.”

They headed onto the pier, more slowly now, since the prey was slowing as well. There was a sudden squeal of tires, and the Toyota spun around and raced back down the pier, heading right at them. Matson veered to the right, and the other car sped past them.

“Dammit,” he said and spun the steering wheel to the left, putting his foot back on the gas. The Chrysler began to turn, but too late. Its two right wheels slammed into the low wooden curb, and the big car lifted up, turning in a graceful arc and hitting the water next to the pier. It sank fast, even with the air capsule inside, and settled on the rocky bottom of the bay.

Matson could taste blood in his mouth, and he licked his lip. He must have hit the steering wheel during the impact, he thought.

“Are you all right?” he heard the Inspector ask.

“I think so. Only a cut lip. How are you?”

“Just angry.” Kwong looked around inside the watery fortress. “The water’s starting to come in faster. We had best get out of here.”

“Can you swim?”

“Of course. Sometimes being fat has its benefits. I’m going to shoulder the door open. Be careful of the wash.”

“Okey dokey.”

Kwong pushed his weight against the door, and it blew open, followed by a torrent of salt water. He pulled himself out and stroked to the top, holding his cane in one hand. When he reached the surface, he looked around and saw the growing crowd. He heard a cheer as his head broke water, then a second one when Matson bobbed up near him. They swam to the shore, where eager hands helped pull them onto the land. Kwong stood up and pulled off his Harris Tweed jacket, then wrung it out.

“It’s amazingly durable fabric,” he said to Matson, who was attempting to work the water out of his clothes, as well. “The worst thing about this is that bloody bastard got away,” he said.

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At five o’clock that afternoon, Kwong’s phone rang. “This is Chief Luk, Inspector,” said an irritated voice on the other end of the line.

“I expect to see you and Tai in my office in five minutes,” it said, then hung up.

Kwong scowled and called Matson, “Being my protégé, you have to take the bad with the good. Chief Luk wants to see us both, now.”

“I’ll be right there,” said Matson.

When they reached the chief’s office, his secretary shook her head at them and said, “He’s pretty bad. Be careful what you say.”

They entered the office, and Luk motioned for them to sit.

“Do you gentlemen have any idea how much it will cost to clean the salt water residue from that car?” He paused and looked at each of them in turn, “I don’t think you’d like to have it taken out of your salaries.”

He walked back behind his desk and sat down, then smiled at them, “Fortunately, a couple of more positive things happened because of your escapade. Spotting the car where you did led the airport police to double its watch, and the abductor was arrested in the airport parking lot, holding plane tickets to the Philippines for himself and the boy.”

Kwong breathed a sigh of relief. “I’m very glad to hear that, Chief. Obviously, that was the outcome that we were striving for.”

“Yes, I’m sure.”

“What was the second thing, sir?” asked Matson.

“By the time the car was pulled from the water, it was inhabited by three wrasse and a Chocolate Grouper, so the towing company waived their fees and took the fish to one of the local waterfront restaurants.” Luk looked down and then broke into laughter.

“So, you saved the taxpayers a little money, after all.”

All three men laughed at that, relieved that some of the tension was broken.

“But I’m not through with the two of you yet,” said Luk, sounding serious again. “Driving off a pier is dangerous business. You could have been badly injured or even killed. This kind of behavior is not what I want to see from my officers. You have both been through serious strain lately. Kwong, you’ve been kidnapped and badly beaten. And Tai, you’ve had serious problems of your own. Neither of you can be in a frame of mind to help the department.”

He picked up a pen from the desk and tapped it decisively on a yellow-lined notebook in front of him, “I want both of you to take a vacation. You need some time off to come to grips with where you are and what you’re doing. I don’t care where you go, as long as it’s at least a thousand miles from Hong Kong. And I don’t want to see your faces around here for a month. That is all, and the city thanks both of you for what you do for us.”