

CHAPTER FOUR

Hong Kong, Berlin, New York

Crawford Stetson barely looked at the young Asian girl who lay on a corner of the king-sized bed. She had drawn the fine, rose colored linen sheet up around her body, revealing only one of her rather small breasts. She was childlike, barely a teenager.

Stretching red and blue striped suspenders over his bulky chest, Crawford tucked the tails of his Hong Kong tailored shirt into blue pinstriped trousers. He fumbled in his pocket for money, withdrew a silver money clip, and thumbed three fifty dollar bills from the clip which he tossed onto the bed. He

didn't bother talking to the girl; why talk? There was nothing to talk about.

A diminutive hall attendant in a white mess jacket with three green wrist stripes and large golden buttons slipped into the suite the minute Crawford had exited on his way to the elevator bank.

"You OK?"

"Sure, why not?"

"He didn't hurt you, did he? That pig."

"No. I can take care of myself."

"Don't be so sure! These men are beasts. You know that."

"That one can't even get it up; his jade stalk is broken." She laughed in a hollow and brittle way.

"Some times those are the worst kind, the ones who can't do it. They beat people instead."

"I have a knife. See." She held out a small, thin, delicate but lethal looking blade.

"I hope you never have to use it," the room attendant said, busying himself with the room service cart and its assorted plates that had earlier held a late night snack for Crawford.

"You should leave soon."

"Don't worry, I can't stand the smell of that man."

"Let's hurry. He could return any minute."

The waiter copied files from the Stetson's lap top computer, using a specially designed Zip drive that was ideal for clandestine work. "The fool probably didn't lock his files. Who knows, we might get lucky."

The young woman, now dressed in a simple outfit of designer style jeans, man's blue shirt, and leather vest, surveyed the room and moved to the open carry-on suitcase. It didn't take long for her to go through it, finding nothing of interest except for a receipt for a restaurant in Amsterdam, Holland. She copied the receipt using a miniature digital camera.

"Did he have his brief case with him?"

"Of course."

"Did you check the telephone calls?"

"Both incoming and outgoing. Five calls: Two to Germany. One from Germany. Two in Hong Kong."

"Let's go. There is nothing more for us here."

"Will you be coming to the meeting tonight?"

"No. It's far too risky. The PLA cops are worse than the British. Best if you don't go. You've done enough already."

"Easy for you to say."

"Saying is always easy. Right action...well, that is another thing."

"Come, let's leave."

The service elevator at the end of the hall responded to their call, and moments later they were in the basement of the hotel, close to the giant kitchen where the prep work was done for the elegant French style cuisine served to the guests two levels above. The room waiter removed his white jacket and hung it in a utilitarian, green metal locker. The girl stood by and watched. While he seemed nervous, she seemed calm.

Finally he punched out, nodded to several co-workers and the two of them left by the stairs that brought them to the back entrance on the ground floor of the huge hotel. They pushed out into the moist air of the warm, May morning of Hong Kong.

"Remember, you don't have to go."

"You are too cautious. Don't be an old lady."

"Caution is what has gotten me through the last forty-one years. Maybe you are in a hurry to become someone's ancestor, me I'm in no hurry."

Berlin

Herbert Kraemer took shelter from a sharp evening cloudburst

in the alcove of one of the few old buildings on Wilhelmstrasse on his way home. He was disappointed in himself and in his colleagues. Where was the spirit, the boldness that allowed great things to happen? They were nothing more than fussy old German businessmen! Hatred was reserved for that fatuous American, Crawford Stetson; but he had to admit that he also admired Stetson's dash and fearlessness. Those damned Americans, though, you can't trust them, he mused.

That evening he had been forced much to his chagrin to defend Stetson, this man and his actions, defend them to his superiors, a cranky group of high placed retired business men and government officials. None of them saw what was going on in the world. They relied on the old, tried, and comfortable. To have gotten them this far was almost a miracle, except for the fact that some Germanic thinking still embraced hope for global domination.

Kraemer had been trained as a scientist, a theoretical physicist involved with particle physics. In that training as the brightest minds in the world explored String Theory and its attempt to rationalize the differences between Einstein's Special Relativity Theory and Quantum Mechanics, Kraemer learned the true importance of the intuitive, creative leap.

Such leaps throughout the history of science had lead to major breakthroughs, ground-breaking insights and theories. Back in the sixties an American named Khun, a Harvard scientist, wrote a book entitled *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* that talked about breakthroughs; but it also pointed out that the main body of academics were acolytes who defended the current reigning paradigms to the death--until a new paradigm emerged. Then these acolytes would flock to the new paradigm: *The king is dead, long live the king!* They were dangerous in their narrowness and their institutionalized defense of the established. The group he worked for were equally dangerous.

Kraemer saw himself as capable of breakthrough thinking. And he was doing just that, but for the stupidity of his colleagues. They were the acolytes to an old way of thinking, and that way of thinking would never get them to where he, Kraemer and the American, Stetson, wanted to go. The two of them in some unholy alliance determined by a mixture of fate and chance were the only ones who had the vision and the ability to bring it off. Only the two of them; and he wished fervently it were only one, him; but reality told him that it would have to be the two of them. Money was a key ingredient, and Stetson had access to it, as did the old Germans.

Herbert wished that there were a way to neutralize the old men. Why couldn't they realize the current course which civilization was taking lead inexorably to a dead end? The greed was too great, the politics too old-fashioned. They had chortled when the American business world was shown to be corrupt and driven by great selfish greed in the opening years of the 21st century. They congratulated themselves as being too shrewd to get caught; too sophisticated compared with the naïve Americans. They also had been at it much longer.

Why couldn't they see it what was happening now? The world model was changing; globalisation was a big part of it, the collapse of the importance of nationhood in the face of worldwide businesses was another part; and the final force vector was ethnic/religious clashes all over the world. At any given time there were more than sixty fights going on throughout the world that qualified as wars! But it was not even a rhetorical question. Kraemer was not capable of understanding minds that did not embrace the possible; he was both optimistic and opportunistic. Change was opportunity.

For Kraemer it was impossible to comprehend depression, the deep depression that seemed to characterize the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, a malaise brought on in part by post modernism and its lack of moral anchors. His simple anodyne

