

Two Birds, One Stone

John Biggs

‘And there it was staring at me...like it had three eyes...*urgh*.’ The maid started sobbing again. She buried her face in her hands.

The two police officers were getting nowhere fast. Constable Lai, with a quick glance at Inspector Chan, said quietly: ‘I think, Sir, it might be better if I dealt with Ah Ying on my own, girl to girl like. Less intimidating.’

Chan shrugged. ‘Leave the recorder on then.’ He left the room.

Lai Ming waited until the woman quietened down. She gently laid her finger on her arm. ‘Don’t worry, Ah Ying,’ she soothed, ‘you’re doing fine. Let’s move on. Did you ever talk to the lady when you did her room?’

‘No, ma’am. She only checked in yesterday. I only saw her for half a second when I was passing as she opened the door to ... to...*him*.’

‘Could you describe her? Any details at all.’

‘Sorry, ma’am, but the room was too dim. He, er, the *dead* man ...’ she sniffled, ‘...he slipped into the room real quick and shut the door. But I heard lots of music soon after, real loud it was, you know like teenagers dance to.’

‘Did you hear any other noises? Like a sudden bang?’

‘No, ma’am. I left the laundry trolley by the door of 1230 before I turned back the beds. I done the far end of the corridor and came back around 8 to turn her bed back...’

‘Was the music still playing?’

‘No, ma’am. I rang the door bell but there was no answer. I didn’t like to go in ’cause, er, well, I thought she ...might be, er, entertaining.’ A shadow of smile crossed Ah Ying’s face. ‘I pushed the trolley to the service lift and sent it to the laundry. Then I went back to Room 1230 but I still got no answer. I thought they’d gone out, so I used the master key... and that’s...that’s when I saw him. Sprawled on the bed...’ She choked.

‘And then?’

‘I called management on the house phone,’ she got out between sobs.

‘Did you know they found a gun in the trolley?’

‘I didn’t see no gun, ma’am, honest I didn’t...’

‘No, no, that’s all right, Ah Ying. You’ve been very helpful. Thanks very much.’ Lai Ming took the older woman by the arm and led her to the door. This was Lai Ming’s first serious case—and she wasn’t very happy about her performance so far. She hadn’t found out anything they didn’t know already.

She wasn't looking forward to the meeting with Chan and Tang that afternoon.

Inspector Chan lounged back in his office chair. Short and whippet-lean, his face Hitler-like with drooping forelock and postage stamp moustache, he was summing up.

'Let's see what we have. The deceased was found lying on the bed of Room 1230, booked under the name of a Fanny Lee. He was naked, his clothes in disarray on the floor. His wallet contained a Hong Kong Identity Card and business cards that identify him as Cornelius Leung, CEO of Cornlin Holdings. And another business card, but I'll come to that later. Cornlin is a firm with a reputation for dodgy dealing. Leung no doubt made many enemies. Tang,' he turned to the stocky, senior constable standing before his desk, 'have you got the forensics report yet?'

'Sir. Leung was shot in the forehead with a .177 calibre air pistol, a Beeman/Webley Tempest. It was found by housekeeping in a laundry trolley. The Tempest is a popular sporting pistol but deadly at close range. Just the job for a crime. They're compact and they make a pop more than a bang.'

'A pop more than a bang. Excellent work, Constable Tang, truly commendable. Fingerprints?'

Tang frowned. 'Traces on the barrel but butt and trigger wiped clean. Hopefully the barrel prints will be enough to make an identification, but they don't appear to be recent. Forensics suggest the person who fired the shot wore gloves...'

'A woman then, Sir,' Lai Ming chipped in eagerly.

'Not necessarily, Constable Lai. Don't jump to conclusions. Now,' he turned back to Constable Tang, 'have you traced the owner?'

'Sir. Sporting pistols have to be registered, the model number recorded and club membership established. This pistol belongs to an Albert Fung, of the Sai Kung Pistol Club. He owns a couple of other pistols, a Beeman HW70A and a Beeman P3. Seems to be fond of Beemans, Sir...'

'Never mind that. Anything else on Fung?'

'Sir,' Tang lowered his voice meaningfully, 'he's a junior partner in Cornlin, Sir.'

'Good one. Bring Fung in for questioning. We'll also need his fingerprints, but careful does it. It's too early to issue a warrant for his arrest. Now, for that other business card.' Chan picked up a card and read out: "*International Sensations*. French, Greek, English, you name it. Call 9546

2450, ask for Fanny and state your preference!! Satisfaction guaranteed.”

English? What’s that?’

‘S & M, Sir. Sado-masochism.’

‘Ah, so you think Leung got his jollies by being shot in the forehead?’

‘No, Sir. My hunch is that Fung hired this Fanny Lee to lure Leung to the Mandarin. But Fung was also waiting in the room for him.’

‘That’s as maybe,’ Chan said. ‘Bring Lee in for questioning too. She’s a vital link.’

‘Sir.’

‘Now you, Constable Lai, what have you found out about this Lee woman?’

Lai Ming had been pleased with her research on Fanny Lee but now she was wondering if her findings were irrelevant. ‘A person calling herself Fanny Lee checked in at 4 p.m. presenting a Hong Kong ID card at the front desk. She’d booked the room by phone that morning for one night only, to wit, Sir, last night. She spoke with an American accent, saying that she was here on a quick business trip. And Sir,’ Lai Ming continued, polishing each word, ‘she didn’t use a credit card to hold the room. She prepaid in *cash*. That’s most unusual.’

‘Now, I wonder why she did that?’ Chan murmured, eyes heavenwards.

‘So she wouldn’t be traced, Sir!’ Lai Ming replied triumphantly. ‘Don’t you see, Sir, that if she really was an overseas visitor she would have checked in with a passport, not a Hong Kong identity card? And Sir...’

‘Yes, Constable Lai?’ Chan asked patiently.

‘I’ve done a search on the number of that HKID. Sir, that number was never issued. I think, Sir, that it must be a *forgery*!’ Lai Ming leaned forward, confident she’d scored a hit with that one.

‘*Gau meng ar*,’ Chan muttered, his hand shielding his forehead. He looked up at Lai Ming with a faint smile. ‘You know, Constable, I tend to *agree* with you about that. So what do you conclude?’

‘That Fanny Lee is someone else, Sir!’

‘Nice work, Constable. Then how do you explain that Fanny Lee’s name is also on the card in Leung’s wallet?’ He sighed loudly. ‘Anything else to report?’

‘Yes, Sir. The room’s clean. No luggage in the closet, only a small CD player on a bedside table. No fingerprints. Sir, I think Fanny Lee, or whoever is masquerading as Fanny Lee, booked the room for one purpose only.’

‘Really, Constable? And what might that purpose be, do you think?’

‘To kill Cornelius Leung, Sir!’

‘And what about the gun that belongs to one Albert Fung?’ Tang asked sarcastically. Lai was an attractive addition to the Force, about whom he had his own specific intentions, but the last thing Tang wanted was for her to steal his thunder.

‘She stole it from him!’ Lai retorted. ‘That’s obvious.’

‘Constable Lai, the first thing you have to realise, if you don’t want to be directing traffic for the rest of your career, is that one fact is worth a thousand opinions.’ Chan’s scowl made him look more hitlerian than usual. ‘Tang, you question Fung and Lee as soon as possible. Lai, you go to Cornlin Holdings and start asking sensible questions for a change. Both of you report back at the same time tomorrow, my office.’

‘Now move it.’

Cornelius Leung was one of the few who emerged from the ’87 stock market crash with a smile on his face—a huge smile. With a bit of luck, some insider information and the amazing gullibility amongst some who should have known better, he’d talked up the crap stock, like Man Yeung and similar joint venture junk, bought a lot himself to help the pressure along, but unloaded all he had on the 17th October, his timing perfect. He just couldn’t believe his erstwhile friend, old YC. It was over fifteen years since their last conversation but the earnest tone in his voice was as clear as a bell to this day.

‘Cornelius,’ YC had said, ‘I’m phoning for some advice. I see you’ve bought up big with those joint ventures like Kam Sing, Man Yeung and Ngan Ying. Do you really think they’ll take off, you know, with the handover only ten years away?’

‘They’ll take off like a rocket, YC. Why do you think I bought them myself? If I were you, I’d sell as much of your other stock as you can to get at this goldmine. Even Blue Chips like HSBC. Do it now. Don’t waste any time.’

YC had done just that. And he had jumped off the balcony of his 23rd storey flat three days later.

And Cornelius had built a mansion in magnificent grounds overlooking the beach at Shek O.

Cornelius had built that mansion to show his love for his beautiful Oi Lin. He inaccurately called the house his Taj Mahal for her. Unfortunately, the name was prophetic: Oi Lin had died only two years after it had been built, while she was delivering their first child, stillborn. Bastard he might have been,

but Cornelius had truly loved his wife. All he had afterwards was his work—and fleeting commercial comfort.

He developed a rigid pattern. His chauffeur, Ah Wing, drove him to Central each morning to arrive at Exchange Square at ten o'clock precisely. He'd actually started work at six a.m. in his splendid home office, Cape D'Aguiar framed by the huge picture window above his desk, but he liked to create a laid back impression by arriving late—so sophisticated, so Western, he thought.

His routine was disrupted when his personal assistant left to have a child—his child, company rumour had it. He replaced her with a young woman, Anna Wu, who at first seemed to lack experience for such an important post, but he couldn't fault her in the interview or in the tests he had put her through. Including one test that was irrelevant but crucial: Anna reminded him of Oi Lin. Anna too was beautiful, but more petite than Oi Lin, a trimmer figure, a sweeter face. He never regretted the appointment. Anna was simply perfect—he could think of no other word to describe her.

Anna greeted him on his arrival in the morning with a cup of monkey-picked tea and a single sheet of paper containing bullet-points for the day: his 'advance organiser' she called it. She'd leave him alone for ten minutes, while he digested both tea and organiser, returning to brief him on the day's meetings and to take his instructions.

In a matter of weeks, Cornelius was in love with his new assistant. Love? No, Cornelius decided, not with Oi Lin still nestling in his heart. But what a wonderful mistress Anna would make! Work with her all day and play with her all night. Why bother with Club Bboss with a woman like this on his very doorstep?

He asked her out to dinner. Looking surprised and a little confused, she'd accepted. He had intended to whisk her back to Shek O for the night, but she refused with such a smile it disarmed any offence he would normally have taken: he wasn't used to being refused. The manner of Anna's sweet refusal had even raised her stocks in his mind.

'Very wise, my dear,' he murmured as they left the restaurant for the waiting Rolls. 'What is your address? Ah Wing will drive you home.'

She gave an address in Mid-Levels, where she alighted. They shook hands. He'd decided not to attempt to kiss her. Not on the first occasion.

He proposed they have a business dinner on a regular basis. Those dinners became the highlight of his life. Each time, he invited her back to Shek O; each time Ah Wing drove them back to Anna's place, but at least she now

offered him her cheek to kiss as she alighted. Easy does it, he thought, a step at a time. Anna had muscled her way into a chamber of his heart, if Oi Lin still occupied its master bedroom. He made Anna an offer, not of marriage, but of something he thought no Chinese woman could refuse: the modern equivalent of Second Wife.

They were in *Vong's*, that splendid restaurant atop The Mandarin, their table beside a window. 'My dear,' he said, leaning over to take her hand.

She'd been gaping at the amazing view and had to tear her eyes away. The view, and two glasses of Veuve Clicquot '85, had softened her perception of the world. She gazed back at him, thinking maybe he wasn't so bad after all.

'My dear,' he repeated, 'you cannot know how much I appreciate your talent, your support, your company—you.'

She blinked, not wondering what was coming next. Her colleagues had already warned her.

'Let's just take the first two. Your expertise and your support. Anna, I want to offer you a place on the Board of Directors of Cornlin, and *this*, as an earnest of my faith in you and in your judgement.' He opened his briefcase and handed her a large manila envelope. 'Please open it.'

Puzzled, she took the envelope and ran her finger through the seal. She took out an elaborate certificate. It was for twenty-five thousand shares in Cornlin Holdings, current value two million dollars. Her jaw dropped. This was not what she had been led to expect.

He smiled. 'Just to keep your input to the Board nice and focused. Well, do you accept?'

'Why, Cornelius! Yes, of course. I'm so *flattered* you think this much of me.' She leaned forward, pursing her lips. They met his lips directly above a flute of Veuve Clicquot.

'Now for my last point. *You*. I have a splendid apartment for you. A penthouse, thirty squares, with roof pool, Mid-Levels, nice and handy to the office. And most important, a huge bedroom containing a spa with a view over Victoria Harbour! Just imagine us, in the spa, each with a glass of Veuve Clicquot...'

But this was an offer she did refuse. 'Cornelius,' she laughed, 'you are amazing, but remember what you said only a minute ago. I am your personal assistant, even your colleague as from now. And I think I may call you my friend.' She looked at him with that sweet enquiring smile that turned his heart to water. He felt like a schoolboy as he nodded unnecessary agreement.

'But I don't think I can be your mistress.'

We'll soon see about that, Cornelius thought. She was playing hard-to-get, that much was clear. He too laughed as he raised his champagne flute.

'To us.'

'To Cornlin,' she replied.

'To us,' he repeated.

'To us,' she agreed.

They clinked glasses.

On her second day at Cornlin, one of the junior partners entered Anna's office.

'Morning. Ah, you must be Cornelius's new assistant. I'd like to see him. It's urgent,' a familiar voice said. Anna looked up to see this tall, spunky guy in front of her. *Oh no!* She forced a smile.

Albert Fung started in recognition before breaking into the shame-faced grin of the naughty boy whom everyone loves.

'Well, if it isn't my old girlfriend Anna! How lovely to see you! Look, we've got some catching up to do. Talk to you later.' He treated her to an intimate wink and went in to see Leung.

The Fungs and the Wus had been family friends. She'd had a crush on Albert, until that picnic in Cheung Chau. Something had gone badly wrong there, but she couldn't remember quite what. Only a week afterwards, Anna's world had collapsed and the pain of that had washed out anything that might have happened at Cheung Chau.

She guessed Albert would ask her out, at least for a drink. Which he did, as soon as he'd emerged from seeing Leung. After work, they were seated in a quiet corner in the Mandarin Captain's Bar.

'Well Anna, Cheung Chau must have been the last time we saw each other. I, er, apologise for any misunderstanding.' He looked at her earnestly. 'Then I left for the US and I guess we lost touch. Oh, I did hear about your loss. I'm sorry.'

'Please, I'd rather not talk about that. It's over, well and truly. How about you? Harvard, wasn't it?'

'Yes. After I graduated I came to Cornlin.'

'Why? You could do better than Cornlin with a Harvard MBA, surely.'

'I wanted to return to Hong Kong and join in the pre-handover feeding frenzy. Dr. Doom was wrong about that! Our mutual friend Cornelius was the first to offer me a job. I also had an eye on a partnership—easy, I thought, if I played my cards right. Apparently I did. So here I am, partnership and all.' He

grinned the grin of one who is very pleased with himself. ‘And you? I’m surprised to see you of all people serving the great Cornelius. It must be hell.’

‘Not at all. I find him very, er, amenable.’ Anna tried to look mysterious. Her mind couldn’t get hold of something. It was sending out strong signals: *don’t trust Albert Fung*.

‘There’s only one way that would make our friend Cornelius amenable! *You*, Anna? Surely not.’ He raised an eyebrow suggestively.

‘You haven’t changed, Albert.’ It was slowly, tantalisingly, coming into focus. ‘That is precisely *not* the way.’ She had an urge to get up and leave but she forced herself to stay. Quick, a conversation topic, away from these dangerous shoals. Ah yes, he’d been a champion pistol shot. ‘Still keep up the pistol-shooting?’

‘Why yes, fancy you remembering that.’

‘What sort of pistol do you use? I’m sort of interested myself. I need a hobby after a hard day doing business Cornlin-style.’

‘Beemans. Hey look, if you’re really interested, why not pop up to my place sometime, and I’ll show you. My guns, I mean,’ he leered.

She forced a smile over her increasing unease. ‘Why, yes, I’d appreciate that. *Oh*, look at the time! Sorry, Albert, must run. See you at work.’ And run she did, out of the Captain’s Bar.

She’d remembered.

Constables Lai and Tang stood to attention in front of Inspector Chan’s desk. He waved them to two chairs.

‘*Chor*, la. This’ll be a long session. That is, if you two have done your homework. You first, Tang.’

‘Sir.’ He opened his notebook and glanced at it as he spoke. ‘Albert Fung has been with Cornlin for ten years. He holds an MBA from the Harvard School of Business. He joined Cornlin, as he said, quote, “All bright-eyed and bushy-tailed, full of ideals. I thought I’d show the world how trading should be done”, unquote. He said initially he’d got on well with the deceased, so well that after six years Leung recommended him to the Board as a junior partner. It was then, Fung said, that he’d found out how Cornlin really operated. Quote, “he required me to do things that were distinctly unethical”, unquote.’

‘Surprise, surprise. And did he do those distinctly unethical things?’ Chan asked.

‘Fung says he wouldn’t and didn’t. Er, I wouldn’t be too sure about that, Sir, to be honest. He’s quite a smart-arse, if you want my impression of the man.’

‘The facts, Tang, just the facts.’

‘Yessir. He said that he compromised as best he could. However, he did admit to increasing tension between him and Leung, leading to strong words, as he put it, on more than one occasion.’

‘Sir, that’s putting it mildly,’ Lai Ming interrupted. ‘Several staff members recall that only last week, Leung shouted at Fung, quote, “Fuck off out of my office, you piece of turtle shit. And I’ll see to it that that’s the end of your partnership. And if you don’t like that, you can fucking well piss off into the night. You choose, la!” er, unquote. Sir.’ Lai was sorry she blushed as she reported this conversation.

‘Charming,’ Chan chuckled. ‘I think we have a motive. But what did he say about the pistol, Tang?’

‘He said all his sporting pistols were locked up securely in a gun cupboard. He said it’s impossible for anyone to obtain access to it. The murder weapon can’t be his, he’s certain on that score.’

‘What about the fingerprints on the barrel of said murder weapon. Any identification yet?’

‘Sir. They’re Fung’s prints, no question.’

‘Hmmm. Get a search warrant and bring in everything that seems relevant, including all his handguns. Check for prints.’

‘Sir.’

‘Which brings us to the appropriately named *Fanny*. What have you got on her, Tang?’

‘I found her business card in Fung’s desk, identical to the one in Leung’s wallet, Sir.’

‘Interesting,’ Chan murmured.

‘But Sir, her mobile number is out of service. I understand that whores keep changing simcards precisely so that we—or their pimps—can’t trace them. With a common name like that she’s virtually untraceable. We don’t even have a vague description of her.’

‘Fuck. So all we have is a link between Fung and Leung through this Fanny. Who may or may not be Fanny,’ he added with a sharp glance at Lai Ming. ‘Well Constable Lai, what have you to report?’

‘The most interesting person I interviewed is Leung’s personal assistant, an Anna Wu. She’s well-liked by everyone. Especially by Leung. He

presented her with two million dollars' worth of Cornlin shares and a place on the Board of Directors. And a seven million dollar apartment—which she declined.'

'Declined?'

'Yes, Sir. She said she wasn't a girl like that.'

'My faith in human nature is restored, Sir,' Tang grinned.

Chan glared at him. 'Did she have other friends at Cornlin, Lai?'

'I asked her, but she said no. She got on well with her colleagues, she said, but none of them were, like, friends. But Sir, she *had* been observed with Fung in the Captain's Bar, at the Mandarin!'

'That could mean anything or nothing.'

'But Sir, if it was known by the staff that she and Fung were a number but she denies it, doesn't that suggest they're in this together?' Lai Ming asked. 'Maybe it was her and not this Fanny Lee who lured Leung to the Mandarin.'

'A "number", as you put it, on the basis of one sighting in a bar? Come on,' Chan retorted, 'she'd already made it crystal clear she was sexually unavailable to Leung. *So far*, that is to say. She had every reason to want Leung in the land of the living. What's your view, Tang?'

'I agree with you, Sir. Fanny was the bait, no doubt about it. But perhaps we'd better not start theorising just yet.' He smiled smugly at Lai Ming.

'Be that as it may, we've got enough on Fung to issue an arrest warrant. We have motive and means. But search his apartment first, Constable Tang. And you, Constable Lai, bring Anna Wu in for further questioning and *I'll* conduct the interview. As Leung's personal assistant, I'm sure she could throw some further light on the relationship between Fung and Leung.'

He stood to indicate the meeting was at an end.

Anna opened the door of Room 1230. She removed wig and sunglasses, but kept on her cotton gloves. She lay on the bed, placing her coat over the bedspread and pillow cover. She revisited her memories to charge herself up for what lay ahead.

Albert suggested we explore Cheung Po Tsai's cave. 'It's about fifteen minutes away,' he whispered into my ear.

I nodded. I couldn't believe it!

'Back in an hour!' he called to the others.

He strode ahead, I followed. What strong, brown legs he had! I was excited in a way I'd never been before. We'd be together, just us, out of sight of family! In a romantic pirate's cave!

He helped me over the rocks. He went down the steep path to the cave first. When I clambered down after, he looked up the legs of my skimpy shorts. That's cool, I thought, but no: Nothing Further. We'll get to kiss though, that's for sure! We reached the bottom. It was gloomy: another step and it would be pitch black. He stopped. I moved real close to him.

Yes! He took me in his arms and kissed me, gently at first, then fiercely, pushing my back against the cave wall. I was in heaven. Albert, I murmured. He was panting like he'd been running. Hey, he'd dropped his shorts! He grabbed my hand and curled my fingers around his long, hard thing. Next he was pushing my shorts down! He was touching me...

'No, Albert, No. NO!'

'Anna,' he groaned.

A sharp, rending pain tore into me. I was shocked. I bit the thick part of his neck as hard as I could. He shouted and jumped back.

I was hurting, angry and so bewildered! I touched myself.

I was bleeding.

She hadn't said anything when they'd returned. She was in shock, hardly understanding what had happened. She was only fourteen, he in his twenties. She didn't see him again, not until they'd met at Cornlin Holdings.

And a week after her rape, the Hang Seng crashed.

Miss Ho told us about it in class, so solemnly. I wasn't worried. Daddy was a careful investor, so he kept telling us. I smiled as usual to the security guard as I walked through the gate but he didn't smile back. With a face like stone, he pointed to Block A. 'A man fell from Block A. He's dead, I think.'

My block! My stomach felt like it'd been punched. I raced over to the crowd standing there. I saw Elaine from the flat next door.

'Elaine, what's happened?'

'Anna, oh it's you...' Elaine's eyes were huge and wet. She clapped her hand over her mouth as if to stop herself saying anything more.

'Elaine, tell me...'

She turned her head away, but not before I saw the tears streaming down her face. 'Your father,' she whispered.

I butted and shoved my way through the crowd, shouting, screaming: 'Daddy! Daddy!'

A policeman was holding back the crowd, two ambulancemen were bending over a body. A man was lying his face turned away. I ducked under someone's arm. I peered at the face.

'Da...Daddy!' I nearly started screaming again, but he seemed to be alive still. Screaming would upset him.

His eyes opened slowly, locking onto mine like in slow motion. His lips moved slightly.

An ambulanceman gently took my arm. 'Come on, girlie...'

'No, please, he's trying to tell me something.' I lowered my ear to his lips.

'Anna, Anna ... listen...' His voice trailed away.

I bent lower. 'I can hear you, Daddy.'

It seemed like random words at first. 'Man Yeung, Kam Sing, Ngan Ying... bad stock... ruined... Cornelius Leung ... Cornlin...cheated...'

I saw his ghost flit upwards.

Cornelius Leung had killed him.

Leung's advertisement for a personal assistant was the opportunity for which she'd been waiting all these years. To find Albert at Cornlin as well as a Sign from Buddha Herself. Two birds with one stone.

If her final plan had flaws, she couldn't see any. She'd designed Fanny Lee's business card and had only two copies printed. She'd planted one copy in Albert's desk drawer, and in just a while, she'd plant the other in Leung's wallet. The Fanny Lee HKID card was easily forged—it only had to fool a hotel receptionist once. That was untraceable, as was the nonexistent phone number. Albert would no doubt swear that he'd kept the guns under lock and key, that Anna was the only person who seen them recently. He'd say that she'd asked to see his guns, that he'd taught her how to use the Tempest, and that it was just possible for her to have taken the key from the hook behind the cupboard, remove the gun and relock the cupboard, while he was in the toilet (what a stroke of luck that had been!). She for her part would say she'd never been to his place, that on the night he was likely to name she'd have a ticket butt for *The Lord of the Rings*. But to cover every night that week, she'd bought tickets for different movies—and a ticket for tonight's Hong Kong Philharmonic Beethoven Series.

Mission accomplished, she'd dump the gun as if the murderer had panicked but where it would be quickly found. And she'd be in time for the Beethoven concert just across the road at the City Hall.

Anna dialled Leung's number using the hotel phone. 'Cornelius, *dear* Cornelius,' she crooned, her voice creamy, 'it's time we finalised our relationship, don't you think? Come to Room 1230, The Mandarin, where we had that wonderful dinner...'

His voice cut in, hoarse, urgent. 'See you in fifteen minutes.'

Ah Ying smiled to herself as she pushed the laundry trolley past Room 1230. By the sound of the music that American lady and her visitor were having quite a party. But then, with a sigh, Ah Ying realised she'd be the one to clean up the mess they'd leave behind.