

## CHAPTER 2

### What is Vortex?

It was midnight in Hong Kong. The city was full of tall buildings and coloured lights. There were a lot of people and cars in the streets. Tucker's eyes and mouth were wide open.

'Is this your first time abroad?' Johnny asked the young agent.

'No,' said Tucker. 'I've been to Scotland – twice.'

Tucker's eyes got even bigger when they went into the Golden Lotus Casino and up the wide stairs. Beautiful lights high above them shone down on all the rich people in expensive clothes.

They went into a large room with red and green tables. It was very busy. Groups of men and women played at the tables. Their eyes were both excited and worried. They were winning and losing a lot of money.

Suddenly, Tucker pointed at a Chinese man in glasses with a long face. 'Look, Mr English,' he said excitedly. 'He's giving you a sign!'

Johnny walked coolly to the table and sat between two Chinese men. He turned to the man on his right and looked at him with a knowing smile.

'Oh no!' thought Tucker. 'He's looking at the wrong Chinese man with glasses!'

The man on Johnny's left put his head close to Johnny's. 'Your grandmother is ill,' he said in a very low voice.

'She's dead!' Johnny said crossly. Who was this strange person?

Then suddenly the strange man fell forward onto the table. He was dead! Johnny jumped to his feet. He quickly searched the body. He found a piece of paper. It had an



address on it: *Kowloon, Paradise 8*. They were getting closer to Fisher.

\* \* \*

The green door of number 8 opened a little. A scared, white face looked at Johnny. Fisher quickly pulled Johnny into the small room.

Johnny held his nose. The room and the man were both very dirty. Was this really a C.I.A. agent?

'Save me!' Fisher reached out to Johnny, but Johnny stayed away from his dirty fingers. 'If you help me, I'll tell you everything.'

'Go on,' said Johnny coolly.

Outside the room Tucker was on the phone to his mother. 'Everything's fine, Mum ...' He didn't see a Chinese cleaner with white hair behind him. Slowly, she lifted a gun to the window. It was pointing across the garden ... to the window in Fisher's room.

'There's a group of three people called Vortex,' Fisher was saying, his words were coming faster and faster.

‘They want to kill the Chinese Premier, Xiang Ping.’

‘Look,’ Fisher showed Johnny a long key. ‘There are three keys. When Vortex put the keys together they can unlock a deadly, secret weapon.’

Johnny didn’t believe him. ‘Oh yes?’ he thought.

‘I’m part of Vortex,’ Fisher continued. ‘We get five hundred million dollars when we kill Xiang Ping. But the others want my money too.’

‘Rubbish!’ Johnny laughed. ‘Look at you! You couldn’t kill anyone. Vortex is probably the name of a computer shop!’ He started to leave but Fisher’s next words stopped him.

‘We killed President\* Chambal in Mozambique,’ said Fisher softly.

Johnny went cold. ‘Mozambique?’ He turned back to Fisher but he was too late.

BANG! As he turned, he saw Fisher fall back on the sofa. He was dead.

\* \* \*

Johnny ran out of the room. He saw the cleaner with white hair.

‘It isn’t safe here,’ he said kindly and helped her into the lift. As the lift doors closed he saw her gun.

‘Stop her!’ he shouted. But the lift was already going down. Then he saw a Chinese man through the window in Fisher’s room. He was taking the key.

‘Quick! Tucker – after him!’ cried Johnny.

The two agents followed the Chinese man onto the roof of the hotel. How could Johnny catch him? The young man could jump higher and climb more easily. Then he heard the words of the monk in Tibet again.

\* The President is the head of a country.

‘You are not young. But with age you become cleverer!’

Johnny smiled to himself. ‘Yes, I am a top secret agent and I am cleverer than this young man,’ he thought.

He followed the running man quite calmly. When the man jumped over high boxes, Johnny walked round them. When the man climbed quickly up and over walls, Johnny opened the doors and walked through. And when the man dangerously climbed over the edge of the roof and down the side of the building, Johnny took the lift to the street.



\* \* \*

Johnny and Tucker were right behind the man when he reached the sea and jumped into a boat. The boat was small but fast and soon he was feeling safe.

But Johnny’s quick eyes found a big, expensive boat and he and Tucker jumped on.

‘I’m a British secret agent and I’m taking control of this boat,’ he said to the group of British people on the boat.

‘What an adventure,’ they thought. ‘How exciting!’

The boat travelled quickly through the water. Faster and faster it went. They were getting closer to the man's small boat.

Johnny took out the camera that Patch gave him. One of the people on Johnny's boat moved in front of him and smiled.

'Just to the left,' said Johnny and he shot at the small boat with the camera. The people on Johnny's boat cried out and the Chinese man jumped into the water.

'Yes!' shouted everyone on Johnny's boat. Johnny looked down and smiled, pleased.

But it wasn't over yet. The Chinese man swam to the land and pulled himself out of the water. He still had the key. Johnny's heart was going fast as he jumped off the British boat and followed him again. The two men looked at each other and then they fought. But it wasn't a fair



fight. Three more Chinese men joined in. They were big and heavy and carried dangerous weapons but Johnny was clever and they couldn't hit him. In the end the three men were on the floor and the Chinese man and Johnny were alone again.

Johnny saw a piece of wood. Quickly, he jumped on it and the other end lifted up and hit the man between the legs. He fell down heavily. Johnny was the winner. He smiled as he took the key. 'I'm still the best,' he thought.