

STEALING CINDERELLA

HOW I BECAME AN
INTERNATIONAL FUGITIVE FOR LOVE

MARK D. DIEHL

PREVIEW 13

Korean Lurch caught me in the hallway on the way to my new 103, for which I was already late. He was clutching another scrap of paper from Richard. He shoved it at my hands and I jumped back as if he were trying to stab me. He took two steps forward and extended his arm at me again. I flattened myself against the wall, but he stuffed the note in among the books and papers I was holding against my chest as I shuffled past him.

“Hello, class,” I said, entering the little room. “Sorry I’m late. I couldn’t get a taxi. Since this is our first day together, let’s get to know each other before we work with the book. Please ask me questions now, and then we’ll go around the room and ask each other some questions, later.”

I answered all the standard questions, telling them about my hometown, age, marital status and the like. Then a young

STEALING CINDERELLA

man in rimless rectangular glasses asked, “What famous buildings did you see?”

“That’s an interesting question,” I said. “Nobody has ever asked me that before. Do you have a nickname?”

“Uh, yes. Pei.”

“Do you mean famous buildings here in Korea, or in other countries?” I asked.

“In other countries,” Pei said.

“Let’s see,” I said. “I’ve been in the Sears Tower, the Hancock Building, the Empire State, the Twin Towers ... Would you count the Saint Louis Arch?” Pei nodded. “Tokyo Tower, and one other one in Japan I can’t remember the name of. Are you an architect, Pei?”

“No,” he said. “I am student of architecture.”

“Ah, and what famous buildings have you seen?”

“All Korean,” he said. “The Sixty-Three Building, Trade Tower ... I want to go Europe. Korean architecture is boring. European architecture is more interesting.”

“How can you say this?” a different young man asked angrily. “Are you Korean? How can you say such a terrible thing about our country?”

“Wow, that’s a fascinating idea to explore,” I said. “Do you have a nickname?” I asked, gesturing to him.

“Mr. Big,” he said.

“Okay. It’s nice to meet you, Mr. Big, and you, too, Pei. Let’s think about this issue a moment. Now, Mr. Big, I can see that you love Korea. Is that true?”

“Of course!” Mr. Big said.

“And Pei, do you love Korea, too?”

“Yes. I love Korea very much.”

“Now, I think Mr. Big feels that someone who loves Korea

STEALING CINDERELLA

should love everything about Korea. Like architecture. He feels that if Pei is Korean, Pei should love Korean architecture most. Is that right, Mr. Big?”

“Yes.”

“Now, we all love Korea, don’t we?” I asked. “But Pei feels that he can be Korean and love Korea, but also see something from another part of the world that he likes best. Is that right, Pei, that you’re Korean and love Korea but you appreciate European architecture more?”

“Yes,” Pei said.

“What do the rest of you think?” I asked. “How many of you agree with Pei, that Koreans can have favorite things that are not Korean? Raise your hands.” I raised my hand. Pei raised his hand, but nobody else did.

“How many think that if you’re Korean, you have to love everything Korean most?”

The other fourteen students raised their hands.

Kindle | Nook