



**Learn English Through
Stories
D Series**

D39

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George Kershaw

Nothing but the Truth



Nothing but the Truth Part 3

By George Kershaw

CHAPTER NINE

Losing the right path

Hu sat with her feet in the water. It was hot, but she didn't feel too hot with her feet in the water. The others were on the other side of the pool formed by the waterfall. They were feeding the last of the bread to some grey fish. What were these fish? Hu wondered. They could ask Mr Rodriguez when they returned to the Field Centre.

It was a moment to herself. It was the first moment to herself for three days, since she left Bangkok.

Hu sat on the warm rock and put her head back. She looked up through the trees, up and up until maybe a hundred metres above her, she could see bright blue sky among the leaves and branches. Around her, she could hear water crashing into the pool and her friends laughing as the fish fought and jumped for pieces of bread. From the trees came the sound of birdsong, and always, never stopping, the continuous noise of unseen insects. Up here, about one thousand metres above sea level in the Dongrak mountains, the air was clean and smelled of plants and flowers; Hu could taste its freshness.

Her new happiness had been growing since she left Bangkok. As they had passed Don Muang International Airport and the last of the traffic jams, Hu had turned in her seat at the back of the tour bus and looked back. She could see the milky orange cloud of dirt hanging above the tall buildings of the great city. She could still see the cloud fifty, even eighty kilometres away.

The Thai students had started singing just beyond the airport. They sang one of Hu's favourite pop songs, 'Mae Ben Rae', which means 'never mind'. It was perfect for her mood. Mae Ben Rae, never mind money, never mind Mr Stanyer, the IB tests.

As the Thai students sang, the other students had joined in. Soon the students in the school show were singing some of the songs from 'The Wizard of Oz'. Hu was asked to sing some of the show's big hit songs and Hu gave her very best performance. They had sung all the way to the national park's Field Centre where they were staying.

Over the next two days, Hu had had very little time to herself. Mr Rodriguez kept them busy all day collecting, drawing maps, looking at different plants and animals and trying to name them. After supper, the teachers gave them lectures on the park. The days were long and tiring, and Hu slept better than she had for weeks.

Now Hu could hear that Sean Payne had joined their group by the waterfall. It seemed that every time Hu looked round he was next to her. He was too friendly. He wanted to give her things, a cola, chewing gum, even a cigarette. (He was always smoking when the teachers were not looking.) Marwa and Yoshiko were very good. They knew she didn't want to be alone with Sean and stayed close to her when Sean tried to talk to her. She didn't want to be unkind, but she wanted some time to herself. Or she wanted time to talk to Marwa or John by herself. But Sean was always there.

Hu closed her eyes and listened to the music of the waterfall, and smelled the perfume of the air. But where was Sean now?

Suddenly there was a scream. It was Sean's voice. Hu opened her eyes and for a moment was blind in the brilliant sunshine. 'Stupid!' she said to herself. Another scream, Sean's, came from the trees behind her.

'Help! Please help me! I've broken my leg!' Sean was screaming in English and Thai.

'Sean's in trouble,' said John. 'We've got to do something!'

'He probably just wants us to go and look for him,' said Hu.

Another scream.

'Over there,' said Thomas, pointing to the trees behind Hu. 'We must go and look. We must stay together.'

'He's probably just being silly,' said Hu, putting on her walking boots.

Another scream. Thomas ran towards the noise. The others followed him. When they left the path, walking was difficult. Sean was somewhere up ahead. Then the noise stopped. It was cool by the waterfall, but as soon as they started into the trees, it was hot. The plants scratched them and Yoshiko was frightened of snakes. They came to an open space among the trees, and stopped to wait for Marwa.

'He's stopped screaming. We must find him!' said Thomas.

'He was here. I can smell cigarettes,' Hu said.

'He's just playing games with us,' said Yoshiko.

There was a louder scream. 'Help me! I'm dying!' The screaming seemed very close.

'This way!' shouted Thomas, and he started back into the trees. The others followed. They crossed a stream.

Marwa found it difficult, but John helped her. They heard Sean calling close by.

They came to another space. Sean was not there. His calls had stopped for a moment.

'This is stupid,' said Hu. 'It's just a game for him.'

'I guess...' John began.

'Snake!' screamed Sean.

Thomas was running. The others followed.

The search continued for almost an hour. They crossed streams, climbed higher and higher.

'Stop!' said Hu. 'This is stupid. Look!' She bent down and picked up an empty cigarette packet. 'This is just a stupid game.'

They waited a few moments. John passed round his water bottle. Nobody spoke.

'Roaaaarrgh!' A horrible noise came from behind them. 'Don't you know they have tigers here?' said Sean, standing up from behind a bush. He had a can of cola in one hand and a cigarette in the other.

Sean had not broken his leg. He was smiling. A moment passed. Thomas spoke first.

'You're an idiot!'

Sean said nothing. Then John spoke.

'I think we're lost!'

CHAPTER TEN

Towards the truth

They looked at each other in silence. Quietly Marwa began to cry. Sean looked as if he was going to say something, but Thomas gave him such an angry look he changed his mind. Sean began to look in his bag for something.

'What are we going to do?' asked Yoshiko. She had her arm round Marwa to comfort her.

'We must think,' said Thomas.

'I can phone,' said Sean holding up his mobile phone.

'Yes, but first we have to have some idea where we are,' said John. 'We need something we can tell them to look for.'

'We can only be about an hour's walk from the waterfall,' said Thomas.

'But which direction?' asked Hu. 'We changed direction so many times.'

'Sorry,' said Sean. Nobody said anything.

'We could climb to the top of the mountain and look around?' offered Yoshiko after a minute.

'No. You would just see trees. The answer must be down, not up. We have been going up all day, following the waterfalls. The last one is at nine hundred and seventy metres, and we're higher than that,' said John. 'We'll find the road again if we travel downwards.'

'Yeah, you're right,' said Thomas. 'And the main road through the park is west of the waterfalls. The Pak Chong to Prachinburi road more or less cuts the park in half from north to south. We're in the eastern half. So we must walk west and downwards.'

'Don't worry, Marwa,' said Hu. 'We'll find the path.'

'No!' said Thomas. Sean had a can of cola in his hand, ready to open it. 'No! Sean, we must save water.'

'This is cola, Thomas...' said Sean with a silly smile.

'Don't drink it now, stupid!' shouted Thomas.

'OK,' said Sean. He put the can back in his bag.

'West is this way, I think,' said Hu. She was pointing at a thick wall of trees. 'We might have to go round those trees.'

'Follow me!' said Thomas. 'John, you must stay at the back with Marwa. And Sean, you mustn't play any more stupid games.' They set out behind Thomas. Sean pretended to walk like a soldier, quietly saying, 'must, mustn't, must, mustn't' with each step.

It is impossible to walk in a straight line in thickly forested hill country. Progress was slow and painful. They often had to stop and sometimes the boys would argue about which way was west. Sean and Thomas argued more and more through the afternoon, and Marwa looked very tired and frightened.

They stopped by a stream. The boys were washing the dirt and blood from their arms while the girls tried to decide which way to try next.

Hu looked at Sean. 'Do you want to make that phone call now, Sean?'

None of them knew the phone number of the Field Centre.

'I'll phone my mother at work,' suggested Sean. Thomas raised his eyebrows and was about to say something, but Hu was standing next to him and stepped hard on his foot. Thomas said nothing.

They waited in total silence as Sean rang. They all felt happy when someone answered it. Sean turned his back to them while he talked very quickly in Thai. Then he started shaking the phone. He tried to phone again. They were all looking at him.

'I think the phone is dead. I was talking to my mother last night for maybe half an hour.'

'Did you tell your mother what's happened?' asked John.

'Yeah,' said Sean sadly. 'But I don't think she believed me. I think she thought I was making up stories...'

Thomas said something in German. To his surprise, Sean said something back at him in German. For a moment, Thomas didn't know what to say.

'You guys!' shouted John. 'That's enough! We've got to think about stopping. We won't get any further today.'

'Yes!' said Thomas. 'First we must find a place. Then we must share some food and water. We must make a fire.'

'Must, must, always must! Who makes you the boss? Just because your father's a policeman,' shouted Sean.

Thomas was much shorter than Sean, but that didn't stop him. He threw himself at Sean.

Sean easily held him off. Thomas was kicking and shouting in German.

'My father is Chief Police Officer at the German Embassy,' shouted Thomas breathing heavily. 'At least he's not a barman. And he didn't marry a "dancer" from a bar!'

Sean's face went white. He held Thomas very tightly by the arms, and lifted him off the ground.

'Listen, Kuhlauf,' said Sean in a low, angry voice. 'My father owns a chain of restaurants in Bangkok, Hua Hin and Rayong.' Sean was breathing very heavily. Thomas was suddenly very frightened. 'My mother owned and managed one of the restaurants when my father bought it. Now she's company accountant.'

Sean put his face very close to Thomas' face and said slowly and angrily, 'Don't you ever repeat that rubbish again!'

There was a moment of total silence. Suddenly he dropped Thomas. John quickly held Thomas from behind. Sean and Thomas were both breathing heavily, staring at each other angrily.

Hu, Marwa and Yoshiko took charge. They decided to stay where they were, close to water to wash in and with a few metres space before the trees closed in. They went to look for wood, Thomas and John in one direction, Hu and Sean in the other direction. Yoshiko stayed with Marwa who was very tired and frightened. The two of them tried to clear some space to sit and sleep in.

Men always like making a fire. The three boys worked hard collecting wood and leaves. They carefully built the fire and Sean encouraged a small flame from his cigarette lighter to catch the dry leaves. As darkness closed in, they started sharing out what little food they had. It was clear that Sean and Thomas had cooled their anger. John tried to persuade Thomas to apologise to

Sean, but Thomas was too angry or embarrassed. But they did sit and share a few biscuits and sweets peacefully.

Hu found Sean sitting next to her. John was sitting next to Thomas, as far away from Sean as possible, and Marwa was asleep with her head on Hu's knee. Sean started chatting to Yoshiko in Japanese.

'How many languages do you speak, Sean?' asked Hu. 'English from my father, Thai from my mother,' then in Chinese he said, 'I learnt Chinese from my mother's mother. I also know some Japanese and German from the tourists when I help in one of my father's restaurants in the school holidays. I like languages.'

Yoshiko and Hu were surprised. Hu said so in Chinese and Yoshiko in Japanese. Sean smiled a kind smile.

'Maybe I'm not as stupid as I look.' He was looking at Hu. She could see his eyes shining in the light of the fire. 'Maybe you shouldn't listen to what people say about me. I don't believe what they are saying about you, Hu.'

Hu sat up quickly. 'And what are they saying about me?' she said angrily.

'That you're one of Mr Stanyer's little friends.'

Hu was silent a moment. Sean Payne! He always said the most stupid things. She almost shouted, 'Who says? Who says that?'

'Sorry, Hu, it's true. People are saying it. Don't be angry. It's rubbish,' said Yoshiko.

Hu was frightened, angry. 'They say??'

'Mostly your understudy, Melanie Gibson, the singing duck. You should be careful of her, Hu. She has a nasty way of talking about people.'

'Just you wait! You'll see! I'll get you!' Hu could hear Melanie's words ringing in her head. Hu tried to sleep, but she was thinking, thinking all the time.

Marwa's head was heavy on her knees. Hu couldn't feel her legs.

How long before her parents might hear something about Mr Stanyer and the English lessons? Hu looked into the dark. How long?

CHAPTER ELEVEN

A way out?

'Hu?'

Hu could feel him looking at her. It was still dark. Her leg hurt and she wanted to move Marwa, who was still sleeping. It was cold too. Hu was hungry. The fire was finished.

'Shhhhh said Hu, quietly. 'Don't wake Marwa, Sean.'

'OK.' Sean's voice was quiet. He spoke softly in Chinese.

'I just wanted to explain. I don't believe this stuff about Declan Stanyer. I know his game.' Sean sat closer to her.

'Noroko Ito. Ilse Sphenson. Fatima Rashid. Darunee Phalavadhana. It's a long list. He's been doing this since he came to the school.'

'Doing what?' asked Hu.

'His game. Girls. His "private lesson" game. Rich girls. Pretty girls.'

'I'm not rich, Sean,' said Hu. She could sense him smiling.

'Maybe not. But he thinks you are. First you get the bad results, then he says you need extra private lessons. You don't tell your parents, do you?'

'No. But Sean, how do you know?'

'He tried it with my sister. She told me, and I, er, spoke to him. He didn't like that one little bit.' Sean paused. 'Did he invite you back to his apartment to be "more comfortable"? No?'

'Yes, he did. I said no,' said Hu. 'He does this to other students?'

Sean nodded.

Hu thought for a moment.

'Sean, what can I do?'

There was a moment's silence.

'I don't know, Hu. Do you want me to speak to him? That man is bad news.'
Sean sounded sad.

'And now Melanie Gibson is saying things about me?' Hu listened to the music of the stream close by.

Perhaps Sean nodded. It was too dark to see.

'Sean. Listen...'

They listened. They listened to the music of the stream. 'Which way does water go?' asked Hu.

'Hmm. Down. That's called "gravity",' said Sean.

'Down means out, don't you see? We're sitting in the Dongrak mountains. Out is the Korat plateau.'

'I get you,' said Sean. He sounded excited.

'So we follow the stream, the water... we follow it out of the park. No more turning in circles, no more arguments about which way is west.'

Sean sighed. 'So down means out. Cool, Hu! We just follow the water.' Sean smiled in the dark.

Now there was some hope.

Dawn in a tropical forest is not a peaceful matter. Everything that walks, or flies, or moves, wakes up screaming 'hungry!' It is like a crazy symphony orchestra tuning up before a concert. It is a market place, a building site, an animal city, busy, busy, busy. The rush hour.

'Wake up, Hu. Breakfast!' shouted Marwa. Marwa was still very hungry, but she was no longer the tired and frightened child of yesterday. Hu had been asleep for perhaps an hour. Marwa and Yoshiko pulled her to her feet. Marwa gave Hu some sweets and her last biscuit.

'Hi!' shouted Sean, climbing back from the stream. 'Your turn!' He and John and Thomas had washed first. Now it was the girls' turn.

Ten minutes later, they all met at the spot where the fire had been the night before. Sean tried to use his mobile phone again, but it still didn't work.

'Sean told me about your idea, Hu. It's the only idea we have. We'll follow the direction of the water - the stream - down and, I hope, out of here,' said Thomas.

'I'll go first with John. Sean will stay with Marwa at the back,' said Thomas.

'I'm OK now!' shouted Marwa.

'Don't worry, little lady. We'll be out of here soon,' said Sean. 'And I'll be right behind you.'

They began to move slowly down the stream.

It wasn't easy. True, they were going downwards. But, as they did so, the stream became wider and steeper. They climbed from rock to rock. Marwa seemed much stronger today, and Thomas seemed ready to hurry, to take chances. They had water from the stream, which they didn't want to drink, and nothing left to eat. They all knew that if they didn't find the path today there would be nothing for them tonight. Thomas raced ahead, and Sean was very kind to Marwa, pulling her, sometimes half carrying her from rock to rock, as they climbed down the stream.

Towards the middle of the morning, they heard a helicopter. Sean stopped in the middle of the stream and spread his arms.

'Mama... I love you!' he called.

'We must make a sign. Make smoke! A fire!' screamed Thomas from below.

Sean climbed out of the water and collected some dry wood. Hu helped him. Sean tried to start a fire, but his cigarette lighter was wet. When the leaves and wood finally caught fire, the helicopter had gone.

Thomas said something in German. Then he ran back to the stream.

'Come on!' he shouted, running through the moving water of the stream. He was soon out of sight.

Thomas screamed. There was a crash and the sound of water.

John and Sean ran to the stream first. There were two large rocks and then a drop of about five metres, a small waterfall. In the pool below, they could see Thomas lying in the water. He wasn't moving. The water next to his head on the right side was red.

Sean didn't wait, not for a moment. He threw his bag onto the bank of the stream and dived into the pool beside Thomas's body. The others climbed down the bank to join him.

They found Sean holding Thomas in his arms by the side of the pool.

'He's OK,' said Sean. 'He's breathing. But he's unconscious. He hit his head.'

'How did you know the water was deep enough, Sean?' asked Yoshiko.

'I didn't,' said Sean.

There was a deep cut on Thomas's head. He seemed to be asleep.

'John, you take my bag. I'll take Thomas.' Sean lifted Thomas onto his shoulders. Thomas seemed to weigh nothing.

Sean carried Thomas for another two hours before they found a road. It was made of earth, but wide enough for a car. They stopped. Sean gently put Thomas down in the grass beside the track. The others sat or lay by the road. They were exhausted. Soon they heard the sound of an engine. A lorry stopped about a hundred metres in front of them. Hu stood up and started to wave.

A tiny man in a grey uniform jumped down from the lorry. He pulled out a gun and pointed it in the air, shooting the gun and screaming and laughing.

'What's he saying?' asked Marwa.

'He says we are the BIA students that got lost,' said Sean. 'He says it's OK! There are helicopters. Television. Television? This guy is crazy,' Sean was laughing. The little man climbed back into his lorry and drove close to them. 'He says to climb in,' said Sean.

Hu sat in the back of the oil company car. She was half-asleep. Her father sat next to her.

'Hu, I'm so glad you're safe. When your friend Sean made that telephone call, it was on the Channel 7 television news. We've been so worried.' The car moved quickly along the highway back to Bangkok.

'Please don't worry, father,' said Hu, sleepily.

'You're safe now. We'll soon be home. Oh, and Hu?' Hu's father said softly.

'Hmm...?' said Hu. She was falling asleep.

'One piece of good news. Your Aunty Wang the one who gave you the ring? She's coming to stay with us.'

But Hu was already asleep.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Nothing but the truth

Hu and John met in the library after lunch. Hu couldn't help crying.

'But Hu, I knew Stanyer was asking a lot for his private lessons. But you sold your Aunty's ring!'

'It was my ring!' cried Hu. 'But I didn't know what to do.'

Miss Paula looked over her glasses and coughed quietly. She was very worried about Hu. Since she had come back from the field trip, she had seemed unhappy.

'When does your aunt come, Hu?' asked John.

'Sunday. And Stanyer wants two more lessons before the English test for the IB on Friday.' Hu tried to stop crying.

'And from what Sean says, it's what he always does. Did you speak to the other girls he talked about?'

'I feel too stupid. I don't know what to say?'

'But Hu, what about Darunee Phalavadhana? Her father's Wiwat Phalavadhana. He's an important official in the Ministry of the Interior. If he finds out... My mother knows him. Perhaps I could speak to her?' John offered.

'But what can you say? "Are you one of Stanyer's little friends?" Like Melanie is saying about me?'

'I don't know, Hu. I think you've got to tell someone about it. The story is coming out already. You need to tell your side of the story.'

Hu covered her face with her hands and cried. 'But I can't! Who can I tell?'

'My mother?' suggested John. 'She knows you from the school show... and she likes you. She knows there's nothing wrong with your English.'

'No!' Hu had raised her voice. Miss Paula looked across at them. 'I'm sorry, John, I need to be on my own.' She got up quickly. 'I need to go and wash my face.'

John stayed in the library for a few minutes after Hu had left. He tried to think. Eventually, he made a decision. He decided to tell his mother, even if Hu

wouldn't like it. He felt sad because he didn't want to do anything behind Hu's back, but he couldn't see any other way to help her.

Mr Riding, the school counsellor, spoke to Hu as she hurried across the schoolyard from the library. He fixed Hu with his hard blue eyes and smiled.

'What's the hurry, Hu?' His stare seemed to look right into her mind. 'You've been crying.'

Hu nodded silently. Mr Riding frightened her. People said he could have power over you with his eyes. His job was to counsel students with 'problems', but he seemed to find problems when people didn't even know they had them.

'I've been watching you recently. You seem worried and unhappy a lot of the time, and I've seen you crying several times. I think we need to talk. Come to my office.'

'But Mr Riding, I have classes...'

Mr Riding stared at her hard. Then he turned and walked to his office. Hu followed, her head down to hide the tears.

From the library window, John saw Mr Riding and Hu entering Mr Riding's counselling office. He picked up his books and half ran to his mother's office.

'Sit down, Hu, and try and relax,' said Mr Riding.

'Relax?' thought Hu. 'Does he think I'm stupid?' She sat very straight on the edge of a low armchair. Mr Riding went to the window, turned and looked down at Hu. He was a tall man in his fifties with red hair which was turning white.

'Do you mind if I smoke?' he asked.

Hu did mind if he smoked, and it was against school rules. Mr Riding got out his pipe and started to light it.

'No, go ahead,' said Hu.

'Like I said, I've been very worried about you for some time. Some of the other teachers have said that you're unhappy. How are things at home?'

'Fine,' said Hu quietly.

'You get on with your parents? I mean, you talk about things with them?'

'Yes.' Mr Riding waited, staring at her. Hu felt uncomfortable. 'I... I do housework with my mother and she helps me with my singing...'

'But can you talk about serious things with her?'

Hu said nothing.

'What about your father?'

'He's always very busy. We talk sometimes in the mornings.'

'Do you talk about important things, Hu?' Mr Riding left the window and sat down heavily in front of her. 'I mean, you're growing up, Hu?' he said very quietly, never letting his hard blue eyes leave hers.

Hu held her hands very tightly together and looked away.

'I understand you've been seeing a lot of Mr Stanyer recently.'

'He's been giving me extra classes,' said Hu.

'Look at me, Hu.' Hu tried. 'Do you like Mr Stanyer?'

'No!' shouted Hu, looking straight at Mr Riding.

'Relax!' said Mr Riding, with a false laugh. He paused. 'It's not so unusual for a young woman of your age to be... to be attracted to an older man, a man in an... an important position.' Mr Riding smiled to himself.

Hu couldn't breathe, she was so angry. She decided not to speak.

'Uh huh,' said Mr Riding, standing up again and walking towards the window. 'Does your father know about these, er, "extra lessons", Hu?'

'No. I...'

'Hu,' said Mr Riding, 'are you scared of your father? Does he shout at you? Has he ever hit you?'

That was when Hu could no longer keep her anger inside. Suddenly she started crying, and could not stop. Somehow, she told Mr Riding the whole story.

At the end of the interview, Mr Riding put his arm round her and led her to the door.

'What you've said is very serious. These are very serious things to say about a teacher.' Hu tried to move away from him.

'But...'

'And I'm not sure you completely understand your own feelings about this man, Hu.' He smiled. 'But don't worry. I think I can sort this out. But we'll need to talk about this again. In the meantime, I shall have to discuss this with my colleagues.'

Hu felt her stomach turn to ice.

'Now, off you go back to class, Hu. And try not to worry.'

Hu didn't go back to class. She went to the main office and told the school nurse she was feeling ill and then walked towards the school gate. She met Mrs Patel carrying a pile of music.

'Are you going home, Hu?' asked Mrs Patel. 'What about the show? We have a rehearsal after school. Are you OK?'

'I'm sorry, Mrs Patel, I...' Hu started crying again.

'It is all right now, my dear, Melanie can take your place. She took your place when you were in Khao Yai. She is getting much better. But you must not miss any more, or I'll have to let her take the part of Dorothy in the show.'

Hu ran. She ran home, blinded by tears. She let herself into the empty apartment, locked herself in her room and threw herself upon her bed, crying.

Mrs Truman, John's mother, was late home. She had been looking at Mr Stanyer's test records in the main school office and making telephone calls. She said nothing to John and Mary when she entered her apartment, but went straight into her study and closed the door. She picked up the telephone.

'Can I speak to Wiwat Phalavadhana... Wiwat? Is that you?'

The telephones were busy in Bangkok that night.

It was the telephone ringing which woke Hu a little later. She had cried herself to sleep.

'Hello?' she said, her voice dry with crying.

'May I speak with Mr Hu An Yuan? It's Mr David Riding here from the Bangkok International Academy.'

Hu's heart stopped. 'It's Hu here. Father is still at work. Do you have his number?'

And your mother's not there? OK. I'll phone him at work.' He paused. 'Hu, are you still there?'

Hu was thinking, 'What can I do?'

'Hu, I should tell you there will be a meeting tomorrow at twelve o'clock. The things you told me about Mr Stanyer are very serious. You can't just say those things about a teacher.'

'But, Mr Riding, you were counselling me. I trusted you!' cried Hu.

'My main responsibility is to the school,' said Mr Riding. 'Just make sure you and your father come to the meeting. Twelve o'clock.'

Hu made herself a cup of tea. She was too tired to cry any more. What could she do?

The phone rang again. It was John.

'Sorry, Hu, I wanted to phone you earlier, but my mother's been using the phone for hours. Are you OK? You weren't in class this afternoon, and I saw you with Mr Riding. What does he want?'

Hu quickly explained about the meeting tomorrow. What could she do?

John's answer was simple. 'Tell your parents the truth. Tell them everything. Tell them the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. That's all you can do.'

That was all she could do. Nothing but the truth. Hu decided she would tell the truth. The truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

She could hear her father and mother's voices on the landing outside the apartment and a key in the lock of the entrance door.

The truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

Later that night, much later, Verity Truman drove back to the school. She went to the main office and took the master keys to the classrooms. Quietly she let herself into Mr Stanyer's classroom and tried the drawer of his desk. Locked, as she expected.

'God forgive me!' she said under her breath. She took a knife from her pocket and opened the locked drawer.