

Strange Land

by Steele Diamond

I was still 18 years old when the plane landed in South Korea. It was 10AM, Friday. Stepping off the jet way, it could have been any airport in America. But it wasn't. As soon as we got in the airport we were hustled to Customs. Filled out a bunch of forms. Asked a bunch of questions. Do you have any plants? Weapons? CB radios? Porno? We all lied about something, I'm sure.

A guy I would be working with, met me. He said he would take me to my room. Later, I thought they really don't send someone you will actually "work with." I think I saw Rob twice in the next 3 months, before he left. But he took me to my room. I checked in with the dorm chief, who issued me what I needed and showed me my room. He told me where I had to report at 0800 Monday morning, and left me to my thoughts. Thoughts of my girlfriend, I had left back home. She told me at the airport that being apart for a year would be hard. We needed the "freedom" to "explore" while I was gone. Alone with my thoughts, that I had graduated high school six months before. Joined the Air Force. Went through a month and a half of basic training. A month and a half of technical training. Now I was in a land that they didn't even teach the language of in high school.

Obviously, there was a room mate, but he was nowhere to be found. I unpacked on the side of the room that had been left for me, and laid down. It was noon. The thoughts haunted me to sleep.

I woke up to 2 guys sitting in chairs on my room mate's side of the room. It seemed like they were trying to be quiet, but failing. I looked at my watch. 5:30 PM.

"Sorry we woke you room-dog. I'm Pete. This is Tanner. Crawl out of bed, we got your green bean set up."

“Huh? Green bean? What are you talking about?”

“First night in country, everybody goes down town and drinks themselves blind. Get ready.”

“OK.”

We met up with about 10 other guys. All introduced themselves as people I would work with. We headed to the “ville.”

The first club we went to, I was told to order chu chu bah. As soon as the cute Korean waitress came over I ordered a chu chu bah. My very first lesson in Korea. Chu chu bah means blowjob. Not that the young waitress wasn't willing but I just wanted a beer. So after the laughter subsided, we ordered the first of several ammo bowls. Everyone gets a straw and basically drinks out of a small washtub filled with fruit punch and sweet potato based liquor called soju. (Over the next year I would learn soju causes blackouts, fights and child support).

We went to about 20 clubs that first night. As far as I could tell, that was less than 1/10th of the clubs within walking distance. They all played classic rock. They all had cute Korean waitresses. They all had soju. It was my first night in Korea. It was my first night in the “ville.” A night I would never forget.

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A year later, I lay in a hotel room in the “ville,” with a tremendous hangover. Europe's “Carrie” was playing through the radio speakers built in the headboard. Fitting as my yobo and I finished having sex for the last time. I rolled out of bed and put my clothes on, looking back one last time to remember. I didn't realize at the time she was but one of several women I would sleep with over the next couple of years. But she was the only one that wouldn't be American.

I said goodbye and walked out of the room, forgetting her.

Walked back to base and entered the main gate, forgetting the
“ville.”.

Gathered my belongings and called a cab for the two hour ride to
Seoul. Forgetting the base.

I got on the plane and settled in for the flight. As the clouds flew
past the plane, I drifted off to sleep....forgetting Korea.

