

Between Heaven and Earth: Book Three - Destiny and Fate - Chapter Six - Ankle Boots

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Guy liked some things and some things he really liked. One of those things was a lady wearing ankle boots. Especially worn with a skirt and dark tights; the look seemed to enchant him. There was something to be said for the knee high Cossack looking style but in Guy's opinion there was nothing more alluring than a slightly plump calf rising out of an ankle boot.

Although Jeong Sook was perfectly content with her ratty old Ugg boots, Guy eventually had convinced her to ditch them in favor of a pair of ankle boots. She was still wearing the up-scale trench coat that Guy had bought for her and she had trimmed it out for the continued cold weather with a thigh length down undercoat. With the hat, a scarf, and the brand new foot gear, Jeong Sook was the best turned out lady in the hotel lobby, or so Guy thought.

They were at the Chosun Hotel in downtown Seoul for an important meeting.

"That what you gonna wear?" she had asked him earlier that evening.

"Yeah sure, why not?" he replied.

"This is important. You need to dress up some. You got a necktie?"

Well, he probably did but he hadn't worn a tie in about three years. What's the point, he thought. When he emerged from the bedroom of his place and presented himself for her inspection, he was wearing a red plaid lumberjack shirt, levis, a navy blue blazer with a gold paisley tie, and a shit eating grin.

She squinted her eyes and said, "a little strange but it'll be ok. They know you American."

Jeong Sook had agonized for several days in advance of this meeting. She had chosen the Chosun Hotel lobby because she thought it was the appropriate venue for such a meeting. She also considered visiting a fortune teller to ascertain an auspicious date for the affair but in the end rejected the idea because she decided that she no longer put much stock in such old fashioned ideas and arranged it for a day that fit the schedules of both Guy and Hee Soon.

Unexpectedly when Hee Soon arrived she had a gentleman in tow. He was a Korean guy who appeared to be in his mid-fifties, self confident, and expensively dressed in a casual, American looking style signaling that he was no corporate or political functionary tied to the organization by a strict dress code. The first thing that Guy noticed was he was wearing a crisp open necked tattersall shirt tucked into sharply creased khakis, boat shoes without socks, and an expensive leather bomber jacket. With a certain satisfaction that he had been right in the necktie dust up, Guy guided their guests to a luxurious seating arrangement in the lobby coffee shop where introductions were made.

Once the hyper-expensive refreshments were ordered, Hee Soon began to explain the presence of Mr. Rhee Jong Bok.

"He has a great deal of experience in dealings with relations between North Korea, South Korea, China, and even America. He may be a great help with your problem so I asked him to come along." All this was delivered in the Korean language and she paused to allow Jeong Sook to translate into her rudimentary English.

As if he had tapped in to a pro-wrestling match, the dapper Mr. Rhee took over in a fractured but fully understandable English.

"I was born in the north but bugged out some years ago. Today I'm known to many governments as a defector that knows a lot about how things work inside that hermit kingdom. I once worked for the

propaganda mill inside the Kim Jong Ill regime. I know bout all the bodies and where they buried. All you guys no know what goes on and how things work. Nowadays I work with the west and for this country to formulate policy to deal with those guys. I fly stateside at least twice a year to talk to DOD, State, and Langley. We all tryin to read the same page. They say knowledge is power, right?" Rhee leaned back, gulped his ice-coffee thickened with several streams of syrup and endeavored to ascertain if his audience had a proper realization of the importance of the personage they were now dealing with.

Right off the bat Guy figured this guy for a pompous asshole and that they had wasted their time and the seventy bucks he had shelled out for the caffeine laden drinks. He was ready to cut their losses and just walk away. Whether it was her firmer grasp on the virtue of patience or Jeong Sook didn't really understand the nuances of English, she wasn't ready to call it quits.

Both women immediately saw the animosity in the air between the two men and took steps to diffuse and hopefully salvage the situation. Instinctively they began to chat and smile at each other. They talked about the tea that they had each selected and how wonderful drinking tea was. Jeong Sook complemented Hee Soon on her hair style which led them to the obscure topic of natural health and beauty secrets. All the smiling and pleasant small talk had its desired effect and little by little the atmosphere calmed down enough to return to the matter at hand.

"So, I talked to Mr. Rhee about your problem and he wants to help if he can. Older Brother, what is it that you suggest?" Hee Soon was back in control and guided the conversation down a productive path.

Rhee was ready and started right in, "What you want to do isn't unheard of but it gonna be real dangerous. North Korea no longer as tight as it once was. Money talks real loud and nothing gonna be impossible with the right money into the right hands. Everybody needs money from the top down and that includes prison guards, officials, and everybody. The danger you gotta watch for is betrayal. We need to get the right peoples that know what they doin. That's the real problem."

"Yeah ok, who are these people and how do we get in touch with them?" This was the heart of the matter and Guy was willing to let bygones be bygones if the guy could come up with some information that turned out to be helpful.

"I know a lot of peoples and I want to hook you up with them. The fella I'm thinking of don't live in Korea. He operate in China. He got a lot of experience with this kinda thing."

"Who is he and how can we talk with him?" Guy wanted to cut to the chase.

Jeong Sook was real uneasy at how direct Guy was with this unknown man. Such direct language, especially with someone you have met for the first time could be construed as rudeness and squash the whole line of enquiry. At the same time she had come to trust Guy's direct style and good heart in getting things done. She decided to let this meeting play out and hope for the best.

"Hold your horse," Rhee answered. "You gotta understand how dangerous this thing is. Everybody in the game is hugely security concerned. If not they don't last long and come to a very bad end. You can't just call this guy up and tell him what you want like you ordering a pizza. You gotta do it right with the proper introductions. Then they got to check you out to see if you are who you say you are. See what I mean?" Rhee condescendingly clued them in like he was talking to third graders.

"Yeah I see what you mean. Are you offering to make the introductions?"

"Already Hee Soon has vouched for you guys and I can get started based on that. I said that everything can be bought in the north with money. That go for China and here too." Rhee was coming to the point of this meeting, for him that is; a payday.

Guy, being pretty quick on the uptake, knew what the meeting was all about too and asked, "So what you are saying is that you can make the introduction for a price?"

Rhee was pleased that it was going so splendidly and replied, "Yes, you understand. It's the way things are done."

Hee Soon looked at Jeong Sook and explained in her native tongue, "yes it's important to know how things are done. Mr. Rhee is reliable and you can trust him. He will do what he says he will do."

"Yeah I got it. How much we talking about?" His warning lights were going off and he was sure he didn't want to buy a pig in a poke.

Rhee took out what appeared to be a calfskin bound notebook, tore out a page and scribbled a figure on it. He handed it to Guy and said, "That's what it gonna take. It's fair and you gonna be happy with my

connections."

Guy took the paper and read the number without reacting. Then he passed it to Jeong Sook. The number was \$2,500.

Jeong Sook wasn't at all surprised. After all, she had plenty of experience with supposedly well connected people holding their hand out to be paid. She turned to Guy and said, "Nothing is free in this world. If he can do what he has promised then we might consider it but it looks a little high to me."

With a big grin Rhee addressed Jeon Sook, "Well little lady, so you want to bargain like in a market? What is it you think you know about what such things go for?"

"What do I know? I've paid more bribes in North Korea and China than you have ever taken! What I wanna know is can you do what you've promised." Jeong Sook's eyes flashed and turned ice cold.

Guy almost laughed. He had seen Jeong Sook's temper flare many a time and was glad he wasn't on the receiving end this time.

"I'm sure he didn't mean any disrespect. He's really a good man. I think his English is not as good as he might think. I'm sure he can and will help you make the right connections to rescue your family," Hee Soon told Jeong Sook in an effort to calm her down.

"Look, I understand it is how things are done and we do want to meet your man in China. Just give us a couple of days to talk it over. There is more than one way to skin a cat and we need to talk to a few other people." Guy was ready to go and he figured he better get Jeong Sook out before she hit somebody.

"Of course take all the time you need. I think this is the best way for you. Think it over and get back to me," Hee Soon told Jeong Sook and they all got up to leave smiling; all except Jeong Sook. She bit her lip and restrained herself from showing Rhee what a little lady was capable of.

On the way out the revolving doors Guy slapped his little lady on the butt and said, "God I love you. You're really my style!"

In the taxi on the way home Jeong Sook summed up the evening, "I don't like that guy."

"Yeah, I noticed. He was somewhat of an asshole. You think we can work with him?"

"I dunno. It's just more money. We need some help but someone we can trust. You trust him?"

"I don't trust anybody but you, baby"

"Baby, that like little lady?"

"Of course not. I love you!"

"Really, why you love me?"

Ah the eternal question, "Let me count the ways. Tonight I love you cause you look so damn gorgeous and are feisty to boot."

"To boot, you just turned on by my leg inna ankle boot." They both rolled against each other laughing in the cab because it was true.

"What we gonna do Guy?" she said soberly after the laughter had subsided.

"Tonight we gonna sleep on it. We'll think of something in the morning," and they snuggled the rest of the way back to Guy's place.