



THE No. 1 INTERNATIONAL BESTSELLER

JAMES CLAVELL'S

# NOBLE HOUSE

A Novel of Hong Kong  
from the author of

**SHOGUN**



## NOBLE HOUSE

**'I swear by the Lord God that whomsoever produces the other half of any of these coins I will grant him whatsoever he asks.'**

*Dirk Struan, June 10th, 1841*

That was the promise made by the first of the tai-pans of the Noble House, the oldest and most important trading house in Hong Kong, and it was to be honoured by all the tai-pans to follow. Now it was up to Ian Dunross to fulfil the ancient pledge.

**'Breathtaking. Only terms like colossal, gigantic, titanic, incredible, unbelievable, gargantuan are properly descriptive. Clavell has made himself the king of super-adventure thrillers.'**

*Chicago Tribune*

**'A mesmeriser. The last time I was so taken with a spellbinding safari was when I read GONE WITH THE WIND.'**

*Los Angeles Times*

**'Fiction for addicts. Extravagantly romantic. A book that you can get lost in for weeks. Not only is it as long as life, it's also as rich with possibilities.'**

*The New York Times*

**'Clavell's biggest triumph yet. Storytelling done with dash and panache. A rousing read.'**

*The Washington Post*

**'Seethes with drama, sex, crime, intrigue and natural disaster. Clavell is, as always, a matchless talespinner.'**

*Cosmopolitan*

**'If you only buy one book this year, then buy NOBLE HOUSE . . . certainly it's the most colourful and dramatic story I have read in years. The enormity of James Clavell's achievement leaves me breathless.'**

*Annabel*

**'A grand drama, with the glamour, mystique and perils of the Orient . . . it has such breadth and power that at the end you will want to start at the beginning again.'**

*Manchester Evening News*

**' . . . Clavell, a masterly storyteller, unfolds a thrilling plot of vast complexity and splendid uncertainty right up to the final page'**

*The Birmingham Post*

**'A real blockbuster of a yarn . . . Clavell is a born storyteller and NOBLE HOUSE has all the ingredients of high adventure'**

*Western Evening Mail*

**'Tycoons, typhoons and skullduggery in Hong Kong – over a thousand pages of it!'**

*Daily Mail*

**'From the exciting pen of James Clavell comes a new and impressive novel . . .'**

*Yorkshire Post*

**'Captures the glamour of the Orient and weaves a web of intrigue and excitement in the gambling world of Hong Kong . . . a fascinating tale . . .'**

*The Chronicle, Oldham*

**'His latest blockbuster'**

*The Daily Express*

**' . . . a heavyweight of a blockbuster, rich in character, deep and devious in plot, vivid in description . . . colourful, fascinating and totally absorbing. James Clavell is a most stimulating writer.'**

*Sunderland Echo*

**'Mr Clavell is a master-builder . . . NOBLE HOUSE is, without question, a monumental work.'**

*Book Choice*

**'An astonishing performance, a surefire bestseller.'**

*Publishers Weekly*

## **JAMES CLAVELL**

James Clavell is a half-Irish Englishman who was born in Australia and now lives mostly in Canada and the States. He was brought up in England and served as a Captain in the Royal Artillery during the war. In 1942 he was captured by the Japanese and sent to Changi. His first bestselling novel, **KING RAT**, is based upon his experiences there.

After the war James Clavell went into the film business and has written the screenplays of such highly successful films as *The Great Escape*. He has written, produced and directed four films, including *To Sir With Love* and *The Last Valley*. **KING RAT** was followed by **TAI-PAN**, an even greater bestseller which spent nearly a year on the American best-seller lists. After this came **SHOGUN**, James Clavell's record breaking epic novel set in feudal Japan which has recently been filmed for Paramount.

**NOBLE HOUSE**  
is the fourth novel in the Asian Saga that  
so far consists of:

1600 A.D. .... Shōgun  
1841 A.D. .... Tai-Pan  
1945 A.D. .... King Rat  
1963 A.D. .... Noble House

All novels are available  
in Coronet Books

# NOBLE HOUSE

A novel of Hong Kong  
by

JAMES  
CLAVELL



Coronet Books  
Hodder and Stoughton



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I would like to offer this  
work as a tribute to Her  
Britannic Majesty, Elizabeth II,  
to the people of Her Crown  
Colony of Hong Kong—and  
*perdition to their enemies.*

Of course this is a novel. It is peopled with imaginary persons and companies and no reference to any person or company that was, or is, part of Hong Kong or Asia is intended.

I would also like to apologize at once to all Hong Kong *yan*—all Hong Kong *persons*—for rearranging their beautiful city, for taking incidents out of context, for inventing people and places and streets and companies and incidents that, hopefully, may appear to have existed but have never existed, for this, truly, is a story. . . .

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June 8, 1960



# Prologue

**11:45 P.M.:**

His name was Ian Dunross and in the torrential rain he drove his old MG sports car cautiously around the corner into Dirk's Street that skirted the Struan Building on the waterfront of Hong Kong. The night was dark and foul. Throughout the Colony—here on Hong Kong Island, across the harbor in Kowloon and the New Territories that were part of the China Mainland—streets were almost totally deserted, everyone and everything battened down, waiting for Typhoon Mary. The number nine storm warning had been hoisted at dusk and already eighty- to a hundred-knot gusts came out of the tempest that stretched a thousand miles southward to send the rain horizontal against the roofs and hillsides where tens of thousands of squatters huddled defenseless in their shantytowns of makeshift hovels.

Dunross slowed, blinded, the wipers unable to cope with the quantity of rain, the wind tearing at the canvas roof and side screens. Then the wind-shield cleared momentarily. At the end of Dirk's Street, directly ahead, was Connaught Road and the praya, then sea walls and the squat bulk of the Golden Ferry Terminal. Beyond in the vast, well-protected harbor, half a thousand ships were snug with all anchors out.

Ahead on the praya, he saw an abandoned street stall ripped bodily off the ground by a gust and hurled at a parked car, wrecking it. Then the car and the stall were sent skittering out of sight. His wrists were very strong and he held the wheel against the eddies that trembled his car violently. The car was old but well kept, the souped-up engine and brakes perfect. He waited, his heart beating nicely, loving the storm, then eased up onto



the sidewalk to park in the lee, well against the building, and got out.

He was fair-haired with blue eyes, in his early forties, lean and trim and he wore an old raincoat and cap. Rain drenched him as he hurried along the side street then ducked around the corner to hurry for the main entrance of the twenty-two-story building. Over the huge doorway was the Struan crest—the Red Lion of Scotland entwined with the Green Dragon of China. Gathering himself he strode up the broad steps and went in.

‘Evening, Mr. Dunross,’ the Chinese concierge said.

‘The tai-pan sent for me.’

‘Yes sir.’ The man pressed the elevator button for him.

When the elevator stopped, Dunross walked across the small hall, knocked and went into the penthouse living room. ‘Evening, tai-pan,’ he said with cold formality.

Alastair Struan was leaning against the fine fireplace. He was a big, ruddy, well-kept Scotsman with a slight paunch and white hair, in his sixties, and he had ruled Struan’s for eleven years. ‘Drink?’ He waved a hand at the Dom Pérignon in the silver bucket.

‘Thank you.’ Dunross had never been in the tai-pan’s private quarters before. The room was spacious and well furnished, with Chinese lacquer and good carpets, old oils of their early clipper ships and steamers on the walls. The big picture windows that would normally overlook all Hong Kong, the harbor and Kowloon across the harbor were now black and rain streaked.

He poured. ‘Health,’ he said formally.

Alastair Struan nodded and, equally coldly, raised his glass in return. ‘You’re early.’

‘Five minutes early is on time, tai-pan. Isn’t that what Father hammered into me? Is it important that we meet at midnight?’

‘Yes. It’s part of our custom. Dirk’s custom.’

Dunross sipped his wine, waiting in silence. The antique ship’s clock ticked loudly. His excitement increased, not knowing what to expect. Over the fireplace was a marriage portrait of a young girl. This was Tess Struan who had married Culum, second tai-pan and son of their founder Dirk Struan, when she was sixteen.