

Between Heaven and Earth Book: One - The Cost of Freedom - Chapter Fifteen - The Moment

Michael Downey
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Of course, Jeong Sook wanted to go meet Hyo Jin right away but the reverend knew they had to let a little time pass. Also they needed some kind of plan. It was Kim's idea that they would need to recruit some competent help. Nick Shin was twenty-seven years old, a native of South Korea, and was working as a christian missionary in Harbin. In addition, he was a former ROK Marine. Kim Soo Beak and Shin were co-workers in the field and friends. Kim was sure that Shin would be an asset to any operation that had the potential to become dicey. Nick was more than willing.

Early the following week, Rev. Kim had Jeong Sook come to his office again, this time to outline the plan.

"Jeong Sook this is a friend of mine, Reverend Nick Shin. He has agreed to go with us to the nightclub to meet with Hyo Jin. Nick, this is Mrs. Kim Jeong Sook. She is a believer and a dear friend of the young lady we will be going to see."

"Hello Mrs. Kim. It's a pleasure to meet you."

Shin was tall and was dressed in jeans, a turtleneck sweater, and a down vest. To Jeong Sook he appeared to be more of an outdoorsman than a minister; a man of action.

"Nice to meet you too pastor. Thanks so much for helping us."

"So, here is what we've been talking about. We will go to the club tomorrow evening. Wednesday night the customer traffic will be kind of slack. I'll go in first and get a table. I'll ask to see Hyo Jin and the hostess, Plum Blossom. About thirty minutes later, you and Nick will enter and ask for my table. I'll discreetly let Hyo Jin know you are coming and to play it cool in front of the hostess and the rest of the staff." Kim had considered this carefully.

"Excuse me, do you mean we should pretend we do not know each other?" Jeong Sook got it right away.

"Yes, that's right. You will have to play it by ear but it is important that the staff doesn't get wind that something is afoot. The key to this is going to be you talking to Hyo Jin privately and letting her know that she has to walk out with us. There will be no time to hesitate. No time to think about it or gather her things. We are just going to walk out the door. Nick here is going to run interference if needed." The clergyman was now dead serious. "Can you do it?"

"I'll do it!" Jeong Sook was not as sure as she sounded.

"Good girl. Timing is going to be everything. When I give the word, we just stand up and walk out. How about you Nick? Are you up for this?" Kim glanced over at Shin to get his affirmative answer.

"Absolutely! We just walk her out and disappear," he was pretty clear.

At 8 p.m. on Wednesday evening, Jeong Sook and Rev. Kim left the New Light Mission together. She wasn't sure how to dress for the evening since she had never been to a nightclub before. It wasn't Sunday service but she figured she ought to dress up a little. She wore a pink wool sweater over her only skirt. Since she thought it was possible that they might have to run, she wore her best sneakers. Her lined coat

topped off her outfit. The pastor wore his regular work-a-day clothes.

They taxied downtown and met Shin at the cafe on the first floor of the building where the club was located. On the way over, Kim was uncharacteristically quiet. Jeong Sook made no effort to interrupt his thoughts. Nick was already halfway through a large Americano, black, no sugar when they found him. He looked like he was ready for action, this time in a leather jacket, jeans, and high top construction boots. They sat for twenty minutes and reviewed the plan one more time.

At the entrance to the nightclub, Kim was greeted by the maitre 'd and was escorted to a VIP booth. He ordered the single malt and setups. Before long Plum Blossom showed up and Kim asked for Jade. All was going as planned. Jade seemed happy to see him and the scotch was, as usual, the best. After three shots of the booze, the atmosphere was festive and Kim led Jade to the dance floor. During the first slow song, Kim took Jade in his arms and began to brief her.

"Listen very carefully. Jeong Sook will be here soon. When you see her don't let on that you know her. We don't want the folks here to interfere. When the time is right, go to the ladies' room with her. I'll keep Plum Blossom busy. Can you do it?"

"Yes." She was a little confused but was no newbie to a little skullduggery.

"Wait for me to take Plum Blossom to the dance floor and then take Jeong Sook to the toilet. Let's go back."

When they got back to the booth, Jeong Sook and Nick had arrived and were chatting with Plum Blossom. Kim introduced Nick as a business associate and Jeong Sook as his girlfriend. Hyo Jin and Jeong Sook pulled off the charade like a couple of gifted actresses. Another bottle was quickly ordered and the party went into high gear. Plum Blossom stayed longer than usual and was getting a little tipsy. Kim made his move.

"Shall we dance?" Kim politely asked and guided his target to the dance floor. Shin joined them.

"Onni, you came!" Hyo Jin threw her arms around Jeong Sook.

It was a powerful moment and both women were crying.

"Yes, thank God, I'm here." The moment went on and on.

"Oh, I've waited for you." Hyo Jin pulled back and looked into the other woman's eyes.

"I'm sorry it took me so long. I came as soon as I could," the tears continued to flow.

"The bathroom; let's go quickly!" Hyo Jin was first to remember the plan.

The younger woman grabbed Jeong Sook by her hand and, half dragged, half led her down the hall, past the entrance, and to the lady's room. Once inside they went into the same stall and locked door. They hugged again and continued to cry.

"I'm here to get you out of here." Jeong Sook knew there was no time and she had to make her case.

"Get me out, how, and when?" Hyo Jin was dazed.

"Now, there is no time! Those two men are Christians and they rescue people like us. I trust them and if you trust me you have to trust them too. Do you trust me?"

"Oh, I trust you but I need to think. I don't know. Let me have a few days." She was confused.

"There is no time. Look, you remember out on the ice? That was 'the moment' and you stood up and ran. This is the same life and death moment. You have to decide now."

Jeong Sook grabbed her and held her tightly.

"You have to decide now. Please come with me. I'll go with you all the way, please!"

Hyo Jin paused briefly and said, "I'll do it! When?"

"Yes, good. You just follow me. We'll go back to the table and act like nothing is going on. When the time is right, we will stand up and follow the men out the door. Don't forget, this is the moment. Never look back! Only go forward!"

"I'm scared."

"Don't be scared, believe me and we'll do it." Now, for her friend, Jeong Sook was filled with the fortitude to do this. It was scary but exhilarating.

Back at the booth, after having taken a moment to compose themselves, they continued to drink and play their roles. Rev. Kim looked for and received the sign from Jeong Sook. It was a go. Hyo Jin was onboard. The third bottle of scotch had been cracked and everyone was approaching their own rubicon. It was time.

"Well folks, tomorrow is another day and at least I have work to do. Shall we say goodnight?" Kim was ready.

"Oh, so soon? The night is young. Let's order some snacks from the kitchen. It's such a wonderful night." Plum Blossom made her play to pry some more money lose.

"How about it Shin? Shall we call it a night?" Kim was sure what the answer would be.

"Yeah sure, I have to work tomorrow too. Thanks ladies."

Kim took the lead, stood up, and headed for the door. There was no ambiguity. He was going. The others gathered their things and followed. Both Plum Blossom and Jade, as hostesses, escorted their customers to the front desk where the hefty bill was settled. Making small talk, they moved towards the club entrance. At the doors Kim stopped, hugged, and pecked Plum Blossom on the cheek. He embraced Hyo Jin/Jade and said follow me, don't stop for anything. Both Kim and Shin stood in the doorway and blocked it. Jeong Sook and Hyo Jin exited, turned right, and opened the door to the stairwell. Hyo Jin kicked off her high heels and started down. Jeong Sook thanked God for sneakers and raced after her.

At the entrance, things got physical. Kim pushed Plum Blossom down and she yelled as she sprawled in the doorway. Three guys rushed out of the club but were stopped when Kim and Shin stepped into the lobby and closed both outer doors. The three bodies hit the doors from the inside and Shin and Kim barely kept them closed by leaning all their weight against them. The second onslaught knocked the reverend ass over tea kettle as the doors flew outward. Shin stood in the gap and drove the toughs back with hand and foot strikes. He took one step back and surveyed the opposition. There were now six guys but only two could present themselves through the door at a time. Shin drove them back a second time.

"Get down the stairs. I'll hold these lads for awhile longer," Shin shouted over his shoulder.

Kim scrambled up and was out the door and headed down the stairs in a flash. He was not worried at all about the safety of the ex-marine. The thugs came again with nunchucks but they were still hindered by the width of the door. Shin fell back and took blows on his forearms and legs but he sold every inch towards the stairway dearly. By the time he got out the door he was bleeding but figured he had given as much as he had gotten.

Luck is often as important as skill or tactics in a fight. Shin was lucky. He slammed the stairwell door and immediately saw an iron bar that someone had previously used to bar the door. He deployed the bar and flew down the stairs. Kim was across the street waiting for his accomplice to appear. Shin trotted up to Kim and slapped him a high five. They ran down the street, turned the corner, and disappeared into the night.

Jeong Sook and Hyo Jin had also made good their escape and were in a taxi heading for the New Light Mission. On their way they first caught their breath, and embraced again. They both giggled and cried at the same time.

"We did it, we did it," Jeong Sook exclaimed.

"Oh yes we did," the exhilaration of the moment masked any doubts for either of them.

As the adrenaline began to wear off, Hyo Jin asked the first of many questions.

"Where are we going?"

"We are going to the mission where I've been staying. We'll meet up with the men there. Don't worry, we'll be safe there. I'm so grateful to have found you. I've been so worried about you. Hey, let me look at you."

They arrived at the mission and Jeong Sook unlocked the front door and led Hyojin to the kitchen where

they were greeted by Mother Shin. The men arrived noisily ten minutes later.