

## XI

Each evening on the way to Jaffa, Madison and Mehemet sat on the high foredeck and smoked cheroots while Mehemet told yarns of the Eastern Mediterranean. He spoke of Arab corsairs, as swift as the sirocco, that raided the coasts of Christendom; and of great sea battles between the Turks and Venetians -- a thousand galleys to a side. He told of mysterious passengers and tragic wrecks, of enchanted islands and cursed passages. His stories were vivid enough that they could have been recollections, but Madison knew that they were drawn from three millennia of history.

On the third night, Mehemet pointed to lights on the horizon. "I'll let the Jews and Christians ashore at Tel-Aviv in the morning," he said. "If you want to land secretly, this is the place."

He rowed Madison into Jaffa's harbor, using oars muffled with rags. As they skirted a great black rock, Mehemet whispered: "There the infidels chained Andromeda as a sacrifice for the Monster of the Sea, hoping that he would stop swallowing ships if he could dine on a beautiful virgin instead. When the beast rose from the water to seize his prize, Perseus slew him and cut Andromeda's chains. That was lucky for her -- but not so lucky for us sailors."

The moonlit surf gently washed a sheltered beach. As they approached, Madison pictured the Holy Land in Advent: candlelight vigils in Manger Square and herald angels singing of peace on earth. But even before Mehemet had run their boat aground, Madison knew that this picture was false. He heard the unmistakable crackle of small-arms fire and the whine of sirens.

They shook hands warmly, and Mehemet described his itinerary in case Madison needed a lift out of Palestine. Madison wore the Assassin's Western clothes, which he had altered during the voyage. Carrying only the dufflebag, he ran up the beach toward a kind of boardwalk. Most of the city was dark and the streets were deserted. He grasped the situation immediately: a military curfew had been imposed. When an armored car raced past on the sea road, loaded with British tommies, Madison hid behind a beached fishing boat. Then he hurried in deep shadows toward Tel-Aviv, the contiguous city to the north.

Just a few blocks inward, a graceful Turkish minaret was lit

from below. The purpose of the illumination, Madison saw, was not aesthetic. Every few seconds, a yellow tracer bullet would fly from the minaret, the high balcony where the Muezzin usually stood to chant his calls to prayer. In response, Sten guns would rake the minaret from ground level.

Just ahead, British soldiers had erected a checkpoint. Madison decided to wait until morning before he approached it. He found a dark alley and sat on the cold ground until a passing car awoke him. It was dawn, and the curfew seemed to have been lifted. He saw that he was in an Arab quarter, Manshiye. Posters in English announced that collective fines would be levied against any neighborhood that harbored terrorists, and the family homes of convicted rebels would be bulldozed. Arabic graffiti declared, "Death to the Imperialists," and "Jihad Jihad." At water's edge, a fortress had been converted into a police station. On its highest tower, a black hangman's flag had been raised below the Union Jack -- the sign of a dawn execution.

Madison's papers got him through several Army checkpoints. The nervous tommies didn't seem concerned about a Westerner; they had their hands full with rioters and snipers. The neighborhood's few glass windows had all been broken, every façade was pockmarked with bullet holes, and burnt-out cars lined the streets.

"How are things going?" Madison asked a young cockney NCO with sandy hair and freckles.

The officer kept his blue eyes trained on distant windows and started every time he heard a sharp sound.

"Not too bad, mate. We cleaned out the bloody mosque last night, and none of our lads copped it. But I'll tell you somefing. These Arab geezahs is stark ravin' bonkers. They make Millwall supporters look like the gents at Wimbledon, right? When their women-folk start cursin', I reckon me own Trouble-'n-Strife sounds like a bloody nun. I'll be glad when I'm rotated up to Tel-Aviv. I reckon the Jews ain't a *much* better lot, but right now it's the Arabs wot's got the bee under their bloody *khafiyas*."

"So nobody's laying out the carpet for you limeys?"

"Bloody wogs, the lot of 'em. When we pull out -- and it won't be a day too soon, in my opinion -- they'll beat each other to a bloody pulp. I'd put ten bob on it."

Tel-Aviv had a higher proportion of Jews than Jaffa, so it was quieter in the present emergency. Nevertheless, according to headlines in the Hebrew press, Jewish guerrillas had machine-gunned an Arab bus in retaliation for a bomb in the Jewish quarter. Graffiti painted by the Irgun Zvai Leumi faction declared *mavet laaravim* ("Death to the Arabs") and "Brits go home." There was occasional small-arms fire, and pedestrians hurried by.

The center of Tel-Aviv was modern, chic, and superficially peaceful. Dizengoff Street reminded Madison of Berlin or Vienna transplanted to the Middle East: there were cafés and Bauhaus apartment buildings behind the palms. Everything looked normal except for a burnt-out bus near the market. Madison inquired at the desk of a downtown hotel about travel to Jerusalem. He was told that much of the intervening land had been seized by *mujahiddin*. The only safe way to reach the capital was in a convoy, and spaces were being reserved for colonial officials. But Madison's V.I.P. visa won him a place on the afternoon bus.

In due course, a convoy of tanks, trucks, busses, and ambulances rumbled past citrus groves and the British military base at Sarafand. They bypassed Ramla, a large town mostly in Arab hands, and then climbed through increasingly arid highlands toward Jerusalem. By the side of the road, Madison saw white trucks with the Star of David painted on their sides, their windows broken and their tires slashed. He thought of the medieval pilgrims who had walked from Jaffa to Jerusalem with Knights Templar in the vanguard, Knights Hospitaller in the rear, and Saracens behind every boulder.

The convoy entered the Holy City through its Western suburbs, newly constructed and heavily Jewish. The Jaffa Road was Jerusalem's main modern thoroughfare, containing most of the colonial administration buildings. The police headquarters and its neighbors in Allenby Square had been dubbed Bevingrad, after the British Foreign Secretary, Sir Ernest Bevin. In the streets of that district, concertina wire had been laid in regular coils and guards stood every few feet.

Blocked by wire, the convoy turned onto St. George Street, from which Madison could see the Old City with its crenelated medieval walls and the gilded Dome of the Rock, too bright to be stared at. Behind, the Mount of Olives overlooked the city, green

and drab; and in the distance, barely visible, were the higher ranges of Moab and Gilead across the River Jordan. Black smoke rose in the still air from several neighborhoods, and an antiquated R.A.F. airplane droned overhead in circles. Madison could smell tear gas and hear the steady thump of tank fire to the east. He also recognized the distinctive sound of British sirens: MA-mee, MA-mee.

At Harvard, Madison had studied classical Arabic with Dr. Yousef Umweiwi, a visiting scholar who usually lived in Jerusalem. He stopped at a post office to look up Uweiwi's address, and then made his way by foot along St. George Street toward the modern suburb of Sheik Jarrah. He had to show his papers at three checkpoints, and he sensed overwhelming distrust on the streets. Tommies walked close to the walls, their guns at the ready. Orthodox Jews stayed mostly on the west side of the street, close to Mea-She'arim, their gated stronghold, where everyone wore the garments of the European ghetto: black hats and tails, long white shirts, and sidelocks. A few Arabs, staying exclusively on the east side of St. George Street, hurried away from the British. But no violence occurred, even when Madison ascended into the Moslem quarter of Sheik Jarrah.

Through this hilly suburb, roads wound toward Mount Skopus. The buildings were modern and spacious, but they retained a traditional feature from the Old City. From each window protruded a wrought-iron cage, a kind of open-work oriel or what the Germans call an *Erker*, large enough to permit two people to sit overlooking the street in the cool of the evening.

Madison found the address he was looking for. It was a large building with thick stone walls and a few arched windows, which were covered with fine cedar lattice-work. The door lintels were painted turquoise, a color traditionally used to ward off the evil eye; and a hand-shaped amulet or *hansa* over the door served the same purpose. This talisman reminded Madison of the china hand outside Madame Sosostri's apartment.

He knocked. A servant peered through a peep-hole, and then a young man looked down from the cage outside a second floor window. Madison noticed that a hunting rifle was pointed in his direction. He showed both of his hands.

"I'm Dr. Brown, from America. Is this Dr. Uweiwi's house?"

The door opened. Madison was searched by two servants and then permitted to climb a flight of stairs from the dark ground floor. He arrived in a bright *liwan*, a central room with small sleeping and study chambers to each side. The *liwan* was plain white except for the elaborate ceiling, decorated in blue, red, and gold. There was no furniture except for a copper table and a large wooden rack containing carpets, cushions, and mattresses. Beneath the far window was a stone shelf, a *masteba*, on which the master of the house might sleep. The only modern feature was a row of steam radiators by the bare interior walls, which were at least a yard thick. The house smelled subtly of coffee and levantine spices.

Yousef Umweiwi sat on a cushion with a small writing stand before him. He wore loose silken clothes of black, and his hair was cut very short. He had a dark tan and small round glasses. He rose to greet Madison.

"Dr. Brown, *salaam*. How are you? Have you been practising your Arabic?"

"Not as much as I'd like."

"Will you have some tea?"

"Thank you."

They sat by the damascened copper table, sipping sweet tea from glasses. Madison said, "I hadn't expected all this excitement. What's going on?"

"Chaos and riots, maybe a revolution."

"The rioters are anti-British, I take it. What was the provocation?"

"Well, London announced a new plan to partition Palestine, giving most of it to the Jews for a Zionist state. That set things off, but there were underlying issues as well. For one thing, thousands of Europeans are arriving every month, buying up land, discriminating against the Arab workers."

"Europeans? You mean Jews?"

"I don't care about their religion. They're imperialist settlers, just like the Boers in South Africa; just like your ancestors in Massachusetts. They want our land."

"Who's leading the Arab revolt?" Madison asked.

"It's rather complicated, because there are several groups. The National Defense Party generally cooperates with the British occupiers. Their core support is in the Nashashibi family, who have

received plum posts in the colonial administration. But even they are losing patience with their masters in Whitehall. Their most important rivals belong to the Palestine Arab Party, who want the British and Zionists to leave right away. This group has its base in the Husseini family."

"Whose leader, I understand, is the Mufti of Jerusalem."

"That's right, Amin el-Husseini. It's ironic, but the first British High Commissioner was the man who appointed him Mufti. This H.C. was a Jew, Herbert Samuel, and he wanted to look impartial, so he made a hothead of twenty-eight the spiritual leader of the Palestinian Moslems. Told him to grow a beard so he'd look the part. Ever since, el-Husseini has been the bane of the Brits." Uweiwi looked satisfied.

"Could I meet this man?" Madison asked.

"Not since October. The British issued an arrest warrant, and he slipped out of Palestine."

"Are you one of his supporters?" Madison asked the question in a neutral tone.

"Not really. I belong to the Istqlal party. We're pan-Arabists, not Moslem zealots or Palestinian separatists."

Madison decided to pose a sensitive question. "What would you say if someone told you that the Mufti was cooperating with the German government?"

"I'd say: More power to him. What's wrong with that?"

"They're Nazis," Madison ventured.

"As far as I know," said Uweiwi, "Germany has only occupied one foreign land, Southwest Africa, and that's been taken away from them. The British and French dominate most of the world's population. Germany mistreats her Jewish minority -- or so I read *every day* in the Zionist press -- and that's a shame, if it's true. But the French have given up using handcuffs to arrest the peasants in rebellious Indochinese villages. They just run wire through the palms of people's hands. As for the British -- well, the black flag flies over Jerusalem several times a day. The enemy of my enemy is my friend."

"But maybe Germany's not such a good friend of yours, after all," said Madison. "Their persecutions have driven thousands of Jews to Palestine."

"Then perhaps the Mufti will persuade them to moderate

their policies," Uweiwi said, signalling for more tea.

"Or maybe he wants Hitler to massacre the Jews, instead of exiling them."

"That sounds a bit far-fetched."

After a minute, Madison asked, "Do you think that el-Husseini is a good leader for the Palestinian cause?"

"No, I didn't say that. He's a clever guerilla, and he runs a good intelligence operation. But he's cruel and he won't tolerate dissent from Arabs. His assassins have gunned down most of the independent talent in Palestine. They'd probably like to shoot me as well." Uweiwi added: "This is a grave mistake. What kind of country will we have if we win our independence? There will be a few fanatical yes-men around the Mufti, but no skilled administrators, no diplomats, no lawyers. To give the Jews credit, they understand that you must start building a nation before it wins its formal independence. But enough of that. What brings you to el-Kuds esh-Sharif?"

Perhaps to test Madison's Arabic, he had used an old synecdoche for Jerusalem: "The Venerable Sanctuary." Madison replied in vague terms about wanting to see the latest archeological discoveries in Palestine.

"Will you stay with us while you're here?" Uweiwi said.

"I would be honored." Madison had hoped to be asked.

He dined with Uweiwi and three younger men. There were also several women in the house, unrecognized presences in the side chambers. Madison was very tired, since he had slept for just a few minutes in the Jaffa alleyway. He was given a plain but warm room, which was decorated only with a Koranic verse and a comfortable mattress. He slept until a Muezzin called the faithful to morning prayer.

Until now, he had not been alone with the reel of film that he'd picked up in Malta. He now unravelled a few frames and held them against the whitewashed walls of his room. They showed legs and feet: the legs wrapped in tight leggings, the feet shod in heavy, peasant boots or wooden clogs. Each frame depicted scores of feet in slightly different positions, like illustrations in a manual on country dancing. Madison was tired of trying to decode such symbol-patterns. He had lost patience with that endeavor in Vienna, if not earlier. Arab mysticism, Kabbalah, and alchemy had

each defeated him, and he doubted that he would have better luck understanding a Romany cotillion. So he put the film away and walked south through the American Colony.

Although gunfire could be heard in the distance, this area was quiet. It had been built by American Protestants before the Great War, many of whom had made a living by printing photographs and postcards of the Holy City. There was still a great concentration of camera stores, photo labs, and postcard stalls in the Colony, with names like Johnson and McCarthy posted over their doors. For the first time since he had arrived in Palestine, Madison saw Christian pilgrims here: Baptist Preachers from the Bible Belt, Greek Orthodox fathers in their cylindrical hats, Roman Catholic nuns, Armenian priests with their cone-shaped hoods, and many barefoot Franciscans, coarse ropes fastened around their grey cloaks. There were also lay people from Western countries, most of whom carried cameras and guidebooks. A few Arab merchants sold Christmas paraphernalia displayed on the sidewalks.

Madison bought a map of the city and sat in the garden of the Rockefeller Museum, a heavy, Byzantine-revival building with an octagonal tower that reminded him of Catholic campuses in the United States. None of the street-names on his map looked familiar, and most of the city's thoroughfares were unlabeled. He went inside and bought a better guide, but even this was inadequate. He knew roughly where to look, because the second line of the address that he was seeking had said, "Old City." He couldn't remember the first line, but he knew that it had sounded strange, being neither Arabic nor Hebrew, neither Latin nor English. Madison saw that there was an Armenian quarter in the southwest part of the Old City. Could the name have been Armenian?

He entered ancient Jerusalem by way of the Damascus gate. As he walked, he counted the sacred events that were supposed to have happened in this area, which occupied less than a square-mile. Christians believed that Adam's skull had been found beneath the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, so the first human being had died here. Abraham had taken Isaac to be sacrificed on Mount Moriah, the southeast corner of the Old City. Later, on the same spot, Solomon had built his Temple, in which the Arc of the Covenant had been kept and the ancient Hebrews had performed all their sacrifices. In the Temple's Holy of Holies, behind a curtain,



God had been constantly present, for it was written that “the glory of the LORD had filled the house of God.”

Solomon’s masons were the first Templars. In generations to come, they had preserved the mystical dimensions of their building, to which the Book of Revelations refers when it says, “Rise and measure the temple of God and the altar and those who worship there.” The first Temple had been sacked by Babylonians, but King Herod had built a replacement. Just steps away from this second building, Jesus had been condemned, crucified, and buried, only to rise from his tomb. St. Helena had found the True Cross inside Herod’s walls; and then Mohammed had ridden to heaven on his white horse from the same rock on which Abraham had bound Isaac. The Dome of the Rock, which commemorated the Prophet’s ascension, had later become the Mother Church of the Knights Templar: Templum Christi. No wonder that this was the center of the earth in Jewish, Christian, and Moslem folklore. Here, if anywhere, was the Navel.

The narrow, crooked streets of the Old City were paved with the same yellow stone that formed the buildings, giving the impression that rough channels had been carved into a monolith. In places, the streets were so narrow that buttresses reached from one side to the other, holding the walls apart. Laundry hung from overhead lines, so low that camels had to duck to pass.

Madison avoided the Moslem quarter, which was surrounded by burning barricades and smelled unpleasantly of tear gas. In the Christian section, he walked past the domed church of the Holy Sepulchre, where the Resurrection had occurred; crossed the Via Dolorosa and the Street of David; and entered the Armenian quarter.

This whole area was walled and gated, since most of its 300 acres belonged to a single monastery. Nevertheless, the vast majority of its residents were lay people, dressed in fashionable Western clothes. They lived in mazelike lanes or quiet courtyards with lemon trees and outdoor staircases. Although the quarter was small, Madison realized that it could be explored for hours. The plan was baffling, but the streets were clearly labeled. Unfortunately, every sign was printed in Armenian characters, which were completely obscure to Madison.

If only he had Marta with him to translate. It did not escape

his notice that he had come to an Armenian quarter, administered like a mini-state by Armenian authorities. He remembered that Marta had found shelter in her homeland when Stalin's men had first tried to kill her. Did she know more than she had said about the scroll's destination?

He loitered in a tidy courtyard, through which a bearded African monk walked in his cylindrical hat. A pair of British soldiers approached with guns drawn.

"Hi there," said Madison.

"Will you move along, please," said an exasperated sergeant, showing the way with his thumb.

"I'm just a tourist."

"Well, this isn't the bloody time for bloody tourism. The Armenian quarter is for Armenians and Abyssinians only. There's a war on, d'you understand? Please go back to your hotel. You can visit Bethlehem on Christmas Eve -- we'll have the road clear by then. If you wander about in the Old City, looking like a bloody idiot, you're liable to cop a bullet. That is, if we don't haul you down to HQ in 'andcuffs."

Madison decided to implement his fallback plan. He left the Old City by the nearby Jaffa Gate and walked through heavily patrolled modern streets to Allenby Square. Opposite the Russian cathedral, with its green onion dome, stood Police Headquarters. The street outside was full of concertina wire and concrete barriers, and there were police snipers on the roofs.

Madison approached the main door, attracting the attention of a dozen men with Sten guns. They searched him very thoroughly and nervously, demanding to know his business. Meanwhile, black vans pulled up to a side door every few minutes, discharging Arab men in leg-irons. It took five British soldiers to drag one bellowing rioter inside.

Madison said, "I want to see the Inspector General."

"Who might you be, then?"

"My name is Madison Brown. I'm a U.S. citizen, and I have intelligence of vital importance to the authorities."

"Regarding the Arab revolt?"

"Not directly. It's concerns Nazi agents in Jerusalem."

"Then you need to talk to an F.O. man."

Madison was led along dark halls and up staircases to the

third floor, smelling sweat and antiseptic in the air. He sensed nervous energy in the building, the air of a siege. He passed armed policemen with prisoners and harried WACs with bulging files. People spoke quietly and urgently, but shouting could be heard behind many doors.

Madison and his three guards reached a door with an opaque glass window, on which had been painted the words "Foreign Office: Section CI-6." He was pleased not to see a name on the door: that meant that he would be talking to someone with high security clearance.

A soldier knocked and conferred quietly with the secretary who opened the door. She wore a grey bun and flat shoes. Her face was long, her eyes were large and droopy, and she seemed to be about fifty. When the soldiers left, she invited Madison to sit in a windowless anteroom where she had her desk. The only decorations were a portrait of King George V and a poster explaining fire procedures. She sat behind piles of papers, smoking and pounding on a typewriter as she spoke. Her wooden desk was battered, and the side facing Madison was covered with graffiti, mostly in English.

"My name is Miss Douglas-Hume," she said, in an upper-class English accent. "I'm Mr. S.'s gatekeeper. He has a lot on his plate. Why should he talk to you?"

"I think he'll be glad if he does," said Madison. "Whitehall has a nice thick file on me. I made a bit of trouble for you limeys in Kenya, and I got here by shooting an immigration officer full of xctlal juice at Luton."

"Then you have an impressive curriculum vitae. But what intelligence can you give Mr. S.? And what do you want in return?" She was still hammering at the typewriter. The rhythm suggested that what she typed bore no relationship to their conversation.

"My information regards a Nazi operation in Jerusalem. Recently, I had a document in my possession that the SS wanted rather badly. They tricked me into mailing it here. Later, I found a related document in the luggage of one of the Mufti's agents, who was travelling from Southampton to Jaffa by way of Malta. I suspect that there's a den of SS agents somewhere in town, probably in the Armenian Quarter, and they're cooperating with the Mufti."

An orderly arrived and handed the secretary a telegram, which she read cursorily. Madison noticed that the orderly, a middle-aged man, had treated her with great respect. She returned to her typewriter, saying, "There's a warrant for you, Mr. Brown. Why shouldn't we throw you in gaol?"

"Because we're on the same side. Look, *is* there a Mr. S, or are you the boss in this department?"

"You're perceptive, Professor -- for an American. You may indeed assume that I'm the boss. I was expecting you. However, I don't need your information." She drew on her cigarette.

"Why not? You already know about St.-Germain?"

"Funny that you should mention him. He entered Palestine via Beirut last Friday."

"Then where's the SS operation located?"

"I don't think I ought to say, Dr. Brown. I can tell you this. The street you were looking for is called Muehtotz, the number is 26b. Does that ring a bell? I'm not saying that it would be worth your time to investigate the place. But if you feel you must, you can start at the Public Record Office. You might look up the ownership documents. The Arab workers at the P.R.O. are striking at the moment, but I believe it's open on a serve-yourself basis."

She is trying to get rid of me, Madison thought. He tried to devise a new line of questioning, but he was distracted by a scribble on the desk leg in front of him. Among lots of other graffiti, he saw a heart, within which someone had written "MK + MB." The coincidence made his breath quicken and his legs shake. Not knowing what to say, he rose to leave.

"We're watching you, Dr. Brown. We have good intelligence about the Uweiwi house. At the moment, you don't seem to be bothering anyone; and you're right -- we're on the same side. But if you make trouble, I *will* serve that warrant." She continued to type as he let himself out.

He walked the halls of Police Headquarters, trying to look as if he had business in each corridor. The top floor was off-limits, and the only people who were admitted looked like bureaucrats. The top brass must have their offices there. The ground floor resembled a squad-room in an American police station: people barked orders, ate sandwiches, swore, and bustled among dirty steel desks. The middle floors contained office suites. Madison noticed that he could

not reach the back of the building at any level, nor the basement; but soldiers marched their captives in those two directions. It made sense that prison cells would be located away from the main road. Madison noticed, furthermore, that Arab prisoners predominated on the lower floors; the fourth floor seemed reserved for Jewish captives.

He left, marching briskly past the guards at the main door. His first item of business was to hide the gypsy film reel so that it couldn't be stolen by British spies in the Uweiwi household -- or by anyone else. Since bus and taxi service had been suspended, he made his way home on foot. He was relieved to find the film still safe in his dufflebag. Although he was tired and footsore by now, he immediately hiked back toward the modern buildings in "Bevingrad." From the main Post Office, he mailed the film to the fashionable suburb of Rehavia, addressing it to "David Cohen, *post restante*." The Jewish clerk opened the package and examined the contents carefully, but seemed mainly interested in establishing that they would not explode. Once the film (now marked "photographic supplies, personal") had disappeared into a mountain of mail, Madison went in search of the Public Record Office, which turned out to be housed nearby in a large administration building.

A Bobby in a tall hat and bright buttons was the only person present in the main records room. Behind him, a few beams of afternoon sunlight cut through the dust and cast bright patterns on the heavy Victorian shelving.

"All right if I look something up?" Madison asked.

"All right with me, only you'll 'ave to serve yerself. And don't pinch nuffing."

The catalog system was complicated, because the British authorities had inherited Jerusalem's records from the previous, Ottoman administration, which had, in turn, delegated most of its power to the leaders of each religious community in Palestine. Thus various systems of organization had been superimposed on others, often haphazardly and inaccurately. But finally Madison found a file number. Armed with this, he walked up and down aisles that were lined with tall, wooden shelving. He moved a ladder into place and climbed until he had retrieved the correct cardboard box. He took it to a reading table and examined the contents. Muehtotz

Street, it seemed, lay within the Armenian community; but 26b was at the very end, on the border with the Christian quarter. This building belonged, ultimately, to the Armenian Monastery of St. James, but it was leased through an Arab management company. Madison wrote down the name of this firm and returned the box.

As he climbed down the ladder, he noticed something written on a rung that nearly caused him to lose his grip and fall. There it was again: a heart with the letters "MK + MB."

He ran back to Police Headquarters.

"I need to see the Foreign Service Officer for Section CI-6," he said; "immediately."

The desk sergeant made a telephone call. "And 'oo might you be?" he asked Madison.

"Dr. Brown. It's urgent."

A few minutes later, he was back in the drab anteroom.

"I want to make a deal," he said.

"Yes?" Miss Douglas-Hume sipped her tea and smoked simultaneously.

Madison said, "*You* know where I can find Marta Khatchaturian. I have a film reel that I stole from the Mufti's agent in Malta. Let's trade information."

She drew deeply on her cigarette. "Dr. Brown, I don't want your film. If it had interested me, then I would have asked our friend in the Uweiwi house to remove it from your dufflebag and bring it here. Sorry. However, because I feel a certain sympathy for you, I will tell you what has happened to Captain Khatchaturian."

"What?" He didn't like the sound of that past tense. It made him sit bolt upright and grab his stomach.

"She tried to contact a Soviet mole in the British Embassy, Paris. Only, he was a double agent. We picked her up and took her to England, with the agreement of the *Suret *. She wasn't very cooperative."

"What did you do to her?" Madison asked, flushing.

"Nothing unpleasant, I assure you. We're a civilized nation; the Geneva Convention applies in the United Kingdom. Of course, we did tell Captain Khatchaturian that we'd have to repatriate her unless she behaved in a reasonable fashion."

"Repatriate her? You mean, to Russia?"

"That's right, just as *you* might be sent home once your

business in England was complete. With this encouragement, she gave us dribbles and drabs of information, enough that I had her transferred here. She lived on the fifth floor until recently -- not being very helpful, I must say. Still, we collected good intelligence from other sources, and she inadvertently helped us to fill some holes."

"What did you do to her in the end?"

"Oh, nothing illegal. When she completely stopped talking, I released her to her country's consulate. That's standard procedure whenever a foreign national encounters legal difficulties in the British Mandate. After all, she *had* entered Palestine without the proper visa."

"You bastards."

"It's a tough business, Dr. Brown. If your Marta captured me in Moscow, I'd never be seen again. She knew the risks, and she played the game as hard and unscrupulously as anyone. I gave her a way out at every stage, but she refused to cooperate."

"I will take this outrage to the highest authorities," Madison said, rising and clenching his fists. "I will demand an inquiry. I have influence in Washington."

"Don't waste your indignation on His Majesty's Government. For all we know, Captain Khatchaturian is alive and well in Soviet hands. Take your case to them. I don't have any objection if she's released, as long as she gets out of Palestine." While Madison fought to control his anger and fear, she added, "Look, *we* haven't done your friend any harm. I know as well as you do that she faces a pretty grim future in Soviet captivity. That's not because *we're* beastly; it's because Stalin runs a brutal regime. On the other hand, he wants good relations with Washington. There may be hope yet."

Not long afterwards, Madison stood outside the gate of the Soviet compound in Jerusalem. The hammer-and-sickle flag flew over low, white buildings, and goose-stepping guards wore red stars on their epaulets. Madison explained that he was a United States citizen who needed to talk to an NKVD official. The Soviets were eager to recruit Americans, so he was ushered quickly into the consulate.

He soon sat in the office of Comrade Captain Arkady Albov, an elderly man with a sad expression and five-o'clock shadow.

Uncle Joe Stalin looked down benevolently from a framed photograph. Albov fiddled with a pen as he listened.

"I know that you're holding Marta Khatchaturian," Madison said, speaking Russian. "I want her released. If you drag her to Russia or hurt her in Jerusalem, I'll raise a holy row. But if you release her, I'll tell you about a major SS plot and give you a document that the Germans value highly. Your colleague, Comrade Lieutenant Alexei Stafonovich Starobin, will know how valuable my intelligence is."

"Comrade Starobin is a Lieutenant Colonel now. He happens to be my commanding officer in Jerusalem."

"You don't say." Madison tried to suppress the fear in his voice.

"Yes, what a coincidence. I'll ask him to stop by."

Through the window, Madison could see a typical Jerusalem Street. When Albov left, he considered jumping out, but he knew that he couldn't escape the NKVD. Besides, he had a trade to negotiate.

Starobin arrived after ten minutes. Madison would have recognized his short hair, cheekbones, and pale eyes anywhere. They shook hands silently. Madison had spent several days in the Russian's company without ever hearing him utter a word.

In English, Albov said, "No deal. We don't want your film."

Madison addressed Starobin: "I'll lodge an official protest if you don't release Marta. It'll mean bad publicity for the U.S.S.R."

Albov said, "She's quite fine. You can even see her, if you wish."

The three men walked downstairs to the basement. The doors were unmarked and heavily bolted; some had small windows, covered with steel shutters that opened from the outside. Madison came close to panic as they descended. Walking first, he wondered whether he was going to meet the traditional end of prisoners in Soviet basements: a bullet in the back of the head. It might actually be a mercy.

Albov flipped open a window and pointed through thick glass to a small cell. Madison pressed his face against the pane. There was no window, so the light was dim, but he could barely make out a cot in the corner. On the cot, curled in the fetal position, was a woman. Madison couldn't discern Marta's features, but he



recognized her dress.

He pounded on the door and shouted her name. She didn't move. Hands seized him from behind and propelled him upstairs. On the way, Albov said, "She can't hear you -- she's been drugged. If you make any trouble, we'll shoot her. Get out of Jerusalem before Arab rioters just happen to beat you to death. What a shame that would be."

Madison was thrown out of a side entrance directly onto the street. He picked himself up, found a hotel, consulted a telephone book and the map in his pocket, and then made his way to the German Mission. This was an old brick building, erected by the Kaiser in a neo-Gothic style, and heavily fortified -- for the Nazis had critics in Jerusalem. It was identified only by a small plaque, and the ground-floor windows were boarded up. Cement barriers had been erected to stop truck-bombers.

Madison pressed the door bell and identified himself through the intercom. In German, he said, "My name is Madison Brown. I'm a U.S. citizen. I need to talk the Comte de St.-Germain. I have something that belongs to him."

He was admitted to a dark courtyard with shuttered windows on all sides. A pair of blond men in plain suits approached, guns at their side. After they searched Madison thoroughly, they led him to a plain, windowless interrogation room, furnished only with a desk and two chairs.

St.-Germain arrived after a few minutes. "You are either very brave or extremely stupid," he said, in his ambiguous European accent. Smiling pleasantly, he extended his hand. Madison ignored it. The armed men waited in the background.

"I'm the guy who stole the film of the gypsy dance," said Madison. "It's here in Jerusalem. Do you want it?"

"It *does* belong to me," said St.-Germain.

"All right. The Soviets have my friend Marta in their custody. If you can get her released, I'll give you the film. Either bust her out by force, or else trade something for her. I'll bet you're holding a Nazi prisoner somewhere whom you can exchange for Marta."

"I have another idea," said St.-Germain. "Why don't I torture you until you tell me where you've hidden the film? I quite enjoy torture."

Madison opened his mouth wide and pointed to a molar. Then, through closed lips, he said, "That's a suicide pill. Lay a finger on me, and I'll bite. I'm a desperate man. So, do we have a deal?"

"I'll see what I can do," said the Count.