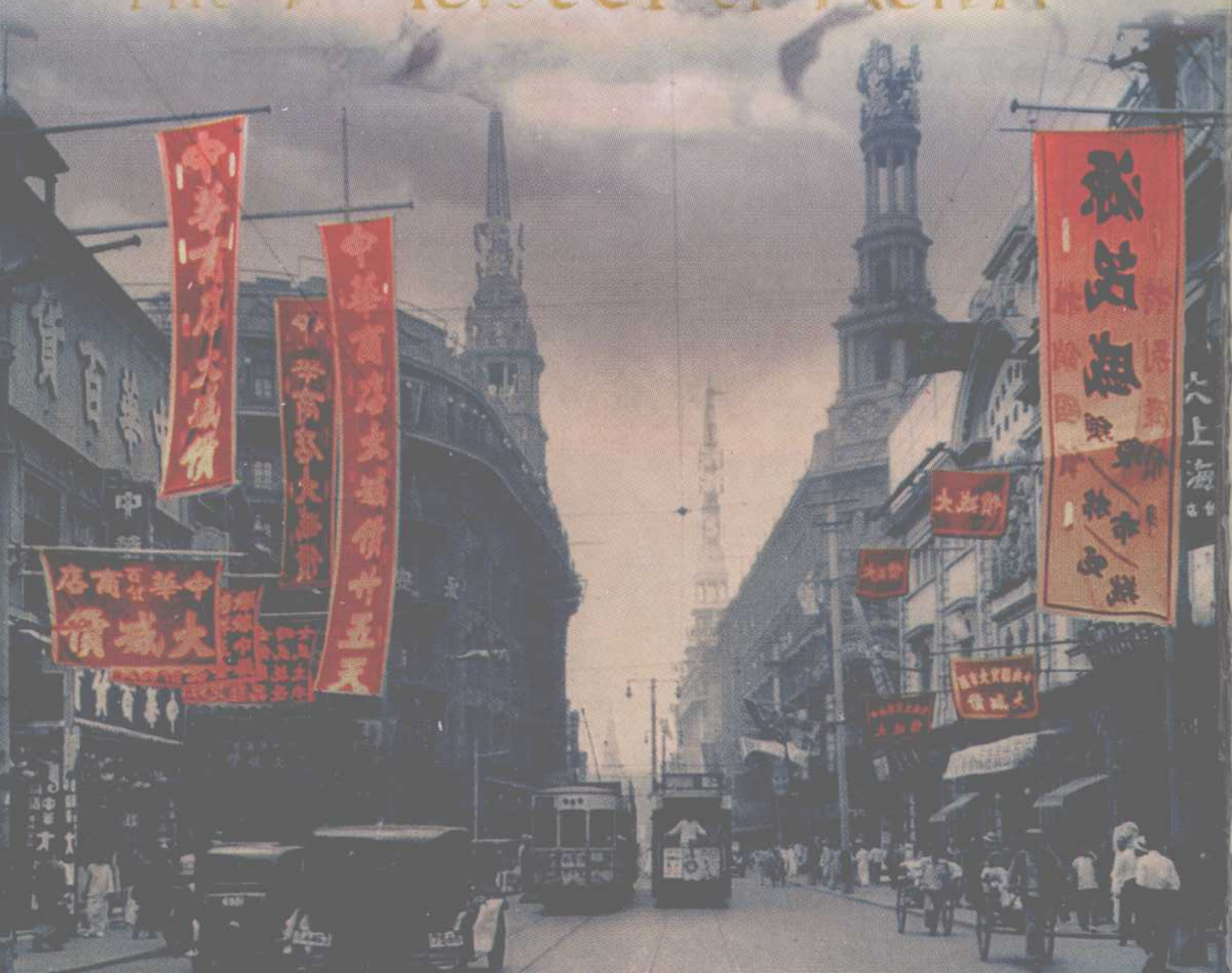


'AN IMMENSELY ATMOSPHERIC, GRIPPING DETECTIVE  
STORY WITH JUST THE RIGHT MIXTURE OF EXOTICISM,  
VIOLENCE AND ROMANCE' *The Times*

# TOM BRADBY

## The Master of Rain



Tom Bradby has been a senior correspondent for ITN for more than a decade. As Ireland Correspondent, he covered the unfolding peace process before going on to become Political Correspondent. He then spent three years based in Hong Kong as Asia Correspondent, during which time he was shot and seriously wounded whilst covering a riot in Jakarta. He is now the Royal Correspondent. He is the acclaimed author of *Shadow Dancer* and *The Sleep of the Dead*.

Set in Shanghai in 1926, *The Master of Rain* is a novel of driving *noir* suspense and rich historical detail, which more than confirms the promise of his two previous novels and which has been shortlisted for the Ian Fleming Steel Dagger for the best thriller of the year. Tom Bradby's new novel, *The White Russian*, will be published shortly by Bantam Press.

### Acclaim for *The Master of Rain*:

'Tom Bradby's expert evocation of the hothouse atmosphere of Twenties Shanghai makes an exotic backdrop to a cracking murder mystery . . . An immensely atmospheric, gripping detective story with just the right mixture of exoticism, violence and romance. Bradby has used his years as a foreign correspondent to imagine splendidly the opulence, corruption, debauchery, violence and mutual racism of a city that fused some of the worst Asian and European values' *The Times*

'Rich, dark, atmospheric, this fine novel captures time and place perfectly . . . it's a great crime story that ends up in a place you won't predict . . . and a great love story that you desperately hope will end up the place you predict' *Lee Child*

'Bradby has done for Shanghai what Raymond Chandler did for Los Angeles – created a stylish and cool



genre-fiction tapestry . . . he weaves together a vivid portrait of the times and a ripping good yarn as he slowly unravels the characters' secrets . . . Debauchery at its most elegant' *TIME magazine*

'In this ambitious, atmospheric crime novel, a city on the brink is recreated with impressive diligence. The physical details are strong and the politics appropriately ominous. *Chinatown via Casablanca*' *New York Times*

'A good page-turning read – you'll want to know what happens in the end, and there are some refreshingly subtle subtextual observations on the nature of evil'  
*The Spectator*

'Every once in a while a book comes along that combines larger-than-life epic adventure; idiomatic, pungent historical detail and genuine storytelling panache. Tom Bradby's *The Master of Rain* is such a book. This is splendidly evocative writing. Masterly in its depiction of a beautiful, dirty and corrupt city' *Amazon.co.uk*

'A gritty thriller . . . The atmosphere and menace of Twenties Shanghai is brought to vivid life as the backdrop to a gripping tale' *Daily Mail*

'Beneath the surface of this clever book, a thrilling yarn of murder and mayhem, we find a wise, richly layered and utterly convincing portrait of what was the most evil and fatally fascinating of all the modern world's cities. No-one has managed to bring Shanghai so alive, in all its ghastly splendour' *Simon Winchester*

'A brilliant evocation of one of the world's most fascinating cities, which uses the classic thriller genre to draw the reader into this hypnotizing milieu. Bradby creates colourful three dimensional scenes which are real and meaningful . . . *The Master of Rain* also works as a wonderful travelogue. It will make you yearn to go in search of the old Shanghai' *South China Morning Post*

'Nigh on impossible to put down . . . This intelligent thriller brings Shanghai and its imaginary inhabitants to life, much the same way as *Gorky Park* did for Moscow'  
*Time Out*

'A powerful plot, vividly drawn background with Shanghai brought pungently to life. Different and distinctive' *Literary Review*

'*The Master of Rain* is that rare thing: a truly epic crime novel, brilliantly researched and superbly executed'  
*John Connolly*

'A moody, murder mystery with all the style of a noir classic' *Mirror*

'As we turn the pages and stray deeper into Tom Bradby's decadent, strangely perfumed world, we grow aware that something sinister lies just beyond the reach of our vision, something we cannot see but that we nevertheless know is there. *The Master of Rain* is an astonishing, haunting, masterful novel' *Lincoln Child*

'Tense and rather lush, expertly working the wonderful setting without overplaying the cultural clash: eerily well-suited to these parlous times' *Kirkus Reviews*

'A vividly set and compellingly readable thriller about corruption in all its forms' *Robert Goddard*

'A fantastic and unputdownable invocation of 1920s Shanghai and the duplicities, shenanigans and general craziness of the International Settlement' *Access Asia*

'Bradby succeeds in recreating the atmosphere and paranoia of a city which formed an interface between various empires, where everything was for sale – especially human beings' *Morning Star*

*Also by Tom Bradby*

SHADOW DANCER  
THE SLEEP OF THE DEAD

*and published by Corgi Books*

# THE MASTER OF RAIN

Tom Bradby



**CORGI BOOKS**

**THE MASTER OF RAIN**  
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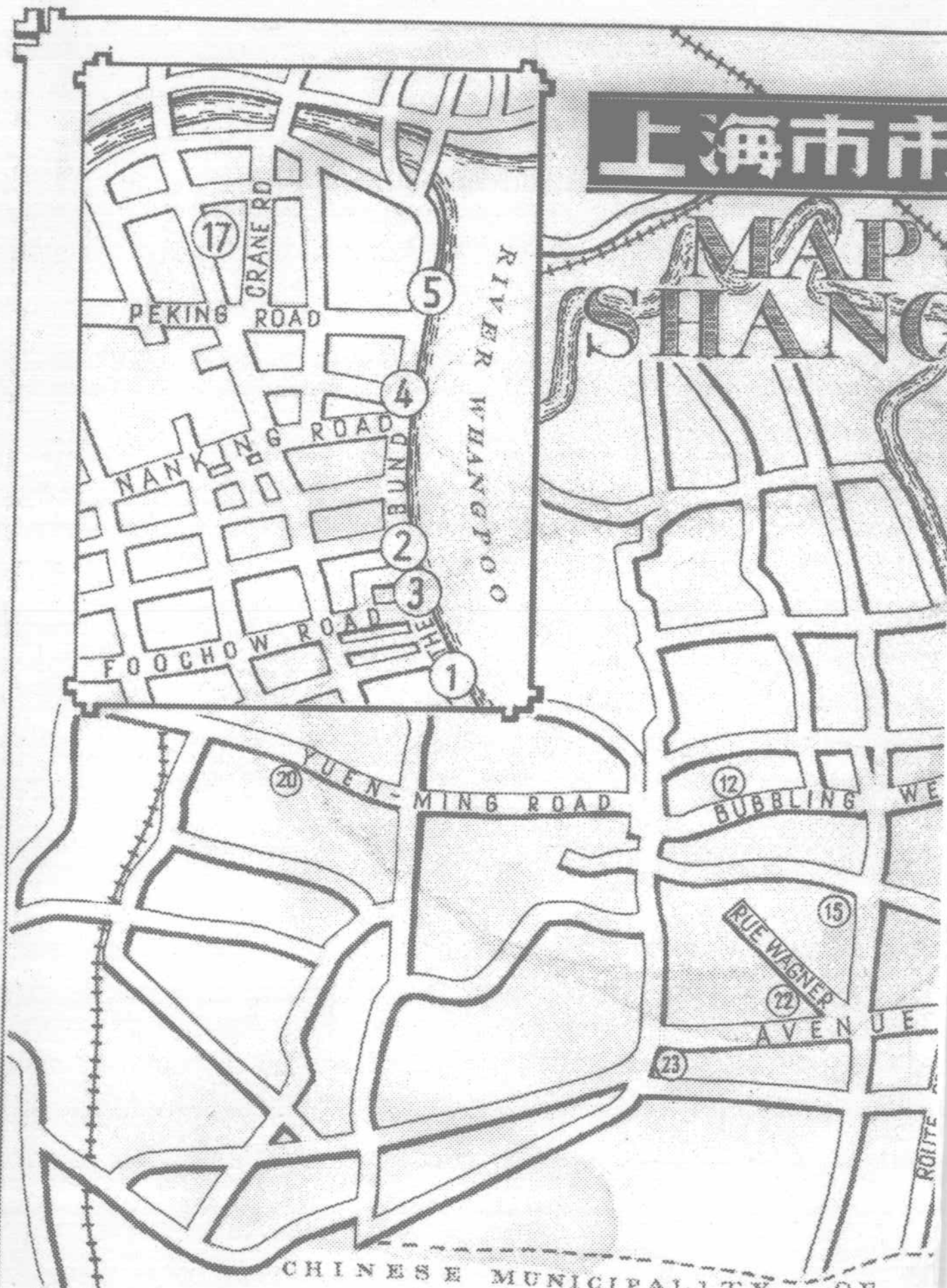
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To Claudia, Jack, Louisa and Sam.  
And Mum and Dad.



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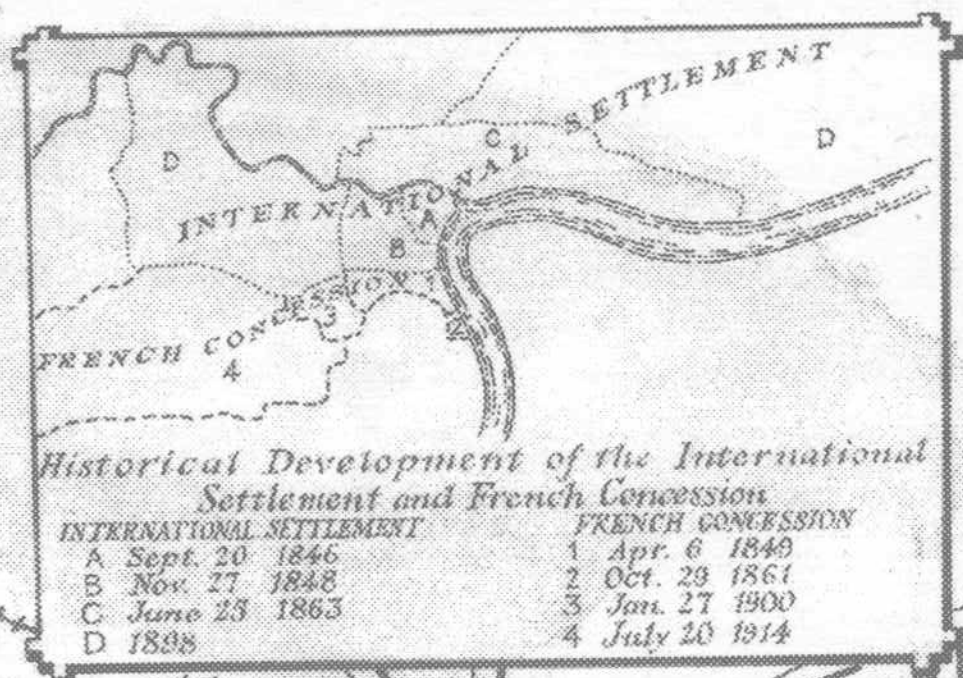
## MAP SHANGHAI



- CHINESE MUNICIPALITY OF
- |                          |                          |                   |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|
| ① Shanghai Club          | ⑥ Central Police Station | ⑪ Municipal 1     |
| ② Customs House          | ⑦ The Race Club          | ⑫ Caprisi's ap    |
| ③ Hongkong Shanghai Bank | ⑧ Happy Times Apartments | ⑬ Sergei's ap     |
| ④ Cathay Hotel           | ⑨ Majestic Café          | ⑭ 'Little Russia' |
| ⑤ Fraser's HQ            | ⑩ Country Club           | ⑮ Russian Ch      |



of  
SHANGHAI



*Historical Development of the International Settlement and French Concession*

*INTERNATIONAL SETTLEMENT*

- A Sept. 20 1846
- B Nov. 27 1848
- C June 23 1863
- D 1898

*FRENCH CONCESSION*

- 1 Apr. 6 1849
- 2 Oct. 29 1861
- 3 Jan. 27 1900
- 4 July 20 1914



Building  
partment  
artment  
Police Station  
urch

- ⑮ Field's rooms
- ⑯ Geoffrey Donaldson's house
- ⑰ Wing On store
- ⑱ Public Library
- ⑲ Fraser's Electrical Company

- ⑳ Hospital St. Marie
- ㉑ Pockmark Lu's House
- ㉒ The Sisters of Mercy Orphanage
- ㉓ Offices of 'New Shanghai Life'

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## SHANGHAI 1926

According to legend, affairs in the 'other world' of China are managed by bureaux or ministries. The most significant of these is the ministry of thunder and storm, presided over by the Master of Rain.

In the close, intense heat of the Shanghai summer, the Master of Rain stands above the dark clouds that hang over the city, brooding upon its fate. The rain is in his gift, and thus he controls the fertility of the land and the prosperity of its inhabitants.

He is an omnipotent and capricious benefactor – or tormentor.



## CHAPTER ONE

Field felt like a lobster being brought slowly to the boil. He closed his eyes briefly against the heat, the humidity and the still, heavy air. Only the clatter of typewriters hinted at energy and motion. He wiped the sweat from his forehead with the sleeve of his jacket and looked again at the two figures gesticulating behind the frosted glass. They were still arguing, and he had the uncomfortable feeling that it might be about him.

Macleod's secretary had stopped typing and was appraising him with a steady gaze. 'You're new,' she said, pushing her half-moon glasses up from the end of her nose.

'Yes.' Field nodded.

The woman wasn't showing any sign of discomfort, despite being three times his size and wearing a cardigan. 'Take your jacket off if you're hot,' she said.

Field smiled, and glanced up at the fan. It turned lethargically, with no discernible effect. He put his hands in his pockets. Macleod's office door had the words *Superintendent Macleod, Head of Crime* engraved in the glass and, although it was not Field's place to



say so, the security of tenure this implied confirmed what he had already heard about the man's confidence.

Field looked up at the fan again, and the paint that was peeling off the ceiling above it. For a moment, the sun broke through the thick blanket of cloud that had hung over the city for days, spilling light onto the desks at the far end of the room. Despite the dark wood panelling, the tall windows made the place seem less gloomy than the Special Branch office upstairs. He tugged his collar away from his throat and wiped away more sweat. He'd never imagined heat like this.

Macleod's secretary was still staring at him. 'How are you enjoying Shanghai?'

'Fine, thanks.'

She started typing again, fat fingers pounding the big metal keys, then stopped and looked at him. 'Slept with a Russian yet? Paid for a princess?'

Macleod's door opened and a small, lean man with dark, slicked-back hair walked past him. 'Caprisi?' Field said, but whatever had been going on in there, it had left Caprisi in no mood to talk. He headed for his desk, took his jacket from the back of the chair, pulled open a drawer, slipped a pistol into the leather holster that hung from his shoulder and marched towards the lift.

Field turned to face Macleod, who stood at his office door, toying with the chain around his neck. He was a burly man, almost bald, with a thin crown of grey hair. 'You're Field?' His voice was deep, with a broad Scottish accent.

'Yes, sir.'

'Follow him down.'

Field hesitated.

'Well, go on, man, what are you waiting for?'

Field got into the lift after Caprisi and hit the button for the ground floor. It cranked into action with a jolt and a loud crack, and descended, as always, so slowly that it would have been quicker to crawl down the stairs on all fours. Not that anyone wanted to take the stairs in this heat.

'You're new?' the American asked.

'Yes.'

'Still a Griffin?'

'No.' Officially he'd finished his training a month ago and had spent the intervening time being bored to death with routine office jobs. He was grateful to get out. Granger had told him his task was to check that the murder was not politically motivated and keep an eye on the Crime Branch.

Caprisi stared down at his shoes. Field noticed how carefully they'd been polished – just as his own had been ever since he'd come to the Far East and been relieved of the need to do anything like that for himself. He remembered his father's obsession with his lack of military discipline and allowed himself a smile.

Caprisi moved quickly through the lobby, his leather soles slapping on the stone floor. Outside, Field found himself squinting against the sun until it disappeared behind a bank of dark cloud. A Buick with a long brown body and a bright yellow hood stood at the kerb, its engine running. As he climbed into the near side, Field saw three bullet-holes in the panel by the door.

'Where's Chen?' Caprisi asked the driver, an old man dressed in a white tunic, who turned and shook his head.

Caprisi looked out of his window, trying to contain his impatience, rapping the glass with his knuckles. He wore a large gold ring on the index finger of his right hand. 'Come on, Chen,' he said, under his breath. 'What's he doing?' he asked the driver, though as far as Field could tell the man spoke no English.

Then a tall Chinese man emerged from the entrance of the Central Police Station. He wore a full-length khaki mackintosh and carried a Thompson machine-gun. He climbed onto the car's running-board and ducked his head through the open window.

'This is a present from Granger,' Caprisi explained, and pointed at Field. 'He's a Griffin,' he said, ignoring Field's earlier intimation that his training was complete.

Chen seemed less put out by Field's apparent intrusion than Caprisi and reached across to shake his hand, then barked an order at the driver and slapped the roof. He remained on the running-board as they lurched forward, the gun banging against the body-work. Field felt for his own pistol, suddenly aware of the rapid beating of his heart.

They moved a hundred yards down Foochow Road. Field looked out past Chen at the tide of humanity sweeping down the pavement beside them, until they were brought to a halt once more. Caprisi leant forward to see what was causing the hold-up, then sat back with a sigh.

'Granger told me you're from Chicago,' Field said.

A thin smile played across Caprisi's lips. 'Granger is the intelligence chief, so he should know.'

Field didn't respond. As head of the Special Branch,