

A direct hit! The techno-thriller has a new ace, and his name is Larry Bond." —Tom Clancy

RED PHOENIX

A NOVEL



LARRY BOND

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*Dedicated to our parents,
Margaret and Harris Bond and Marilyn and Don Larkin,
for their encouragement, patience, and most of all,
for their love.*

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All of them made the book better.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

They say collaboration is the hardest form of writing. Trying to get two people to agree on everything for the year it takes to produce a manuscript should be next to impossible. Happily, it is not only possible, but fun.

Patrick Larkin and I wrote this book together, working side by side over the phone and by computer—all despite being physically separated by 2,500 miles. He not only produced his share of the story but offered counsel and advice in my portions as well.

Together, Pat and I pulled this book forward from the faint glimmerings of a rough idea and a possible plot, and I cannot conceive of tackling this work without him. It is his book as much as mine, and he deserves at least as much credit.

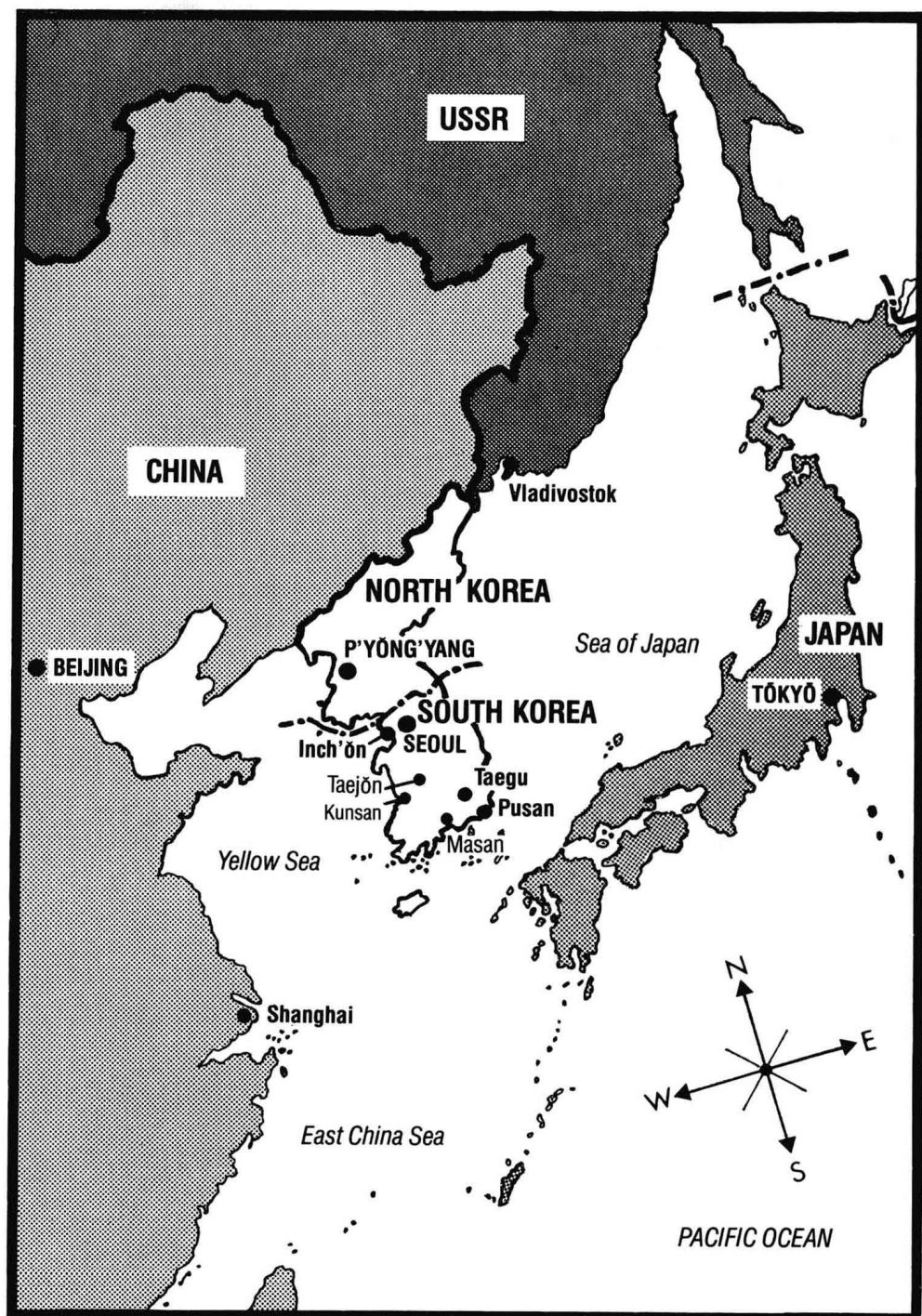
Korean cosmology assigns a separate season and divinity to each of the four cardinal points of the compass:

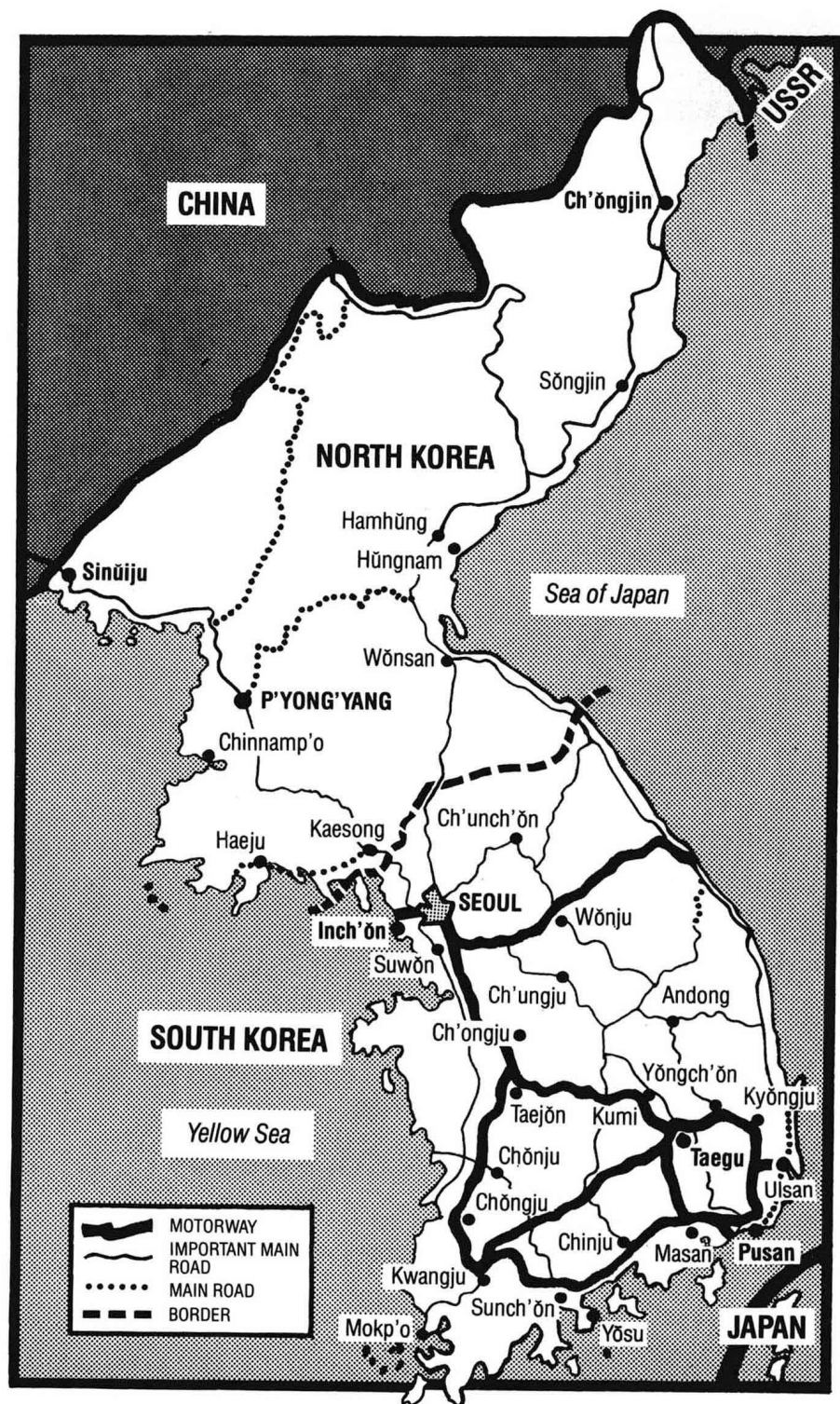
The East is associated with Spring and the Azure Dragon,

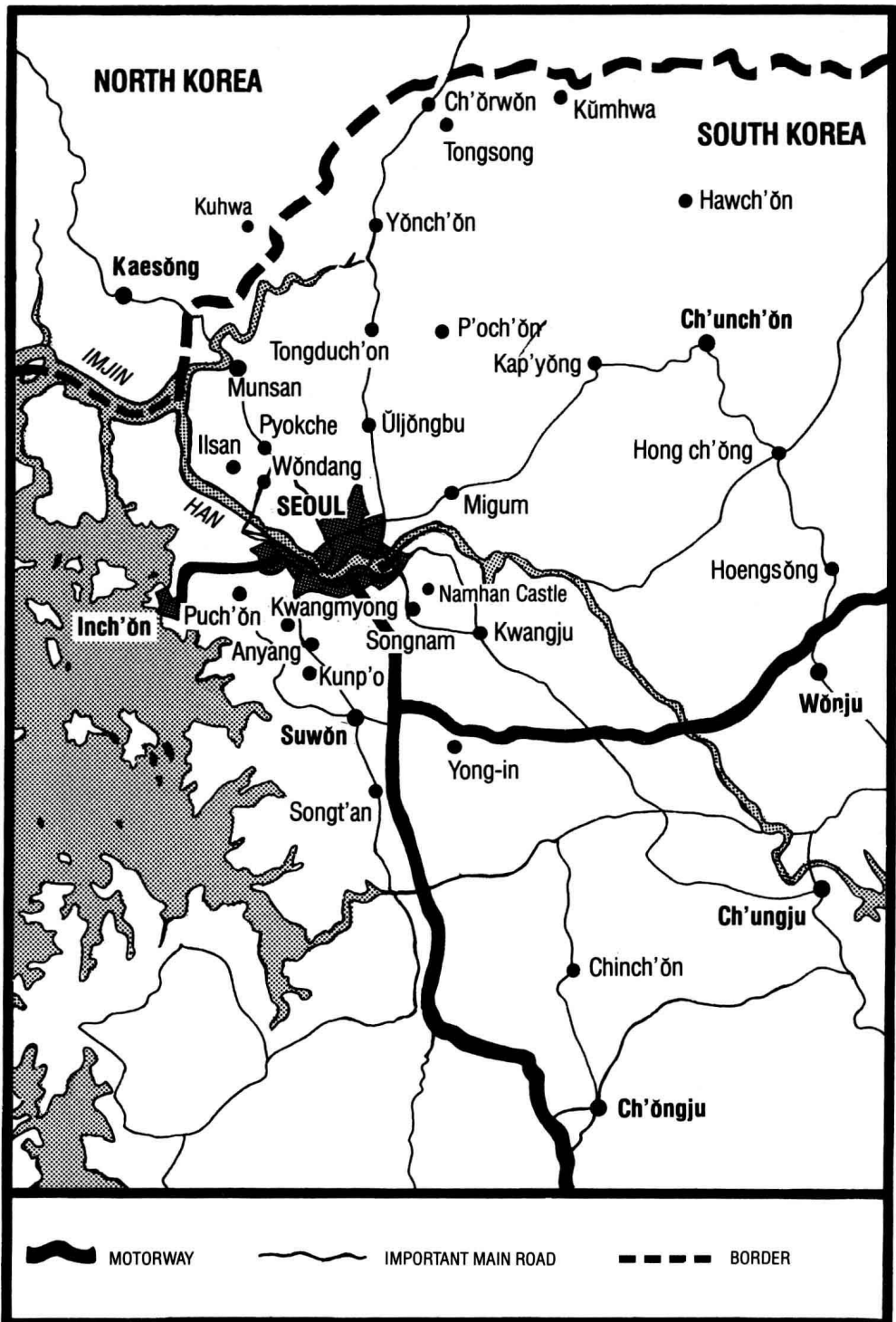
The North with Winter and the Divine Warriors,

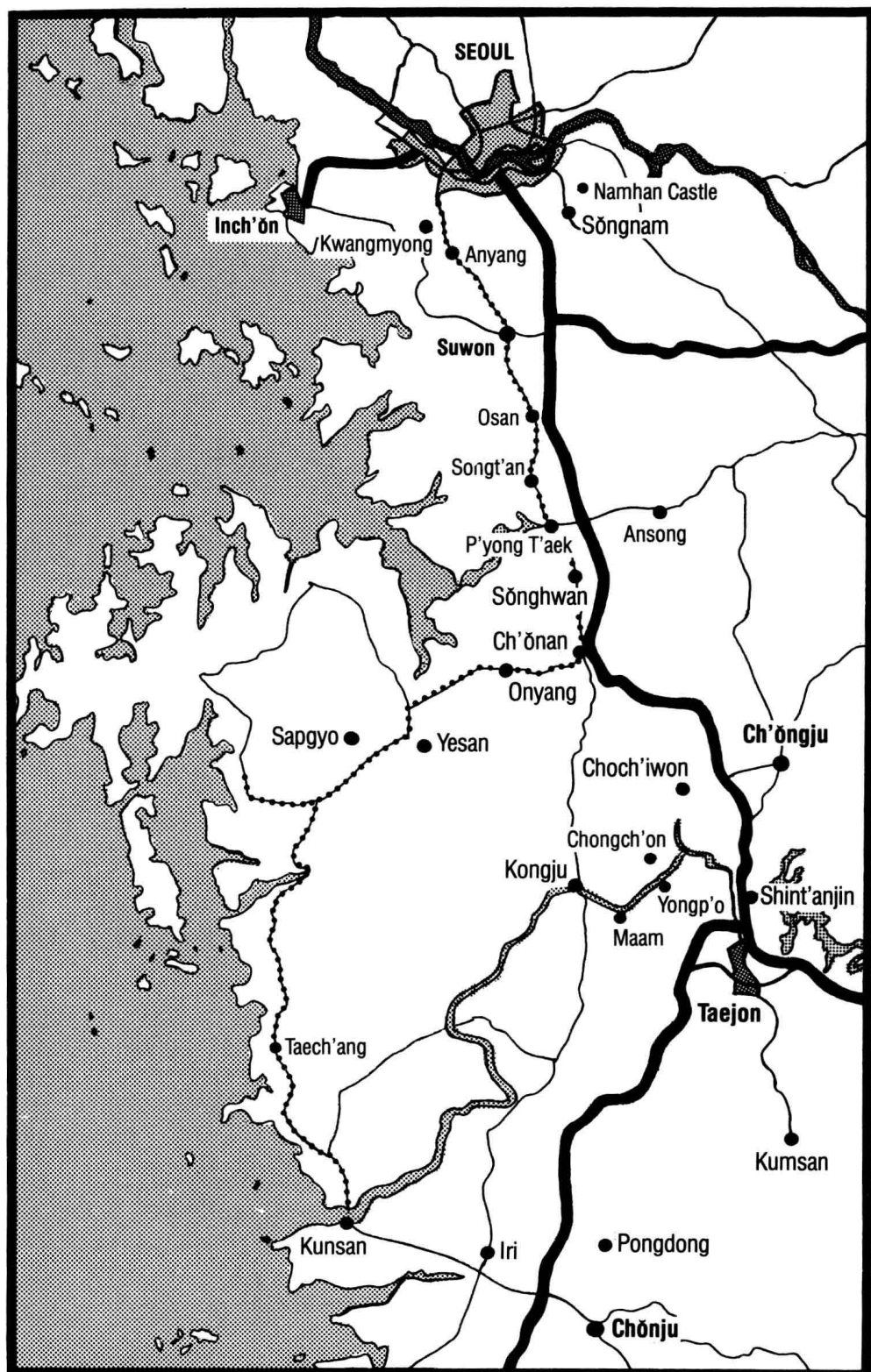
The West with Autumn and the White Tiger,

And the South with Summer and the Red Phoenix.









DRAMATIS PERSONAE

AMERICANS:

Paul Bannerman—The U.S. secretary of state.

Congressman Ben Barnes—Democrat of Michigan, chairman of the House Subcommittee on Trade.

Admiral Thomas Aldrige Brown—Commander of Task Force 71, the U.S. Navy's senior officer in the Korean theater.

Captain Marc Chadwick—A U.S. Army intelligence officer stationed in South Korea.

Captain Tony "Saint" Christopher—An Air Force F-16 pilot assigned to the 35th Tactical Fighter Squadron, 8th Tactical Fighter Wing, based at Kunsan, South Korea.

Major Colin Donaldson—Executive officer, 1st Battalion of the 39th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division. Stationed at Camp Howze, near Tongduch'on, South Korea.

Dr. Blake Fowler—A staffer on the National Security Council, Washington, D.C.

First Lieutenant John "Hooter" Gresham—An Air Force pilot assigned to the 35th Tactical Fighter Squadron, 8th Tactical Fighter Wing, based at Kunsan, South Korea. He is Captain Tony Christopher's wingman.

Captain Doug Hansen—Military aide to General McLaren.

Captain J. F. Hutchins—Administrative assistant to 2nd Division civil affairs officer, assigned to command of a provisional infantry company.

Anne Larson—An Army civilian employee and computer expert working as supervisor of the logistics programming section at the U.S. Army's Yongsan Base in Seoul, South Korea.

Captain Richard Levi, USN—Commander of the Spruance-class destroyer USS O'Brien.

Second Lieutenant Kevin Little—An ROTC graduate assigned to South Korea. Platoon leader of 2nd Platoon, A Company, 1st Infantry Battalion of the 39th Infantry Regiment.

General John Duncan McLaren—Commander Combined Forces, Korea. Commands all U.S. and South Korean forces.

Captain Matuchek—Commanding officer, A Company, 1st Battalion of the 39th Infantry Regiment.

Jeremy Mitchell—Administrative assistant to Congressman Ben Barnes.

Corporal Jaime Montoya—Radioman assigned to the provisional company commanded by Second Lieutenant Kevin Little.

Sergeant Harry Pierce—Platoon sergeant, 2nd Platoon, A Company, 1st Battalion of the 39th Infantry Regiment.

George Putnam—The president's national security adviser.

Admiral Philip Simpson—Chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff.

SOUTH KOREANS:

General Chang Jae-Kyu—A South Korean Army officer commanding the 4th Infantry Division.

Major Chon Sang-Du—An A-10 pilot in the South Korean Air Force.

Captain Lee—A South Korean combat engineering officer.

General Park—Chairman of the South Korean Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Second Lieutenant Rhee Han-Gil—A South Korean Army officer assigned as liaison officer to 2nd Platoon, A Company, 1st Battalion of the 39th Infantry Regiment.

NORTH KOREANS:

Captain Chae Ku-Ho—1st Company, II Battalion, 91st Infantry Regiment.

Lieutenant General Cho Hyun-Jae—Originally assigned as commander of the North Korean II Corps, later promoted to Colonel General and command of the First Shock Army.

Senior Captain Chun Chae-Yun—The captain of DPRK *Great Leader*, a North Korean Kilo-class diesel submarine.

Major General Chyong Dal-Joong—Cho's deputy commander, later promoted to Lieutenant General and command of the II Corps.

Lieutenant Sohn—Platoon Leader, Assault Group 2, 1st Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment.

Kim Il-Sung—General Secretary of the Korean Workers Party, President of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, commander in chief of the armed forces. Called the Great Leader, Kim Il-Sung is the aging and infirm absolute ruler of North Korea.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

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Kim Jong-Il—Called the Dear Leader, Kim Jong-Il is the son and heir apparent to Kim Il-Sung, the Great Leader.

RUSSIANS:

Colonel Sergei Ivanovitch Borodin—A Soviet MiG-29 pilot heading up a training team in North Korea.

Captain Nikolai Mikhailovitch Markov—Captain of the Soviet Tango-class submarine *Konstantin Dribinov*.

Andrei Ivanovich Rychagov—Member of the Soviet Politburo and defense minister.

PROLOGUE

AUGUST 19—SOUTH OF THE DMZ NEAR HAKKOK, SOUTH KOREA

They found the North Korean tunnel shortly before dawn.

The two men—one an American intelligence officer, the other a South Korean combat engineer—stood regarding a three-inch-wide borehole as they might an ancient oracle, one that had given them good news.

Captain Marc Chadwick knelt and ran his fingertips around the edge of hole Five-A, feeling the damp, smooth rock. “Look at that pattern. Almost circular. We’re right over the bastards.”

His Korean counterpart, Captain Lee, nodded. “Almost certainly. Five-B and Five-D also indicate this location.”

Both men smiled, feeling the excitement of a long hunt now nearing the kill.

Hole Five-A didn’t look like much. Just a water-filled hole that went straight down through ten meters of solid rock. But it served as a detector for underground vibrations, like the ones made by North Korean engineers blasting tunnels under the Demilitarized Zone—the DMZ—and into South Korea. Explosive charges laid to carve out a new tunnel sent shock waves rippling through the rock—shock waves that slopped water out of the closest boreholes. Not much. Usually not more than an inch or two. But a good engineer could tell a lot from that, and Captain Lee was a good engineer.

Lee turned and looked north toward a small rise that blocked their view of the DMZ less than a kilometer away. He shook his head. The North Koreans had pushed this tunnel more than two kilometers from their side of the line before they’d been detected. It passed right under the Allied fortifications built along the DMZ, and the North Koreans could have used it to infiltrate spies and raiding parties into the South, or perhaps even for large-scale troop movements should war break out. Lee scowled. The communists were getting too good at this game for his taste.

He glanced east. The sun was coming up, spilling light over a brown, barren landscape blasted by summer heat and dry weather. The South Korean engineer mentally ran over the amount of work that would be required, pursed his lips, and said, "If I have my men start now, we should be able to break in by midday."

The American nodded and the two men studied the borehole in silence for a moment longer before turning away back down the valley toward their waiting jeep.

Captain Lee's estimates were, like everything else about him, precise.

Chadwick noticed the silence first. For six hours since daybreak the valley had been filled with a high-pitched, grinding whine as South Korean drills ripped their way into the ground, opening a path for the explosives that would break through into the suspected North Korean tunnel. He'd watched avidly for a time, but his interest had waned as the sun rose higher and the temperature climbed, and he'd finally retreated to a shadowed truck cab.

Now the drills had stopped. Chadwick sat up suddenly and pulled the latest issue of *Stars and Stripes* off his face. He stared through the windshield as combat engineers unreeled thin detonator wire from the enlarged borehole to a sheltered spot near where the trucks were parked. After a moment Lee stood and gave him a thumbs-up signal. The charges were in place and wired to go. He clambered out of the truck cab and ambled over to where Lee lay waiting with his noncoms.

The Korean grinned up at him and gestured to the plunger. "Care to try your hand?"

"Nope. You blow things up. I just take pictures of 'em. Before and after."

Lee chuckled, motioned him to the ground, and then pushed the plunger. Borehole Five-A erupted in a fiery pillar of smoke and thrown rock debris. A muffled roar rumbled through the valley and shook the earth.

Lee and his troops were up and running toward the hole before the dust even settled. Their explosives had torn open a jagged crater, three feet across at its narrowest point. Most importantly, it did not seem to have a bottom. Shining a powerful light straight down revealed only a circle of darkness. They were in.

Lee took an old Korean War-vintage M3 submachine gun—a "grease gun"—from his sergeant and slung it across his back. He looked at Chadwick. "I'm claiming the honor of going down first. Care to accompany me?"

The sweat stains under Chadwick's arms suddenly felt ice cold, but he shrugged and asked, "Do we get to use a rope?"

Lee grinned. "Naturally. Only Marines are forbidden to use ropes, Captain."

"Terrific." Chadwick checked the clip on his regulation-issue 9mm pistol.

He didn't like this commando stuff. What if the bad guys were waiting down there for the first flies to drop into their parlor? Desk jockeys like him were supposed to analyze North Korea's tunnels, not invade them. But he couldn't think of any graceful way to back out, and he'd be damned if he'd let Lee see that he was scared. He and the engineer had been partners now for months and they'd made a good team. Chadwick didn't think that would stay true if he chickened out now.

He watched while Lee stepped to the edge of the hole, clipped a line onto his belt, and signaled his men to lower away. The South Korean dangled momentarily and then disappeared through the narrow opening, looking intently downward.

Moments later, Lee called up for them to stop. The end of the line came back up, and Chadwick stepped to the edge.

They lowered him slowly past the jagged sides of the hole that kept threatening to snag his battle dress and then on down into the darkness. He swallowed hard and tried to concentrate on mentally recording what he was seeing. It was the best way he knew to push away the fears his subconscious kept raising.

For the first fifteen meters the hole was nearly circular, but then the walls spread away, opening up like the lower half of an hourglass, and he was swinging in the air. Chadwick realized that the blasting must have caved in the roof of the tunnel. He looked down. Ten meters' worth of rock littered the floor below him.

He touched down on the uncertain footing and scrambled for a moment to get his balance. Something grabbed his arm and he jumped, feeling the adrenaline rush pulsing through his system. It was Lee, steadying him.

"Jesus Christ!" he whispered. "You scared the crap out of me."

"Sorry."

Lee let go and stepped back, swinging his light around in an arc to cover the tunnel in front of them. They had broken through the roof near the end of the tunnel, but well over to one side. The passageway itself ran north-south and was at least thirteen meters wide, big enough for a three-lane road. Away from the area currently under construction, the floors, walls, and ceiling had all been smoothed. There were lamps mounted overhead. They weren't lit though, and only Lee's flashlight and the sunlight pouring down through the explosives-torn shaft provided illumination—looking much like eerie spotlights in the dusty air.

More men were swarming down the ropes now, some carrying weapons and others demolition gear. Chadwick whistled softly as he saw crate after crate of explosives being stockpiled off to the side. "How much will it take to destroy this underground freeway?"

Lee cocked his head, studying what he could make out of the tunnel through the darkness and still-swirling dust. "Perhaps as much as a thousand

kilos of C4. It will take us most of the day to wire the charges. This could be the second largest 'freeway' we have ever found." He smiled wolfishly and shrugged. "Who knows? If we time it right, we may be able to catch the communists as they return to their work this evening."

While Lee's men lowered their equipment through the narrow opening to the surface, the two captains moved off down the tunnel, accompanied by seven M16-toting enlisted men. The engineers needed security while they worked, and Chadwick wanted to get a good look at everything before it was too late.

His nervousness had evaporated with the absence of opposition. Now he had a job to do.

"What's that on the wall?" The American stopped as his flashlight hit a painted line of Hangul characters.

Lee stepped closer. "It says that this is the 'Socialist Awareness' tunnel." The South Korean sounded both amused and disgusted at the same time.

"Well, it's the 'Socialist Awareness' tunnel for about six more hours. Then it's going to be the 'Socialist Collapsed Hole in the Ground.'" Chadwick raised his camera and snapped a picture of the nameplate.

They'd already come three hundred meters from the entrance without seeing much of anything. Just the smooth rock walls and floors, an occasional ventilation shaft, and now this painted sign. It looked peaceful, but every step brought them closer to North Korean territory.

A few meters farther on their flashlights picked out a row of dark, boxy forms blocking the passage in the distance. Heavy construction equipment? That didn't make sense. You didn't use bulldozers to build tunnels.

They picked up the pace a little, closing on the shapes. They walked another twenty steps or so and then Chadwick pulled up short. In a very soft voice he said, "Oh, shit. Captain Lee, tell me those aren't what I know they are."

His flashlight pointed up and outlined the rounded form of a tank turret, and another one next to it, and another one next to that. Three tanks, with their turrets pointed aft, in travel position, were parked abreast in the tunnel.

Lee whirled and shouted something to a private, who took off running. Chadwick understood just enough Korean to understand "colonel" and "more men." Smart move. Get the brass and get reinforcements. Nobody had ever found any equipment parked in a tunnel before. Son of a bitch. Excitedly he ran over to the left. He shined his flashlight down the passage between the tank and wall. Yep. There was another tank past this one, and one past that, and on until the light was lost in the darkness.

Chadwick stood and stared, drinking in every detail. A long-barreled 115mm main gun. One 7.62mm coaxial machine gun. A heavy machine gun mounted on the turret for use against aircraft and helicopters. An infrared searchlight mounted near the main gun. There couldn't be any doubt about