CHAPTER 07

NO SAFE PLACE

01 — THE PLACE AT WHICH HE WAS EXPECTED

The third man had been standing at the entrance for nearly twenty minutes when the person responsible for the building brought him a chair. He declined it. One of the municipal officers went inside, and the other remained on the pavement with a sheet of paper on which he had been making notes.

Across the street Roy was sitting on a bench with his right arm resting against his coat. The light above the entrance illuminated a sign giving the hours at which applications for accommodation would be received. He would have had time to make an application if he had been able to cross the street.

A woman arrived with two children and a bag of clothes. She showed a document to the officer. He directed her inside. When she asked whether there had been a change in the arrangements, he told her that they were carrying out an inspection.

Roy watched the children disappear into the building. Whatever the men had come for, they had not prevented the woman from entering.

He had been trying to decide whether that was a sufficient reason to follow her when a young man came out of the entrance carrying several folded blankets. Someone had evidently asked him to bring them to the small vehicle parked farther down the street. He returned a few moments later for another load.

By then Roy had made his decision. He stood up carefully and began to walk away.

It was not the possibility of being recognized that troubled him most. If the officers obtained his name from the person responsible for admitting him, they would acquire the name of somebody who had assisted him. That person would have had no means of knowing what it meant to do so until after the assistance had been provided.

He had once believed that the problem could be resolved by making himself known. In the early days of the proceedings that followed his arrival in Okakyo, he had been asked to establish that he was a person to whom the law applied. Now that several authorities had accepted that he existed, he was unable to enter a building without considering what the knowledge of his existence might do to the people inside it.

At the end of the street there was a shop selling food in containers that could be heated at the counter. He bought something to eat. The attendant offered him a pair of chopsticks and, seeing the way he held his arm, replaced them with a spoon.

He thanked her.

She asked if he wanted the lid left off the container.

"Please."

He ate at the narrow counter beside the window. There were two other customers, one wearing the uniform of a municipal transport employee. They were talking about the alterations to the evening services.

A number of the terminals in the upper district had ceased issuing certain kinds of tickets. Their replacements were expected the following morning. The employee said that the machines themselves were working, but that the changes to the authorization system had taken longer than anticipated.

"They could have left the old ones running," the other customer said.

"That's what we told them."

Roy finished eating and returned the spoon to the attendant.

Outside, the windows of the buildings were beginning to reflect the lights of the vehicles on the street. It was not yet cold enough for anyone to pay particular attention to a man wearing a coat with the collar raised.

He took out the telephone. Lian had given him the time of his next appointment and explained what changes in his condition would make it necessary for him to seek assistance before then. He could still remember everything she had said.

The difficulty was finding a place in which he could wait until morning.

He thought of calling the medical association. There might be another message from Rachel. But there was no longer a telephone in the shelter at which he had previously been able to make his inquiries without having to explain why he was there. He did not know whether the association's telephone number would now appear among the numbers subject to examination.

He put the telephone away.

A public screen at the junction was showing an announcement about the temporary inspection of accommodation facilities. The measure was intended, the announcement said, to establish the accuracy of the records maintained by institutions participating in municipal assistance programs. It did not affect the eligibility of people in need of assistance.

Below the announcement was the number of an office to which inquiries could be addressed.

Roy read it. There had been a time when an announcement of that kind would have been of interest to him only because of the information it contained. Now he read it with the additional purpose of trying to establish which words had been omitted.

No reason for checking the accuracy of the records had been given.

He continued toward the lower part of the district. Somewhere behind him, at the entrance he had not used, the woman with the two children was probably being assigned a place in which to sleep.

He hoped she would not be asked to give it up.

02 — THE INSPECTION OF ORDINARY THINGS

The instruction authorizing the inspections had reached the municipal liaison office shortly after four in the afternoon. Captain Deren received a copy of it when he requested an explanation of the activities being undertaken in the upper district.

The instruction was addressed to the authorities responsible for the accuracy of civil records. It did not mention Roy Batty. An annex, which had not been included in the copy supplied to him, described the circumstances under which an irregularity was to be referred to the office conducting the search.

He asked for the annex.

The liaison officer told him that he could obtain the criteria applicable to referrals made to the command, but that the municipal office had been given a separate set of instructions.

"Whose operation is this?" Deren asked.

The officer hesitated. He said that the inspections were being conducted under the authority of the national continuity provision. The assistance of the municipality had been requested by a department of the government.

"Which department?"

The officer consulted the terminal on his desk. He obtained the name of the department responsible for the extension of the search and the name of a civilian office through which the instructions had been transmitted. Neither name appeared on the acquisition order in Deren's possession.

Deren went to see Vale.

He found him in a room with two members of the staff who had been instructed to prepare a revised assessment of the progress of the operation. On the screen was a graph showing the number of institutions at which inquiries had been made since the search had begun.

The line rose more steeply near the end.

Deren waited for the two employees to leave before showing Vale the instruction.

"We have people looking at accommodation records. Do we know what they'll do when they find something?"

Vale said that a record indicating the possible presence of the subject would be referred to the appropriate unit. There was no change in the responsibilities of the personnel who might subsequently be deployed.

"And if the record indicates that he's ill?"

"Then it will be assessed along with the other information."

Deren looked at the graph still displayed on the screen. He asked whether any of the additional inquiries had produced a reliable observation of Roy since the incident involving M-08.

Vale said that the information was still being examined.

The captain had been preparing to make another proposal concerning medical assistance. He had intended to ask for a physician to be available to the personnel conducting the recovery. He now

found himself considering whether the physician would be of any use if the subject were prevented from receiving treatment before the personnel arrived.

"We're looking in the places where an injured person is most likely to go," he said.

"That would seem reasonable."

"It would be reasonable if we knew what we wanted to happen there."

Vale turned away from the screen. He reminded Deren that the purpose of the operation was to obtain custody of a subject who had repeatedly demonstrated his ability to resist the personnel assigned to it. The authorities responsible for the extension of the search had been instructed to increase the likelihood of locating him. They were not responsible for the decision concerning what would happen once he had been located.

The explanation was consistent with the documents Deren had been given. It was also consistent with the explanations he had been receiving for several days from people whose responsibilities ended just before the beginning of the responsibilities of the next person.

He asked whether a restriction could be placed on the acquisition of medical information by the command until the proposal he had submitted was considered.

Vale said that the command had not yet received any clinical results from civilian physicians.

"I'd prefer to establish what we'll do with them before we receive them."

Vale agreed to have the proposal included among the questions to be raised with the civilian director. He did not give Deren authority to alter any existing arrangements.

At the accommodation facility, the municipal officer had finished comparing the register with the information available to his office. He found two discrepancies. One concerned a man who had moved out three weeks earlier. The other concerned a woman whose civil registration had been amended while she was staying at the building.

Neither discrepancy had anything to do with Roy.

The third man asked whether anybody had arrived that evening without a registration document. The person responsible for the building said that such people sometimes came to the entrance but that it was possible to arrange provisional admission while their circumstances were established.

"Has anyone come today?"

She consulted her register. There had been nobody of that kind.

He thanked her and made a notation on his terminal.

When the inspection was over, she asked whether the register would have to be sent to the municipal office again the following day. The officer said that there was no need unless another request was received.

She watched them leave. Then she went to find the woman with the children, who had been waiting for someone to show her how to use the washing facilities.

At the command centre the inspection was recorded as completed. No relevant person had been found.

There was no place in the report to record a person who had decided not to enter.

03 — THE ADDRESS OF A PHYSICIAN

Lian received the call from Imani shortly before she was about to close the practice. The physician at the hospital had spoken to a colleague at a small diagnostic institution that might have the equipment needed for the further examinations. She had not given him the name of the patient.

"Can he arrange an examination tomorrow?" Lian asked.

"He thinks so. He'll need to know what we want to measure."

They discussed the examinations. Some of the questions concerning Roy's condition could be answered by observing the differences between the measurements obtained on successive days. Others required instruments that neither the small practice nor the diagnostic institution was accustomed to using for a patient with his particular history.

Imani had retained the notes from the period during which Roy had been a patient at the hospital. She would provide the relevant portions with his permission.

"Have you been asked for them by anybody else?" Lian said.

"Not directly."

Imani explained that the administration had received further inquiries concerning the research wing. The inquiries had not been addressed to the physicians conducting the treatment. She had asked for clarification and had been informed that the requests concerned records retained by the institution rather than records in the possession of any particular physician.

"I can't tell you that those are different sets of records," she added.

Lian understood. The data collected during treatment had furnished some of the experimental questions Adrian was trying to answer. It might not be possible to distinguish a datum belonging to the research from a datum belonging to a patient merely by finding out in which room it had been collected.

They agreed that the material required for the next examination would be selected on medical grounds.

After the call Lian took Roy's sheet from the drawer in which she kept the records for the following day. There were several things she wanted to ask him about the injury. Near the bottom of the sheet was a note concerning the right hand. He had been able to perform the movement she requested at the beginning of the examination but not to the same extent when she repeated the request a little later.

She had seen a similar discrepancy in patients after severe injuries. What was unusual was the amount of force he could still produce when a movement was possible.

Before he left, he had asked whether it would help to exercise the hand. She had told him that they would have to establish which tissues were involved before she could recommend what to do. In the meantime she had asked him not to use force to complete a movement that he was unable to complete voluntarily.

He had seemed to understand.

She wondered whether the circumstances in which he would find himself before the next appointment would permit him to follow the advice.

At eight the receptionist returned to the examination room. Two people downstairs had asked to speak to someone about the use of the building. They had described themselves as representatives of an authority conducting a survey of the institutions in the district.

"Did they say what they wanted from the practice?"

"Not yet."

Lian went downstairs. One of the visitors was a municipal employee. The other showed her a card identifying him as an officer assigned to the department responsible for continuity inquiries. He asked whether the practice participated in a referral arrangement with the medical association.

She said that it did.

He then asked whether the association had made any referrals during the previous seven days concerning people who had been unable to obtain treatment at a public institution.

"It would depend on what you mean by unable to obtain treatment," she said.

He produced a letter. Its terms were broad enough to include almost any patient whose reason for consulting a physician arose from a difficulty experienced somewhere else.

She read it twice.

"Have you obtained authorization to examine individual clinical records?"

The man said that they were making preliminary inquiries to determine which institutions might possess information relevant to a government operation. He did not require the production of clinical records that evening.

She asked him to leave a copy of the letter and a number at which the authority could be contacted.

He did so. Before leaving he asked which days the practice was normally open.

"The hours are on the door."

He thanked her. The receptionist waited until both visitors had gone before asking whether the appointment for the following morning would have to be cancelled.

Lian took the letter upstairs.

"No," she said. "Not because of this."

There was no instruction in the letter requiring her to cancel an examination. There was also no indication of the circumstances under which she would next be visited by the men who had brought it.

She telephoned the association and asked for legal advice. By then the people responsible for answering general inquiries had left for the evening, but Min was still in her office.

The lawyer listened without interrupting. When Lian finished, she asked her to send a copy of the letter. She said that similar questions had been addressed to the association and that the scope of the government's inquiry was being examined.

"I have a patient coming tomorrow," Lian said.

Min did not ask for a name.

"Is there a medical reason why the appointment should be changed?"

"No."

"Then I don't see a reason to change it. We can discuss what you'll do if another request is made."

After the conversation Lian went to the window. The street below was quiet. She had chosen the rooms for the practice partly because the building was easy to reach from the transport terminal and partly because the entrance could be used by people who had difficulty walking.

She had never considered how easily the same entrance could be watched.

04 — THE RIGHT TO REMAIN

Rachel had returned to the room in which she was staying before the call from Lian reached the medical association. She had spent the evening reading the copy of Adrian's statement. It lay on the table beside the message Roy had sent her.

There were two different kinds of information on the table. One concerned a man whose existence the government had recognized but whose liberty it had ceased to recognize. The other concerned an institution that the government had constituted but whose activities it had not been obliged to describe.

She had been trying to establish whether it was possible to ask a question about the second without bringing further attention to the first.

The woman who had arranged for her to use the room knocked at the door. She had come to give her a notice that had been sent to everyone occupying the building. The owner had been requested to confirm the names of the people resident there and to indicate whether the accommodation of any of them had been arranged through a public institution.

Rachel read the notice.

"Do you need anything from me?"

"Not tonight. I thought you should see it."

She thanked the woman. When the door closed she sat down again. The room contained very few of the things that had belonged to her before coming to Okakyo. Nothing she had brought from the hospital could be replaced by going to a shop. Yet she had become accustomed to leaving her coat on the back of the chair, and to knowing where the light would fall when she opened the curtains in the morning.

She realized that she had been thinking of the room as somewhere she could return to.

She telephoned Min.

The lawyer was still at the association. She explained that the notice was similar to several others that had been distributed in the district. She advised Rachel not to make any statement about the notice on behalf of the owner. If a request for information was addressed to her personally, they could examine its terms.

"Can they order me to leave?"

"There is no such order in the notice you've described."

Rachel told her that she understood the distinction.

"I don't know whether it makes a difference anymore."

Min said nothing for a moment. She had received more than one call that evening from people considering whether it was necessary to remove themselves or someone else from a place in which they were entitled to be. The government had not yet had to issue an order requiring any of them to leave.

"Don't give up the room because we haven't received an answer," she said. "If you decide you can't stay, that's different."

Rachel looked at the message on the table.

She asked whether anyone had telephoned for her.

Min said there had been no further call. She did not mention the conversation with Lian. She had acquired the information as legal adviser to a physician, and the physician had not identified the patient.

"I'll call in the morning," Rachel said.

When she put down the telephone, she took the statement from its envelope. Adrian had included a description of the provenance of the reference that connected the old research to the department within the Defense Secretariat. He had been careful not to claim that the department had received any particular biological material. The surviving record established the transfer of records. It did not establish what had been done with them after the transfer.

She thought of the difference between the samples they had used in the hospital and the sample that had behaved in a way Adrian could not account for. If the research had once been conducted under conditions different from those imposed on civilian institutions, some of the questions they had regarded as new might have been asked before.

She did not know how much of the work could be repeated without the apparatus at the hospital. Even less did she know whether the people who had once possessed the apparatus would be permitted to make it available to her again.

She opened a blank file on her terminal. Rather than copying the experimental results, she began to write down the questions that had led to them. She described the reason for repeating a measurement, the difference they had observed, and the reason for resisting a conclusion that would have been convenient to draw from the difference.

No new experiment could be performed in the room.

But somebody who read what she was writing might know what experiment to perform next.

When she stopped writing, nearly an hour had passed. The window above the table was dark. In the corridor she heard the woman who had given her the notice speaking to another occupant of the building.

Rachel had not yet decided whether to remain there the following night.

She continued working anyway.

05 — A PERMISSION TO LEAVE

At the regional facility M-06 was told the following morning that her request for permission to consult a civilian physician had been referred to the medical section. An appointment had been arranged for her at ten.

She went to the appointment. The physician was somebody she had seen on previous occasions. He asked her to sit down and explained that he had been requested to determine whether there was any medical requirement that could not be met by the facility.

She said that this was not what she had asked him to determine.

He showed her the request that had been sent to him. There were two documents. One was her own inquiry. The other was a form on which an officer had entered the purpose of the proposed examination.

The purpose was described as the assessment of an additional medical requirement.

"Did you write that?" she asked.

"No. That's what I've been asked to establish."

She read the form again. It would have been possible for the physician to conclude that the facility possessed the apparatus needed to perform every examination that she was likely to require. If he reached that conclusion, the officer responsible for the decision would have an answer to a question that she had not asked.

"I don't have any objection to being examined here," she said. "I would like to be able to decide which physician I speak to."

The physician placed the form on the table.

He asked her whether something had happened during the examinations conducted at the facility that caused her to distrust the people who conducted them.

"No."

"Then what would you ask a different physician?"

She thought about the events at the tram platform. She had seen what might happen to a man if she followed an instruction that had been given to her. She had allowed him to go. The judgment she had made concerning his physical condition had been discussed by the officers responsible for the operation, but none of the discussions had concerned what it had meant to her to make the judgment.

"I haven't decided what I'd ask," she said. "I think I'd like to decide after I've arrived."

The physician looked at her for a while.

"I can write that there's no reason on medical grounds to prevent you from attending a civilian practice. I don't know if that will be enough."

She asked him to write it.

He did. He gave her a copy of the statement before she left the room.

In the corridor M-04 was waiting for an examination of his own. She told him what the physician had agreed to do.

"Have you found a civilian physician?" he asked.

"Not yet."

"How will you find one?"

She said that she supposed she could find one in the way that anybody else would. Until then she had not thought of the question of how a person found a physician unless somebody had arranged for a physician to find that person.

M-04 took out his terminal and showed her the listing of medical services available in the district. He had obtained it the previous evening. It was a municipal listing intended for the public.

"Some of them have numbers you can call," he said.

She thanked him.

At the administrative office she presented the statement. The employee examined it and asked her whether she was requesting a temporary release from her duty at the facility or permission to use an institution outside it.

"Both, if that's what I need."

He said that a limited period during which she was not required to be at the facility could be arranged. Permission to obtain medical treatment was a different matter, and he would have to refer the request to the office responsible for the conditions under which she had been appointed.

She asked whether there was anything to prevent her from going to a civilian institution during a period when she was not required to be at the facility.

He looked at the statement again.

There was no prohibition he could identify, provided she remained available to receive instructions and returned by the time specified. He made a note that the physician had not recommended a restriction on her movements for medical reasons. He warned her that the period might be curtailed if the personnel were required for deployment.

She accepted the conditions.

On the way back to the common room, she passed the window overlooking the entrance to the facility. It had been possible to see the street from that window all the time she had been there. On previous occasions she had looked at it while waiting for a vehicle to take her somewhere.

She went outside a little before noon. A member of the staff at the entrance recorded the time at which she left and reminded her of the time by which she was required to return.

Nobody asked her where she intended to go.

She had thought that she would experience something different when she crossed the street. In fact, the street looked much as it had looked from the window. A delivery vehicle was blocking part of the pavement. She waited for it to move and continued walking.

For the first time since her arrival in the district, there was no person at the other end of her journey who had been instructed to expect her.

06 — THE WAITING ROOM

Roy had spent the remaining hours of the night in the public portion of a transport building. The last services had departed shortly after midnight, but several passengers who intended to take the first services in the morning had remained. An employee had gone through the building telling them which doors would be closed and which would remain open.

He had slept for a little while. When he woke, his arm felt as if it were no longer resting in the position in which he had placed it. He looked down and found that it had not moved.

He stayed in the seat until the feeling diminished.

By the time he reached the practice the receptionist had set out the documents for the morning appointments. She recognized him and asked him to sit where he had sat the previous day. There were two other people in the room. One was reading from a terminal and the other was speaking quietly to a nurse.

Lian called him into the examination room. She asked where he had spent the night.

He told her.

"Did you get any sleep?"

"Some."

She made a note. Then she told him that she had arranged for some of the examinations to be carried out at another institution. She would accompany him if he agreed to go. Before they discussed the details, there was something else he ought to know.

She showed him the letter she had been given the previous evening.

He read the first paragraph. It took him longer to read the remainder. When he had finished, he put the paper on the table and asked what she had told the men.

"That we receive referrals from the association. They didn't ask me for your name."

"They will."

"They may."

He looked at her.

Lian said that the legal adviser at the association was trying to establish the scope of the inquiry. No clinical records had been provided. She was telling him about the visit because it was a circumstance that he might wish to take into account in deciding whether to proceed with the examinations.

"Do you want me to go?" he asked.

"I want to examine you."

He found it difficult to answer. There were several things he had expected her to say, and that was not one of them.

She waited while he read the letter again.

He asked if she had any reason to believe that the men would return that morning. She said she had not been given any indication of when they might return. He asked whether she knew that he was the person for whom the government was searching.

She said that she had suspected it before he came for the first examination. She had been able to establish it from the information he provided concerning his medical history.

"You could have asked."

"I had enough information to begin."

He looked at the instruments on the table. In the corner of the room was the chair on which he had sat while she examined the response of his right hand. Nothing about the apparatus or the chair had changed since the previous afternoon. He had been aware of the difficulties that the people at the hospital had experienced in continuing his treatment, but he had not expected them to follow him so quickly into an ordinary room in another part of the city.

"I want to continue," he said.

They began with an examination of the arm. Lian found that a change in position that he had accomplished the previous day could now be obtained only with some difficulty. His description of the sensation in the arm when he woke up concerned her more than the decrease in the range of movement.

She telephoned the diagnostic institution and spoke to the physician Imani had contacted. He agreed to receive them earlier than they had arranged.

While they were preparing to leave, the receptionist came to tell Lian that an officer was at the entrance to the building. He was speaking to one of the people responsible for the other practices. Another officer had entered the passage leading to the stairs.

Roy heard the conversation through the open door.

He put on his coat.

Lian asked the receptionist whether either of the men had requested admission to her rooms. She said they had not. Lian told her to continue answering inquiries concerning the morning appointments.

When she turned back to Roy, he was standing beside the window.

"You can't leave by the window," she said.

"I know."

He had been looking down at the pavement. One of the two officers was standing beside a vehicle. A patient walking slowly toward the entrance stopped to ask him something. He moved out of the way to let her pass.

Roy thought of what had happened to the people at the hospital after the army obtained authority to enter it. They had been given very little time in which to consider what they would do. He did not wish Lian to have to make the same decisions on his account.

"Is there another appointment you can arrange?" he asked.

"There is. But you need the examination today."

He told her he would contact her again. She reminded him that he had asked her to be his physician, and that she could not discharge that responsibility merely by giving him another telephone number.

For a moment neither of them spoke.

Then Lian took her bag from the table. She said she had already arranged to leave the building with him. If an officer wished to speak to her, she would speak to him in her capacity as a physician. She would not provide information about another person unless the authority to require it had been established.

They went downstairs together.

The man in the passage was reading a notice giving the names of the practitioners in the building. He looked up as they came toward him. Lian asked if she could help him.

He asked whether she was Doctor Lian.

"Yes."

He said that he was following up an inquiry made the previous evening. He wished to know the time at which she would be available to speak to him.

She told him that she was leaving for an appointment at another institution and could speak to him on her return. She asked him to leave his name with her receptionist.

The man looked at Roy. Roy returned his gaze. He felt the effort required to keep his right hand still, though the hand itself did not move.

"Are you a patient here?" the man asked.

Lian answered before he did.

"We're on our way to an appointment. If your inquiry concerns my patients, I'll need to see the authority under which you're making it."

The man did not move to prevent them from leaving. He had not been assigned to detain a person whose identity had not been established. He told her that he would return later in the day.

Outside, Lian directed Roy to the vehicle she had arranged. They waited until its doors closed before either spoke.

"I don't know if he'll have the same instructions when he comes back," she said.

Roy looked out of the window as the building disappeared behind them.

"Neither do I."

07 — THE COST OF A WITNESS

M-06 had found the address of a physician in the municipal listing. She had chosen a practice not because any person had recommended it to her but because the listing said that inquiries could be made in person. She arrived shortly before the end of the morning appointments.

The receptionist asked her to take a seat. A few moments later she was given a form on which to enter her name and the address at which she could be contacted.

She wrote M-06 in the first space. She looked at the second. She had been assigned to the regional facility, but she did not believe that she had permission to receive correspondence there from a person whose identity had not been established by the administrative staff.

She asked the receptionist if it was necessary to complete the form before she spoke to a physician.

The woman said that she could wait until after the consultation to provide some of the information. She asked how she should address her.

M-06 told her that the designation she had written was the only name she used.

The woman accepted the answer.

In the waiting room a man was doing something with a small electronic device while a child sitting next to him watched. The child complained that the sound was no longer working. The man adjusted the device and gave it back to her.

M-06 watched for a moment. Then she looked at the telephone she had been given when the period of release from the facility was arranged. An instruction had appeared on its screen. All personnel subject to deployment were requested to confirm their availability.

She sent the confirmation.

The physician called her into the room a few minutes later. He asked what had brought her there. She explained that she had been permitted to leave the institution at which she was employed, but that she had not yet obtained a decision concerning her request to receive civilian medical treatment.

He asked if she was seeking treatment for a particular condition.

"Not exactly."

She explained the purpose of the examinations she underwent at the facility. He listened. When she had finished, he told her that he was not familiar with the circumstances under which the examinations were conducted. He could offer a consultation, but some of the medical questions she might wish to ask could require information that he did not possess.

She asked whether he would write a report to the institution if she consulted him.

"Not unless I have an obligation to do so, or you ask me to."

"How do I know whether you have an obligation?"

He said that there were circumstances in which a physician might have to disclose information. He explained some of them. She asked about an inquiry from her employer. He said that the fact of her employment would not in itself entitle a person to a copy of her medical record.

She sat for a while without asking another question.

Then she described the man she had been instructed to find. She did not give the physician the man's location, or the name of the institution at which she worked. She said that she had been aware that he was injured and that an instruction given to her might result in another injury. She had not followed the instruction in the manner expected by the people who gave it to her.

"Do you think that was a medical decision?" she asked.

The physician said he would have to know a great deal more about what happened to make a judgment about the injury. But the question she appeared to be asking concerned something in addition to the injury.

"Did you believe you had a choice?"

"I made one."

"That isn't quite the same thing."

She thought about it. She had been able to permit Roy to leave the platform because there was a moment in which she could decide not to prevent him. She did not know whether she would be given such a moment again.

The physician asked whether she was afraid of returning to her institution.

She said that she was not afraid of the building. She knew the people in it and the work they did. What she did not know was whether the next time she made a judgment of her own she would be permitted to retain it.

He wrote down something she had said. At her request he showed her the words.

The consultation was nearly over when a new instruction appeared on her telephone. Personnel were to return to the facility. She read the time by which she was required to arrive.

"I have to go," she said.

The physician asked whether she would like to make another appointment.

She said she would telephone when she knew whether another period of release could be arranged.

At the reception desk she paid for the consultation. The receptionist gave her a receipt and a card with the telephone number of the practice. She put them beside the statement the physician at the regional facility had given her.

When she returned to the facility, she was directed to the briefing room. M-04 was there. A map of the upper district had been displayed on the screen. Several addresses were identified as medical institutions considered relevant to the government inquiry.

One of them was the building she had just left.

She asked why the address had been included. The officer said that the institution had been identified from its participation in a civilian referral arrangement. It had not been established that the subject had ever been there.

"Have the people who went there been asked about their examinations?" she said.

The officer told her that the information obtained by the civilian authorities would be assessed before the personnel received further instructions.

She sat beside M-04. He asked quietly whether she had seen a physician.

"Yes."

He looked at the map. She followed his gaze.

She knew that the officer conducting the briefing had no reason to associate her with any of the addresses on the screen. Nevertheless, for the first time she had reason to wonder what might happen if she disclosed to the command a fact that concerned only herself.

08 — THE LAST AVAILABLE ROOM

The examinations at the diagnostic institution took longer than the physician had anticipated. Near the end of the afternoon he took Lian aside and explained that the results were not sufficient to establish the extent of the damage. They did, however, give him reason to advise against any further use of the injured arm until more could be established.

Lian asked whether there was a possibility of admitting Roy to the institution overnight. The physician said that it was not equipped to provide inpatient care. He offered to ask another hospital whether a room could be made available.

The two physicians were discussing the arrangements when an employee came to tell them that the administration had received an inquiry concerning recent examinations conducted on behalf of other institutions. The inquiry included a request to preserve the records of the previous seven days.

No individual patient was named.

The physician asked whether a further request for production of the records had been received. The employee said it had not.

He told her to retain the inquiry and refer it to the person responsible for the institution's records. Then he turned to Lian.

"You'll have to speak to your patient."

Roy was in a small room beside the examination area. There was a glass of water on the table in front of him. He had been asked to wait while the physicians spoke to each other.

Lian explained the results and her recommendation. She told him about the new inquiry and said that he would need somewhere to rest. She could try to arrange admission elsewhere, but she could not tell him that another institution would be free of the inquiries that had reached the two he had visited.

He thanked her. She had the impression that he was about to ask if he might leave.

Instead, he asked if it would be possible to telephone the association from the room.

She found a telephone he could use and left him alone.

At the association, Min was preparing a supplementary statement for the legal committee when the call was transferred to her. She recognized the voice. She told him that Rachel had left a message for him.

She read it exactly as Rachel had written it.

Roy listened without speaking. He asked whether the association still retained the documents that had been sent from the hospital. Min said that it did. He asked whether Rachel had somewhere to stay.

"She has accommodation at present. I can't promise that the arrangements will remain the same."

He said that he understood.

Min asked if there was anything he would like her to tell Rachel.

He looked at the glass of water. He could see the reflection of the light in the glass. Although he had wanted to speak to Rachel for several days, he now found it difficult to think of something to tell her that would not be made untrue by the events of the following day.

"Tell her I had the examination," he said. "Tell her somebody knows what to look for now."

Min wrote it down.

"And if she wants me to call again, I'll try."

He had almost put down the telephone when she told him that Rachel was expected at the association a little later. She asked if it was possible for him to remain available until then.

He looked at the door. Lian was speaking to somebody in the corridor. He could hear neither the words nor the other person's voice clearly. He thought of the statement he had given at the hospital that had established what he wanted to happen to his body. It had been necessary to repeat the statement so many times that there were occasions when he felt he had spent more of his life describing what he wanted to do with it than doing it.

"I'll ask," he said.

When Lian returned, he told her what the legal adviser had said. She offered to ask the physician if he could remain in the room for another hour. The physician agreed. He had no other examinations scheduled there that evening.

In the building occupied by the medical association, Rachel was entering the address of the research documents in a statement intended to establish where the records would remain if she were no longer able to take part in the inquiry. She had not included the address of the room in which she had been staying. The owner of the building had not yet responded to the notice requesting the names of its occupants.

She had brought her coat and the small bag containing the things she would require if she decided not to go back there.

Min came into the room while she was signing the statement. She told her that Roy had telephoned and had asked for a message to be conveyed. She read it to her.

Rachel put down the pen.

"Can I speak to him?"

"He's asked whether he can remain available for a little while. I don't have a number at which I can reach him."

Rachel looked at the clock.

"Then I'll wait here."

Min said that she would remain at the association until the call had been received, or until Rachel decided to leave. She went back to her office and told the employee responsible for the evening telephone service that there might be a call she wished to receive personally.

At the command centre Deren received the summary of the inquiries made that day. It described several medical institutions at which further records might become available. An officer in the department responsible for the extension of the search had recommended that the association's communications be examined before another deployment was authorized.

The captain asked whether a reliable observation of the subject had been received.

The liaison officer said that none had yet been verified.

Deren looked again at the recommendation. There had been no change in the instructions concerning the use of force. There had been no answer to his question concerning the arrangements to be made for an independent examination. Yet the means by which a man might arrange such an examination were now among the things the command was being offered a means of observing.

He wrote that the reports did not establish the subject's presence at any of the institutions. He requested that the distinction be maintained in subsequent assessments.

He sent the statement. He did not know whether anybody would regard it as a reason for delaying the next operation.

In the small room at the diagnostic institution, Roy watched the minute hand of the clock move toward the appointed time. There was no bed in the room. There was a chair, a table, and a window that looked out onto the side of another building. For the remainder of the hour nobody was expected to require the room.

He had not seen Rachel since the day they went their separate ways. He had imagined finding her in a place at which they would have time to decide what to do next.

He no longer expected to find such a place.

But he still had the telephone, and there was still time left on the clock.

END OF CHAPTER 07