

Between Heaven and Earth: Book Three - Destiny and Fate - Chapter Seven - The Art of Life

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Long before the story was over and before he could know how it would turn out, Guy began telling it. Writing had often been a way to sort out his thoughts. He could quickly write down in free form what was passing through his mind and then see it in black and white. Then it could be adjusted or corrected. Concepts, ideas, and memories became, more or less, cast in stone once he wrote them down.

When telling Jeong Sook's story he debated with himself whether the best genre would be fiction or a straight nonfiction narrative. He experimented with both forms but in the end opted for the novel. He reasoned that the story was bigger than Jeong Sook herself and it could be told best in a classical literary style. He began to frame it as a love story between a man and a woman. Next it became the story of vastly different nations, cultures, and world views. Finally it was the story of the working out of destiny, fate, and redemption between Heaven and Earth. All of these essentials became nested inside each other like a set of Russian babushka dolls and the story unfolded.

Jeong Sook herself was more and more single minded as time passed. She was sure of her calling and as she acted out her role, she gained confidence in pursuing the goal. Often she brushed aside setbacks and practical limitations. Her feeling was increasingly tied to her faith and her faith evolved to meet the circumstances. She did depend on Guy to sometimes recreate their original 'come to Jesus

moment,' when they determined to do the impossible.

Anytime she got down, and she still did, he could almost always pick her up out of the dumps with a few words. Often he was quick to notice the absurdity and humor in a predicament. He became her savior on more than one occasion. She began to depend on him in her innermost self to keep on an even keel and oncourse; like a master mariner might use a compass.

Guy spent a lot of time hunched over the keyboard of his laptop or tablet computer creating order out of the chaos of life. As the work continued he gleaned a great deal of significance and meaning from it. Both his art and real life progressed in fits and starts and fed off each other. When there was nothing to do to advance the impossible mission, there was always the story to tell.

"Hey, what you writing on? That my story?" she asked him.

"No, it's my story," he let her know.

"Lemme see it. Are you using my name?"

"Of course not. It's fiction and I have to change the names to protect the innocent."

"What make you think anybody really innocent?"

"You're absolutely right. Nobody is innocent but I'm still changing names to avoid lawsuits"

"I want to read what you writing. Let me see it."

Guy had no problem with her reading what he was writing mainly because he was sure she would quickly get bogged down in the English. He handed her the tablet with one of the early chapters on the screen. She took it and stared at the text for about five minutes before she handed it back.

"Good job. Keep it up," was her only comment.

In order to keep it up Guy tried imposing a bit of the writer's discipline on his effort. He did his best to work on the novel for three hours everyday. In the meantime, life went on. He still had to produce an income so he also worked on several travel stories and submitted a couple of opinion pieces to local newspapers and online news outlets. A big chunk of every day was given over to his relationship with Jeong Sook and their common endeavor. He sometimes wondered about the potential synergy between the novel and their activities to free Jeong Sook's family.

Jeong Sook also continued to work at the hospital and she did a series of part time jobs in restaurants and coffee shops. One day it occurred to her that it had been several months since she had lapsed into the dark thoughts that caused her to cry uncontrollably. What has changed she asked herself? Her relationship with Guy had certainly changed. She depended on him more and more to be there and also to be her emotional rock. Was that it? The other thing was that she no longer thought that life in general and her life in particular lacked meaning. She was sharply focused on the calling she had heard; that is, to somehow, somehow deliver her father and daughters out of hell and into the new life of freedom. It filled her life with the sense of meaning she had longed for only a short time ago. It also filled her with doubt and the fear that she was not enough. She needed her rock.

Her rock needed money. Although he now had an idea where they might get the funding for the project, he had yet to approach his pal, Kyle, with the proposal. As in most things, timing was going to be paramount. If he waited too long there was a very good chance that Kyle would spend the money on something stupid or worse; his wife would find out about the windfall and that would be game over. In his head Guy worked on a strategy and an approach. It went without saying, the key ingredient would be alcohol.

"What you think about that guy who wants to introduce us to his connection in China?" Jeong Sook wanted to know.

"I don't know. What other choice do we have?" Guy wasn't optimistic.

"We got that much money?"

"We could probably come up with it but that would pretty much be scraping the bottom of the barrel."

"What that mean, scrape a barrel?"

"It means the end of the money," Guy had to be honest.

"We need to get money. You got any ideas?"

Guy hadn't told her about Kyle's lottery winnings. Up until now Guy figured there was no point in mixing such diverse parts of his life together. Kyle knew about Jeong Sook and she in turn knew about her guy's friend. Sometimes she referred to him as 'your boyfriend'. It seemed that it was the right time to put all his cards on the table and spilled the beans about the money.

"We better go see your boyfriend. We need the money and God has provided. I thought he would." Jeong Sook was more than pleased with this development.

It was only pure coincidence that the very next kakao message that popped up on Guy's phone was from Kyle.

"Yo dog, TGIF let's have a drink," as if Kyle needed an excuse to get shitfaced.

It was only two o'clock on Friday afternoon and Guy was on a deadline for the in-flight magazine that was paying him to produce a feel good piece about an upcoming spring festival; something to do with mud baths. He was planning to finish the piece, have dinner with Jeong Sook when she got off, and even get in a couple hours on the novel. Ah well, in any good cause, sacrifices were required.

"Yeah ok," Guy kakaoed back.

And then, "Where you at?"

Ten minutes later, "Still working, off at six. Let's meet up around 8ish, Itaewon?"

"You still bird dogging that ladyboy?" Guy wasn't gonna let him off easy.

"Fuck you!" Kyle indignantly shot back.

"Don't get your panties in a bunch. Just funnin you. See you at Gecko's at eight."

Perfect thought Guy. He could get some work done and still soften Kyle up for the big squeeze.

As it happened, it was March 17th and Itaewon was jammed with revelers looking to celebrate St. Paddy's Day in a big way. Folks had started early and it would go real late into the wee hours of Saturday morning. Being Irish himself, Guy knew how to celebrate and had whooped it up at both the Seattle and New York parades in the past. He considered his Irish heritage to be an important ingredient of who he was but he was not much into the wearing of the green. He figured his mug was all he needed to let folks know that he was a son of the old sod. In the past his face had been referred to by someone as a map of Ireland and he wore it with pride.

Before setting out for the rendezvous with his boyfriend he took a shot at explaining the cultural significance of Saint Patrick and the Irish to Jeong Sook.

"Who is this guy and why he always wear green? It like Santa and his red suit?" she wanted to know.

Guy had to catch himself to keep from laughing. It was a serious question and deserved a serious answer. He understood immediately the connection between the two iconic characters.

"Yeah maybe it's something like that," he started out. "They were both real people in the long development of western Christian history. The legend of Santa Clause came out of Asia Minor which today we call Turkey. He was a much beloved Bishop in the church and was known for his love for his flock, especially children. The red suit came a whole lot later; something to do with a Coca Cola ad campaign."

"Later?" Jeong Sook wanted to be clear. She really liked Santa Grandfather as he was known in South Korea.

"Much, much, much later. Nicholas, his real name, was born around the third century A.D. He didn't start going around in red until the twentieth century when the Coca Cola Company used his image to promote their product. Red was their color."

"So he American now?" Jeong Sook was a little skeptical.

"You could say that, at least the image is."

"How about the other guy? He American too?"

"No, he's definitely Irish. I should say he was Roman-British and became Irish. Sometimes it works like that."

Jeong Sook was bemused, confused, and more than a little interested. Although she had graduated from prestigious middle and high schools, and had matriculated at the Fine Arts University of Pyongyang, she was almost entirely ignorant of the culture and history of the west. If it hadn't been portrayed in a Hollywood or a Disney film, it wasn't part of her world view.

Guy continued, "Christianity had newly come to Britain in those days through the Romans. When Rome pulled up stakes in Britain around 400 A.D., lots of Roman-British families remained behind. They were for the most part Christian. Patrick was born into one of those families. Patrick was kidnapped by Irish pirates and sold as a slave in Ireland. It was a common occurrence at that time."

"That how he become Irish?" Jeong Sook liked such stories and wanted to get it straight in her head.

"That's right. He was put to work as a shepherd boy in the wild countryside. He spent a lot of time alone and had a deep conversion experience. He saw visions and dreamed dreams. He talked to God maybe," Guy wasn't sure of all the details but he related it as he remembered from his parochial grade school days.

"Wow! Talked to God?" Jeong Sook was impressed and a little jealous. "What they talk about?"

"The usual stuff I suppose," Guy informed her. "In one dream he was told he should escape and was led to a ship that was heading for France. He snuck on board and was free. Apparently God had called him to return and convert the Irish to the church."

Now Jeong Sook was bowled over. "A calling, I think this like my story. Did he go back?"

"He sure did. He converted Ireland and drove out all the snakes!"

"Snakes," she thought for a moment and said, "somebody need to drive the snakes out of North Korea."

"They got snakes in North Korea?"

"They sure do and they mostly named Kim!"