

# CHINESE TAKE-OUT

by Ian Mathie

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Front cover design by **Melissa Brayford**

## Dedication

For my Dad, who always loved the saxophone, even after injury forced him to stop playing one himself.

## [Author's Note](#)

This is a work of fiction, inspired by the defection of Fanng Lizhi, a Chinese physicist, who took refuge in the United States Embassy in Beijing in 1989. This happened at the time when China was experimenting with democracy, with Tienanmen Square as the focus of its expression, particularly among the student masses. At the same time there were several sources of international tension and world leaders were conducting missions of shuttle diplomacy to stop the global pot from boiling over.

Fang Lizhi eventually managed to leave China and took up an academic post in UK, later moving to the University of Arizona. He was brought to the UK in an American military plane, although his actual arrival was a long time later, and the circumstances were a little different from those described in my story.

All the 'active' characters in the story are fictional and any similarity to real individuals is entirely coincidental. The historical facts are on record.

## Chapter 1

THE FLAT CRACK of a rifle brought Green instantly awake. The sound lay dead on the frozen air and it was impossible to say from which direction it had originated. It was just after dawn, overcast, with thick grey clouds hanging so low he felt as if he could reach up and touch them. Down by the shore a thin trickle of smoke was beginning to curl up from the rusty flue sticking out at a crazy angle from the wall of the border post.

Green wanted to stand and stretch his cramped limbs, but that would be a mistake. The small hollow in which he lay, and the rock that had sheltered him from the wind the night before, were the only cover for several hundred meters. He shifted a leg instead, and pulled a heavy pair of binoculars out of a padded white bag that lay beside him. He raised them to his eyes and began to scan the ground below.

It had snowed again during the night. Once the wind had died the snow had fallen in fat, heavy flakes, covering the low bivouac tent and making it shapeless. The weight of the snow pressed down on Green's legs as he lay on his stomach watching. Nothing moved.

Green lowered the binoculars and looked at his watch. There were still at least two hours to go, provided the agent was on time. He was about to pull out a self-heating ration pack when a movement down by the building attracted his attention.

A soldier came round the side of the hut, a rifle slung across his chest. He stopped in front of a deep drift, opened his fly and relieved himself into the snow. It was deep everywhere down there, almost up to the soldier's knees. He buttoned his clothing and looked around. As he turned towards where Green lay he paused, staring intently. Swiftly he raised his weapon, aimed and fired. Green winced as he saw the muzzle flash, followed immediately by the flat report. There was a grunt above him, the snow in front of his face splashed red, and he felt the weight of something heavy landing in the snow beside him. He froze and held his breath.

Slinging his rifle over his shoulder, the soldier headed purposefully towards where Green lay. Another uniformed figure came out of the hut and shouted something. The soldier turned and shouted back, but the distance was too great for Green to hear their words. The soldier turned back and continued trudging up the slope. The other man went back inside the hut.

Green would certainly be discovered. He wished he had a rifle, but there had been no way of bringing one. He reached inside his parka and pulled out a heavy Remington automatic pistol. He had no silencer, so he wrapped the padded binocular bag round it and pushed it out in front of him, under the snow, pointing it upwards slightly.

He waited.

It seemed to take forever for the soldier to arrive. He was looking down at the snow as he trudged upwards. He looked up once or twice to check his direction, but did no more than glance before looking down again. When the soldier was only a couple of meters away he slowed and looked up, straight into Green's eyes. He hesitated for barely a moment before his rifle began to swing down.

With a muffled roar the snow in front of Green erupted. A red flower blossomed where the soldier's face had been. He was thrown backwards into the snow. Green lay still and watched the hut. For several minutes he waited.

Nothing happened.

When he was satisfied that the other man was not going to come out, Green eased himself forward, out of the slim tent and turned, expecting to find the body of his agent. A young stag, still breathing, lay bleeding into the virgin whiteness.

Green thought rapidly. If the soldier did not return to the hut soon his comrade would surely come looking for him. Reaching into the bivouac, he pulled out his rucksack. He dragged the dead Korean border guard by the feet, pushed him into the tent and brushed snow over the entrance. With the butt of the Korean's rifle he hit the stag hard across the neck. There was a soft snapping noise, the beast sagged and its breathing stilled.

Green slung the rifle over his shoulder, hung his binoculars round his neck, and holstered his pistol. Then he took hold of the stag. It was heavier than it looked, and with muscles sluggish from hours of chilled inactivity he found it difficult to lift. At the third attempt he got it across his shoulders, and started down the slope towards the hut.

The noise as Green dropped the dead stag onto the wooden porch brought the other soldier out. Green was ready for him as he opened the door. The Korean's eyes widened in disbelief as he saw Green, and felt the long steel blade slide between his ribs. He sagged soundlessly to the floor and lay still.

Green made sure the guard was dead and then pulled him to the end of the boards. He did not bother to search the man, but simply rolled him off the end and into the snowdrift that had formed against the side of the hut. Then he went inside.

There was plenty of fuel and the old stove was remarkably efficient. Green stoked it up and began to thaw himself out. He looked around to see what supplies the former occupants had left but was disappointed. The Korean rations were disgusting and he was glad to have the fresh meat.

It was two more days before his agent arrived.