

*The
Height
Of
Arrogance*

*A Doctor Shadow
Adventure*

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This is an original shorty story and has
never appeared elsewhere.

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The world trembles on the brink: In China the Japanese have invaded and annexed Manchuria, In Europe Germany plays cat and mouse with a frightened and impotent League of Nations and across the sea America does it's best to ignore the gathering storm clouds.....The year is 1937...

A Salsa warrior is loyal to his country and his fellow warriors. Fearless in battle, never takes a life unnecessarily and always-acts for justice!!

I A Lady in Distress

"I fear for my father's life," Suzie Duk said in a quiet voice. She was small and nervous but she hid her nervousness with a sort of cartoon oriental calm that involved a lot of down casting of eyes and folding hands in laps.

"Two nights ago," Suzi continued, "My father received a note threatening his life if he did not give my brother John his share of his inheritance immediately. Then last night-," she stopped to compose herself casting a sidelong glance at Dr. Hoon, her friend who had induced her to come to Dr. Shadows to plead for help in the matter.

Dr. Hoon was northern Korean, raw boned and taller than most men on the streets of New York. He looked like the peasant he was, still dressing in the long blue robe and loose quilted pants of his mountainous home. When he spoke in his native

tongue, however, he had the voice of a poet and it was not so hard to believe then that he was an herbal doctor of a small and wealthy Korean community. It was in that capacity that he had come to befriend the Duk family and hear of Suzie's troubles.

"You must trust Kuk Sa Nim Chadeaux ," Hoon said referring to the man he had brought her to see.

The girl looked up at the man that Hoon had called the honorific 'General of the Army'.

He was a white man, but such a one as she had never known existed. His Gramercy Park brownstone was a mixture of the orient and modernistic American, as indeed was the man. True, he spoke perfect Korean with the same mountain accent as Hoon, but there was nothing of the pupil about his manner. If the Honorific was to be believed he was a highly ranked Salsa warrior trained at the same monastery in Korea, now destroyed, where the older Hoon was trained as a healer.

"Last night," she continued after looking at Hoon again. "An attempt was made on my father's life. My father believes that attempt was made by my brother; I can not believe that. My brother has fears, some call him weak. But he is also a hot-head whom my father disinherited years ago but he loves our father. I know it!"

The tall man seated across the desk might have been an icon carved from granite. He wore a gray suit and tie, had long silver-gray hair swept back from his high forehead in a widow's peek. His handsome angular face with piercing-gray pupils like chips of flint, was itself a granite mask with a skin tone that seemed to suggest a sculpture's hand.

Then he smiled and life jumped into his features. A gray flame seemed to ignite in his eyes and he spoke. "I will do everything I can to discover the truth and aid your father," he said in a soothing voice and then as if it were the most important reason of explanation in the world added. "You are Hoon's friend."

At that Suzi felt a strange sense of calm come over her. He looked up at Hoon who nodded his head and smiled imperceptibly. Doctor Shadows, Grey Wolf of Justice-was on the case.

II Distrust in the Family

Mr. Ki Nam Moon lived up to his name. He was a wide, muscular fireplug of a man with a shaven head and a round lunar face. He would have been far more at home as a bar bouncer than as a secretary. He looked very uncomfortable wedged behind a very full desk at the ground floor offices of Minotaur Enterprises limited, the Duk family business, in remote Astoria Queens.

"My name is Anton Chadeaux," the Granite Man said. "I would like to speak to Mr. Duk regarding a personal matter."

Mr. Moon adjusted his tiny glasses with hands that looked as thick and callused as bear paws and blinked. "My word," he said in the Queen's English. "The famous Doctor Shadows, the newsreel chappies are always talking about, rather as famous as that other Doc S fellow, eh what?"

"It is about the death threats to Mr. Duk that we are here."

"Death threats, eh? I think I'll have to call Mr. Duk about this!"

"This is Doctor Hoon," Dr. Shadows added, introducing his companion. "Mr. Duk will know him."

Mr. Moon spoke quietly in Korean into the inter-office phone; his large hand shielding his mouth so that neither visitor could overhear his conversation. "You may take the elevator at the back of the building to the third floor," Mr. Moon finally said. "Mr. Duk's study is through the sliding wooden doors when you get off."

Dr. Shadows thanked him and followed Hoon to the elevator. "Did you notice his knuckles?" Dr. Shadows said, referring to Moon, "A Karate man."

Hoon nodded, familiar with the deadly Japanese empty handed fighting style. "A useful skill in a secretary, I should think." Hoon said with a wry smile.

The automatic elevator disclosed a wide carpeted hallway that ended in the promised wide oak doors. Inside they found a man as stolid and formidable as the doors.

"My daughter had no right to bring an outsider into our family's affairs." Kim Mu Duk said to Hoon in Korean, his voice firm and cold. "Take your American friend and leave; I regret your fruitless trip."

The two men were standing in a wood-paneled old world room, lined with books in Korean, English and Japanese. The Elder Duk held court from behind a massive desk that spoke of stability and tradition.

"I have no wish to interfere with your family," Dr. Shadows said in English. "But Suzie, as a dutiful daughter fears for your safety."

"I have no fear," the elder Duk said. He was a proud old man, small like his daughter, with the same delicate hands, but with a hard-life written on them in wrinkles. He wore the Confucian scholar's long white beard that he stroked, thoughtfully in a cultivated gesture .

"An attempt was made on your life," Dr. Shadows said. "Surely you do not wish to deny your daughter your council before she is wed?" In the question The Grey Wolf had provided an out for the old man's pride, for with concern for his daughter a proud

man can escape accusations of cowardice.

"A shot was fired at me from outside this window," Kim said, indicating the one behind his desk. He rose and turned his chair around to reveal a bullet hole. "Had I not slumped forward a moment before in sleep," he continued, "My slumber would have been eternal."

"Have you spoken to the authorities?" the Granite Man asked.

"I will not do so until I have spoken to my son." The old man took a deep breath and then spoke as if in physical pain. "Though I disinherited John for his activities against the government presently in control of my homeland, he is still the fruit of my loins. The young do not realize the compromises that must be made in business."

The senior Duk bowed deeply. "If you can clear this matter up I will be a grateful father. My secretary Mr. Moon will aid you anyway he can. Please-excuse me."

Hoon and Dr. Shadows watched him go in silence. When the door to the study closed Dr. Shadows and Hoon sprang into motion. The chair was quickly reversed and positioned it as it must have been when the shot was fired, judging by the worn spots in the carpet. Next, Dr. Shadows produced a thin telescoping tube from his suit pocket and used it; first as a magnifying lenses to examine the bullet hole in the chair; he then telescoped it to sight through hole to the window. He studied the lower edge of the window where tape was covering the broken glass.

Hoon moved to the window without being asked and removed the tape to clear the line of sight. Dr. Shadows tied off the end of a black string and handed it to Hoon and the Korean stretched it to the hole.

Sighting down this string from the chair's position the Granite Man spoke. "A tree, about a block away is all that is in direct line." Hoon looked out the window, noting with disgust the city soot and grime on the wide ledge that ran around the outside of the building.

"I see it, Kuk Sa Nim," Hoon said. "It is tall enough, but it looks like more a

weed than a tree."

Next the two men reversed their sighting down the string. "Search for a bullet, if you would, Hoon, I will interview Mr. Moon." Hoon bowed and began the search as Dr. Shadows exited.

"It is a sad affair, that of John Duk, I mean," Mr. Moon said. "He and his father were once quite close."

"When did a rift develop?" Dr. Shadows asked.

"John's mother died in a fall from the top floor landing in the building. John, fifteen, saw it and was never the same, somehow blaming his father who was present at the accident. The father installed the elevator and sealed up the stairs to help the boy cope with his fears, but he went off just after college--about five years ago. It would, by Jove, seem to prove what comes of inferior education."

"Cambridge man, eh?" Dr. Shadows said. When Moon looked puzzled the Granite Man pointed to the Korean's class ring. "Did this rift have a specific cause?"

"John's political activity," Mr. Moon said flatly. "He began to participate in anti-Japanese rallies and the like, which he felt took precedence over his family's well being."

"I take that to mean that Mr. Duk still has holdings in Korea?"

"Extensive, as well as his import/export business," Mr. Moon noted. "Quite profitable now that the raw materials from Mancukio are being allocated to loyal citizens."

"Why would John threaten him now?" Dr. Shadows asked. "Why not sooner?"

Mr. Moon removed his glasses and wiped them vigorously, his face assuming a dark phase. "John was just released on parole after two years in prison for a-eh-altercation with a policeman outside the Japanese consulate in Washington; he almost killed the man. It has been a major heartbreak for Mr. Duk."

"His burden is great indeed," Dr. Shadows said. He rose from his seat and moved to the door. "Where were you when the shot was fired at Mr. Duk?"

"In my room down the hall," Mr. Moon said. "I heard glass shatter and Mr. Duk called out, but when I rushed in, I saw nothing."

At that point Hoon joined the two men, bowing to Dr. Shadows. "I searched diligently, Kuk Sa Nim," Hoon said in a whisper. "I but I could not find either bullet or bullet hole."

"Very interesting," the Granite Man whispered back.

Aloud Dr. Shadows said, "Thank you, Mr. Moon." He moved to the door then paused. "My next step is to find John Duk. What college did he attend?"

"Columbia," Mr. Moon said with distaste.

"That's my alma mater." Dr. Shadows smiled. "Good day."

III. Old School Ties

The Granite Man and Hoon went straight to the tree they suspected of being the sniper's roost. It was in a vacant lot some two blocks away from Duk home, almost at the foot of the new Triboro Bridge. It towered above the two-story stone structures around it, but it was as Hoon had said, little more than a three-story weed. Its upper branches swayed in the slight afternoon breeze and seemed to offer little purchase for a sniper.

Dr. Shadows removed his suit jacket and climbed the tree with his lean weight, causing the top branches to oscillate precariously.

Climbing as high as he could clamor, Dr. Shadows used his multi-tool in telescope fashion to sight in on the Duk residence. It was, at best, an unsteady perch and vantage point.

Hoon conducted an exhaustive search of the area around the tree for a cartridge casing. "My luck with the father of misfortune," Hoon said when Dr. Shadows had returned to the ground, "Is the same as with its child."

"No cartridge-as no bullet." Dr. Shadows nodded. "I almost expected it." His voice took on a new urgency. "We must work quickly to find John Duk or there will be dire consequences for the Duk Family!"

The two men got into Dr. Shadows' sleek grey roadster, Dr. Shadows driving-Hoon in the rear passenger's seat. This was not out of disrespect for Hoon's employer and friend, but rather out of Hoon's distrust of cars. And a fear of head-on collisions which he retained from his mountainous home, where almost all car accidents were head on around narrow mountain roads.

They drove back over the year old Triboro Bridge to the outskirts of Harlem to see Suzie Duk at Columbia University. She worked as a secretary in the oriental studies department.

When the Granite Man entered the building, word spread to the secretarial pool quickly and many of the women suddenly had to dart to the powder room to reapply their makeup. And those same women, seemed to have had many errands that kept them passing Suzie's desk while he was there.

"An hassa na seiyo." Dr. Shadows greeted the pretty coed. She bowed gracefully to the Granite Man and Hoon, a little embarrassed to be visited by such noteworthy individuals at work.

"I have spoken to your father," Dr. Shadows said, "And I believe your concerns were justified. Now I must find your brother; do you know where he is?"

She inhaled sharply and shook her head. "I do not know," she said quietly.

"He has not contacted me since his release, but-" She looked around to the large office to see the other secretaries quietly turn away from staring at the Granite Man, then leaned in to whisper. "There was a pool room where he used to spend much time," she spoke with downcast eyes. "It is not a nice place; the element is disruptive. Someone there might know."

"It will not be the first 'not nice place' that I have ever been," Dr. Shadows smiled, "as Hoon can attest." Hoon did his best to look innocent.

Hank's Billiards and Snooker Hall was not a 'not nice' place. It was a squalid basement establishment in Harlem. Tenements bordered it and it was doubtful if the sun's light touched its dirty front windows for more than an hour on a good day. In short, it was a dive.

"Young Duk does not seem to haunt the paths of the four hundred," Dr. Shadows whispered to Hoon.

The Korean nodded and added, "Perhaps a penny in a dung heap has greater value than amongst gold dust." His eyes glanced around the room, taking in the clientele. "Our friend, Slugger would be much at home here."

The Denizens of "Hanks" looked like a 'Who's Who' of steerage and the brig. Mostly young, would-be tough guys; Asians of Korean and Chinese descent, many mixed bloods, several Negroes and one very out of place red-headed Irish hooligan.

"The place is closed," the red head said in a guttural tone.

Dr. Shadows stood impassive, surveying the pool game continuing on the center

table and a dart game progressing in the dim rear of the establishment. His grey eyes were as impenetrable as obsidian.

"I see that," he said.

The redhead, a thick-necked thug almost Dr. Shadows' height but twice as wide, stepped up to Dr. Shadow & Hoon. He closed and opened his meaty fists with deliberate theatrics.

"So blow!" Red said. "Hank don't like sightseers." Dr. Shadows stood stock-still. He might have been a monument, his impassive features unmoving. The atmosphere in the room was charged with tension; suddenly-no darts flew, no billiard balls rolled across the felt. The very thick smoke that drifted through the room-seemed to pause in its passage.

"I said blow," Red insisted. Suddenly, he launched a sucker punch from a coiled right; its speed blinding-as good as Dempsey at his best.

The others in the room saw the fist complete its arc, heard the crack of contact and an exhalation of air, but the Granite Man stood unmoving.

It was Red that crumbled to the floor with a cry of pain.

For a moment no one moved or spoke, the only sound in the room was Red's moan of agony. What they had seen smacked of magic. They knew, or until then they thought, that no human being could take a hit on his jaw from Red and remain on his feet, much less stand unflinchingly. Maybe the street talk was true. Maybe-Dr. Shadows-was more than human!

Only Hoon's eyes of all those in the room perceived what had really happened. Trusting to his finely honed reflexes Dr. Shadows had waited until the punch was thrown (for in studying Red's stance he knew it would be) before dodging his head back mere inches to slip the arc of the punch. At the same time he had flicked his left hand up to snap an ornate ring on his hand against a nerve center on Red's wrist causing intense but non-injurious pain. So finely honed were the Granite Man's reflexes that it

had all occurred in the blink of an eye while all were focused on Red's swing. It was the stuff of legerdemain and legend that had ascribed to the ancient Shaolin monks of China, the Ninja spies of Japan-and the great Houdini's (whom Anton Chadeaux had once spent a weekend with trading magic secrets) occult abilities. Speed, skill, and a little dim lighting.

"I am looking for John Duk." Dr. Shadows said in a quiet firm voice. "I'm not bringing him trouble."

"John carries his own trouble around with him." A feminine voice cut through the tension in the room. All eyes shifted to the source of the voice; a stunning, short-haired Eurasian woman dressed in a blue three-piece pin stripe pants suit that did nothing to conceal her curvaceous form. She also had a matching pinstriped eye patch over her left eye, which had the effect of making her one good eye glow like an emerald. She stood in the doorway to a small office that had been hidden of the gloom of the place.

"In here, big grey and gruesome," she said to the Doctor Shadows. Her gaze shifted to Hoon. "Leave the hick out there." Hoon bristled at the remark, but obeyed Dr. Shadows hand signal that told him to wait..

"And you are?" Dr. Shadows asked.

"Hank," she said through lips that were clenched around a cigarette. Then she turned her back dismissively and walked back into the office. Hoon and Shadows exchanged a look and the Granite Man shrugged and followed Hank into the office.

"So you want to see John?" Hank asked. She sat behind an oak desk that dwarfed her and propped her delicate feet up on the edge affecting a casual posture.

"Family business," Dr. Shadows said. There were no other chairs in the room, obviously intended to put anyone being interviewed ill at ease. Dr. Shadows stood relaxed with a wry smile on his chiseled features.

"You don't look like a relative of John's." Hank said. She looked the Granite Man over from foot to head. "But, you could be like family to me if you wanted."

Dr. Shadows and Hank locked eyes for a moment. "Maybe after I help John with his problem," he said, "We could rack up a few ivories on the felt."

Both of them laughed. "You got moxie, Colossus, I'll give you that." Hank blew some smoke rings at him. "What's your business with John?"

"He's threatened his father," Dr. Shadows said. "And an attempt has been made on the man's life."

Hank was on her feet instantly. "John talks big; he's-passionate. It's what got him jail time, talking big at some John Law-but it's all talk. He's full of fear; can't even go up stairs without somebody holding his hand. He may have yelled at his old man but he'd never hurt him!"

Hank was face to chest with Dr. Shadows, looking suddenly like a child next to a statue. But it was a furious child. "You hurt that confused kid and I'll make your life miserable."

The Granite Man smiled broadly. "I don't doubt you could," he said, "Or vice versa! But I'm trying to help John, and you've just given me the facts to clear him!"

IV. The Height of Arrogance

Dr. Shadows, with Hoon crouched in the back seat, raced his car at breakneck speed back to Queens. A traffic officer on a motorcycle paced them for sometime-apparently intent on ticketing them until he came abreast and saw that it was Dr. Shadows at the wheel, then the officer zoomed ahead to clear a path through bridge

traffic.

"Why do we rush so, Kuk Sa Nim?" Hoon asked.

"To race, my friend,-ahead of my foolishness!" The Grey Wolf of Justice answered. "The clues were there all the time; I only hope we're not too late to save the Duk family from tragedy."

They were.

As Hoon and Shadows raced from the elevator on the Duk family's floor, they were confronted by a frantic Suzie who was pounding on her father's closed study door.

"Father, open up!" she screamed. Mr. Moon came out of his room down the hall, carefully closing his door behind him. "What was that sound?" He demanded. "It sounded like a gunshot."

"I heard John's voice yelling, then a gunshot." Suzie cried. "Father-open up!"

"Do you have a key for this door?" Dr. Shadows shouted at Moon.

"No," Moon said, "and it is stout oak, we will need a fire ax from the downstairs office to force it!"

"Stand back," the Granite Man ordered. Hoon grabbed the near hysterical Suzie and backed away. Mr. Moon looked at Dr. Shadows as if he were insane.

"That is an inch thick oak sliding door man," Moon insisted. "You'll shatter your shoulder."

The Granite Man seemed not to hear Moon's remark. His breathing was in long shallow hisses, his eyes, focusing on the center point of the door. He pivoted his hips, lashing out with the side of his right foot, leaning away from the door; he emptied his lungs with a low pitched shout.

There was a thunderclap of exploding wood and the door split lengthwise.

Moon looked on stunned, Hoon with pride, Suzie with confused awe. The Grey Wolf did not wait for applause. As soon as his leg snapped back from the sidekick Dr. Shadows squeezed his muscular frame through the wounded portal.

Inside he found the elder Duk face down in a pool of blood near the center of the room. Beside him was a revolver and it was clear he had been pistol whipped and shot in the back!

"Father," Suzie screamed. Hoon restrained her until Dr. Shadows had stooped to feel for a pulse at the old man's neck.

"He's alive," The Granite Man said and rose to take the girl from the Korean who switched places with him beside the fallen man.

"Can you help him, Dr. Shadows?" Mr. Moon asked.

"That's up to Dr. Hoon," the Granite Man said in a grim voice. "My degree is chemical engineering."

Suzie whimpered in fear for her father and hugged tightly to the Grey Wolf.

Hoon began to work immediately on the elder Duk, first assessing the extent of the damage then to staunch the flow of blood.

He spoke in rapid Korean, "The bullet passed through his lung, but missed the heart. We can save him, Master, but a western hospital is the way." Dr. Shadows quickly moved to the telephone on the ordered desk and dialed the nearest hospital and rapidly barked out the location and situation, concluding with, "and tell the police that the attacker is still on the premises; precede with caution."

"John must have gone out here," Moon observed, poking his head out the office window. "There he is on the ledge! John!" He yelled out the window and then turned to race out of the room into the hall. "He's going into my open window!"

Dr. Shadows turned Suzie away from looking at her father. "Go down and wait for the ambulance." He said in a calm but firm voice, "Your father will be alright if you keep your head." His grey eyes promised the truth of his prediction.

"But John-" she began.

"Go!" Dr. Shadows said in a tone that brooked no discussion. Then he added, more softly. "I promised my help; he will have it."

Only a moment had passed since Mr. Moon had charged from the room when Dr. Shadows followed.

It was almost too late.

Moon had reentered his room and was rolling on the floor in a death struggle with a powerfully built taller Korean that Dr. Shadows recognized as John Duk!

"Stop him, he's got a knife!" Moon yelled in Korean.

Dr. Shadows plunged into the tangle of arms and legs and pried the knife from the combined grip of both men, tossing it across the room. Then with a casual show of tremendous strength, he yanked the younger Duk bodily off the secretary-flinging him against the wall.

"Goman!" Dr. Shadows ordered in Korean. "Stop!"

John Duk shook himself and growled groggily. "What's going on?"

"I saw him come in that window," Moon interjected, "When I came in the room he jumped me with the knife."

"What?" Duk said. "He lies-I . . ."

"You came home to confront your father," Dr. Shadows continued, "As Mr. Moon suggested when you spoke to him yesterday. He met you, brought you here to 'discuss' it and the next thing you remember was Mr. Moon bending over you with a knife in his hand is that not so?"

"Why-yes--" John said, "How--"

"Go next door," Dr. Shadows said, his eyes locked with the secretary's. "Your sister will need you."

A confused John Duk exited the room.

"How long have you known?" Mr. Moon asked. His body seemed relaxed, but Dr.

Shadows noticed the subtle shifting of weight to the balls of his feet that signaled the Korean was preparing to fight.

"I knew at first that the bullet that shattered the window and passed through the chair was fired from within the room," Dr. Shadows said. "A fact confirmed when I saw the 'tree' that coincidence pointed to as the origin for the shot; yet there was no bullet hole in the room."

"Conjecture," Mr. Moon said in Korean. "You have no proof that your weak courts of law would find binding." He was attempting to maneuver toward the room's exit, his eyes locked with Dr. Shadows'.

"Perhaps," the Grey Wolf said, "But even those 'weak courts' would take into account the fact that John Duk has a dreaded fear of heights as a result of seeing his mother's death; he could neither have climbed the tree nor escaped along the window ledge-which only you were witness to!"

Moon lunged for the door but with wolfish speed Dr. Shadows blocked his path. Moon launched a twisting right punch that, if landed, could smash a cinder block to dust. The Granite Man was prepared, though, blocking with his own right and sidestepping to the outside of Moon's swing. He launched a left at the secretary's kidneys who shifted, took the hit on his hip and launched a back kick Dr. Shadows jumped back out of the kick's range and the two men stood in ready stance, each reassessing the other's ability.

"I thought," Mr. Moon said, "After seeing your performance on the door I might find a challenge from you ability. I see now the stories of the Salsa warriors are exaggerated; the Japanese have nothing to fear from dancing monks!"

Moon sprang forward with a lightening fast front kick intended to crush Shadows' chest, but the Granite Man was faster, turning his body like a matador, so that the foot missed him by inches. Then he lashed out with both fists simultaneously, the right pulping Moon's face and the left breaking Moon's thighbone in three places. The

Korean collapsed, mercifully unconscious.

"If you had spent more time in your Karate class," Dr. Shadows said quietly to the bleeding man, "And less time thinking up insults for your own country's martial heritage, I might have had to exert myself instead of just dance."

"Your father is resting comfortably," Hoon said to the Duk children. It was later at the hospital and the elder Duk was in intensive care, but stable after surgery.

"He is a strong man," Hoon continued. "He will recover."

Suzie Duk was so beside herself with joy that she hugged Hoon much to his discomfort.

"But I don't understand how Moon could fake me being in the room with father," John Duk asked Dr. Shadows. "And why did he do it?"

Dr. Shadows held up a fist-sized piece of tangled metal. "He used this wire recording of you from the phone conversation you had with him the night before; I recovered this from Mr. Moon's pocket."

"Mr. Moon had been diverting war materials, secretly to his Japanese friends in the occupying forces in Manchuria. Many sent from this country against our laws in shipments of your family products. He feared a-reconciliation between you and your father, would cause an audit of the books."

The grey giant gave a warm smile to reassure the two Duks. "Why don't you go in and sit with your father; he needs you both now."

The two young people bowed and went into the private room.

"I will stay, Kuk Sa Nim," Hoon said. "All three may need me.

"That's fine," Dr. Shadows said with a wolfish grin.

"I have a-hankering-for some midnight billiards, myself."

The end.....

A large, bold, grey letter 'B' in a serif font, centered on a light grey rectangular background. The letter has a classic, slightly rounded design with a thick vertical stem and two curved bowls.