

## Between Heaven and Earth: Book Two - A Cross to Bear - Chapter Three - Bringing In a Couple of Keys

Michael Downey  
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When the big KAL Boeing 737 arrived at the gate at Incheon International Airport, Eddy Alfa wasn't nervous at all. He had done this more than a few times. Fact is it wasn't a couple of keys it was really only a few lose joints. They were safely tucked into a slit he had cut into the back of the thick leather belt he was wearing.

Dressed in a black T-shirt with the words "I've Got A Big Dick" written in four inch white letters, baggy cargo shorts, and flip flops he figured he fit right in. He picked up his one checked bag and headed for customs. Eddy was a native of Southern California, a child of the seventies, and a rock and roll wanna-be. His personal philosophy could be best described as liberal hedonism. He saw the world through the prism of his adulation of the big name rock groups and his greatest accomplishments in life were the concerts he had attended. He believed in hard work, at least until he had enough money to get his party on. The conservative drug laws of South Korea, like most laws, didn't faze him at all. He lived to party on.

Eddy had lived in Korea for eight years and had taught at various universities, public schools, and private academies; usually until they got hip to his act and fired him. Since there was no shortage of jobs teaching English in Korea at that time, he always found another job. Sometimes he decided he was sick of the 'shit' at a job and just quit and went on vacation till funds became short.

Devilishly handsome, slim, and well spoken when he was sober, the ladies loved him. The expat community was small enough that Guy knew Eddy and had worked together with him at the same English Academy on the outskirts of Seoul sometime back. At that time Eddy often showed up for classes at two in the afternoon reeking of alcohol. Students noticed and asked if he had been drinking.

He always replied "Of course not. I drank a lot last night and the aroma is still hanging around."

Finally at an academy dinner for all the teachers he went too far. He arrived at the Korean restaurant forty minutes late and almost falling down drunk. Eddy drank hard all through dinner and by the time they had arrived at the obligatory singing room, he was out of control. He hit on all the women teachers one by one without paying any attention to their rebuffs. The director asked her husband to try and get him to stop. Eddy drunkenly cursed all Koreans in general and present company in particular. Next he took several swings at the husband. In the end Guy dragged him out and stuffed him in a cab. The next day he couldn't understand what the fuss was all about. Anyway there were other jobs.

This time Eddy was returning from his favorite vacation spot. Ten days in a Bangkok cathouse always seemed to charge his batteries even if it drained his bank account. The whores were cheap and the recreational pharmaceuticals were plentiful. On this trip, even he was amazed at the depravity of the twin twelve year olds he had spent the last three days with.

"Ain't life grand?" he thought without a single pang of conscience.

Eddy passed through customs without a care and got down to business. He needed a ride, a place to crash for a couple of days, and a job.

"Better call Kyle"

At a Burger King on the arrivals level he dug through his bag and came up with his cell phone and turned it on. Of course the battery was dead so he located his charger and an outlet on the wall. He tried Kyle's number a couple times with no response so he sent a Kakao message. Kakao was the internet based messaging service that was wildly popular among Koreans.

"What up dog?" he queried.

Within ten minutes he got the reply "Where you at Negro?"

"Just got in; still at the airport"

"Bring me anything?"

"My dick"

"Fuck off!"

"Anyway welcome back."

"What are you gonna do next?" Kyle changed the nature of the exchange.

"Can you pick me up?" he replied

"What!!!! Take the limousine bus," he was advised.

Now this was not in Eddy's plan. In the first place he was down to his last hundred thousand won and he was in frugal mode which really meant freeload. The bus cost twelve thousand won and he felt confident that he could impose on Kyle to drive the hour and a half out to the airport to get him. The tolls and parking fee was immaterial to Eddy. In addition he wanted to sample the weed on the ride back into Seoul.

"Come on, be a dude!" Eddy thrust.

"It's a long way and the traffic is gonna suck at this hour," Kyle parried.

"I did bring you something and you'll like it," Eddy played his hole card.

"Ok. Wait. Gotta drop the kids off and I'm on the way," Kyle capitulated.

"Hurry up," his good friend drove the knife home.

Eddy spent the next two hours going through his phonebook wondering who he could put the bite on. Noriko of course was his first call. She was deeply in love with him and against all odds held on to the delusion that Eddy would someday settle down and marry her. Noriko worked for a Japanese cultural center in Seoul and lived in a small apartment in Itaewon. She was overjoyed to get his call and pressed him for a meet up. Eddy played her like a fish, confirmed nothing, and left her feeling full of hope that her lover was coming around.

"She'll be good for some pocket money at least," Eddy said out loud after hanging up.

Noriko had a roommate and the last night he had stayed there he had tried to crawl into bed with the roommate after Noriko had gone to sleep. It had been worth a try but now there wasn't a snowball's chance in hell that he could crash there tonight. No worries he had other options. After a couple more insulting Kakao exchanges with Kyle he went out to have a smoke and wait for his ride.

Kyle was pissed but Eddy was a friend and he considered himself to be a nice guy. He had a headache from the three bottles of makoli, a Korean rice wine Kyle was partial to, that he had drunk that morning on his long walk. He was sleeping it off when his wife of eleven years, Kyung Hee, had rudely woke him up and told him to go pick up the kids, they were going to grandmas. He was happy to let them go and he would have Saturday evening to himself.

When he got the Kakao from Eddy he wasn't surprised. They were good friends but he thought it was a pretty one sided relationship at times. He always had a good time when he met up with Eddy but it usually ended up bad. They had a lot in common; both were American, both could speak English, and both loved to party.

Although he hadn't yet admitted it to himself, Kyle was a hard core alcoholic. He told himself that as long as he could get up and go to work every day, he didn't have a problem. He came from a pretty dysfunctional family in Ohio and had been partying steady since his mid-teens. With a string of alcohol related incidents and a bad marriage behind him he had come to Korea twelve years ago to get a new start and teach English. Within a year he had fallen in love with Korean life, met a woman, and had gotten married. It seems that he had turned his life around and with two kids, had become a family man. Only problem was the liberal Korean attitude towards drinking and his alcoholism weren't a good match.

Heavy binge drinking on the weekend wasn't so unusual in Korea especially in some parts of the expat scene. Drinking every night after work gave way to morning drinking and then waking up early to start drinking. Anyone who was paying attention could see it wasn't going to end well. Despite the drinking problem, Kyle was a smart talented guy and so far, managed to hold things together.

On this Saturday night as he pulled up to the arrivals ramp to pick up his drinking buddy he told himself, like he had done a thousand times before, "I am not going to get fucked up tonight!"