

Chapter 11 : The Harbour Farewell (27 - 39)

Han Lee leaned over the handrail around the deck of the “Eastern Star” and gazed into the choppy waters beneath him. It had been mostly an uneventful journey from China, but the weather now, approaching the coast of KwaZulu Natal in eastern South Africa, was worrisome, and he was frightened that the docking and unloading of the ship might be a problem.

The “Eastern Star” eventually made its way into the harbour, and, once inside, conditions improved vastly. The ship was out of the vicious current now, and bobbed up and down gently in its loading area.

Han Lee watched as the unloading equipment was brought into place on the dock beside the ship. He’d done this run many times before. But as the crane claws approached container No #1E4679, he gripped the handrail nervously. His Indian friend, Dewan Singh, was in charge of directing the crane operators, and Han Lee watched in trepidation as the process began. The crane lowered its great claws over the container and Dewan, with his handsignals, guided them down to the top of the container, where they gripped the heavy metal box tightly and started to lift.

Han Lee watched nervously, as the container rose in the air and the crane swung it round and began to lower it on to the waiting container truck.

Han Lee suddenly screamed out, “No, Dewan, that’s the wrong truck! It should be on that yellow truck on the right!”

Dewan frowned and consulted his list. “Yes, you’re right!” He pulled out his mobile and quickly barked orders to the crane operator.

After a flurry of conversation between the crane operator and Dewan, the crane driver shrugged, went back into his cabin and transferred the container from its current position on to the yellow truck.

When the container was loaded on to the yellow truck, its driver looked up to where Han Lee was standing and put up his thumb. Han Lee, in his turn, raised his thumb, and the driver edged the truck out of the dockyard into the street beyond, finally disappearing from view.

Han Lee wiped a tear from his cheek, and then turned his face to the sky. It had been successful! His wife and child were now safe with her brother and his family, free from the harsh life they had endured in China.

He might never see them again.