

## Power

by Sue Hitchcock

On a palatial yacht moored just out of sight of Acapulco on the Mexico coast, an exclusive meeting was taking place.

“There’s still money to be made.” Madame Ling was one of three influential women accepted as honorary men amongst this gathering of powerful men, “You are so pessimistic.”

The decorative women had been sent up to the upper deck, to a celebration – was it someone’s birthday? - with the crew, who had been picked for their looks as well as their military training. The music penetrated the private lounge only faintly, hardly interrupting the kleptocrats’ discussion.

“Go on! Mai Ling, You have a plan?”

“We have known for thirty years that our wealth was at the expense of the planet, that the choice would have to be made, when nothing would protect even the wealthiest from the changes in climate. Our yachts still have to be supplied with food and water, even though you have solar powered air conditioning, or de-salinated water.”

“Surely we will survive long enough, with our technical ability. I’m not planning to live for ever.”

“Some of us have children!”

“OK so we need to wind down. I’ve already halved my exploration force and the engineering is mainly maintenance now.” Robert Platon was only recently appointed to the board of his oil company, after his mentor had decided to enjoy the time he had left.

Da Ponte's yacht was moored only a few kilometres away, but he had declined the invitation, preferring to pursue his hobby, painting sunsets.

"It is so tempting to carry on. It's the pressure from all the ants, driving around in their old petrol cars."

"And the old ladies shivering in their draughty hovels!"

"What about our own usage. I'm committed to Bitcoin and we had to build a new power station to run its computers."

"You should have based it in Saudi. We could use solar power." Ibn Ben Mohammed was enthusiastic about diversifying his investments.

"Thank you, that will be my next project."

"We needed lots of customers for our gas and oil, but how can we make a profit in a different way?"

Madame Ling had patience. Her time to speak would come. The group went quiet and took another fill of their crystal tumblers, most with single malt, some austere with spring water from the Andes. They savoured their drinks and considered their dilemma.

Mai Ling took a breath and leaned forward, all eyes turning to her,

"You have already stated the solution. On one hand we need to find an investment opportunity and on the other there are far too many little people who would like some of what we have. There is one answer and it is the same as it has always been. The one thing we can sell and never have to pick up the pieces."

At that moment the noise of the firework display, which was the high point of the party on deck, interrupted her, making her burst out screaming with laughter. "That's it! Arms manufacture, perpetual war!"

A conscience is that still, small voice, that people won't listen to, especially Madame Ling.

"Oh, I know just the man," came the reply from the yacht's owner, Oleg Grigorovitch.