

lands do not belong to shuren, they belong to the people's republic of china. we are sacrosancting our sovereignty over these lands. they are much too valuable to leave in the hands of one such as mr. handai. "how do you know about byce?" jane said. "the people of china know many things" mr. chow said. "it is necessary that we know things to safeguard our future, where other governments fight and squabble, debating endlessly on matters most trivial we of china are strong and united. for the past fifty years we have had the most extensive foreign surveillance program in the world. we have a vast network of tracking devices unrivaled by western technology. it is easy when you produce fifty percent of the world's consumer electronics." mr. chow's eyes glazed over as if reminiscing about a first love. "it has been a most suitable way for me to serve my people." his eyes locked onto her. "so yes we know about mr. handai's little project." a cold draft swept the room as the door opened. jane turned, expecting, or at least hoping, to see tony burst into the room, ready to rescue her. instead her mouth dropped as she watched a giant asian man carrying a dark jacket in his arms stumble into the room. he took off his hat to reveal a completely bald head and a wrinkled face. jane's mouth dropped. it was ming the giant. now she knew there were no coincidences. he had been following her for nearly three decades. "any trouble getting?" mr. chow asked. "not anymore" the giant said, dropping the jacket heavily onto the ground. the jacket flipped open, revealing the face of tony martin. his body completely still. she wanted to run to him, but a heavy hand on her shoulder let her know that the conversation was not over yet. instead she glared at mr. chow. the sense of civility that had kept up on her suddenly gone. "why are you here?" she said, between clenched teeth. she glared at the giant who was now standing impassively against the wall. "why have you been following me?" mr. chow shrugged. "i must admit it was mostly an accident at first. your research at ucsd did not spark much interest in our leaders. but then you went to washington, you joined the left, met with important people. we became very interested. we continued to watch your meetings with byce handai. we became more interested, and that is how we learned about his most interesting projects. and of course this place." "why me?" she repeated. "why did you put a tracker on me?" mr. chow stood up and walked towards her. the hands on her shoulders tightened to remind her not to do anything stupid. mr. chow leaned forward, nearly touching her head with his own. "not you, dr. ingram," he said softly. he reached towards her and pulled her globe pendant out before she could object. mr. chow's eyes softened. "this was one of our first trackers." he touched it almost lovingly. "i gave this pendant to my brother to keep track of him. i never thought he would part with it." "in fact when we realized that you had it my bosses wanted to deactivate the tracker." mr. chow stammered with the faintest hint of emotion. "perhaps i was nostalgically saddened by my brother's death, or maybe i just wanted to see my nephew. i never married myself, never had children." jane was not going to feel sorry for this man. "either way i insisted that we keep tracking you." he chuckled, the polite smile back on his face. "it was a very good investment on my part. i thank you for that." she launched herself at mr. chow with all her strength. this man had followed her for decades. this man had destroyed texans. this man had killed mat-lin. and if that wasn't enough this man had now betrayed the memory of paul. his guards grabbed her by the waist but not before she had grabbed his throat. her fingernails left long bloody scratches as they pulled her away. the last thing she saw before fading into unconsciousness was the flora who even more confused than normal. she had gotten used to and even welcomed the dreams coming to her at night. they seemed to have spared her the constant blackouts. but this time she didn't even remember going to sleep. the dreams no longer announced their presence with blue dotted vision but just took over her consciousness at will. and each time she woke she suffered the painful emotions of a woman many times her age. flora had managed to stay on bleezard's back as she dreamt her arms draped around his neck. bleezard's head was pitched forward as he drank from a gurgling stream. flora slid off of bleezard's back and looked around. she recognized the flat fields and the warm plant of waypoint meadows. it had only been seven months since she was here with the rest of her cohort but it felt like a lifetime ago. back then she would have never imagined that she would now be running away from the institute on a horse with the most precious of ancient artifacts in her possession. bleezard came and nuzzled her hand. having drunk his fill from the stream, she had nothing to feed him or herself for that matter. the sun had already set but she didn't have time to make camp. on bleezard's back she should be able to reach her old home in just a couple hours. her mother would give them food, shelter, and supplies. the thought of seeing her mother warmed flora's heart and gave her strength. she pulled herself back onto bleezard's back and squeezed him down towards the valley. flora was going home. bleezard was fast. in just two hours they reached the outskirts of podel. she gently crossed bleezard to slow to a trot not wanting to run over an