

TOM CLANCY

**POWER
AND
EMPIRE**

MARC CAMERON



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PUTNAM

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PROLOGUE

A dozen men clad in bright orange coveralls and white hardhats swarmed the decks of *CGSL Orion*, the 396-meter flagship of China Global Shipping Lines, like ants. The hollow thud of metal box against metal box rattled the air, adding a bass note to the scream of gears and the whine of spinning cable drums. Gargantuan orange gantry cranes towering fifty meters above dipped and rose, then dipped again, their noses swinging back and forth from dock to ship with payloads of white, green, blue, or red metal containers known as TEUs, or twenty-foot equivalent units.

Gao Tian, chief of the ants, stood on the concrete docks of Dalian. This was one of the busiest container hubs in China, and the mountain of TEUs stacked beside the huge vessel made the man look and feel minuscule. He waved his good arm and spoke into the radio clipped to a loop on the chest of his coveralls. The broad smile across his face belied the frenetic pace of the activity around him. Far too busy with their own tasks, none of the other dockworkers looked up to pay any attention to his flailing arm, but they listened intently to his voice over their respective radios. His job was to coordi-

nate and make certain the loading went quickly and safely; of all the people on the docks, Gao was intimately familiar with the dangers.

Each year, almost three-quarters of a billion of these ubiquitous metal containers—roughly 24 trillion pounds of cargo—moved around the world via tractor-trailer, locomotive, and cargo ship. Roughly 180 million TEUs came from China, and well over 10 million of those came through the Port of Dalian—on ships much like *Orion*.

The job of a dockworker was stressful enough, but Gao Tian found it difficult to concentrate, considering his recent upturn of fortune.

Gao was forty-one years old, with thinning black hair and a round face that naturally relaxed into a smile—a coworker had remarked that he always looked as though he'd just relieved himself in the swimming pool. He was not a big man, nor was he particularly strong. In truth, Gao had many reasons to be unhappy. His right hand had been crushed in an accident three years earlier when a turnbuckle on a piece of lashing gear had snapped. The sudden loss of tension allowed the TEU to shift just a few inches—but those few inches were enough. Three fingers of his right hand had been sacrificed to the ship, his bone and flesh smeared between the steel bulkhead and the fifty-thousand-pound metal box, like so much red-currant jelly.

Gao's thumb and remaining finger were of little use. He could, at least, hook the antenna of his radio and depress the talk button, allowing him to direct the activity of the crane operators and the dozen orange-clad stevedores, ensuring that the stacks of TEUs were loaded correctly and efficiently. Gao earned no more pay as the chief coordinator, but, given

his useless hand, he counted himself lucky that the dock manager gave him a job at all. And besides, it made sense that the men who did the hardest and most dangerous work received a few more yuan a day than someone who merely stood on the dock and talked into his radio.

Other men in the crew might eventually move up and become true supervisors with offices of their own, but that was not to be for Gao. In all his years, he had never strayed farther than a hundred kilometers from his birthplace of Dalian—and then only to visit his wife's mother, who lived on a small piece of cooperative land north of the city.

He'd grown content enough with his lot—and then the man with the red eye had come to visit him. Three weeks ago, the man had offered a considerable sum of money to see that a certain TEU was loaded into a certain spot aboard a certain ship. To Gao's astonishment, this arrangement happened twice more, and each time the man had given him an envelope of money along with verbal instructions. He made Gao repeat the number of the desired TEU and would not allow him to write it down.

Today, the man with the red eye wanted two TEUs—PBCU-112128-1 and PBCU-112128-2—loaded together, well aft of the stacks, low and near the centerline of the ship.

CGSL *Orion* was classified as an Ultra Large Container Vessel, or ULCV. Almost four hundred meters in length and with a draft of sixteen meters, the ship was deep enough to stack eighteen TEUs from the bottom of the hold to the top-most box above deck. Twenty-three TEUs could be arranged side by side across her fifty-three-meter beam. One TEU looked much like any other, so the chalky blue box with unobtrusive white X's painted at each corner would soon blend

with the 16,000 other boxes aboard the ship, all similarly muted in color, that were stacked over, under, and around it. PBCU-112128-1 and PBCU-112128-2 were not particularly difficult to remember, which was a good thing, because Gao was already thinking of how he was going to spend the extra money the man with the red eye had given him. Nine hundred yuan, roughly equivalent to a hundred fifty U.S. dollars, each time he helped arrange a spot for a container that was going on the ship anyway. It was a tidy sum for someone making seven thousand yuan per month.

Gao suspected his benefactor worked for a triad and wanted his container of drugs or other illicit material stowed deep in the middle of the thousands of containers on the vessel, thus lessening the possibility of search by authorities. Gao was a moral man, opposed to narcotics, but nine hundred yuan was nine hundred yuan, and he rationalized that he did not know with any degree of certainty what was in the container. The man with the red eye had assured him that he wanted only to hasten the unloading process when his container reached its destination. So Gao took the man at his word and kept the money, with a conscience as cloudy as his benefactor's eye. He was able to slightly assuage his guilt by thinking about how he might spend the newest installment of nine hundred yuan.

Keeping well clear of the swinging cables and flying TEUs, Gao followed the man's instructions and located PBCU-112128-1 and PBCU-112128-2 in the stacks. He located the barcode on each container and checked them with the scanner he kept secured to a lanyard at his waist. He then coordinated between the operator of the second gantry crane and the stevedores working aft of *Orion's* exhaust stack and bridge

house to guide the chalky blue TEUs into place. The entire process—from the time Gao first pressed the talk key on his radio with his surviving finger to the moment the locking cams on the lashing hardware were turned at each corner of the two containers, locking them together, seven layers from the bottom deck, ten rows aft of the raised white bridge castle and eleven across from the starboard rail—took just under six minutes.

His task complete, Gao began to move his arm again. He spoke into the radio, directing the crane operators and stevedores as they continued to fill *Orion*, none the wiser to his deal with the red-eyed man. The chief of the ants smiled, nine hundred yuan richer, and thought about the pigs he could now purchase for his mother-in-law. He liked his mother-in-law. She was a good and gentle woman, well deserving of some new pigs.

Hands clasped behind the small of his back, General Xu Jinlong of the Central Security Bureau leaned in to peer through the tripod-mounted camera over the rooftops of the Chunhe residential district and industrial buildings situated along the Port of Dalian. A soldier at the core, Xu was thick across the shoulders, with the big hands and muscular forearms of a man who spent more time in the field than the office. Two other men flanked him, one close and relaxed, ready to take orders or give council. The other, a youthful man wearing a pair of black sunglasses, had positioned himself back a few steps. His hands were folded in front of him, his head slightly bowed, as he waited to be bidden forward.

All three men stood in the shade of a small copse of walnut

trees on a gravel apron off Zhongnan Road, just north of Haizhiyun Park and Laohutan Scenic Area. Many varieties of protected birds and plant life were abundant in these woods, so passersby paid little attention to the powerful eight-hundred-millimeter telephoto lens that protruded like a canon from the front of the digital camera. The camera itself was superfluous; it was only there to give the lens credibility. The last thing the general wanted was a digital record of any of his activities. He had not come to capture the beauty of Laohutan's numerous waterfalls or magnificent root carvings. His interest at the moment lay northward, down the hill toward the sea and the intense activity along the Dalian docks.

Charged with protecting the highest political leaders in China, the duties of the Central Security Bureau were akin to those of the U.S. Secret Service. Operatives in the CSB, however, put much more emphasis on the word *secret*, particularly those operatives under the command of General Xu.

Xu stood motionless, eye to the camera, studying the scene with rapt concentration. The dark suit the fifty-six-year-old man customarily wore allowed him to blend in among the hordes of similarly dressed businessmen and government officials around his offices in central Beijing. But Beijing was four hundred sixty kilometers away and a suit would have drawn unwanted attention as he stood on the side of the roadway on the coast of the Yellow Sea. He dressed instead in light khaki slacks and a white shirt with the sleeves rolled up against the unseasonably hot and muggy September. A beige photographer's vest of lightweight nylon hid the Taurus semiautomatic pistol tucked inside the waist of the khakis. The men with him were similarly dressed. But the young CSB operative named Tan wore dark glasses to cover a severely bloodshot eye. All

three men were tall and fit, as those tasked with the protection of other men needed to be.

Both the general and his protégé, a man named Long Yun, had come up through the officers' corps of the People's Liberation Army, Long following Xu by a decade. Another ten years younger than Long, Tan began his professional life in the People's Armed Police. He'd shown great promise until the blood vessels around the pupil of his right eye began to burst every time he sneezed. Rigorous testing revealed his vision was still fine, but Xu found the thing hideous and looked for assignments that would keep the man out of his line of sight. It was the general who had suggested Tan wear dark glasses, even on cloudy days or indoors. It would not do to have the general secretary or some other Party dignitary thinking one of the men who protected him was half blind or, worse yet, half drunk.

Xu used a handkerchief to wipe the sweat from a high forehead. He spoke without looking up from the camera. "Comrade Tan, do you trust this cripple dockworker of yours?"

Tan's shoes crunched in the gravel as he took a half-step forward. "I do, General," he said. "I have conducted three transactions in all, one week apart. In the first two, I chose a container at random, each from a lot heading to the United States. Over this three-week span, Gao Tian has mentioned our arrangement to no one, not even his wife."

"Astounding," Xu said, and gasped, mockingly, though he doubted that Tan had caught the inflection. What man in his right mind would confide a sudden windfall of money to his wife, of all people?

General Xu stood up from the tripod, arching his back, feeling it pop and snap. In retrospect, it was a mistake to use

someone from his own staff for the negotiations, but he would never admit it out loud. The matter of the container ship *Orion* had been conceived and decided prior to his arrangement with the man known as Coronet. Other operations would be far more tidy—and less likely to connect to Xu or his organization.

“The gods gave men mouths,” the general said. “And in my experience, men have a difficult time knowing when to keep those mouths shut. This endeavor must be handled with the utmost discretion and secrecy. We cannot afford for your man to speak of this . . . ever.” He looked at Tan. “Do you understand?”

“Of course,” the younger man said, but Xu doubted this was true.

“You must kill him,” the general clarified.

Tan blanched at the order, proving Xu’s suspicions correct.

“Of course,” the young man said again.

“Today,” Xu added. It was tedious how everything had to be spelled out for this one.

Tan braced to attention and gave a curt nod. “Of . . . course,” he said again, stammering, as if any more appropriate words had flown from his brain.

The general sighed, exhausted by the conversation. He tipped his head toward the tripod. “Retrieve the lens and gear,” he said. “But be certain you are careful as you put it away. The people’s money should not be wasted by shoddy handling of equipment.”

Before Tan had a chance to repeat himself yet again, Xu turned to Long Yun and gave a knowing glance toward the car.

Long Yun settled in behind the wheel as the general took his customary spot in the backseat, on the right side, so the

two men could more easily communicate. Outside, Tan blustered on the gravel pad as he packed the camera equipment, no doubt made more nervous by his boss's watchful eye through the tinted window.

"Follow this witless egg," Xu instructed Long Yun. "When he has killed the cripple, silence him as well. I am afraid your man Tan lacks the constitution for matters of delicacy and discretion. If the fool on the docks has not yet bragged to his friends, then someone will most certainly have witnessed him meeting a man with such a hideous eye. That ship will reach the United States in two weeks. I'm confident there will not be much left after . . . the incident, but the Americans are known to be extremely thorough. There can be absolutely nothing to link *Orion* to this office. Do I make myself clear?"

Long Yun turned and grinned at the general.

"Of course," he said.

*I shall not waste my days in trying to prolong
them. I shall use my time.*
—*Jack London*

Jack Ryan, Jr., sat behind the wheel of a dusty Ford Taurus and rubbed a hand through his dark brown beard, trying not to think about his growing need to pee. The car sat parked for the fourth time in seven hours, and Ryan rested both hands on the steering wheel, staring into the darkness. Dallas, Texas, had a reputation for being muggy, even in fall, but this September night had turned out cool, allowing the two men in the Taurus to keep their windows rolled up most of the way and the AC turned off.

Just two years old, the dented Ford looked to be in much worse shape than it actually was. The Taurus was one of the few models that could be a police car, or, with a quick coat of rattle-can black and some judiciously applied dents to the doors and fenders, become a ratty beater that those same police would see as a meth fleet vehicle. Despite being in dependable shape mechanically, this particular car stank like

bad cheese and dirty gym socks—blending well into this seedy South Dallas neighborhood.

A quick Internet search had revealed that the intersection not three blocks away was among the top five most likely spots in Dallas to get stabbed. There'd been no stabbings tonight as far as Ryan knew, but the night was still young. The sound of bottles breaking on pavement not too far down the street signaled that a cutting, at the very least, was a distinct possibility.

Ryan tapped the steering wheel with his thumbs and looked at his watch. His need for relief was going to reach critical mass in the next few minutes. He had a Gatorade bottle in the backseat, stashed there for surveillance emergencies, but he really hoped to get out and stretch his legs for a minute—even if it was behind a stinking dumpster that overflowed with pizza boxes in an alley littered with broken syringes and used condoms.

During the forty-two minutes they'd been parked between the back door of a Mexican grocery and a store that sold sewing machines—of all things—Jack had seen a half-dozen guys—all Asian—go into the Casita Roja strip club across the street. Over the course of those same forty-two minutes, he'd watched a homeless dude stagger by and vomit all over himself, a graffiti artist tag the back of a sewing-machine shop, and two hookers entertain clients as they stood against the rough brick wall beside the dumpster, accompanied by a halo of moths fluttering under the sad glow of a feeble streetlamp.

"If you could see me now, Mother dear," Ryan mumbled to himself, tapping the Taurus's armrest.

"You say something?" Barry "Midas" Jankowski asked from the passenger seat. Like Jack, he was bearded and wore a

loose button-down shirt with short sleeves to cover the Smith & Wesson M&P Shield pistol tucked inside his waistband, as well as the loop of copper wire he wore low around his neck. Hollywood would have everyone believe the entire communication package, including the mic and radio, could be wrapped up and fit into the tiny bit of plastic worn inside the ear. Ryan wished it were that simple. There were tiny mics, but they still required a radio and some kind of power source. Campus members used a Profilo wire near-field neck-loop mic and a small flesh-tone earpiece. A house-built voice-activated intercom system obviated the use of a PTT switch. The whole shebang ran off a Motorola radio about size of a fat deck of playing cards.

“Just thinking about this sexy life of a spy,” Ryan said. “I’m going to need to take a leak in a few.”

Four other sets of ears listened to the conversation over the encrypted net. Ryan had hoped Midas might admit he needed a relief break as well, to make him feel a little more human in his time of need. No such luck. Jankowski was relatively new to The Campus, but Jack had been on enough ops with the retired Delta Force commander to know he possessed a bladder the size of a watermelon.

“I went an hour ago,” Domingo “Ding” Chavez’s voice came over Jack’s earpiece, gloating a little. “When I slapped the microphone up.”

Chavez, a senior member of The Campus—and a former CIA officer—had made an educated guess about their target’s next stop, and arrived in just enough time to stick a magnetic hi-gain microphone to the light fixture outside the doors of the Casita Roja. About the size of a matchbox, the little mic broadcast on the scrambled radio frequency of

the team's net. It was surprising what useful intelligence could be picked up from people just before they walked through the door of an unfamiliar location. Even when alone, they sometimes just blurted out things to themselves.

Chavez continued to rub it in. "I had me a few sips of a cold one while I was inside. Had to blend in, you know, go with the flow." He made no comment about the nude girls gyrating inside. His father-in-law, The Campus's director of operations, John Clark—a legend in the intelligence community—happened to be working over-watch on this op from the roof of a payday loan place halfway up the block with a good view of both the front door of Casita Roja and Ryan's Taurus. He was listening on the same net.

Ryan sighed. "Maybe I should go in and try to get a listen on what our guy's talking about."

"Negative," Clark said. "We have the tracker on his car and we're up on his phone. Right now we're just building patterns."

Chavez spoke through a barely concealed chuckle. "*Mano*, a white guy like you would stand out in there."

Ding had a master's degree in international relations, but he could turn on his East L.A. accent at the drop of a hat.

"Hold up," Clark said. As the boss, his radio was primary and had the ability to override any chatter—which he frequently did. "Two Asian males coming out the main entrance now."

Jack threw his own monocular scope to his eye and got a good look at the two men. In their early twenties, with short cropped hair, both wore faded jeans. Loose white wife-beater shirts displayed arms and shoulders covered with tattoos. They loitered by the doors, each lighting up a cigarette. Ryan

could make out the print of a pistol stuffed down the front of one guy's jeans, barely hidden under his shirt. The team had already identified several members of the Sun Yee On triad. Casita Roja was a strip club run by Tres Equis, a small cell of the Sinaloa Cartel known for the three figurative X's formed by a single bullet hole between the two dead eyes of their victims. Since the capture of "El Chapo" Guzmán, factions of the cartel were becoming even more bloody—if more violence than that brought on by the Sinaloa was even possible.

It made sense that everyone in the club would be packing. The men out front spoke in rapid Mandarin—which to Ryan made them sound highly pissed about something.

Midas cocked his head to one side, listening. The Chinese men took a couple cursory looks up and down the street, saw nothing to alarm them, and settled in to smoke and joke. They finished their cigarettes, stood outside, and then talked for two more minutes before going back inside, as if on a time clock.

"I'm guessing those two are triad," Ryan said.

Midas gave a slow nod. "Sounds like these Sun Yee On assholes are into some heavy shit with Tres Equis. Prostitution, drugs, you name it. According to these guys, they're supplying the Mexicans precursor chemicals to cook up some meth. My Mandarin's a little rusty, but I'm pretty sure I heard 'red phosphorus' in there."

Clark concurred. "Thought I caught that." He wasn't fluent in Mandarin, but he'd been around long enough to pick up more than a few words and suss out the interspersed English. "Any mention of Eddie Feng?"

"Nope," Midas said.

Their target, Eddie Feng, was a Taiwanese national. Apart

from being addicted to strip clubs and lap dancers, he called himself a reporter for a rag called *Zhenhua Ribao*—*True Word Daily*. This online journal specialized in juicy exposés about the secret lives of the political elite in the People’s Republic of China. The ZRB was, at best, sensationalized click-bait. At worst, it was just plain fake news.

Gerry Hendley, CEO of Hendley Associates, the financial arbitrage firm and white-side face of The Campus’s clandestine activity, would never have approved the unwarranted surveillance of a bona fide journalist. But Eddie Feng was more of an entertainer and propagandist. Feng did, however, appear to have stumbled on something going on with Taiwanese operatives and the PRC.

Jack had found the tenuous connection while comparing some chatter on an Internet forum for the Confucius Institute at the University of Maryland. According to several U of M students, *True Word Daily* had run an article about the bombing of an unfinished subway tunnel on the outskirts of Beijing. There was a lot of detail in the article—at least the translation Jack read—details only someone familiar with the investigation or the person or group who did the bombing would know. Ryan happened to be privy to the same information in the form of a People’s Armed Police transmission grab by Fort Meade. This Feng guy was getting too much right about events that would be embarrassing to the ChiComs to be blowing smoke. The PRC hadn’t released anything about the subway bombing to the media yet. There was no chatter of it anywhere but for the NSA intercept—and Eddie Feng’s article.

Jack had taken his analysis to John Clark, who’d done some research of his own before calling Ryan into a meeting with

Gerry—who'd okayed a more intrusive operation. Gavin Biery, IT director for Hendley Associates, would pull up Eddie Feng's bank records, phone history, and anything else he could hack into—which was, according to Biery, “every digital jot and tittle” there was on the man.

It turned out Eddie Feng had made a recent payment of two thousand dollars to a guy named Fernando Perez Gomez, a car dealer in South Dallas who the Texas Department of Public Safety Gang Intelligence database said had ties to the Tres Equis offshoot of Sinaloa—and a second two thousand dollars to a Sun Yee On triad boss, a recent arrival to Plano, Texas, from Taiwan.

The information was thin, but considering the underworld players involved, and the fact that Eddie Feng had somehow gotten his hands on the information about the Beijing subway bombing, Clark and Hendley had agreed to spool up a short operation and use Eddie Feng as an “unwitting agent.” Feng would do the hard work, continuing to develop his sources and extracting information from them while they watched from afar and took notes. The Campus team would merely follow him during his investigation, see where he went, and who he met, and learn if he came up with any more useful intel from behind the Bamboo Curtain.

Biery had located Feng when his phone pinged a cell tower in Houston, but by the time the team had spun up and the Hendley Associates Gulfstream was in the air from Washington Reagan, Feng had already moved north. It didn't take him long, though, to get down to business in the Fort Worth–Dallas Metroplex. In the past seven hours, the team had followed him to four different strip clubs. None of them were particularly high-class joints, but Casita Roja was definitely

the worst. What's more, the club was located in an area of town where a couple bearded white guys like Jack Junior and Midas Jankowski stood out like . . . well, like bearded white guys in the barrio.

Ryan looked at the front door of the club, then back to Midas. "They say anything else useful?"

"Not really," Midas said. "Other than the meth ingredients, they mostly talked about girls and shit."

Adara Sherman, another member of The Campus's operational cadre who was conversant in Mandarin, came over the net. "One of them has a girlfriend who dances in this hell-hole," she said.

John Clark spoke next. "Did the skinny one mention something about a Camaro?"

"He did," Adara said, obviously impressed.

"Damn," Ryan said. "Am I the only one who's not fluent in a bunch of other languages besides English?"

Ding Chavez, John Clark, Adara Sherman, and Dominic Caruso all answered back in turn.

"Si."

"Da."

"Oui."

"Hai."

Midas turned and looked at Ryan from the passenger seat, giving a little shrug in the darkness.

"Yep," he said.

"Looks like I need Rosetta Stone or a multilingual girlfriend," Jack muttered, reaching over the seat to grab the Gatorade bottle. He started to pop off and say something else, but he caught movement out the rear glass as he turned.

He froze.

“John,” he said. “You got a visual on our six? I’ve got movement out our back window.”

Clark’s slightly muffled voice came back a moment later, giving a play-by-play. Ryan could visualize the man’s cheek welded to the comb of his suppressed .308 Winchester model 70, his eye peering through the reticle of a night-vision scope.

“Two Hispanic males,” Clark said. “One female. Males have pistols tucked in their pants . . . One is carrying a cane or stick . . . Scratch that. It’s a golf club . . . The males just left the girl standing at the wall. They’re creeping your way, Jack, ten meters and closing.”

“We’re moving in from the west,” Chavez said. He was in the crew-cab pickup with Adara, a little more than a block away.

Dom was parked farther out, five blocks up the street in the direction of the next nearest strip club with Hispanic or Asian ties. The location was another educated guess, since Eddie Feng had been working, more or less, along a zigzagging line of such places all day.

“Stay sharp,” Clark hissed. “These guys are moving slow, tactical . . . Always a chance they could be undercover cops—hang on, the female decided she’s coming with them now . . .” From the tone of his voice it was clear he remained on his rifle.

Clark exhaled fast, like a boxer taking a body blow.

“Shit! Not cops. Guy with the golf club just whipped the shit out of the girl.”

“’Bout time to unass the car, partner,” Midas said, drawing his sidearm.

“Hold up,” Jack said, his hand on the ignition. “I got an idea.”

“They’re coming up on either side,” Clark said.

He could see the man on his side moving up now, almost at the back of the Taurus.

Ryan looked across the center console at Midas. “Fling your door open on my mark.”

Midas grinned. “I like your style.”

Ryan turned the key as the image of a man filled his side mirror. He used his left hand to push his door wide open while at the same moment using his right to throw the Taurus into reverse.

The engine roared to life. Tires chattered on the grimy asphalt and the car shot backward down the alley. The open doors acted like wings catching the two approaching men, knocking them off their feet and dragging them along with the car. Ryan stomped the brakes just after impact. Physics and inertia kept the doors traveling rearward, slamming them shut and pinching the two men between the unforgiving pieces of steel.

Ryan and Midas bolted out of the Taurus on top of their respective assailants. Ryan’s was unconscious but still breathing. The broken shaft of a golf club stuck from his right thigh. Midas’s man was a little more coherent, but the retired Delta operator solved that by bouncing the man’s head off the doorpost.

Ryan and Midas each secured the pistols and did a quick pat-down for other weapons before calling “clear.”

“No movement from Casita Roja,” Clark said, his voice cool and detached, as if they were still on routine surveillance. “Ryan, Midas, pull those guys back behind the sewing-machine shop. Ding, you and Adara check on the girl.”

Gravel crunched as Chavez rolled up with Adara Sherman

and loaded an unconscious Asian female into their ratty four-door Silverado. Adara's sure voice came over the radio. She'd served as a Navy corpsman in a past life and had seen more than her fair share of wounds and death. "The girl's still alive, but that asshole broke her nose. Pretty sure her orbital bone is shattered. Good chance she'll have some swelling in her brain."

"Parkland Hospital is just south of us," Dom Caruso said. It was his job to keep up with things like emergency rooms and police stations during this rolling surveillance. He gave the complete address of Parkland.

"Roll up to the emergency department," Clark said. "Watch for surveillance cameras but drop her off by the door and haul ass out of there before anyone sees you. They'll be used to it around here."

"Roger that," Ding said.

Adara climbed into the backseat with the unconscious woman and the pickup backed out of the alley, taking a quick but quiet left toward Parkland Hospital.

"Don't forget to grab her ID," Clark said. He didn't have to say it would come in handy to build their picture of Eddie Feng's web of associates.

"Way ahead of you, boss," Adara said. "No ID, but she does have some kind of brand on the side of her neck. It's covered with blood, but I'll get a photo."

Clark came over the net again. "You about done, Jack? We could have company anytime."

"Just about," Ryan said.

Both he and Midas donned blue nitrile gloves and leaned the unconscious men against the graffiti-covered back wall of the sewing-machine shop. Neither man carried ID, which

was not surprising. Tattoos identifying them both as Tres Equis affiliates were clearly visible on their necks and shoulders.

Ryan and Midas took the rolls of cash from each man's pocket to make it look like a robbery and jumped back into the Taurus. They'd voucher the money and turn it over to Gerry Hendley, who'd find some charity that needed it. Four and a half minutes after Ryan first saw the men coming up behind them, wind whistled through the bent doorframes as he sped toward Harry Hines Boulevard.

"I'll be right behind you," Clark said. "We'll stay up on the phone and check in tomorrow. This guy has an inside scoop on a terrorist action in the PRC and now he's involved with drug cartels and the Sun Yee On triad. Something's going on here, boys and girls. I don't know what it is yet, but it's enough to do some more digging into Eddie Feng."