

Shanghai, the International Settlement, August 5, 1937

The Mirneau was in a shabby section of the Settlement, an unlikely place for such a discreet and expensive restaurant, far from the bright lights of Nanking Road. It was found with difficulty through winding little streets, and this made the Mirneau a favorite of illicit lovers, deal-makers, and publicity-shy politicians.

Jake Greenberg had been there for half an hour, waiting for his friend, slowly drinking his way through a tall Campari and soda, and watching the lights come on in the lowering darkness outside. When telephone rang at the maitre d's station and the little man glanced his way, he knew the evening wouldn't work out well. How bad it would go, was something he would think about later.

With a little bow and a click of his heels, the maitre d' leaned toward Jake and whispered, "Deputy Police Commissioner Reilly telephoned, sir. He can not join you tonight. He sends his regrets."

"I'm not surprised, Julian. Thank you."

"I hope it is not *trouble*, sir."

"Just routine police business, I'm sure,"

"Of course, sir."

He didn't believe any part of that and he was pretty sure Julian didn't either. War was in the air. His friend had been keeping strange hours these days, going over planning with the Municipal Council and Shanghai's various military organizations.

The Chinese and the Japanese had been fighting in north China for a month now, and rumors of murder, rape, and looting were flying through the ex-pat community like whirlwinds. Peking had fallen to the Japanese and most foreigners believed Shanghai was their next target. Some Westerners hadn't waited. They packed up and took the first available ship, leaving their servants to box up furniture and household goods. Many others lived semi-packed, ready to run at the first sign of the war

spreading south.

Stay or go? It was a question he and his wife had been wrestling with for weeks. Claire, seven months pregnant with their first child, was for staying. This was their home, not--like many foreigners-- just a place to make money. Usually, he made snap judgments and she was the deliberate one. This time, he wasn't sure what to do. Fatherhood was already pulling at him.

"Was something unsatisfactory, sir?" the waiter asked in painfully labored English. Jake was so focused on his thoughts that he was startled when the waiter materialized at his side. The waiter was a tall, lean, balding man with deep set dark eyes and a pronounced five o'clock shadow. "The maitre d'..."

"It was nothing," Jake said. "My friend couldn't join me. I'll take the check now." Jake finished his drink, and glanced out the front window. Ward Road was now brightly lit and busy despite the rain. Coolies, balancing twin loads on their shoulder poles, shuffled by, and rickshaws, pedicabs, and autos crept through the narrow street. Every now and then a Westerner would stop at the window and look longingly inside before moving on. That had become normal now. So many penniless Jewish refugees had come to Shanghai from Europe in the last year, charities had been overwhelmed.

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Across the street from the Mirneau, a Westerner stood with his back against a brick building at the mouth of Wickham Lane. His hands were stuffed into the pockets of a black raincoat, his collar was up against the drifting rain, and his black fedora was pulled low over his forehead.

The man suddenly decided he had to make sure Wickham Lane was clear. He turned and walked a few steps to his left. The lane, one of many that branched off Ward Road, was typical of overcrowded Hongkew. It was filthy and smelly, lined with gray two-story row houses so old they seemed to lean against each other for support. Except for two almost naked little Chinese children splashing in puddles amid the piles of garbage, there was no one about.

Satisfied that his get-away route was still open, he turned back to Ward Road and studied the elegant restaurant with disdain for a moment or two. Then he shifted his attention to the flow of traffic. The evening rush had peaked and it was starting to thin out.

No one took notice of him. He knew they wouldn't. Ward Road had become the center of Jewish refugee life in Shanghai, and many men without family wandered the streets just to be out of their tiny, fetid rooms.

The man shifted his weight from one foot to the other. He pulled his left hand out of his pocket and checked his watch. It said 8:20.

"It's time," he mumbled to himself. His bowels felt loose. His right hand, clutching the automatic in his pocket, was slick with sweat, but the hard, rough surface of the grip felt strangely reassuring. His thumb rested on the safety lever, ready to release it.

Release the safety, aim using the sights, squeeze the trigger gently, the man recited to himself over and over, like it was his morning prayer.

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"Please come again to the Mirneau, Mr. Greenberg," the maitre d' said as Jake was passing his station on the way to the front door. Jake said he would and stepped outside. Standing under the restaurant's portico, he paused for a moment to adjust his hat and turn up his collar against the rain.

He was about to move off when a group of three men came out of a narrow service alley along side the restaurant. Two younger men were talking together in German, like old friends. The third man, in his forties and taller than the others, lagged behind. There was no doubt they were refugees, each of them was wearing a heavy European suit, far too warm for Shanghai.

Jake stepped aside to let them pass. As he did, a gunshot boomed out and the restaurant window behind him shattered. Without thinking, Jake dove behind a parked car. Big caliber gun he said to himself. He pulled his own pistol out of his shoulder holster. "Down!" he shouted.

The three men stood rooted in place, looking around in shock.

"Get down!" Jake shouted again. There were screams from inside the Mirneau.

Three more shots boomed out in quick succession. One of the young men clutched his chest and fell backward onto some shards of glass that had fallen on the sidewalk. His friend grabbed his side and flopped down on the sidewalk, sitting with a puzzled look on his face, watching the blood ooze through his fingers. Jake reached out, grabbed the tall, fortyish man by his coat sleeve, and hauled him down as a round slammed into the car. Another shot exploded the windshield. This time Jake saw