

Chapter 34

Pilgrimage to the White Goddess
Harmony Disturbed by Strange Events

There was a flight now direct from Shanghai to Hong Kong, an old garage-sale Boeing 707. Watching the stony hillsides of south China drift past below him, William became aware of a sort of liberation, or perhaps of decompression. The two and a half years since he had invented the Bosco had been (so it seemed to him now) a kind of altered state, a single continuous obsession with his work, daily—indeed, hourly—calculating and re-calculating, sifting through screens full of securities, checking indices and interest rates—countless tiny acts of judgment, each building on the other. Not to enrich himself particularly, although it was satisfying to think of that, but for the thing itself, the columns, pages, screens of numbers, and the order that was to be found in them, teased from them. Perhaps, too (though William himself never thought of it in this way) for his father, or for Mr Abramowitz and Mr Stegun.

Now, having broken that one heroic train of thought, he perceived the rest of the world again. Asan had reminded him of that world, and of what he might do in it. The business of *settling accounts* had often been in his mind during the past years, but only as an abstract idea, a fantasy. To do it!—to strike the great steel plates of the world and see the ding!—this was a new thought. Asan was right, of course; there was no limit to what he might do, at any rate in China.

And also in Hong Kong. The main reason for his visit was to pay his debt to the Ngs—to *settle his account* with them. He had heard Mr Ng say more than once that he would like to have set himself up in a little business, if only a small store or a delivery service, but had never had any capital. Perhaps he had already done so, with the occasional remittances William had sent. There had been nothing about it in Mr Ng's letters; but then, he was not an informative letter-writer. Certainly the Ngs were still living in the resettlement estate in Aberdeen, though with the funds William had sent they could have afforded much better. Well, Mr Ng would have his business, if he did not have it already. The colony had plenty of the kind of small concern that could be bought up lock, stock and barrel without injury to its assets or market. One or two million, perhaps five million—little enough, for all their kindnesses.

And what was five million, after all? *Time* had said he was worth eighty million at the end of 1980, and that was the figure he had given Asan. Going over his positions, William thought this was an underestimate. The true figure seemed to be more like a hundred million, at least on paper. Even in simple cash, he thought he could put his hands on forty million. His January bonuses alone had been fifty-five—subject to the income tax, of course, but still ready cash well in seven figures. He could certainly go five million for the Ngs. Although, considering that they had no business experience at all, it might be wise to start them on a modest scale.

William had arranged to be seated by one of the starboard windows, in the hope of seeing Dapeng Bay, but the colony was still covered by its New Year mists, and he thought the flight path would have been too far east anyway. When they came out from under the cloud base it was to Diamond Hill and the sprawl of north Kowloon. William had cabled Mr Ng the listed time of his flight, not knowing that planes in mainland China at that period took off when they pleased, and only ever in perfect weather. William was thus a full twelve hours late, and was not surprised to find himself alone in the arrivals area at Hong Kong International. He phoned the Ngs to apologize, checked into the Peninsula—Hong Kong's grandest hotel—then rode a cab alone through the tunnel to Aberdeen. Both the Ngs were in the dark little apartment when he arrived.

“*Gong hei faat choi!*” William called out through the door grille. It was actually almost a month late to be wishing the Ngs “Happy New Year”, but in the press of work he had omitted to send them a New Year’s card, and was feeling delinquent. Mrs Ng opened the grille for him. Each of the Ngs presented him with a *hong bao*—the little red envelope with the family name on it in gold, containing a bank note, which married people give to the unmarried at New Year.

“Finished your business in China?” asked Mr Ng, setting up the folding table, as Mrs Ng went to the kitchen to prepare food.

“All finished. Things changing fast there now.”

“Oh, soon be back to normal. That Cultural Revolution business—stupid!”

The Ngs showed few signs of being related to great wealth. Mrs Ng had stopped working, but Mr Ng had doggedly refused to—*If I don’t work I shall begin to feel old*—and William had no idea how they had spent the larger part of his remittances, which he thought must by now have totaled a quarter million U.S. dollars. If he had not known Mr Ng better he would have suspected him of succumbing to the curse of the Chinese and gambling it all away. Probably they had just put it into certificates of deposit. There was an air-conditioner now, in the window on the balcony, and a huge color TV, and a refrigerator roughly the size of the Ngs entire kitchen stood awkwardly next to the chest of drawers in the main room. Otherwise all was as before. They sat at the folding table and drank beer.

“I wouldn’t mind,” said Mr Ng, when William mooted the idea of going into business. “Something manageable, with a decent profit coming in. I’ve had the idea myself, been looking round in fact. But it’s tough starting from nothing, even when you have the capital. So we’ll be partners?”

“No. I’ve no time to run a factory. The business will be yours.”

“Hey. Then I definitely wouldn’t mind. What kind of business is it?”

“I don’t know. That’s why I wanted to come to the colony.”

Mr Ng nodded. “I wish you had come before. Three years is too long.”

“I’m sorry, Uncle. I got so absorbed in my work, the months just melted away.”

“So you have been like the man of Qi snatching the gold,” said Mrs Ng, laughing. The reference was to an ancient story from the philosopher Liezi.

Snatching the Gold

Once there was a man in the state of Qi who wanted to get some gold. Early in the morning he dressed himself well, put on his hat and went to the market. Arriving at the shop of a gold dealer, he snatched some gold and ran away. A constable soon arrested him and said: “Wasn’t it foolish to snatch the gold when so many people were present?” The man answered: “At the moment when I was snatching the gold I saw nobody, only the gold.”

William himself laughed. “Not quite like that. I didn’t really set out to get rich, or to be on the cover of *Time*. It was just . . . I got fascinated by numbers, by the prices of bonds. It’s not like stock or commodities, where you have to get into a deep study of the businesses you’re dealing with. It’s . . . abstract. Yet of course not abstract at all.”

Mr Ng was shaking his head, grinning. “Don’t tell me! It makes my head spin when you talk that jargon. We’re simple people, eh, Ma?”

“Simple we may be, but we picked a winner.”

Mr Ng frowned in strong disapproval. “Don’t boast of good luck, Ma. There are many twists and turns in this life, you can never know what they’ll be.” Then he cracked a grin, and raised his glass to William, looking him right in the eyes. “Don’t second-guess the future, just enjoy the present! ‘Today we have wine, so today let’s get drunk!’”

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Settle accounts. Next morning William called first at the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank to arrange some fund transfers. After that he went to see Murray at Talmadge Tucker.

“We should have held on to you,” said Murray, and laughed easily, and patted William’s back, and bought him lunch. From Murray William

picked up some leads in the local business community, and spent the two days his funds transfers required following them up, visiting import-export offices, small hotels, and factories in the New Territories.

After stopping at the Hong'n'Shang again on Tuesday morning he took a cab up Nathan Road to Yaumadei, where all the jewelry stores were located. Selecting one at random, he walked in. He was the only customer. There were three assistants, each centered behind a counter: front, left, right. The one in front was a fiftyish guy with glasses, the others both young women. Papa and his two daughters, perhaps, family firm. Papa greeted him with a nod, not much impressed by his jeans, plain white T-shirt, scuffed sneakers and airline shoulder bag. William turned to the prettier of the two girls and began browsing her cases. Nothing was price-tagged.

"This one?" William, speaking in English, indicated the grandest of a number of necklaces, a gold lunule studded with diamonds, set on a fine gold chain.

"Ah, one of our best pieces," said the girl, in the same language. "Would you like to look at it?"

"I'd like to buy it. How much is it?"

Papa had come round. "A beautiful piece, beautiful," he said. "Let me show you . . ." and began fiddling with the locks of the display case.

"I can see it's beautiful," said William. "I want to buy it, if the price is right. How much?"

Papa could not be deterred from bringing the thing out on its bed of black velvet.

"Beautiful," he murmured. "Beautiful." He turned the lunule carefully into the spots, to give the customer its best refractions.

William looked ostentatiously at his watch. "I'm rather busy," he said. "If you could just quote me a price."

"Hm. Ah, this one . . . three hundred thousand, I'm afraid."

"And this one?" (A lovely brooch—diamonds and rubies, in the shape of a butterfly.)

Papa was very carefully replacing the lunule, positioning it just so. He closed the case, and opened the next one for the brooch. "Sixty thousand," he said, without further prompting—perhaps beginning to suspect he was being practiced on by this hippie.

His suspicion only really began to show half a dozen items later, at which time he stopped bothering to open the cases and merely read off the prices. A hundred and twenty . . . eighty . . . two hundred and ten . . . The girls had given up on William altogether, and were gossiping quietly in the doorway back of the center counter, until two more customers came in—an elderly Japanese tourist and his wife. Papa greeted them rather too emphatically in bad Japanese, switching William off for a moment, then turned back to him, very brusque, as one of the girls took them in hand.

“Anything else?”

“I don’t think so,” said William. “What’s the total?”

“I’m sorry?”

“The total. For the items you’ve quoted me.” William repeated himself in Cantonese for clarity: *“Haambalaang do chin?”*

At this point William, who was rather enjoying himself, thought the old boy might really throw him out. But no; he went back over the thirty-odd items William had selected, totaling them up doggedly on a pocket calculator. To avoid embarrassing the Japanese couple with all this nonsense, he just turned his hand so that William could read the calculator display. Five million, eight hundred and forty-four thousand Hong Kong dollars—just short of a million U.S.

“Four million cash,” said William.

A blank stare. “Excuse me?”

“Four million cash.” William set the airline bag on the counter and unzipped it. The Hong’n’Shang had bundled the money in fifty thousands—a hundred five hundreds each bundle, bound with a paper strip. He set them out in stacks of ten bundles on the counter, eight stacks. The Japs were staring, pop-eyed, the girls too. Papa had slipped into catatonia.

“If you could just wrap them for me.”

Papa jerked back to life. “Ha ha! Mister, ah. Ha ha ha ha ha! Four million . . . I see! Ha ha ha ha ha ha! But, ah, you see . . . The total . . .” he looked at his calculator, but somewhere in his confusion had erased the display. “Total is . . . five million and . . . I think it was eight . . .” He lunged frantically at the calculator, keying numbers in a frenzy.

“I think four million is very fair. Of course, if you don’t agree . . .”

Recovering his wits, the old boy held out for five five, soon came down to five oh, then stuck hard at four eight. Understanding perfectly well that, after a couple of feints for the door by himself and staged displays of desperation on both sides, they would eventually settle at four five, but tired of the game, William set out sixteen more bundles. Papa and the second girl went into overdrive, rattling open display cases, matching items to boxes, deploying reams of fine pastel tissue paper. With everything packed, the airline bag was a dead weight on his shoulder, much heavier than William had expected. He shook hands with Papa, then with the girls, who blushed and bowed; then, for the hell of it, with the Japs, who *really* bowed. Outside, William flagged down a cab and negotiated a price to the New Territories.

The village had changed little. Same single dusty street, same rickety jetty. The whole place apparently empty, as before. But there was a power line now, coming down on poles from the hillside, and every dwelling had a TV aerial. William told the cab to wait by the jetty, and walked down the street to the temple. Stepping inside from the bright sunlight, all he could see at first was Guanyin. She was a new Guanyin, or—more likely—had been newly painted: all white, except for the flesh-colored face and a painted-on necklace of bright green. In front were some little offerings: some tangerines, strips of squid pressed and dried.

William had not been quite prepared for Guanyin's scale, which he had remembered as life-size, and had scaled down further in his anticipations after finding Mrs Fu's house smaller than he had recollected. In fact she was at least twice life-size, this obscured by her being in a kneeling position, and none of the necklaces could meet its clasp. There was, however, a long gold chain, worked in the form of a rope, which could make the circuit of Guanyin's neck. He fastened this, standing up on the plinth to close the clasp, and fixed ten or fifteen other pieces to it. There was a filigree gold tiara that, with some careful bending, sat on her head. The rest of the pieces William draped over her arms and hands, or just laid on the plinth by her knees. It was a remarkable display when done, the diamonds glittering and flashing even in this dim light.

William stepped back—noticing, for the first time, that there was a boy standing at the temple door. The boy was tiny, three or four years old

probably, dirty and entirely naked, though this was still March. He was staring at William with an expression of extreme idiocy. William dismissed the boy from his mind. Kneeling in front of Guanyin he made *bai*, then a full *koutou*, knocking his head nine times, three times three, on the bare earth of the floor. Three times three, what was that? Oh, the bird man opera Gordon had liked so much.

The infant backed away, then ran away, as William left. The bright spring sunshine made William's eyes squint. Down at the jetty the cab driver was reading a pornographic magazine and smoking a cigarette. William had him drive back to Kowloon. He took a nap at his suite in the Peninsula, got a haircut at the hotel barber's shop, then rode the ferry to Wanchai, the district on Hong Kong side where most of the bars were. The first two bars had nothing he was looking for; as in a fairy tale, it was the third that yielded up a fine strapping Danish sailor in a smart white uniform, who was entirely willing to do what William suggested, in exchange for free run of the room service at the Peninsula's premier suite.

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Mr Ng thought the button factory would suit him best. Not many product lines, the business easy to master. The equipment reasonably new, the finances in good shape so far as he could tell, the location good, room for expansion, plenty of people used to factory work. Mrs Ng would enjoy the design side, and personnel matters—interviewing the workers and so on. He felt sure he could handle marketing, financing, the sales force, import-export. A nice little business: always a demand, raw materials no problem, turning over a few million a year. Not beyond his scope, not at all.

William felt pleased. Old Ng was a level-headed sort. He'd been afraid he might go for the electronics firm, which William felt, on reflection, really would have been beyond his abilities, and which he regretted having included in his short list. Old Ng had made a sensible choice, though.

“But will he sell?” asked Mrs Ng. “Such a nice business! Is he really willing to sell?”

“If the price is right, he’ll sell,” said William.

He spent the next day in Kowloon with Mr Ng: a lawyer, an accountant, a separate firm for the audit (you can’t be too careful in Asia), back to the Hong’n’Shang to talk terms, up into the New Territories to look at the factory. The owner—a young playboy type who had inherited the factory from his uncle—was gambling in Macau, but there would be no problem with the sale. Mr Ng had sufficient grasp of things, there was a good steady manager in the factory, and what Mr Ng couldn’t handle would be covered by the attorneys.

William had wanted to do some real-estate shopping, to set Mr Ng up in a nice apartment reasonably near the factory, but Mr Ng wouldn’t hear of it.

“You’ve paid me back, son, setting me up with this business. This is the chance I never had. Up to me to make it work, make a profit. When I have profits, I’ll buy an apartment and a car.”

They went to the tiny supermarket in Ocean Terminal and loaded up with imported beer, then back to Aberdeen and sat drinking and talking until late at night, Mrs Ng laughing merrily at them as they got more and more flushed and maudlin. Instead of going back to the Peninsula, William slept in his old bed that night, his old bunk bed, waking next morning to the sound of children in the courtyard below, birds singing on the mountainside above, and the small cheerful kitchen noises of Mrs Ng making breakfast.

* * *

Mr Chauncey Yip was vexed. He was sitting in his tiny, windowless office in Kowloon with a Chinese newspaper spread on the desk. The thing that had vexed him was an article in the paper, a report that the government was to bring in drastic new penalties against mail tampering. A good forty per cent of Mr Chauncey Yip’s business involved acquiring and opening other people’s mail. This called for the cooperation of Her Majesty’s servants at the post office, appropriately remunerated of course. Presumably that cooperation would now be harder to obtain, or would command a higher price.

Hearing footsteps on the bare concrete stairs that led up to his office, Mr Chauncey Yip hastily slipped the newspaper into a drawer and leaned back in his chair, pretending to scrutinize some papers on a clipboard, an attitude he thought appropriate to a busy man of his calling. The client, when he appeared, was a smooth-faced young fellow wearing dark glasses. Scruffy clothes but not of the cheaper sort. He had dressed down for the visit, as sensible people do when setting out to engage a service whose scale of fees is unknown to them. The accent mainland, western—Sichuan or Hunan originally, though only just discernible through excellent Cantonese. Mr Chauncey Yip rather prided himself on picking up these little markers of speech, gesture, clothing. He liked to think of himself as a man who took his work seriously, a cut above the general run of private investigators—defrocked policemen, embezzlers left unprosecuted to save the company's face, front men for the triads, men who had failed at everything else that can be done in the way of business with only a desk and a telephone for fixed assets.

“I am representing a gentleman who needs an investigation carried out. Following the investigation, certain actions may be necessary.”

Mr Chauncey Yip was on guard immediately. The colony was by no means what it had been, in the days before the Independent Commission Against Corruption came up. There were all kinds of creeps and snoops around, looking for illegalities.

“Certainly. We are a reputable firm, of course. We proceed strictly according to the law. I can't commit us to anything that might be considered improper.”

“Of course. In the event you think anything is outside your rightful scope, naturally you must say so.”

“Just so. Now, this gentleman you represent . . .”

“All the relevant details of the gentleman are right here.”

The client took a fat brown envelope from an airline bag he was carrying. He set the envelope on the table in front of Mr Chauncey Yip, who picked it up and peered into the open end. The envelope contained two neat bundles of orange bills. Mr Chauncey Yip, who had been here before, quickly computed the amount: a hundred thousand Hong Kong dollars.

Mr Chauncey Yip swallowed involuntarily. Not a snoop, no. A snoop would never bid so high. Just a punter with more money than sense, who wanted some dirty work done. Bread and butter, bread and butter. ("White rice gruel" was the actual expression in Mr Chauncey Yip's mind.) Mr Chauncey Yip was a gambler, and when he had regained his inward composure the gambler's instinct asserted itself.

"I am familiar with this gentleman," he said, putting the envelope down precisely midway between the client and himself, open end to the side. "But, you know, I could have sworn he was somewhat bigger."

The client snatched up the envelope, stood, and stepped back. "This gentleman is very well known everywhere!" he exclaimed angrily, the southwestern accent coming right out. Sichuan Province, definitely. "He is accepted in all business offices! If you don't consider . . ."

"Yes, yes!" Mr Chauncey Yip had got up and come round the desk. He took the client's arm. "Yes," he soothed, "yes of course. It's quite all right. I recognize the gentleman now. He is exactly as he should be. Ha ha ha! No need for disagreement. Ha ha ha ha!"

Both seated again, the envelope in his drawer, Mr Chauncey Yip leaned back, put his fingertips together, and said: "We are, however, a firm of investigators. There are things we cannot do. In the event some actions are required that are beyond our powers, there are specialist consultants we can call on. I shall attend to these things personally. Now, this investigation."

"A person to be located. Information about the person and his family to be gathered. After that, I shall tell you how to proceed. Here is the person's name, and the last address I have for him. He is no longer at that address. Nor is he listed in the telephone book. That's all I know."

Leaning forward slightly, Mr Chauncey Yip glanced at the scrap of paper the client had pushed towards him. A name, and an address in Waterloo Heights. Mr Chauncey Yip, who had been working the colony for twenty years, knew the name perfectly well, and the first part of the investigation was already complete, though of course he would not let the client know this. He thought of the nice fat brown envelope in his desk drawer. No longer vexed, no longer vexed at all, Mr Chauncey Yip nodded.

“I shall attend to everything personally,” he said. “Personally!”

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It was at or about this time that a number of curious events came to pass in widely distant parts of China. Whether these occurrences were directly related or not will never be known for sure.

In the small country town of Hibiscus Slope in the far southwest a struggling young schoolteacher, whose name was Liang Yi, was notified, quite out of the blue, that he had been selected to fill the post of assistant principal at an exclusive school in the provincial capital, with a large, airy apartment and all travel expenses paid for, a twentyfold increase in salary, and responsibility for educating the children of all the province's most important people, with the benefits that would naturally accrue from such connections. Liang Yi had not even applied for the position—nor, in fact, even known that it existed.

As if to compensate for the astonishing good fortune of this obscure person, a college lecturer in that same town, actually a Party member with a hitherto spotless file, was arrested for counter-revolutionary activities. A police search of his house turned up government documents marked TOP SECRET and some printed pamphlets from Taiwan calling for the overthrow of the Communist Party. The lecturer, whose name was Wang Baojiang, wept and screamed his innocence, but he got fifteen years anyway. His wife divorced him, his children changed their name, and six months after sentencing the unfortunate man died of dysentery in a labor camp on the Qinghai plateau.

Two thousand miles away on the plain of central Manchuria, in another small town, a veritable shower of gold descended on a certain Tang Zhuohou. Comrade Tang was a low-grade clerk in the district's Civil Affairs Office. His fortunes had been at a low ebb since the end of the Great Cultural Revolution five years before. Comrade Tang had never been involved in the cruel excesses of that period, having been too old to be a Red Guard; but when the staff of the district's Civil Affairs Office had been purged in '67, Comrade Tang—being of an impeccable poor-peasant background and possessing a modest secondary education—had

found himself suddenly elevated to the position of Secretary in that office, with responsibility for innumerable issues relating to the birth, marriage, death and relocation of a hundred thousand people. A decent and conscientious man, Secretary Tang had done his best to discharge his duties fairly. However, he lacked the political skills needed to stay on one's feet in those troublous times. When the Gang of Four was overthrown in '76 and the Cultural Revolution officially brought to an end, the staff purged in '67 had come back and settled accounts with those who ousted them. Comrade Tang had been criticized as a leftist opportunist and demoted to a petty clerical function. For five years he had been wearing the tight shoe, reporting to people filled with a spirit of vengeance toward him, drawing a salary just sufficient to keep his family from starvation. Then the shower of gold: a letter arrived from the Bank of China in New York. It informed him that a distant relation of his had died in that city some months before. According to the terms of this person's will, a sum of money had been deposited in interest-bearing securities in Comrade Tang's name. The monthly interest on these securities, transmitted automatically to Comrade Tang's own local branch of the Bank of China, was over eight hundred American dollars—a staggering sum by the standards of northeast China. Oddly, the letter did not mention the name of the deceased. Comrade Tang would dearly have liked to discover it, since, as best he knew or was able to learn from inquiries among family members, he had never had any relations at all in America.

These oddities were not restricted to the mainland. In Hong Kong at about this time there was an even stranger incident. It was reported in all the colony's many newspapers, including the English-language *Standard*, *Post* and *Star*. The eleven-year-old son of a wealthy man was snatched from the street as he left school one evening, bundled into an unmarked van, and disappeared. The family expected a ransom demand but contacted the police anyway, and the police officers wondered to each other whether the European fashion for kidnapping had been taken up by the Colony's underworld.

Next day the boy turned up at the remote eastern end of the New Territories near Dapeng Bay, with a tale no-one could make sense of, then or ever. The kidnappers had blindfolded him and driven him a great

distance. After a long interval when nothing happened, he had been put into a boat, which had then traveled across water for some considerable further distance. The blindfold was removed, to reveal open sea under moonlight. Before he could get a look at any of the kidnappers, the boy was thrown into the water and the boat sped away.

Fortunately the lad was a strong swimmer. He made it to shore, walked several miles to a fishing village, and telephoned his family. The newspapers made much of this odd business, none of them failing to note that the boy was the only grandson of Mr Xu Yiming, central figure in the great U.S. Navy Purchasing Scandal of '79, who had died peacefully the previous year in Taiwan, whence he had fled when the ICAC investigators got too close.

It may be that these odd inharmonious influences even crossed the mighty Pacific. Early one breezy spring morning the students of a martial-arts school in Tacoma, Washington went to pay respects at Lakeview Cemetery in nearby Seattle, in which lies the resting-place of the master Li Xiaolong, known to them by his American name, Bruce Lee. The grave had few visitors now, and the students were astonished to find it invisible beneath a mountain of flowers.

The flowers were made up in various ways: great circular wreaths eight feet across, thick-bordered photographs of the Master set up on easels, Chinese memorial tablets with white characters on black, draped with orchids, chrysanthemums, peonies, carnations, fluttering ribbons of white silk. As well as these formal tributes, flower displays in pots and buckets were set all around in no discernible order, hiding the ground and most of the gravesite from view.

"Must have cost a fortune," said one of the students, a mechanic in an auto body shop who had given all his free time in the previous five years of his young life to a study of the Master's techniques. "They would have needed a truck. Christ, where do you *get* that many flowers?"

"Must have just been done last night," murmured another. "Look, everything's fresh."

In front of the flower mountain were set two black metal tripods, five feet high, each supporting a large perforated metal bowl. The inner surfaces of the bowls were blackened with fire, and inside them, and on the

grass around them, and clinging here and there to the flower displays where they had been blown, were charred fragments of hell money, what must have been great masses of hell money—the paper bills printed with an image of Lord Yanwang, Emperor of Hell, that traditionally are burned to honor the dead.

As the wondering boxers stood and stared the wind picked up, stirring the grass and the bare branches of the little park, shifting the charred black flakes of hell money. The carefully-wrought displays above the tomb trembled and shook, some petals and fronds of fern blowing loose to scud to and fro in the restless air. One of the circular wreaths, stacked above a dozen others, taking the full force of a gust, turned a few degrees, then fell, rolling onto open grass away from the tomb, shedding blooms as it rolled. The wind caught the blooms and loose petals and fern fronds and burned hell money fragments, teased them back and forth for a while among the stone markers of the dead, then sent them dancing off down the hillside to the water, to Portage Bay and the boundless ocean beyond.