

## Credits

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### **DIGITAL VERSION 1.0**

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#### **January 11**

My last job, I promised myself. I had to go along with Fast Eddie Lo-or pretend to, anyway. He had Steve stashed away somewhere in Kowloon. I owed Steve. Ever since he saved my life at the orphanage, when we were eight. I could not let my blood brother down when he needed me, even if it meant serving Fast Eddie one last time. And Fast Eddie wanted me to take out his rival, Big Brother Tsien. He'd tried it twice before, and now he was desperate. Desperate enough to want the best in the business: me. I wasn't happy about having to kill again. But if I had to pick someone the world wouldn't miss much, Big Brother Tsien would have been pretty near the top of the list anyway.

I was in the parking garage, wearing the uniform of a janitor. Must have been over a hundred times I'd pulled this trick, and it worked just like always. I had the C-4 planted in a garbage barrel right near the ramp to street level. Big Brother was on the alert for another hit attempt; chances of getting something planted in his car, or getting past his bodyguards, were too low even for me. But planting something here in the garage was a snap. All I had to do was wait for the big man's Mercedes to pass the garbage can on its way out, hit the button, and me and Steve would be home free.

At least, that was how it was supposed to work. Can you blame me for not predicting that when Big Trousers' car came along, it'd come roaring out with a chick in a mask planted to the hood? Someone else was trying to wax him: someone with a serious weird act! She was in silver spandex from head to toe, and I was almost laughing 'til I saw her punch her way through the windshield. Maybe I should have hit the button when I had the chance and blown them all to bits, but I didn't. Maybe that's a mistake I'm still paying for. Anyway, I hesitated.

She pulled Big Brother—who can't weigh less than a hundred and fifty kilograms—out of the speeding car and through the windshield with one arm! Then they both bounced off the hood and rolled across the concrete. I decided this was enough nonsense and pulled out my 9 mm. They were rolling around on the concrete something fierce, and no ordinary marksman could hope to tag Tsien without hitting the babe in the mask. But I'm not an ordinary marksman.

I was about to empty the clip into him when I noticed that Tsien's mooks had stopped the car and gotten out. There were six of them, about to open up with SMGs-on me, of course. I was using a nine-round mag with hollowpoints. I squeezed off one shot on my way behind a pillar. BANG: One down, five to go. Must have been a thousand rounds hit the other side of that pillar. Good thing it was concrete. I could get the positions of the five remaining mooks from the reflection in the mirrored windows of a nearby Saab. I took a chance, turned, and broke for a spot behind a panel van. On the way: BANG BANG BANG. Three went down, but one of them popped up again. Okay, so I was having an off day. The remaining autofire was raining on the side of the panel van now, turning the windows to dust.

That was when the white-haired guy in the old-fashioned costume showed up. He came backwards down the ramp, executing this series of funny back flips. It was like he was in slow motion, but he was hard to watch somehow. I had to refocus my eyes to even look at him. The mooks looked just stunned for a moment; they turned their guns towards him, ready to pull the triggers.

BANG BANG BANG. I'm not the kind of person you want to turn your back on in a gunfight. End of the mook situation.

I didn't know what the old guy was going to do, and I didn't much care. Tsien was my target. When I glanced back at him, he'd changed a bit. Grown about four feet. Sprouted horns. And scales. And there was this strange energy crackling around him.

BANG BANG. Two right between his bulbous red eyes.

The scumbag didn't even flinch. Instead he grinned, exposing these nasty shark-type teeth. He had the masked chick by the throat, and with his other hand he was daring me to come for him.

And that was just the start of the whole mess.



Chapter 1