

XII

Except for a trip to Rehavia to retrieve his film, Madison didn't step outside the Uweiwi house for the next forty-eight hours. Meanwhile, the fighting in Jerusalem seemed to intensify and then subside, although the multilingual press continued to report skirmishes, truck bombings, and even a full-scale battle near Haifa. Madison had several conversations with his learned host about local politics, but mostly he stayed in his room, reading newspapers and pacing between the whitewashed walls.

When he awoke on the third day, he saw that a folded piece of paper had been slipped halfway under his door. He opened it and read:

Dr. Brown:

We have arranged a trade for your associate, Captain Khatchaturian. At 23:00, a Hagganah ambulance will stop outside. You will be shown the prisoner. As soon as she enters the house, you will drop the film from the window. If there is any trick, the Uweiwi compound will be dynamited immediately. It is surrounded, so do not try to escape.

Madison was so elated that he nearly danced in his room. Once he collected himself, he felt time slow almost to a stop. He could hardly bear the suspense, but at least he felt new hope: by midnight, he should see Marta again. He told Dr. Uweiwi just enough so that the whole household was ready for a mysterious visitor late in the evening -- prepared either to shoot or flee on Madison's instructions. He warned them, too, that the visitor might arrive in a vehicle bearing the Star of David: they should not shoot just for that reason.

A few minutes before eleven, Madison sat in the second-floor *Erker* next to the youngest Uweiwi son, who carried an ancient musket. Madison held the film, carefully wrapped in dark cloth. He stared at his watch, drummed his fingers on the cast-iron cage, and strained to hear the sound of a motor. The streets below were strikingly quiet, because the British curfew had now achieved some success. There was a bite in the air, and the smell of burning coal. Madison heard nothing but the scuffle of rats' feet until precisely

23:00, when an ambulance appeared and screamed to a halt in front of the door.

The back opened and two men pulled the head of a stretcher into sight. Right away, Madison saw familiar black hair and eyes. His whole frame lurched at the sight of this prone and motionless figure, but then her eyes turned upward and he knew that she was alive. He had no doubt who she was.

They pulled Marta back inside. Madison grasped the film and waited anxiously. The back of the ambulance opened again and out she ran, a small woman wrapped in dark cloth. The house door opened downstairs and then shut behind her. Madison dropped the film through the iron grate below him and ran to see her.

An Arab girl of about sixteen stood in the hallway, wide-eyed and frightened. Hearing the ambulance screech away, Madison opened the door a crack and peered out, but the street was empty: no film, no Marta. The girl in the hall hardly resembled her. He grabbed his head in anguish and doubled up.

As soon as he managed to stand, he ran outside without saying a word to his host. He hurried through dark streets and country roads toward Batei-Ungarn, a suburb built by Jews from Hungary. Only once did a British armored car zoom past, and Madison managed to avoid it by ducking into a doorway. He was more worried about terrorists and old-fashioned bandits who might lurk in the groves and ruins beside the undeveloped roads. But in his current frame of mind, he didn't care much about being shot.

Batei-Ungarn was a district of utilitarian housing, where cement stairs had been built outside each apartment block to save construction costs, and laundry hung from house to house. Madison understood that the Irgun guerrillas had a strong presence here, instead of the more moderate Hagganah forces that provided paramilitary protection elsewhere. He saw graffiti that supported this theory: mostly in Yiddish, it called for the assassination of Wauchope (the High Commissioner), and death to the Mufti.

Madison walked in the middle of the road, his hands conspicuously bare. His heart pounded as he wondered who would spot him first: British police, Arab terrorists, or the Irgun. He was the only person in sight; his shoes clicked on the gravel.

Someone cocked a pistol inches from his head. Madison stopped and raised his hands.

"What do you want?" The Yiddish words were spoken right behind him.

Madison easily understood this language, because he knew both German and Hebrew; but he couldn't speak it. So he replied in English: "I want to find the Ets-el."

"Who doesn't. Are you a cop?" The man behind him still spoke Yiddish.

"No, I'm a Yankee tourist. Everyone says I should visit a terrorist cell before I leave Jerusalem."

For a split second, Madison felt excruciating pain where his skull met the back of his neck. When he revived, he was tied to a chair facing five men and two women. They all wore secular clothes and carried side-arms. Hand-rolled cigarettes hung from their lips; most were young. A bare bulb burned in the smoky room. On the cracked, whitewashed walls, posters showed muscular young people with raised fists and angry expressions.

Someone was washing and dressing Madison's head-wound. He swallowed hard to hold back vomit. A short, thick-set man rose and blew smoke into his face. In heavy Brooklynese, he said, "So, a joker, eh?"

Madison replied, "I got where I wanted to go."

"Whaddya want wit us?"

"I need your help. I'm working with an NKVD defector; we're trying to stop an SS plot. My friend was in British custody until recently. Her name is Marta Khatchaturian."

Madison's interrogator showed no sign of recognition. Madison continued, "She wouldn't cooperate with the Brits, so they turned her over to her former boss, one Alexei Stefanovich Starobin."

This time, the interrogator couldn't suppress a flicker of acknowledgment. Madison said, "I had to save her life, so I offered the Germans a trade if they'd free her from the Soviets. I didn't promise them anything really valuable, just a document they wanted. They agreed to get her out of Russian custody, and evidently they did seize her. But when it came time for the exchange, they tricked me. They still have her, as well as the document. I want her out."

"There are a lotta people in German jails. A lotta my friends and family, as a matter of fact. Why should we rescue a Russian agent, instead of -- just for instance -- a Jewish child?"

"Because she knows about a Nazi conspiracy that's taking place right here in Eretz Israel."

"What conspiracy?"

"She's the only one who understands the details," Madison lied. "But it's of critical importance. Huge."

"OK. We do got folks inside the German Mission. We'll check out your story. If you're on the up-and-up, we'll discuss whether to help you or not. If you're playing games wit us, then I personally will plug you full of lead and leave you for the jackals."

Several men unbound Madison and marched him at gunpoint into a cell that smelled strongly of urine and tobacco. The door slammed behind him and he sat down in pitch-darkness. All he could see were bright flakes of swirling color produced by his injury. Somewhere, he thought, Marta was waiting in a similar cell for her Gestapo interrogators. He *hoped* that she was still waiting.

Some hours later, a blinding light woke him and his eyes streamed with tears, even though he hadn't opened the lids. When he did, he saw that he was sitting under a staircase in a dank cubicle. The thick-set man stood in the doorway, still smoking.

"I'm Jacob," he said. "Your story checks. Your girlfriend, she's alive and kickin'. We can't spare our people to spring her, but we can help you do the job yourself. They say the enemy of my enemy is my friend."

Welcome to the Near East, Madison thought. Dizzily, he struggled to his feet. His pants were clammy and his joints ached. Jacob led him down a hall and into the interrogation room, where he and several other guerrillas outlined a plan.

They moved Madison from Batei-Ungarn to Western Jerusalem in a series of mule-powered carts. He rode all the way with a sack over his head and a gun to his temple. The last of the carts trundled over a bump and into a cobblestone courtyard as a gate slammed behind them.

At this point, Madison was strapped inside the roof of the wagon. A German soldier now searched the cart, but failed to examine the ceiling. When the soldier was gone, Madison climbed down and hid in a laundry basket. In a minute, the basket lurched

into motion. Madison was borne outside like a lean Falstaff, then through a door and up a flight of steps.

He waited while he heard the sound of beds being made. After a few minutes of this, the top of the basket opened, and he hurried (according to plan) into a nearby broom-closet. Two valets in Arab clothes pretended not to notice him as they scrubbed the floor.

Before he closed the closet door, he saw a hall, a small infirmary, and some offices. He spent the rest of the day squeezed between mops and buckets, desperate for a toilet, and frightened every time he heard German spoken on the other side of the door. In fact, the hall was quite busy, so Madison had to struggle not to cough or sneeze. But, as predicted, the Germans left their broom-closet to the native help, who seemed to work for the Irgun.

He was uncomfortable because of the shape of the closet and the heat, but especially because the Zionists had given him a piece of heavy equipment that wrapped snugly around his chest, making him sweat and itch. But at last, the hall became quiet and his watch told him it was eight o'clock. He eased the door open and peered into the dark corridor, lit only by moonlight. He tiptoed on the marble floors, staying close to one wall. He turned right, then stopped to listen. Footsteps approached, squeaking on the polished stone.

He was completely exposed. It took him a second to make a decision. Then, running down the hall toward the steps, he found a door that he had been instructed to open. He stepped inside and pulled it gently closed, making a quiet thump. The footsteps passed.

Madison stood in a small, smelly chamber. Before the door had closed, he had spotted the only object that the room contained: a chute. He now groped for its handle in the darkness. He discovered that the aperture wasn't more than eighteen inches across, and its shape was complicated by the hatch. He scrambled awkwardly until he'd lowered his feet down the hole. His arms and head still stuck into the room.

More footsteps; the sound of German. Madison held his breath and then strained all his muscles as he began to tip forward out of the chute. By sheer force of will, he held himself in place until the Germans were gone.

He thrust his elbows into the chute and let himself drop, praying as he hurtled down a smelly shaft into the unknown. He landed feet-first in a box of garbage. There was a scuffling sound nearby, but no other noise. Madison climbed over bags of trash toward a door. Heat and red light emerged from a furnace or incinerator in the corner. By this light, Madison saw paper stacked as if ready to be burned. On closer inspection, the stacks turned out to contain cards: five-by-seven-inch pieces of white stock with grey grids printed on one side and square holes cut at random. Madison pocketed one for later inspection, although he already knew what it was.

He peeked into a long corridor lit with dim bulbs that hung in steel cages. Along the left wall was a row of plain metal doors. Madison found the one marked "VI," which was secured with a padlock. He took a tool out of his pocket and snipped the lock open. It fell toward the stone floor, but he managed to catch it between his knees. He opened the door and crept inside.

He stood in darkness, trying to get his bearings. Before he could see anything in the gloom, something crashed onto the same raw spot where he'd been clobbered the day before. He clutched his bleeding hair and sank to the ground, stars whirling in his cranium.

The door opened, then closed again.

"Madison?" Two small hands grasped his shoulders and pulled him back.

He couldn't speak. Marta touched his wound and murmured something softly in Armenian. "It's a good thing I recognized you on my way out," she said.

"Are you OK?" He forced the words through his teeth. Pain shot from his head down his back.

"I've been better," she said. "So have you, I guess. Hold me for a second."

They clung together in the darkness. Madison asked, "Did they hurt you?" He couldn't see her at all.

"Not too much, just a beating or two -- and a lot of waiting. The anticipation of torture breaks some people."

"Let's get out of here."

"All right. What's your plan? By the way, thanks very much for coming." There was a touch of laughter in her voice.

"We're supposed to wait in the trash room until the servants arrive to clear it. They work for Irgun Zvai Leumi, the ultra-Zionist faction."

"You mean we're in the Ets-el's hands?" said Marta. "Out of the frying pan and into the fire."

"There may be another way out," said Madison.

Just then, the door opened and a powerful light shone in. Madison, still on his knees, turned to see leather boots below the blinding beam. He pushed a button near his belt and clambered to his feet.

"There is another way, indeed. Take them outside so that I can shoot them myself. They'll leave as cadavers." Madison recognized the resonant voice of St.-Germain. Blinking, he saw the outline of a man with a ponytail, holding a bullwhip. The searchlight was hot and painfully bright.

Madison raised his hand, in which he grasped a steel tool. He held his elbows up so that his jacket opened to reveal sticks of dynamite strapped to his chest. A black wire ran down his sleeve from the tool to a battery-pack at his belt.

"If I relax my grip," he said, in a slow and deliberate voice, "you and I and this whole building will be blown to Kingdom Come. Take one step toward us, and I'll let go. I have nothing to lose, and the folks who gave me this bomb would be delighted if I used it."

"You heard him: back up," said Marta, "and turn off that bloody light." Her hair was wild and her face was puffy; there were black rings around both eyes. With her furious expression, she looked like a Gorgon.

When the light went out, Madison could discern three soldiers and a machine gun mounted on a tripod. He and Marta edged into the hallway. Madison said, "I'm very, very nervous. My hands are shaking. One tiny noise, one faint movement, and I'll lose my grip. So freeze, you Nazi bastards."

They all inched toward the end of the corridor -- Madison watching St.-Germain, Marta steering him. As a single group, they climbed a flight of steps and reached a foyer where the night air could be felt. Marta opened the door. Two soldiers sprang inside, seized her, and held pistols to her head.

Madison said to St.-Germain, "Tell them to let go of her."

"First disconnect your dynamite."

"I can't"

"I find that hard to believe." St.-Germain looked pointedly at Madison's battery-pack.

"Well, I *won't* disconnect it."

There was a long period of silence, during which Madison and St.-Germain stared at each other, and the five German soldiers squinted down their rifle barrels at Marta and Madison. Finally, the Count said, "Very well, let them go. We'll catch them later."

The soldiers relaxed their grip on Marta. She and Madison edged toward the main gate, which a guard opened. Still facing the German Mission, they backed across the street. Then Marta sprinted into a dark alley, and Madison followed her, holding the explosive trigger conspicuously above his head.

One side of the alley was the perimeter wall of a *souk*, a covered market. There were locked, cast-iron gates at regular intervals. While Madison disconnected his dynamite, Marta tried to pick a padlock so that they could enter the *souk*. She did not seem to be making any progress; her hands shook and she was breathing heavily. Madison handed her his heavy clippers. They snipped the lock, stepped inside, and shut the gate behind them. Then they ran through dark, covered lanes lined by rug shops and shuttered vegetable stalls. They couldn't enter the stores without breaking glass, but some shops also had external displays. They found a solid crate on which vegetables were displayed during the day. They crept under it and waited for the market to open.

Their refuge was dark but warm, and it smelled comfortingly of cabbage leaves. Madison lay his bleeding head in Marta's lap and told her some of what had happened to him since Paris. She said some ambiguous words about her treatment at the hands of the Soviets and Nazis, and her vagueness made him nervous. "So, it wasn't too terrible?" he asked.

"It can be an awful lot worse," she said, stroking his matted hair.

He fell asleep. She woke him to the sound of wheelbarrows and dollies. They climbed out of their crate and walked briskly through the *souk*, aware that they made a strange sight: Marta with her black eyes, Madison with blood in his hair -- a couple of furtive Westerners in an Arab market during a civil war. But they were

able to leave before anyone discovered the snipped lock or the dynamite under the vegetable crate. In this time of random violence, most people were loath to challenge strangers, no matter how odd they might appear.

As the sun peeked over Gilead, Marta led Madison into the Armenian quarter. When a British patrol approached, she turned toward a wall to hide her face and chattered loudly in Armenian until the tommies passed by. She knocked on a side door and waited for a priest to appear, a bearded octogenarian in a black, conical cape. After they had spoken for a minute, a young servant appeared and led Madison and Marta into a clean kitchen. A doctor arrived to treat their injuries, and soon they sat on overstuffed English furniture in a sunny drawing room with a view of a lemon tree. On the walls were framed photographs of venerable patriarchs, prints of Jerusalem, and many leather-bound books. The wallpaper was floral and elaborate.

Marta said, "Did *you* arrange for me to be transferred from the Soviets to the Nazis?"

"Yes," said Madison, quietly proud. Sitting in a comfortable armchair opposite Marta, he was as contented as could be.

"Why did you do that?" She gave him a severe look.

"Because I had worked out a deal with St.-Germain; he was supposed to free you."

"What did you promise him in return?"

"The film of the gypsy dance."

She pursed her lips. "What if that were the last ingredient he needed to work his black magic?"

Madison fumbled for an answer, finally saying, "I wouldn't care."

"Even if his sorcery could help make Hitler the master of the world?"

"I would always choose your safety over a political cause."

"That's the most ridiculous thing I've ever heard. Would you save your *own* life, if it meant condemning millions of innocents to death?"

"No." Madison was growing uncomfortable.

"But you'd make the same exchange with my life?"

"Given the choice between betraying my country and betraying my friend, I hope I should always choose my country."

"What indescribable rot," said Marta, whispering to keep her angry voice from penetrating the walls. "It's not your bloody country that's at stake here. Do you know what Hitler's planning? He means to exterminate all the non-Aryans who occupy the land between the Rhine and the Volga. That means killing a hundred million people -- starting with the Jews and the gypsies, but not stopping there. There will be so much deliberate slaughter that civilization may not recover -- may not *deserve* to recover."

Madison muttered, "I doubt that one film of a gypsy dance will make very much difference."

"Don't be so sure. From what I heard, St.-Germain thinks his puzzle is just about complete."

"All right, why don't you tell me everything you learned while you were in all those jail cells?"

"I gained nothing from my time with the British or the Russians. But I did learn one more thing from the Germans. I overheard two guards talking about 'Kidron.' Their superior was extremely angry at them for using that word in my hearing. Who or what is it?"

Excited, Madison rose and found a King James Bible among the other theological reference books. He consulted a concordance and then said, "From the Book of Joel":

Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the LORD cometh, for it is nigh at hand.

A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains. ...

Let the heathen be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehosaphat: for there I will sit to judge all the heathen round about.

Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, get you down: for the press is full, the fats overflow; for their wickedness is great.

Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision.

The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining.

The LORD shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and earth shall shake.

Marta interrupted: "Excuse me, but what does all of this have to do with Kidron?"

"Traditionally," Madison explained, "Kidron is identified with Jehosaphat, the valley of decision. It's the big gulley immediately east of the Old City, right below the walls. As for the apocalypse that Joel prophesies, the signs of it are everywhere. According to you, Hitler is about to attempt the ultimate blasphemy. He wants to destroy the seed of Abraham, the people whom God chose to fulfill His providential design. When the heathen take God's people for slaves or shed their blood, 'the day of the LORD is at hand, and as destruction from the Almighty shall it come.'

"Meanwhile, for the first time in two thousand years, there may be a new nation of Israel, a new Zion -- perhaps even a new Temple. If I were a Nazi, I would worry. The Book of Joel begins with a prophesy: heathens will inflict terrible woes on the people of Israel. 'And they have cast lots for my people; and have given a boy for an harlot; and have sold a girl for wine, that they might drink.' However, the Lord promises, 'But I will remove far off from you the northern army, and will drive him into a land barren and desolate, with his face toward the east sea, and his hinder part toward the utmost ocean, and his stink shall come, and his ill savour shall come up.' Hitler must make sure that this text doesn't refer to him."

"How?" said Marta.

"Well, Joel prophesies: 'The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD is come. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD has said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call.'"

"Can you interpret that?" said Marta.

"If I really wanted to understand it, as a Quaker, I would take it to mean: Receive God in your heart and ask for forgiveness. However, I suspect that the Nazis read it much more literally."

"What do you mean?"

"I think they want to utter the Lord's true name in Jehosaphat so that they can be counted among the remnant that is saved, despite the evil that they plan to do. The true name of the Lord is the secret word sought by kabbalists, and they believe that they can generate it."

"How?"

"With a machine that's probably stored in the Valley of Kidron."

"Then let's go," said Marta.

They decided to travel as Armenian clergy, using costumes supplied by Marta's friends in the monastery. Madison became a priest in a false beard; Marta, an old and modest nun. Thus disguised, they walked past the Wailing Wall, where Orthodox men still wept for the destruction of the Temple, and past the gleaming Dome of the Rock, where Muslims in long robes and skull caps waited patiently to see Mohammed's beard. From the ramparts of the city's east wall, they could look down on the Valley of Kidron.

Although it was immediately adjacent to the city, the valley was unpopulated, a dry ravine between Temple Mount and the Mount of Olives. Two roads ran through it, parallel to the city walls. Between these roads and throughout the valley, tombs and mausolea were littered like shells on a beach. Madison knew that for centuries people had wanted to be buried in Jehosaphat, so that they might stand at the front of the line when God came to judge mankind. The tombs ranged from small gravestones to elaborate marble structures. In many cases, rough niches had been cut out of the valley wall, leaving exposed stone which was then finished into temples or urns. A few tourists scrambled over the marble relics, and pilgrims searched for the mausolea of St. James and Zechariah.

"I would guess," Madison muttered, "that there's a nest of Nazis inside one of those monuments."

Several Arabs stood nearby; two of them seemed to be watching the odd pair of Armenians closely. Marta moved Madison on. Once they were safely back inside the monastery, she said, "The Germans probably hide during the day. But we could sneak around after dark and try to find them."

So they napped in separate rooms, ate food brought to them on trays, and returned to the Wailing Wall at dusk, dressed once

more in clerical disguises. Since the curfew was still in force, they moved furtively; but most police units seemed to have been deployed in Arab areas. They exited the Old City by way of the Dung Gate, using a road that wound through Kidron Valley. They left the road immediately and picked their way along the steep, gravelly hillside, glad for the camouflage that their dark costumes afforded.

And so they scrambled over rocks and snuck through groves beneath the crenellated walls, as a sickle moon rose over the Mount of Olives and set over King David's city. As far as they could tell, they were the only live human beings in the Valley, where thousands of the dead awaited judgment. After a long while, they sat on a rock near the Golden Gate to reconsider their plan. Madison was about to explain that Jews expected the Messiah to enter Jerusalem through the door behind them, even though it had been walled up for centuries; and that Jesus had actually passed through this gate on Palm Sunday. But before he could say anything, Marta pointed to an ambulance that purred along Shiloah Road at no more than ten miles per hour.

It bore the Star of David. Madison whispered, "That could be a genuine Hagganah ambulance."

"Then why would it drive so slowly through Kidron at four in the morning?"

It stopped rather close by. The back doors opened, and out jumped six black-clad men with submachine guns. Six more had materialized at the side of the road. The two groups shook hands and slapped backs briefly, as if they knew each other well. Then the six from the truck disappeared onto the hillside, and the six from the road climbed aboard the ambulance, which pulled away quietly. Marta said, "Changing the guard."

She and Madison crept gingerly toward the spot where the vehicle had parked. One of them kicked a stone which rolled noisily toward the bottom of the valley. Marta stopped and whispered, "Too dangerous. We can't handle six commandos."

Instead, they climbed back to the base of the wall and walked to Dung Gate. As the sun first touched the golden Dome of the Rock, they entered the Armenian Quarter, whose gates were just opening.

They talked in the kitchen where the doctor had treated their

wounds. Madison said, "Why don't we alert the British -- get them to raid Kidron?"

"Because then they would control St.-Germain's machinery. Who's to say that they wouldn't use it?"

Madison accepted her point. On his own, he would have trusted His Majesty's Government, but he could understand Marta's reluctance after her experience in an English prison. "Well, how about the mainstream Jewish organization, Hagganah? The basis of all this occult stuff is Kabbalah, so it belongs to the Jews by right. I even promised Nathan that I'd protect the secret Hebrew texts."

Marta took a moment to reply. "I have no quarrel with Hagganah," she said. "They're socialists, which I like; and, as an Armenian, I sympathize with the Jews. They haven't really hurt anyone for a couple of thousand years. But now they're about to get their own country. Once that happens, they'll be just like everyone else, with economic interests, territorial ambitions. Why should we give them awesome power?"

"I assume," said Madison, "that even if the U.S.A. had a competent espionage outfit around here, you wouldn't want *my* country to capture St.-Germain's treasure."

"That's a safe assumption."

"Can we seize it ourselves, somehow?"

"I doubt it," said Marta. "We've gotten away with murder a few times, you and I; but you can't push your luck. Six or more SS agents in their own lair -- that's not a job for us."

"I have an idea," said Madison.

"Yes?"

"Let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech."

"What are you talking about?"

"I'm quoting the Babel story from the Book of Genesis. What happens when a group of prideful men collect more knowledge than they can safely possess? Their knowledge must be divided, distributed, confounded."

"Do you mean," said Marta, "that we should alert *everyone* about the Nazi activities in Kidron?"

"Exactly."

"So that all their enemies will show up at the same time --"

“That’s right, and then, as God tells Joel” -- Madison searched the Bible for the correct passage -- “Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles; Prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near; let them come up: Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruninghooks into spears. ... Let the heathen be wakened, and come unto Jehosaphat.”