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THE AMAZING NEW NOVEL ABOUT STEPHEN DAIN,
INTERNATIONAL DETECTIVE—THE MAN WHO TAKES
OVER WHERE THE SUPER-SPIES LEAVE OFF!

BY ROBERT SHECKLEY

DEAD

RUN



BAIT

STEPHEN DAIN swung the MG on to the road to Paris. Somewhere in the crowded city his prey lurked, dangerous as a wounded animal in the jungle. It must be lured into the open. The only bait he had, Dain thought, was the girl.

THE GIRL looked at Dain's hands on the wheel. She knew that tonight they would go to bed together. The astonishing sexuality of a sports car in motion had set it off. What would come after, danger, betrayal, torture, even death, she preferred not to think about. One thing at a time . . .

Sinister, voluptuous, tingling with excitement,
the new **STEPHEN DAIN**—

DEAD RUN

Also by Robert Sheckley

 CALIBRE .50

 Published by Bantam Books

DEAD RUN

A STEPHEN DAIN MYSTERY
BY ROBERT SHECKLEY

BANTAM BOOKS



NEW YORK

DEAD RUN

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FOR DICK ROBERTS

CHAPTER I

HE STOPPED when he saw the ambulance, a tall and stately old machine painted green and gray, with discreet side curtains and a uniformed driver at the wheel, parked with two wheels straddling the curb on a narrow alley off Bolton Lane. It was magnificently respectable, that antique Rolls-Royce with its purring engine; more respectable than the driver, down whose beefy red face a trickle of sweat poured from under a blue uniform cap, to lose itself in a tight white collar. That was nearly noteworthy in itself; a trickle of sweat on a chilly London morning, with the sun hidden behind a bank of racing gray clouds. Carlos decided to watch.

Two uniformed attendants brought down the sick man; he seemed very sick indeed, with his face the color of lead and his eyes rolling in their sockets like blue marbles in a child's toy. The attendants supported him, and a third walked in front carrying the man's briefcase. They brought him to-

ward the ambulance, almost carrying him, and his legs bent foolishly beneath him like the legs of a drunk or a drug user.

Carlos watched in idle fascination. Sickness interested him; he was mildly inclined toward hypochondria. During the long watches aboard ship, he sometimes imagined himself catching some new and unheard-of disease. Then the great men of the Ford or Rockefeller Foundations would want to study him. The disease would not hurt; it would be a slow and mysterious thing, quite unknown to science. They would give him a private room in a great white hospital in New York, let him have anything he wanted, and three times a week they would take samples of blood, urine and saliva, and ask him questions: How did he feel? What, exactly, were his sensations, his state of mind, his reactions?

"Now then, move along now," the foremost attendant said. "No reason to stand here and gawk. Move along, move along."

Carlos had watched many ambulances in his time, and had observed ambulance attendants of various nationalities. Invariably they were incurious and uncaring, indifferent to the crowd around them as long as it didn't interfere with their work. The idea of an ambulance man asking him, one of four spectators, to move along, was interesting. Perhaps the patient's disease was contagious?

"Move along," the attendant repeated. "Give the poor chap a chance to breathe."

The other spectators left. Carlos was on the point of leaving, also; then he looked at the ambulance driver. The man was staring at him, and anxiety was apparent on his sweating red face. Carlos looked again at the sick man, now being lifted into the back of the ambulance. In those glazed blue eyes he thought he recognized something he had seen often, in a business way; the sick inward stare of a man with an overdose of narcotics.

"I told you to clear out," an attendant said. He was a big man, standing head and shoulders taller than Carlos, the briefcase gripped tightly in his right hand, his left raised to strike. "Get out of here!"

Then Carlos knew what was going on. He knew it, even without the sick man, making a despairing half turn, croaking, "Listen, get somebody . . ."

Two attendants pushed him into the ambulance. The man with the briefcase swung his fist at Carlos, and at the same

time there was a wink of blued steel from the direction of the driver.

Carlos ducked under the attendant's clumsy blow and jabbed him neatly in the stomach, a knifeman's thrust without the knife. The man doubled over, gasping, and the briefcase dropped from his hand. Carlos scooped it up, knowing that it had to contain something valuable. Jewels, perhaps? Currency? Heroin?

The attendants dropped the sick man and came after him. Carlos was already twenty yards down the street, sprinting hard, the briefcase clutched to his chest, a huge grin on his face. Two men lumbered behind him, but he ran three steps for their one, down the deserted early morning streets, into a warren of twisting alleys near London Dock.

He shook them off as he had shaken off police in Tampico and Vera Cruz. No man with excess meat on his bones could catch him. Hunger and work had pared him down to a runner's condition, heavy lifting had expanded his lungs. He outran the attendants with ease, slowed to a rapid walk on Trench Street, and returned to his boarding house.

Now he carried the briefcase hidden under his draped overcoat. He was still grinning. There must be riches inside, for past a doubt he had interferred with a carefully planned robbery. A beautiful robbery! But they had only themselves to blame. It took steady nerves for that sort of thing, and those men had not been steady.

CHAPTER 2

SHE WAS SLEEPY, and more than a little indignant at the treatment she had received. No amount of British good manners could make up for that. They were very polite, all of them, but they wouldn't let her go back to her hotel. She reached into her purse for a cigarette, and found only an empty pack. That did it. She got to her feet and walked to the sergeant's desk.

"Sergeant, will you please take my statement now?"

"I'm very sorry, Miss Bellows, I couldn't do that."

She contained the explosion she could feel building in her. "Just *why* couldn't you do that?"

The sergeant began telling her some nonsense about the division of duties in the London Constabulary. It confirmed all her ideas of the stupidity of officialdom. When she had gone to Mexico for her divorce, the officials had been just as devastatingly polite, just as implacably unreasonable. They had told her, no, madam, the matter has been represented to you wrongly. Perhaps in the border towns they grant an immediate decree. But here in Morales, in the Federal District . . .

Still, she had succeeded at last in getting her divorce, and past a doubt she would succeed soon in making her statement to the police and being allowed to leave. Really, it was so simple. She had witnessed a robbery. Just that. She had seen it from the window of her hotel room in the gray hours of dawn, while she had been smoking a cigarette alone with her insomnia. An ambulance had arrived in the street below, and two attendants had brought down the patient. Then a badly dressed little man had appeared, argued with one of the attendants, snatched a briefcase and run away. She had come down as soon as she could. Ambulance and patient were gone. Finding a use for her insomnia for once, and filled with an absurd sense of civic virtue, she had asked directions to the nearest station house, had gone there and told what she had seen.

They had been very solicitous at first. The sergeant had offered her tea. A lieutenant named Davis had started to take down her statement, just as it would have been done in the States. Then, halfway through, Davis had begun his incomprehensible behavior.

"Well then, who *is* going to take my statement?"

"The right person is on his way, Miss Bellowes."

"How long will that take?"

"He should be here momentarily."

The right person! My God, these British and their sense of propriety! When Lieutenant Davis had heard the address of the robbery, he had stopped, consulted a map, thumbed through a list on the sergeant's desk, then made a telephone call. To the right person . . . Well, his sense of propriety hadn't stopped him from staring covertly at her legs. They were very good legs; all of her was proportioned nicely, in what she considered a neat imitation of a woman. She had a sweep of blonde hair the color of dark honey. It framed and softened her square, hard, attractive face with its aggressive jaw and bitter, beautiful lips. Her eyes were blue and wary, the hopeful, disillusioned eyes of an unbeliever.

Now there was movement at the station-house door. Apparently the right person had arrived. He walked directly to her.

"Miss Bellows? I'm Stephen Dain. I'm very sorry you had to wait. If you'll come this way, I think we can use the lieutenant's office."

He was tall and dark-haired, quite attractive in an aquiline sort of way. She rose and followed him. It seemed odd that the right man, from his accent, was an American. She asked for identification and he showed her, very briefly, a paper with an illegible signature, stating that Stephen Dain was on assignment with the Central Intelligence Agency for an indefinite period of time. The paper did not say what section or department he was working with, nor did it state the purpose of his assignment.

Fifteen minutes later Dain had taken down her statement, and five minutes after that she was looking at photographs of numerous villainous-looking men in an attempt to identify the thief. No one in the police files looked very much like him. Then, strangely enough, Dain asked her to identify the ambulance men. That interested her. It made the whole thing sound like a deliciously complicated conspiracy. She was unable to find their photographs, and Dain asked her to describe, to the best of her ability, the appearance of the thief.

"He was short," she told Dain, "badly dressed, either tanned or dark-skinned. He looked Latin, or perhaps Asiatic." She thought for a moment. "I think his nose was rather large. And he was grinning when he ran with the briefcase."

"I imagine he was," Dain said.

"What did he steal?"

"We aren't quite sure yet."

She chose to ignore the tactful evasion. "You mean you prefer not to tell me?"

Dain smiled at her and shrugged his shoulders. That amused her for a moment. This Stephen Dain was so perfectly the young government man whose history was written bold upon his forehead. In college, he must have been an excellent student, especially in politics and languages. And yet, despite his respectable intellectual achievements, he was surely a he-man on the popular FBI model—quick with his fists, adept at weapons, powerful despite his lean frame. And as though this weren't enough, Dain was obviously discreet, close-mouthed, modest, and even ironic! What a monolithic spectacle! What a terror! She had always

known that men of this sort must exist, just as idiots and dwarfs must exist; but that didn't diminish her surprise at being faced with one.

"Could you tell me," she asked, "why the London police felt it necessary to call in an American CIA man on this robbery?"

"An American was robbed," Dain told her.

She was growing angry. He must think she was a child, to give out a story like that. At times it was flattering to be considered a child; but not now.

"Mr. Dain, you are being deliberately evasive about this whole thing. What's the big mystery?"

"No mystery at all," Dain said. He stood up. "I think that's all we need you for at the moment, Miss Bellows. Could we contact you later to look at some Interpol photographs?"

"I don't see why I should be bothered. There were other people in the street. Someone else must have gotten a look at your thief."

"We've talked to several people who were in the vicinity," Dain said. "But they had all left before the actual robbery took place. None of them really noticed the thief."

"That makes me an important witness."

Dain nodded.

"But to an unimportant crime."

Dain nodded again, not willingly.

She smiled at him very pleasantly. "You know the name of my hotel, Mr. Dain. I'll probably be there for a day or two longer."

She turned quickly and left, not quite content with her exit line.

CHAPTER 3

HE WAS a large man in his mid-fifties, dressed in a Saville Row suit and a quiet necktie. By sheer force of personality he managed to make that suit look like a monument to an effete and doomed way of life. When in England, he wore Saville Row as a silent, almost incomprehensible insult to the West. His face was broad and intelligent, but with no sign of a suspect intellectualism. His fingers were long for

a man of his build, and almost sensitive; he made them look stumpier by clipping the nails straight across. He sat across the desk from the ambulance man, his hands folded quietly in front of him, his large head immobile on its thick neck, his eyes cast down. In his youth he had learned the value of words; more recently he had discovered the huge value of silence. He let the silence swell now as the head ambulance attendant finished his story.

"That's exactly how it happened, Mr. Bardieff. It was so unexpected—so irrational—"

Bardieff smiled briefly. He had his own theories about the nature of the irrational.

"We chased him, of course, but the man was too quick. After losing contact, we thought it best—"

"You *thought*?" Bardieff asked, and noted the reaction. It was old habit with him to touch chords that evoked fear. The proper fear in others could mean security for oneself.

"I am very sorry, Mr. Bardieff."

"Your sorrow does not concern me. Would any of you recognize the man if you saw him again?"

They nodded swiftly, scenting a reprieve.

"Go to the file room. Mary will show you the photographs. See if he is among them. And send Czettner in."

Bardieff smoked half a cigarette. Then Czettner entered with the air of a surgeon dispassionately ready to perform an autopsy. Czettner was young, dedicated absolutely, and therefore lacking in a certain flexibility. He was good-looking—really a handsome young man—but the impression he gave was of a rigid asexuality. His cold pleasure lay in abstractions, plans, schemes, ideas, concepts, anything that could be divorced from flesh and blood. The ambulance and the hypodermic needle had been his device. He had counted on qualities he had read about in books; the phlegmatic disposition of British crowds, the acceptance of an ambulance anywhere, at any time at all. Czettner's plans were always of the nature of set-pieces. Their usual success had to be ascribed, in the final analysis, to man's indifference to artificialities thrust into his environment.

Czettner heard about the capture and subsequent loss of the briefcase with a calmness that bordered on indifference. His bent was statistical, he didn't allow himself to worry about momentary loss or gain. Still, he agreed with Bardieff that the contents of the briefcase had an importance in their own right.

"I have a feeling," Bardieff said, "that we will not find the

man's photograph." He smiled faintly, remembering Czettner's distaste for intuitions. "Assuming this to be the case, what do you propose to do?"

Czettner considered. "The man will have to dispose of the contents. There are only a few markets for such goods. We will watch for the man, and keep an even closer watch on the markets."

"Very good," Bardieff said. "What do you think of our chances?"

"The success or failure of any one enterprise—"

"No, no," Bardieff said. "We must not think in such long terms, at least not at the moment. The briefcase is important. Do you think you can recover it?"

"Yes," Czettner said.

"What makes you think so?"

"I rely on the predictable stupidity of human beings."

"Fine," Bardieff said. "Can you start immediately?"

Czettner rose and left the room without a word. He too had learned the value of silence. Bardieff took out a handkerchief and mopped his forehead. He had helped shape the Czettners of the new world—historical necessity had called for the birth of a generation of Czettners. But he couldn't help being uncomfortable in their presense.

CHAPTER 4

LOCKED in the privacy of his room, Carlos put the briefcase on the nightstand, lighted a cigarette and lay back luxuriously on the bed. Morning sunlight filtered through the dust on his window, and the briefcase glowed a deep cordovan. He admired the brass fittings; their yellow wink hinted at riches beneath the shining leather. For the moment, the hint was enough. Later, the contents of the briefcase would have to be converted, through dangerous and devious channels, into currency. God alone knew where that path would lead him. A briefcase worth the services of four men and an ambulance must contain riches indeed; jewels, platinum, uncut heroin. . .

But for the moment, he could be rich without opening the briefcase, lying on an unmade bed in a sailor's boarding-

house with twenty pounds six shillings in his pocket. Yes, for the moment he *was* rich. It was worth remembering.

Carlos finished the cigarette at his leisure, then examined the briefcase. It was locked; he nodded approvingly. He tried to slit the leather with his pocket knife, and encountered a sheet of steel beneath the cordovan. Better and better! A man doesn't buy a briefcase like that in order to transport his lunch and the morning paper.

He turned to the lock. It was small but very strong, of a better steel than the blade of his knife. He cut back the leather and saw that the flanges of the lock were welded into the steel body of the briefcase. Excellent. From his jacket pocket he took an oilskin package which he had found useful in many parts of the world. He removed two slender curved picks and went to work on the lock with the delicacy of a man dissecting a butterfly.

No delicacy sufficed for that lock. It was a superior creation, as was proper on a briefcase containing great riches. Carlos cut away the rest of the leather, exposing the bright steel case. He studied it carefully, turning it in the light so that he could examine the seam where the two halves came together. From his oilskin case he took a small chisel and placed it against the seam. He hammered with a heavy seaman's shoe, then looked. He had barely dented the metal. The seam overlapped. There was no place to gain leverage.

Carlos lighted another cigarette and scowled at the briefcase. His good humor had vanished. They had gone too far, the makers of this little safe. The damned thing looked as though it might have to be opened with a cutting torch; and if he did that, heat might spoil the contents.

He shook the case and heard a faint dry rattle within it. Packets of heroin? Banknotes? He put the briefcase on the bed and tried to think.

He needed help in order to open the damned thing. Someone with hammers, big chisels, perhaps even a cutting torch. But in all of England, there was only one man he knew; John Adelgate, to whom he sold the packets of marijuana and heroin which he smuggled across from Mexico. Adelgate had not cheated him yet; perhaps he could be trusted. But what share would he want simply for opening the briefcase? And could he be sure that the briefcase would be opened in his presense? If not, part of the contents could easily be removed; or the entire thing, if it proved valuable enough. Here in Europe, Carlos had no friends. To trust Adelgate

with a few packets of heroin was one thing; but to give him a metal briefcase worth at least the services of four men and an ambulance . . .

No, by God, it was too big a risk! He had dreamed of this moment too long to entrust it now to a cold, fish-faced stranger. Ever since he had left his village and gone to Puerto Vallarte to work on the fishing boats—longer than that, since the time when he was a little boy playing in the dust of Santa Marta de la Mesa—he had dreamed of a time when he would have riches in his hand, in his own hand, fabulous wealth, thousands of dollars, perhaps tens of thousands. He had feasted on that dream during the years of cutting sugar cane on the lands of the rich man from Mexico City, and afterwards, working on the fishing boats of Puerto Vallarte, and still later, stoker, oiler, steward, on a succession of ships from Acapulco and Vera Cruz to many ports of the world, the dream had sustained him. That vision of independent wealth had helped him live through the filth of the world. Other men had their God, a remote stranger who saw everything and did nothing; Carlos had his dream.

The wealth which buys freedom had obsessed him. Men from the North had told him, *work hard, Carlos, save, improve yourself*. But a thousand years of thrift would not be long enough for a man of Santa Marta de la Mesa to become like the Americans of the North. Communists on board ship had talked to him with great earnestness: *Work for the people, Carlos. Remember Mexico's great revolutionary history. Fight for the day when all wealth, and all the means of wealth, shall be distributed equally*. They had talked well, those men, but they had not moved him. Very well to talk of the Mexican Revolution; but in Santa Marta, two babies out of three died soon after birth; and when the cane was cut and the money spent, the men of his village lounged in front of the cantina and tied their rope belts tighter. Perhaps in Russia they had indeed learned to share all the wealth; but if this were so, the Russians were a breed of men unlike any other men Carlos had seen on the face of the earth. No, the Communists could be right, but a prudent man didn't care to wait so long. Better to get rich now, and leave the Americans and the Russians to argue their incredible theories of human destiny.

Carlos turned again to the briefcase and studied it with fierce concentration. His forehead was creased, and his eyes glowed beneath the shielding frontal bone of his brow. His wide lips were pursed in concentration. He ran a calloused forefinger around the rim of the briefcase, then lightly ca-

ressed the welded flanges of the lock. Truly good workmanship would have driven rivets in addition to the weld. He studied the weld with care, noting, on one side, tiny, almost invisible air bubbles.

Kneeling on the floor, he braced the briefcase against an angle of floor and wall, and positioned the chisel against the welded flange. After a preliminary tap, he drove down hard with the shoe, then studied the effect. Nothing visible. He set the chisel at a corner of the flange and chopped hard with the shoe. From the floor below came a stern tapping on the water pipe. An outraged voice whined, "'Ere now, it's seven-thirty in the morning!"

Carlos glanced to the bed where his knife lay folded. Then he struck against the flange three more times, with great precision.

"What in hell's the matter with you? Bloody lunatic!"

With the fourth blow, the flange and lock sheered neatly off the briefcase. A little more work with the chisel allowed him to pry the tongue off. The briefcase opened slightly.

Moving to the bed, Carlos opened the hinged top and shook out the contents. Within, he found an opened packet of Woodbines and a large brown Manila envelope. The envelope was sealed; stamped in red on both sides were the words, "Top Secret."

That was unpleasant. The riches promised by the beautiful briefcase and the four men and the ambulance were already receding from view. Top Secret! He opened the envelope quickly, praying that it might still contain something of value. Inside was another brown envelope, slightly smaller, also marked "Top Secret." This one had an address: American Strategic Planning Board, 4 Carlyle Street, London, S.W. 3. Carlos ripped the envelope open, shuffled hastily through the papers inside and dropped them. His disappointment was as painful as a knife-thrust in the side. He wanted to cry, to hit his head against the wall, and only the fear of his complaining neighbor downstairs stopped him. After all the danger, the quickly summoned resolution, the magnificently performed action, after all the hope and all the promise, what did he have? A handful of American secrets! What a fool he had been to dream! The prize was gone, and he was left now only with the danger.

Still, even in his acutest moment of disappointment, resolution did not fail him. The briefcase had to be disposed of. As for the papers—it would probably be best to burn them and pretend they had never existed. Only a fool

involved himself with a government and its secrets. And Carlos was no fool.

He gathered the papers together and glanced through them. They didn't seem to say very much, these Top Secrets. One page appeared to be a map of some kind; but nothing identified the land or the ocean, no towns were labelled, there was nothing except a neat pen tracing of what looked like a coastline. Some little black dots were scattered around the map, little dots with numbers. Another page contained references for the numbers. But the references were all in groups of five-letter words, of no language he had ever heard of. A code? Certainly a code. There were more pages filled with these five-letter groups, and more pages of numbers, many numbers, some extremely big, some small, all with lettered references. This American Top Secret, Carlos thought, contained many little secrets.

Very well, he told himself. destroy the papers and forget the matter. He took a box of matches from his pocket and removed a single match. Then he began cleaning his nails with it.

Perhaps he shouldn't be hasty. True, the briefcase hadn't contained jewels, platinum, heroin, dollars, or any of the other recognized forms of wealth. But it had contained a Top Secret. Someone had thought enough of that secret to hire four men and an ambulance. Just to perform the robbery must have cost someone several hundred dollars. What could this secret be worth? A thousand dollars? Ten thousand dollars? Were they worth anything, these pages written in code?

He slapped his knee impatiently. Of course they were worth something! Governments were always buying secrets from spies, that was well-known. And these secrets, twice stolen, should be worth more than most. In his anger at the lack of readily negotiable wealth in the briefcase, he had nearly allowed a potentially greater wealth to slip away. Secrets were valuable! And American secrets must be very valuable, since America was so rich a country. Ten thousand dollars? These secrets might be worth twenty or even thirty thousand!

The sensation of wealth had returned to him, and with it a sense of well-being. Soon there would be an end to meaningless work for too little money, to bad food and ugly women, to pointless existence among cold aliens. He would get money for the Top Secret, and with that money he would buy a farm in Australia, as far as he could get from America,

Mexico, and Russia. He would pay for his farm in cash outright, and call no man his master.

But how was he going to convert the Top Secret into money?

That, he conceded, might be difficult. But the first step was obvious. He would go to John Adelgate, who disposed of anything of value. Doubtless he would have to haggle with Adelgate over a price—but at least there would be a price.

He put the papers into the inside pocket of his jacket and hid the briefcase under his mattress. It was perfectly safe there; no one made up a room in this boardinghouse until the guest had signed out. He left at once, armed with his knife and his enthusiasm, and possessed of a nearly invincible ignorance as to what might lie ahead.

CHAPTER 5

"ALL RIGHT," said Susan Bellows. "I've looked through about ten thousand of your smudgy photographs. What next?"

"That's it," Dain said. "These Interpol photos are copied from police files all over Europe. Unless you've made a mistake, his picture isn't on file with any of the European police."

"I haven't made any mistake."

"You're sure?"

"Of course." But as she said it, she tried to find the thief's image in her mind. It lay there, blurred but distinct, indescribable except in generalities—brown or tanned complexion, large nose, flat lips, bright dark eyes, black hair, a certain sureness about his bearing, but something a little desperate in that sureness. As she concentrated on it, the picture became dimmer; it wasn't really a picture, it was a key, waiting for the three-dimensional representation to initiate the process of recognition.

"I'd know him," Susan said. "Now what?"

"Now," Dain said, "I'd like to buy you a drink."

"That's an offer I hardly ever refuse."

In a back room of the George V, they sat over squat glasses of Scotch set on a gleaming mahogany table. The dusky

twilight of the place invited confidences; they exchanged none. Dain seemed withdrawn into himself, morose, almost apathetic. His hands were quiet, and he gave the impression of being completely at ease. But Susan had the impression that this air of relaxation was not natural; it seemed to be imposed upon him, a man's idea of how he should react under stress.

She asked, "What will you do now?"

"Try to find him."

"You don't even know what he looks like."

"It isn't always necessary."

She shook her head dubiously. Perhaps he knew what he was talking about; but to find one faceless man of Latin complexion in all of Europe . . .

"What about you?" Dain asked.

"I shall continue my trip. Paris, Geneva, Vienna, Florence . . ."

"It sounds like fun," Dain said.

"It's just great. Dain, aren't you going to tell me what was in that briefcase?"

"No."

"I can make a pretty good guess, you know."

"That's your concern."

"What if I talk about it?"

"There's nothing I can do about it."

She didn't like his answer, and she resented being written off. After all, she was the only real witness to the theft. She pouted over her drink—pouting was a thing she could do prettily—and looked up at Dain again.

"Isn't there any way I could help?"

Dain straightened in his chair. "There is, of course."

"Well then?"

"You wouldn't like it. It would disrupt your travel plans."

"To hell with my travel plans. Chasing a thief sounds much more exciting than walking through art galleries."

"It could be dangerous."

"Then by all means, include me in."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes. On condition that you tell me what was inside that precious briefcase. You know, we'll be colleagues, intrepid hunters of the desperate criminal. It wouldn't be fair if you didn't tell me."

Dain nodded. "The briefcase contained an envelope marked top secret."

"And inside the envelope?"

"There was a top secret document."

"Dain, you aren't being fair! What was the document about?"

"I haven't been told."

"But it was important?"

"Extremely important."

"I don't see how we have any chance of recovering it," Susan said. "If the Soviets have it, can't it be sent to Moscow by diplomatic pouch?"

"That and other ways. But we're quite sure the Soviets don't have it. Those ambulance men were in Russian employ. The papers were stolen from them."

"I see," Susan said slowly. "But who could have stolen them? And why?"

"We have no way of knowing. But since we don't have the thief's face anywhere on file, it's reasonable to assume that he's new at the game. Either he's a free-lance spy trying to break in, or he's employed by some other government. The first seems more probable, under the circumstances. If so, he'll try to sell the plans."

"Can he get much for them?"

"A great deal," Dain said. "But not easily. Dealing in this sort of merchandise is tricky. We'll be lucky if we find him before someone kills him."

Dain lighted a cigarette and thought for a moment. "If he is an amateur at this, then he's bound to make some mistakes. He might get away with a few, but there's very little margin for error in the espionage field. If he's smart and lucky, he'll contact us first and offer to sell the papers back."

"And if he contacts the Russians?"

Dain shrugged. "He might get a great deal of money. But they never pay for what they can take."

"I see," Susan said. "All right. What do we do now?"

"Nothing. We wait for something to happen."

"That might take a long time."

"Yes, it might."

"Won't we get bored?"

She looked directly at Dain, and was a little shocked at the impact of his direct, grayish-green eyes. He was smiling faintly, very controlled. She wasn't sure if she liked it. He was probably the sort of man who thought he knew so damned much, who gave away nothing.

"We'll try not to be bored," Dain said. The smile he gave her had a definite hint of lechery. She frowned automatically, thinking that this might be fun.

CHAPTER 6

BINGHAM ROW, at its upper end, fought mightily for respectability. The lower end was beyond redemption, bordering, as it did, on the docks, and catering cheerfully to sailors of fifty nationalities and half a dozen tastes. But Upper Bingham Row was inhabited by ship's chandlers, chemists, greengrocers, and the like, who turned their faces resolutely and a little desperately away from the river, toward the apartments of clerks and the semidetached homes of family men. Passionately Upper Bingham Row desired to join the bourgeoisie; and, in the proper light, succeeded. None on that narrow battlefield street fought so hard as John Adelgate of Adelgate's.

Carlos came to Adelgate's with hope in his heart and secret papers in his pocket. He entered the dim little furniture store, and within seconds Adelgate himself appeared, small and moist like a man who has been reincarnated from a frog, with thin hair combed straight across a round head, with narrow forehead and small, supercilious nose, hands folded across a respectable little paunch, damp, knobby fingers interlocked, rosebud mouth pursed somewhere between genteel disapproval and businesslike desire. Conflict raged behind Adelgate's placid appearance. Cunning little Respectability met the brute Avarice daily in a twenty-round battle. It was an overweight match, the burly defending champion far and away the favorite; but an interesting struggle was guaranteed all the same. Decision: an uneasy compromise, formed and re-formed every day, expressed by defiant little mottos which crept across Mr. Adelgate's mind during the business hours. Selling heroin calls for a certain ingenuity in the construction of slogans:

No worse than selling booze, is it?

Strong drink is habit-forming, too; so it's just a question of what's legal.

Users don't get violent like drinkers. Very quiet bunch, users.

Nothing deadly about it. Just withdrawal that's dangerous. And that's the fault of society.

People need their bit of fun. The stuff does what alcohol promises.

Chinese used to smoke opium like we down a pint; and just consider the Ming dynasty!

With these homely sayings, Mr. Adelgate tried to force friendship between nervous little Respectability and the insensate brute Avarice. He considered himself a monument to the success of this project.

Adelgate said, "Well now, Mr. Zechillia! And how are you today?"

"Very fine," Carlos said. Since he had left his village, no one had succeeded in pronouncing his last name correctly. He had learned to recognize himself in many foreign approximations, none of them very close to the name he had been given in Santa Marta.

"And how are you, Mr. Adelgate?"

Adelgate had leaned forward somewhat anxiously to hear the reply. That was another disadvantage under which Carlos labored. He had grown up thinking that he spoke Spanish. But when, in his teens, he had journeyed to Puerto Vallarta, he had learned that the rest of Mexico didn't consider his language Spanish at all. It was a dialect, people told him, one of the tongues of the Aztecs, interspersed with mispronounced Spanish words. That had been a shock. At the age of sixteen he'd had to learn what the man of Mexico City and Vera Cruz called Spanish. On board ship he had assimilated English with fair thoroughness. Any Spanish-American could understand his English. But foreigners leaned forward anxiously when he spoke, aimed an ear at him, asked him to repeat words, to speak a little slower please. Some foreigners didn't understand his English at all, couldn't figure out what he was saying. He could express himself properly only in his dialect; and he would die rather than return to Santa Marta. He understood almost everything which a world of aliens said to him, but only a protracted acquaintance gave them the ability to understand him.

"Won't you come in the back, Mr. Zechillia, and have some tea?"

"Thank you very much." Carlos had learned to stomach the stuff. It was a minor ordeal through which one passed in order to conduct business.

"There we are, now. Is that chair comfortable? *Very good.* Pleasant journey across, Mr. Zechillia?"

At least this time he hadn't offered any of those things with the ugly name: scones.

“Extremely glad to hear it, Mr. Zechillia. The weather here has been somewhat drier than usual. We are expecting a lovely summer. At least, we have our hopes.”

It rained enough in this city to irrigate all of Mexico.

“Now then, sir, I expect you have a little business you’d like to attend?”

“I have something to sell.” Although naturally ceremonious, the conventions of a dozen countries and a dozen Mr. Adelgates were too much for Carlos.

“Of course, Mr. Zechillia. I’m happy to say that the price per gram has stayed constant during your absence. If you will allow me to take out the scales—”

“No, Mr. Adelgate. It is not heroin.”

Adelgate smiled. Jewels or platinum presented less of a problem to a vigilante conscience.

“It is a strange thing; but valuable, I think,” Carlos said to the forward-leaning Adelgate. Then, speaking slowly and with much attention to his enunciation, which remained unremittingly Aztec, he told the story of the ambulance men and the Top Secret.

Mr. Adelgate listened; and not so much a battle as a skirmish took place in his mind. Stolen plans! How colorful! And it was not as though they were British plans. These belonged to the Americans, who, although allies, were not even in the Commonwealth. For a moment, Adelgate flirted with the romantic notion of acting as a middleman in this matter. But good common sense brought him to reason at once.

“Please, Mr. Zechillia, say no more. I would be less than truthful if I didn’t tell you that I have no experience in matters of this sort. No experience whatsoever.”

“You will not sell them for me?”

“My dear fellow, I have no notion whom to sell them to. Not the slightest! It’s an entirely different sort of thing. A different world, you might say, from the world which I inhabit.”

“Different?”

“Of course! Vastly different!” Mr. Adelgate paused. He understood very well his own everyday world of furniture and heroin; it had become a commonplace to him, ethically comparable to a good stiff drink at the corner pub. Users held no mystery for him; they were nothing more than drinkers of an illegal beverage which he sold in handy powdered form. Even jewels and platinum were matter-of-fact items to which an independent man resorted in order to escape

the strictures of socialistic taxation. This was mundane. But what could he say to this foreigner about the romantic newspaper world of spies, plans, documents, secrets? He tried to explain, but embarrassment took hold of Mr. Adelgate. He sounded, he felt, like an Edgar Wallace thriller.

Carlos was not embarrassed, since he never read. He asked firmly, "Are these papers valuable?"

"I suppose they are," Mr. Adelgate said. "Yes, I should certainly think they are."

"I knew it!"

"But my dear fellow, you must still find a buyer."

"That's true," Carlos said, his joy fading in the light of practical necessities. "Someone must buy secrets like these."

"But one never knows who," Mr. Adelgate said.

"Then how do people sell secrets?"

Mr. Adelgate applied his business mind and practical knowledge of the world to the problem. "The buyers must have an organization. Just like any other business. Contact men . . ." He remembered something from the war. "They have men who buy drinks for sailors."

"Do you think if I went to the dockside bars—"

"No, no, that was only during wartime. I don't think they do it any more."

They sat together in silence. Another slippery bit of information swam to the top of Mr. Adelgate's mind.

"There was a fellow in Amsterdam a few years ago, Van Joost I believe his name was, dealt in smuggled diamonds. But one of my customers said he was really a special agent."

Carlos raised both eyebrows. "For whom?"

"I don't believe my customer ever told me."

"It doesn't matter. He is a man who buys secrets?"

"That's what my customer said. Or at least he implied it. Understand, I've never met this Van Joost, I have no idea—"

"Could you give me his address?" Carlos asked.

"I believe I have it here somewhere," Mr. Adelgate said. He began to shuffle through a pile of papers of assorted sizes and colors, rapidly at first, then more slowly. It had just struck him that he should receive some sort of middleman's commission for this service; and at the same time he realized that the raggedly dressed Carlos Zechillia obviously didn't have the price of a commission on him. There were other objections to giving the address. Zechillia was a foreigner, and therefore quite probably untrustworthy when taken from his normal sphere of business. He was an excitable

fellow who might get into trouble; and if that happened, if he fell into the hands of the police, might he not wildly incriminate anyone who had had contact with him?

Adelgate's fingers slowed still further at this thought; but the piece of paper with Van Joost written boldly on it had come to sight. Carlos seized it with a flashing smile. He studied it with care, since he read only with difficulty. Van Joost, 17 De Ruyters Kade, Amsterdam. He would remember it.

"Thank you very much, Mr. Adelgate," Carlos said, rising to his feet. "I am extremely grateful to you. If I am successful, I hope to show my gratitude."

"That's very decent of you. You will be careful?"

"Of course!" Carlos said. "Thank you!"

"Wouldn't want anything to happen to you," Mr. Adelgate said heartily, clapping Carlos on the shoulder.

CHAPTER 7

ANTAEUS, the opponent of Hercules, drew his strength from Mother Earth. Czettner would have liked to emulate that mythic socialistic archetype. But instead, his power came from an intellectual process in which the mind was projected selectively into the probable future. Now, with his plans formed and his orders given, he seemed to expand visibly before Bardieff's eyes. Even his explanations had the faintest note of condescension; the tone of the planner to the mere builder.

"I have sent out the ambulance men," Czettner said, "dressed in ordinary clothing, to four likely areas of London. There is a slight chance they will catch sight of the man. These are the areas I have selected."

Czettner's strong, pale fingers moved decisively to different points on a wall map of London while he explained his reasons for selecting them. Bardieff nodded. He had awakened that morning with a faint headache, a reminder of his old migraine. It intensified his natural distaste for his colleague. With an effort he concentrated.

"The ambulance men agree," Czettner said, "upon the spontaneous nature of the thief's action. Taking into account

all the evidence, I think we can form a reasonable hypothesis about the character of the man."

"And what have you deduced about his character?" Bardieff asked, with wasted irony.

"The man is an asocial romantic, inclined toward a criminal opportunism. The theft arose fortuitously; he saw a chance for gain and seized upon it."

"Unless, of course, he was hired for the job."

"I considered that possibility. It would imply a major leak in our previously tight organization. Since it is the more cumbersome of the two hypotheses, I have discarded it for the moment."

"All right," Bardieff said. "What else?"

"Assuming the correctness of my reasoning, the thief is a man without an organization. He will have to *sell* rather than deliver the papers he has stolen. That complicates his situation. His outlets in London are severely limited."

"He may try to use them anyhow," Bardieff said.

"I thought of that, and put a twenty-four hour watch on all known buyers not connected with us. This is a serious drain on our strength, but only a temporary one. I consider it justified by the seriousness of the event."

"Fine," Bardieff said. "What if he doesn't try to sell the papers in England?"

But Czettner had thought of that, too. He assumed that the thief would soon leave the British Isles. This land of England, he pointed out, was gallingly restrictive to the sale of espionage work. The thief would find this out, if he didn't know it already. He would want the wider scope and close frontiers of the continent. In expectation of this, Czettner had stationed men at key points on the more important exits from the country. The thief had a strong probability, however, of slipping past them unnoticed into France.

"And then?" Bardieff asked.

Czettner smiled subtly. "His apparent advantages on the continent are illusory. We have much greater organizational strength there, and less trouble with police interference. I have already contacted our people preliminary to an expected second phase of the operation."

"You seem to have covered everything," Bardieff said, somewhat sourly.

"To the best of my ability. I have."

After Czettner had left, taking his sanitary schemes with him, Bardieff relaxed in an overstuffed armchair. That morning, the sight of Czettner's white, pure, Grecian face had been

nearly too much to bear. According to his dossier, Czettner did not smoke, drank very lightly, and was not inclined toward promiscuity. Using him as an example, there was really a great deal to be said against virtue. In a man past his twenties, it tended to become a vice.

More and more of late, Bardieff had fallen into the habit of reflection. Certain things never came under his observation; he found no reason to speculate on the immutable future of communism. Alternatives could be left to the fevered imaginations of bourgeois romantics. Instead, Bardieff thought back on his army days, their simplicity and joy in a chaotic world. There had been a fierce pleasure then in the swift spread of Russian influence across Europe in the wake of the Red Army. Bardieff sometimes wished he were still serving with his fellow-officers. Perhaps they had been right, those who had survived the Germans and Stalin, and had stayed in the army. Man's refuge lay in the following of simple orders. *Defend your country.* That was a motto even a clever man could live with. But the difficult and austere task of serving future generations taxed a man's strength and his dialectical ability, unless that man were a Czettner.

And now? The conquest went on, but the countries of the west, forever tottering, refused to fall. They invented new stratagems, retained their pseudo-liberal governments, grouped the forces of left and right around them. Worse yet, they were beginning to make use of dialectics. They were still clumsy at it, they preserved an affection for the un-useful truth—but they were beginning to use that supreme weapon. The end-result, as Bardieff saw it, would be a complete semantic confusion.

And who then would know the truth? Which men would know their own minds? Only the Czettners, those triumphs of the will to conditioning. He wished he could have more affection for the demonstrable wave of the future. To know history, to serve it, that was one thing; but to feel affection for it was another.

He sighed and turned to his work. Later that morning he was told that the thief had been seen at Victoria Station, but had been lost in the crowd. The ambulance men were re-deployed to cover the most likely ports of exit from England.

During the same day, Dain received his first piece of definite information. A witness had come voluntarily to New Scotland Yard, had been interrogated briefly and taken to Dain's temporary office at Central Intelligence. A CID ser-

geant brought in the man's record, which Dain studied quickly. It was followed, fifteen minutes later, by the man himself.

The witness was small and moist, nervous, pudgy, obsequious, and faintly at home in authoritarian surroundings. An odor of furniture polish trailed him and clung affectionately to the chair upon whose edge he sat.

"The fact of the matter is," said Mr. Adelgate, "I considered it my duty to report this matter to the proper authorities. The police have assured me that I will not—that previous indiscretions—"

Dain assured him that his previous indiscretions would not be held against him.

"Well then, sir, I suppose you might as well know that at one time I was engaged in what they call the drug traffic."

Dain raised both eyebrows in an expression of faint surprise.

"I got out of it, of course, as soon as I realized it was wrong. I'm in furniture now."

He looked up hopefully. Dain smiled and indicated that he well knew how anyone could suffer a brief lapse from the strict letter of the law.

"Yes sir. And of course, from time to time people still approach me, foreigners and the like, thinking I'm still in the racket. It's a damnable nuisance, but I can't very well post a sign, can I?"

Dain agreed that such a situation could indeed be an embarrassment, to say nothing of other difficulties.

"That's exactly it, sir! Other difficulties! Criminals, Mr. Dain, enforce their own sort of law. The position of a man like myself is not easy."

Dain could understand that. He offered Mr. Adelgate a cigarette. Adelgate accepted it, wondering if he had set the groundwork of his story properly. The American seemed a pleasant sort, quite possibly with influence. To judge from his manner, the foundation of the story was well laid. A modest confidence came over Mr. Adelgate.

"That being the case, sir, you can understand that it was not exactly an *unusual* thing for me when this sailor fellow came to my shop this morning. I expected he was like the others; a foreigner who had picked up a packet of narcotics somewhere, and had heard scurrilous rumours that I could dispose of it for him. I prepared to eject him as quickly and quietly as possible."

"A sailor?" Dain asked.

"I believe he said he was a sailor."

"Did he give any name?"

"I'm afraid he didn't." Mr. Adelgate had decided to withhold this piece of information, since it argued a suspicious degree of intimacy with the man.

"Do you know what his nationality was?"

"I couldn't say for certain, sir. Spanish or Italian, or one of those places."

Dain nodded. "Sorry to interrupt you, Mr. Adelgate. Just tell me the story as it occurs to you."

"Yes sir. Well, sir, it was the most extraordinary thing. Instead of offering me narcotics—I would have given him short shrift then—he wanted to sell me *secrets*! American secrets, he said. I was taken aback."

"That's very understandable."

"Yes, I was caught quite off guard." Adelgate hesitated for a moment. The difficult part of the story was coming, the part which had to be told in just the right way.

"When I told him I didn't buy anything except furniture, the fellow demanded an address from me. He more than demanded. He *threatened*, Mr. Dain. I confess I was frightened. He was a little man, but extremely muscular, as sailors frequently are. Furthermore he carried a knife, and I was unarmed."

"Nasty situation," Dain murmured.

"It was indeed. The fellow was getting ugly, so I gave him the first address I could think of. Man in Amsterdam by the name of Van Joost. Joost used to be in narcotics, so I'm told. But I gave the sailor his address simply because it came to mind. If I had thought a little faster, I would have given him a fictitious name."

"This way is much better," Dain said.

"Is it? I'm awfully glad you think so, sir. . . . When the sailor left, I sat down to think out my position. It wasn't simple, you understand. Criminals, particularly if they're organized, can be every bit as powerful as the law. Or at least, so I've heard. It wasn't as though I were a completely innocent shopkeeper." Mr. Adelgate smiled ruefully. "I've had a bit of trouble in my time."

"Luckily," Dain said, "that's all over and done with."

"Yes sir. I thought it out, and at first, I'm ashamed to say, I considered simply not speaking about it. But other considerations moved me. Suppose the idiot were caught? Wouldn't he be likely to involve *me* in the wretched affair? I didn't like the idea. And I didn't like the idea of American

secrets being stolen, we being allies and all. I mean, we're all in this together, aren't we?"

"We certainly are," Dain said. "Do you remember Mr. Van Joost's address?"

"I've written it down here. 17 De Ruyters Kade, Amsterdam."

"What did the sailor look like?"

Mr. Adelgate gave a somewhat vague description of Carlos.

"Is there anything else you can remember? Anything at all?"

Mr. Adelgate thought for a moment, then shook his head. He had said exactly what he had planned to say.

Dain said, "I can't thank you enough, Mr. Adelgate. Would you mind repeating your statement to a stenographer?"

"Not at all, sir, not at all. I expect he'll be an easy man to catch. How he came upon those secrets I have no idea; but he seemed a simple-minded, impetuous sort of chap. Even without my information you'd probably have him in no time."

Dain again expressed his thanks, and led Mr. Adelgate to a stenographer's desk. On the way, Mr. Adelgate asked, "I don't suppose there's any reward posted? Not that that was my purpose—"

Dain said that no reward had been set. But if Adelgate's information proved at all useful, he would definitely receive compensation. Pleased, Adelgate sat down to dictate his statement, and Dain returned to his office. After contacting police headquarters in Holland, Dain booked two tickets on an evening flight to Amsterdam.

CHAPTER 8

"NOW THIS," she said, "is a very lovely room. And the price includes breakfast."

Carlos nodded. He looked past the pink bulk of the landlady into the tiny, scrupulously clean rectangle of the room.

"It has a view," she added.

Carlos was busy converting guilders into dollars in his head. His cash reserves were running low. Less expensive rooms could be found near the docks; but this room looked out on De Ruyters Kade, within viewing distance of Joost's store.

"I like a room with a view," Carlos said. "I think I will take it."

"I beg your pardon?" the landlady said. "Oh! You'll take it. . . . Excuse me, have you been speaking English very long?"

"Not very long," Carlos said gloomily.

"I didn't think so. I have no trouble understanding my English guests, and Americans too, when they speak slowly. Are you from South America?"

"From Chile," Carlos said, on the spur of the moment.

"All that way! Is Chile very lovely?"

Carlos nodded. He knew hardly anything about South America. "The mountains are very beautiful," he told the landlady.

After she had left him alone, Carlos went to the window and lit a cigarette. With his back braced against flowered wallpaper, knees hugged to his chest, he sat and looked across the street at Van Joost's store. His patience was un-self-conscious, and inexhaustible. No stern exercise of the will gave him that unmoved calm; it came naturally, an oriental trick of passivity in which thoughts and images drifted lazily across the timeless screen of his mind. He was nervous and easily excited, and this ability to assume an animal-like state of quiet was perhaps his most remarkable trait. He never considered it, sitting in the window like an idol carved from dark stone, blue sacrificial cigarette smoke rising in a thin pillar before his face.

Van Joost's store looked small, well-kept like most of the stores on the Kade, and undistinguished. It had nothing unusual about it, standing sturdily in gray Dutch sunlight. It looked all right; but Carlos was considering not entering it.

So far, he had followed a simple path. Taking the briefcase had been nearly spontaneous. Even going to Adelgate had been only natural under the circumstances. But now?

Now to visit Van Joost committed him. For a vague promise of future wealth, he would be accepting the risks which men run when they interfere with governments. And he would be accepting those risks blindly, with no knowledge of the counter-measures, the retaliations, which the men concerned with the plans might employ. The wealth which could buy independence was the guiding ambition of his life; but there was nothing suicidal about Carlos.

He could still destroy the plans and forget the whole thing. This trip to Holland could be a sailor's quick spree before signing for another voyage.

He sat and smoked, immobile in the window, and thoughts

and impressions drifted slowly across the unjudging surface of his mind. Clumsy aphorisms formed: it would be good to be wealthy, no sense walking into trouble, no reward without danger.

He came to no conscious decision. The decision had been formed days ago in London, years ago in Mexico. He got to his feet and brushed ashes from his jacket. He looked down once more at Joost's store. Then he sighed and went out the door and down the stairs.

"Yes, yes," said Van Joost. "A remarkable man, Mr. Adelgate is. How is Mr. Adelgate these days?"

Van Joost's voice was deep and furry, as though he had not cleared his throat completely. He was a very large man, well over six feet tall and porportionately broad; but he gave a fragile impression in spite of his bulk. He had adapted his movements to the size of his shop, and now he minced behind the restricting counter, among the watch movements and the trays of trinkets, like a consumptive lion in a cage that mocked his appearance of strength. Joost's hands were large, with blonde hairs growing on the backs; a fine tremor ran through them. He had a habit of staring into Carlos's eyes intently for a second, and then his gaze would dart around the familiar corners of his store.

Carlos reacted to nervousness with immobility. He watched Van Joost, wondering what bothered the man.

"It has been—let me see—every bit of fifteen years since I have seen Mr. Adelgate. We went into different lines of work. But sometimes we still have the opportunity to send each other customers."

"Yes?" Carlos said politely.

"Oh yes!" Joost's hollow laughter with its faint furry edge boomed across the little store. There was something funny about customers, something amusing about business arrangements. Carlos grinned. He could appreciate the humor of business as well as the next man. He backed a step away from the counter, turning so he could watch the door.

"Now my friend, Mister—"

"Yes," Carlos said, with a fixed and ghastly grin on his face.

"Quite right! Completely right!" Van Joost said, his laughter loud and edged with weasel fur. "No names! Eh? Only business. Am I correct?"

"Only business," Carlos said, and they both laughed at the joke. Humor had conquered nervousness. It was hilarious,

this matter of business. The tremor increased along Van Joost's hands, and Carlos, laughing, ill at ease, backed another step toward the door.

Van Joost took alarm. "You wish to complete the transaction at once? Excellent, I am authorized. If I might be allowed to look—"

An old woman pushed huffily past Carlos and entered the store. Van Joost looked like a man unfairly loaded with responsibilities. He managed to wink at Carlos. "If you shall wait only one little minute—"

"I'll come back," Carlos said. He took a step outside the door. There was a stricken expression on Van Joost's face. He hurried around the counter and took Carlos by the arm. "Just one moment, my dear friend—"

A curtain parted at the rear of the store and two plainclothes detectives came through, their revolvers drawn. They chose to vault spectacularly over the counter. This gave Carlos time to chop Van Joost across the throat with a hand as hard as a piece of seasoned oak.

Strangling, Van Joost reeled back into the detectives. The old lady screamed, tentatively, in recognition of the unusual, and not without pleasure. Carlos went through the door like a sprinter, cut through the crowds along De Ruyters Kade and vanished into a network of streets at the lower end. The detectives weren't even sure which way he had run. By the time they found out, it was a purely academic question. They gave the alarm, but no alarm had ever outrun Carlos.

The ticket clerk had family problems on his mind. He glanced through the bars at the breathless, dark-faced little man. His hand moved automatically toward the reels of tickets.

"Yes?" he asked, raising his voice above the expiring snarl of a steam train. "Where do you wish to go?" When he saw that the man spoke no Dutch, he repeated his question in English. But the man, drenched in perspiration, his black hair plastered against his forehead, evidently didn't understand.

"I want a ticket on the next train," Carlos said, striving to control his breathing.

The ticket clerk had never heard a language like that. Perhaps it was Basque? Foreigners who expected to be spoken to in their own language should go to the tourist office. "Where do you wish to go?" he asked again, this time in French, speaking very slowly and enunciating with care.

"I want a ticket on the next train," Carlos said, this time in Spanish.

"I can't understand what you're saying," the ticket clerk said. It was too much, his wife three weeks overdue, his mother visiting from Dordecht, the toilet broken. "Tell me where you want to go or leave the line."

"I buy a ticket here?"

"You're holding up the line. Move, or I'll call the police!"

Carlos gripped the counter with both hands, glaring at the clerk. The clerk looked across the station, trying to catch the eye of a policeman. A woman tapped Carlos on the shoulder. In the babel of foreign tongues around him, he heard her speak accented but comprehensible English.

"Where do you wish to go?"

"The next train."

"To Paris?"

"Yes."

She told the ticket clerk that the foreigner wanted to go to Paris. Carlos thrust a handful of money across the counter. He received a second class ticket and a few guilders change. The woman also bought a ticket to Paris and walked with Carlos, half-leading him. She took his arm when he tried to board a first class compartment, led him firmly but gently to the second class. She was half a head taller than he was, plump, with short silky blonde hair. She was not pretty. But she was also not ugly, and she could speak English.

At police headquarters in Amsterdam, two detectives were reduced in rank. A description of the foreigner who had run from Van Joost's store was broadcast to all police units in the city. The charge was suspicion of robbery. A heavy surveillance was put upon the airport and the train station. A report of this was given to Stephen Dain.

Later, Dain interrogated Van Joost and found that his description of the man tallied with the description given by Susan Bellows. Joost did not know the man's nationality, had not seen the secrets, had nothing new to add.

That was all for nearly four hours. Then a frontier guard telephoned. He hadn't received the report in time; but less than half an hour ago he had seen a man answering the thief's description. The man had been driving a tan Volkswagen, and had crossed the frontier into Belgium by the Liege road. Belgium and French police authorities were notified, and border guards from Valenciennes to Esch-sur-Alzette were alerted. An hour later, French police reported

that they were holding the driver of the tan Volkswagen at Maubeuge. Dain and Susan Bellows set out at once in an MG loaned to them by the Amsterdam CIA office.

Late that afternoon, two Russians with diplomatic passports landed at Amsterdam airport. One of them was tall, young and very handsome, ascetic and disdainful in appearance. The other man was older, his hair was graying, and his small lips were pursed in amusement at the ephemeral tidiness of the little world around him. Both men gave their occupation as heavy machinery experts. The immigration official wrote it down. These days, all Russians seemed to be heavy machinery experts.

CHAPTER 9

IN LONDON that evening, Mr. John Adelgate was turning out the lights in his store preparatory to leaving for his house in Lower Clapton. Since his interview with Dain, he had refused to let himself think. Blindly, automatically, he had gone about his business—his furniture business only. Earlier, before going to Scotland Yard, he had warned his drug contacts to stay away until further notice. Adelgate was taking no chance of trouble.

But now, the impact of the ordeal was beginning to wear off. He could permit himself to think, he could even congratulate himself on a difficult job boldly and skillfully done.

In the normal course of business, he would never have informed on Carlos. But *secrets* were not normal business. They were outside the pale of any illegal enterprise he had ever known. Secrets were dangerous. After Carlos left that morning, Adelgate had sat down to think out his own position.

He didn't like it. That untutored savage was bound to be caught on the continent, just as a tiger would surely be caught if it tried to roam Hyde Park. Carlos, alone and friendless in the maze of the European underworld, unable to detect friend from informer, deficient in civilized skills, lacking even an intelligible language in which to conduct business. He would be caught.

Mr. Adelgate's reasoning had pushed him remorselessly on. After being caught, Carlos would be interrogated, perhaps tortured, certainly tempted. The government men would want to know the names of everyone connected with him, everyone who had had any part in the theft and attempted disposal of the secrets. You could count on them to press very hard. And Carlos, with no motive for loyalty, intent upon saving his own skin, would certainly implicate Adelgate. The possession of those secrets had transformed the man into a sort of plague carrier; not only his own liberty would be taken away, but the liberty of those who had associated with him.

Accordingly, Mr. Adelgate had told the police about Carlos before Carlos had a chance to tell the police about him. All the risks weren't over, but each hour seemed to improve his position.

Now the store was in order and Mr. Adelgate prepared to turn out the lights and go home. As his hand reached for the light switch, he heard a firm knock at the door.

"I'm closed," he called out.

"Police," a voice answered.

Annoyed, Adelgate went to the door and opened it a crack. A large, well-dressed man stood in the evening gloom with two men behind him. The well-dressed man showed a badge attached to a wallet.

"May we come in, sir?"

Adelgate opened the door for them. They filed in, and the last man closed the door behind him. They looked around the shop in a policeman's prying way.

Adelgate said, "I'd like to know—"

"I'm Inspector Hadden. These men are my associates, Detective-Sergeants Flynn and Turner."

"I was just going home."

"We'll only detain you for a moment." Inspector Hadden took a small notebook from his pocket, opened it and studied a page. "Now let me see. About the man—"

"Inspector, I told everything I knew at Scotland Yard. My complete testimony is there."

"I realize that, Mr. Adelgate. But you understand how it is. We like to double-check all information."

"At this hour?"

"Would it be better if we came during the day when you had customers?"

"No, of course not. What did you wish to know?"

"Just the answers to a few questions. You said that this man offered to sell you secrets. Did you ever actually see these secrets?"

"No sir."

"You're quite sure?"

"Absolutely. I'd remember a thing like that."

"Did he tell you how he came by them?"

"No."

"Or what form they were in?"

Adelgate shook his head.

"Would you mind describing the man again?"

Adelgate did so.

"And you are quite sure you could identify him?"

"Well, sir . . ."

"Now, now, Mr. Adelgate, you had an excellent look at the man. What's the difficulty?"

"Yes, I could identify him."

"You could pick him out of a police lineup?"

"I think I could."

"That's fine," Inspector Hadden said. "That's what we thought." He nodded, and his two men came up and each held Adelgate by an arm.

"Now just a moment—"

Inspector Hadden wasn't listening. He had turned away and was looking around the shop. After a moment he walked to a corner where a new shipment of furniture had been unpacked. On top of a pile of cardboard cartons there was a coil of rope. Hadden picked it up and tested it between his hands.

"Inspector, what is this? What are you people doing?"

Carrying the rope, Hadden walked back to the center of the room. His head was craned back, he was peering at the crossbeams along the ceiling.

"Yes," he said, "that should do nicely."

Adelgate realized what was happening and made a sudden violent effort to break free. The two burly men kept a firm grip on his arms. Hadden pulled a flat-top desk into the middle of the floor. He put a chair on top of it and climbed up. He looped the rope around three crossbeams and tied a knot.

Adelgate said, "Mr. Hadden, I was wrong! I *can't* identify the man!"

Standing on the desk, Hadden wiped his hands and began to fashion the free end of the rope into a noose.

"You mustn't do this!" Adelgate shouted. "I can't identify him, can't possibly!"

The men holding him might have been statues. Their faces registered nothing, neither pity nor cruelty. Their thick hands were fixed around his arms as immovably as hands of stone. They stood on either side of him, their feet widely planted, their eyes downcast. Hadden finished his noose, climbed down and walked over to Adelgate. His well-featured, ruddy face had an expression of regret.

"I'm sorry," Hadden said. "This is necessary. I can promise that it won't hurt you."

"You're going to kill me?"

"I'm sorry."

Adelgate screamed, "What do you mean, it won't hurt me? Do you think hanging won't hurt? You can't do it, you promised not to hurt me! Hadden, you promised!"

"It won't hurt," Hadden said, and moved behind Adelgate.

Adelgate wrenched at the stone hands holding him, then sagged suddenly, forcing the men to hold him up. His eyes were fixed on the noose, hypnotized by it. He tried to think of a prayer, but his mind was filled with anger at the unfairness of it all. It wasn't his fault, he wasn't involved. If he could only get loose for a moment, if he could run . . .

Someone, it must have been Hadden, struck him a sharp blow on the back of the neck just under the skull. Adelgate heard a sharp sound like a dry stick breaking. It seemed to him that his store was suddenly plunged into darkness. The fuse must have blown. Simultaneously the men at his side released their grip, he was free and running. He plunged ahead into the darkness, through the open window, into the street. The streetlights hadn't been turned on, that was very strange, and the lights of the stores were out. The darkness was absolute, unbroken even by a moon or stars overhead. But he could feel the rough pavement under his feet, and he ran, sensing with his feet how the pavement changed to tall grass, and then to soft sand covered with a deepening layer of water. He must have run all the way to Dover! He waded into the water in that split second before he lost consciousness, and he died with the illusion that he was swimming to France and safety.

CHAPTER 10

DAIN TURNED onto the Maubeuge road and brought the MG to an even forty miles an hour. Susan Bellowes leaned back in the seat, her eyes half closed, body relaxed. Warmth poured down on her upturned face and the sun gleamed red against her eyelids. A long line of plane trees cast their shadows one by one against her, an endless succession of shadows passing like birds in flight. Warmth, sun and shadow produced an almost hypnotic state, enforced by the even droning of the engine, by the faint vibration of the seat. She felt childishly happy, defenseless, gratefully released from her cocoon of anxiety.

Through half closed eyes she looked at Dain and saw him imprisoned in silky strands of her hair, upright behind the steering wheel, unaware that he was trapped in the net of her hair, still playing his game of spies and G men although it was well past suppertime. She looked at him fondly; but already there was a stirring of resentment behind her look, for she sensed her urge to control behind the grotesque matronly simile.

She believed—with astonishment, as always—that they would go to bed together. The astonishing sexuality of a car in motion had set it off. Motion, vibration, the even succession of light and dark, these things had seduced her before a word could be spoken or a hand outstretched. She had seduced herself, that was inevitably her weakness, all women's; and Dain, silent behind the wheel of the rushing car, played only the part of a stranger come to participate in prearranged temple rites. He was needed; but he had to bear the resentment strangers met everywhere.

At this moment she loved Dain as truly as she could, without stability, without hope. She was deadened to commonplace stimulation—she suspected that most women were—and she responded only to this distant, subtle, cold touch across her deadened nerve-ends. She responded suspiciously but with gratitude, blessing indirection in a world of direct shock, grateful for the presense of a stranger among the regiments of familiar faces.

It would be terrible to know him now, hideous to under-

stand him. Understanding gave the Judas kiss to pleasure, and changed the miraculous moment into a polite affair of coiled bodies and cold morning coffee. For her, to know all was to despise all. She didn't want to love a man; it was better to love a pair of tanned hands on a white plastic steering wheel.

The car slowed, and the even succession of light and dark gave way to an even grayness faintly cold to her face. Annoyed, she opened her eyes fully. They were coming into a town. She sat upright and looked around.

"Where are we?"

"Approaching Maubeuge. We should find out something here about the thief."

"To hell with the thief."

"What's the matter with you?"

She looked at him with the special, intense loathing reserved for disappointing lovers. "I have a slight headache. Would you mind giving me a cigarette?"

Upright and silent, they drove to the border station. They found that the police had stopped the wrong man. No further word had come from Amsterdam. In fifteen minutes they were on the road to Paris.

"But why did you give a correct identification of him to the police?" Czettner asked.

"I had no choice," Van Joost told him. "You must remember, the old woman and the two policemen had also seen him. At least, they had caught a glimpse of him."

Czettner seemed to be considering this.

"I contacted the organization as soon as possible," Van Joost said. "And I warned you about Mr. Adelgate. Have you done anything about Mr. Adelgate?"

Czettner didn't answer. He stood silently in Van Joost's store, the gloved fingers of his left hand tapping lightly on the counter, his raincoat buttoned to the throat. Van Joost had undergone that day three separate interrogations; from the police, from Dutch security, and from the American. This talk now, with the man from his own organization, was by far the worst. The others could be lied to, cajoled, entreated. But this man, who Joost had himself summoned, stood silent and contemplative in front of him, unmoved by truth or lies, pursuing some unknowable train of thought of his own. This man represented power; a word from him could cut off party funds. And then the store would fail, as it should have failed fifteen years ago.

"You should not have given them a correct identification," Czettner said at last.

"I did not think fast enough," Joost said. "I was without instructions, I became confused. But I contacted the organization just as soon—"

"The organization can't think out everything for you. We can't arrange your shelves and speak to your customers."

Joost nodded dumbly. It seemed almost certain now that his party funds would be reduced, perhaps stopped altogether.

"What will you do if the police catch this man and ask you to identify him?"

"I will *not* identify him," Joost said. Triumphantly he added, "I will lie."

"Clumsily."

"Not at all. They will learn nothing from me."

"What about the American? Suppose he questions you?"

"Mr. Dain? He is the easiest one of all. A child could lie to him"

"That is your considered opinion?"

Sarcasm was lost on Van Joost. He said eagerly, "I'm certain of it. He didn't look very bright, and he hardly paid attention when he questioned me. Even the girl, the other witness, acted brighter. But Mr. Dain hardly seemed to hear me."

"So of course you talked a little faster, to make sure he heard you."

"I didn't!" Joost said. He added reproachfully, "You must give me credit for some intelligence."

Czettner seemed lost in a dream. His handsome face had the look of a boy engaged in a deadly serious game of hide-and-seek. Watching him, Joost was filled with admiration. In spite of fifteen years in the service of militant materialism, he was superstitious, a believer in signs and portents, childishly proud as the Eastern world assimilated the manners of the bourgeois world he was a part of, and which he was dedicated to destroy. This man, Joost thought, was an accomplishment as great as a hydroelectric dam, and far more meaningful. With the coming of strong, subtle young men like Czettner, the battle was joined on still other fronts.

Joost's admiration was so intense that he barely noticed the movement of Czettner's right hand into the deep pocket of his raincoat. The hand slid out again, and in it was a small-calibre automatic.

"Just one moment," Joost said. "Perhaps I haven't explained myself thoroughly enough . . ."

His words were lost in Czettner's vast indifference. Czettner had found the action appropriate to the moment. Without haste he reached into the pocket again, took out a silencer and fitted it to the barrel. Joost watched, panic showing only in an uncontrollable pulse in his throat.

"The truth of the matter is," Joost said, "I see where my actions were wrong. I will correct them. Listen to me for a moment! I have been too far removed from the movements of the party—but on orders, on orders from the party. I have been left without guidance. I cannot be blamed for a lapse, I cannot—"

"No one is blaming you," Czettner said. He cocked the automatic and raised it to the level of his chest. Van Joost's lips moved soundlessly, spraying the counter with a fine spittle. Czettner fired, placing the bullet neatly between Joost's rapidly blinking eyes, just above the bridge of the nose. Joost stared at him, caught in mid-blink; then he backed a step and fell with a small sound for so large a man.

Czettner put the automatic away, stepped behind the counter and scooped a handful of watches into his pocket. Then he left.

On the way back, he stopped at a little bridge over the Voorburgwal canal. It was dark and deserted. Czettner leaned against the parapet, and one by one he dropped the watches into the water. Then he took off his gloves and returned to the hotel.

"Was it really necessary?" Bardieff asked him.

"Of course," Czettner said. "Van Joost was too weak to have faced any police pressure. We couldn't afford to have him identify the thief."

Czettner lay slumped in a chair in the suite he shared with Bardieff. He was smoking a cigarette, quite a rare thing for him, but not at all indicative of tension. He knew that smoking was one of those activities labelled pleasures. Czettner experimented with pleasures from time to time, to further his insight into human beings. He knew it was very important to understand how people reacted, and what they reacted to. He was a diligent student of human nature.

"It will look like a robbery," he told Bardieff. "It will be just one more of the thousands of crimes committed every year in the West. One day in the newspapers, a week of investigation, and then nothing."

"First Adelgate and now Joost," Bardieff said.

Czettner sat upright. "Does it really disturb you? I thought army men understood expediency."

Bardieff shrugged off the question. He had been in the army for twelve years, eight of them commanding troops, four in a political capacity. The party had seen his value and reliability and had judged him more valuable for external affairs. He had been transferred to Canton, then Bucharest, and at last to London. Except for occasional holidays, he had not lived in Russia for nearly ten years. Perhaps he had been too long away from home. It struck him that Czettner, nominally his subordinate, might have been sent to test the depth and extent of his reliability, might even have been sent to confirm a decision already made concerning him.

Bardieff said, "The disposal of Van Joost and Adelgate solves very little. The American woman, Miss Bellowes, is still accompanying Dain. She can identify the thief."

Czettner gave a slight, impatient shrug. "Obviously. So she must be killed." He used the word with a faint expression of pride. No euphemisms were possible for a realist.

"And Dain?"

"He also should be killed."

"And then will you kill the next CIA man assigned to the case? And the one after that?"

"You should not be willfully obtuse," Czettner said. "Not even as a joke. Or *were* you joking?"

Bardieff refused to be baited. Good humor had kept him alive too long for him to respond now to a creature like Czettner. He said, "You young men can be curiously old-fashioned. Next you'll want to put a bomb in the Louvre."

"Terror has its uses."

"Of course. Why not blow up Versailles? Perhaps someone will erect a factory on its site."

Czettner smiled. He understood humor, though he found its practical application difficult. "Terror is not as old-fashioned as you think. Any means are permissible when they bring the desired end. To categorize a thing as 'old-fashioned' is to be guilty of sentimental thinking." He finished his cigarette and put it out carefully in an ashtray. "You're out of touch, Bardieff. Terror is returning."

"Is that your latest instruction?"

"It is self-evident. Or do you prefer other means?"

Bardieff smiled and shrugged.

"I think you have grown too fond of meaningless subtlety," Czettner said. "You should be careful of it."

"This is a discussion for children," Bardieff said, getting

to his feet. "Kindly spare me your textbook quotations. This operation is your responsibility. When do you wish to remove Dain and the girl?"

"Very soon," Czettner said. "First I must make a plan."

"I'm going to sleep," Bardieff said. He went into his bedroom.

Alone in the darkness, Bardieff lay fully clothed on the bed, his hands clasped behind his muscular neck, a cigarette smouldering in the ashtray beside him. His delicately attuned instinct for survival had been aroused by Czettner's clumsy attempt to bait him. He felt no anger toward the man—the Czettners were historically inevitable—but he felt necessarily protective toward himself. There was no open battle between them yet; perhaps there never would be one. Czettner was not a slavish fool with a notebook, a simple extension of some faction's ear in Moscow with a condemnation already in his pocket, searching only for documentation of a predetermined fact. It was a pity he wasn't; that sort of thing could be handled.

Czettner was nothing like that. He was, instead, a new product of the conditioning process, a child of the stable state rather than of the revolution. And, Bardieff suspected, his thinking might be polarized toward Peking rather than Moscow.

He grinned, took a final drag and put out the cigarette. In that thought might lie salvation if the situation ever became serious. But in the meantime there was the thief to catch and Dain and the girl to be disposed of.

Bardieff undressed and got into bed. He felt an almost affectionate pity for Czettner—young, dedicated, humorless, untravelled, and therefore tending to oversimplify the problems of an ancient and unruly world. Just before going to sleep, Bardieff wondered what Czettner would be like drunk. It would be interesting to see. The young man needed to learn—in a hurry—that no human is perfect, no matter how hard he tries.

CHAPTER 11

AT CIA'S EUROPEAN headquarters in Paris, Dain learned nothing new about the movements of the thief.

Since the man hadn't been seen again in Amsterdam, it had to be tentatively assumed that he had left the city and probably the country, for an unknown destination. The border alerts had so far proven ineffective. Just *how* the man had done it—escaped a police trap and eluded or outrun the guards at all border checkpoints—was still a matter for conjecture. Some, including Dain, thought it was beginner's luck. Others felt that the man's success argued some sort of organized help. The extent of this conjectured help was completely unknown; but according to a persistent rumor, the thief was being aided by a prominent neutralist Asian power. This, in turn, gave rise to the theory that the man was really *not* a sailor, and therefore was not as naive as his movements would seem to indicate. He was, instead, a spy and *agent provocateur*, representing a third power and trying to stir up as much trouble as possible among the NATO nations on the one hand, between NATO and the Soviet Union on the other hand, and possibly even between the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact countries on the third hand. This theory, although it stirred some interest in Washington, was not favored in Paris. Until new information was received, the simplest working hypothesis was to take the facts at their face value.

Dain learned that John Adelgate had been found in his London store hanging from a noose, an apparent suicide. But the police surgeon believed that his neck had been broken before he was hung.

In Amsterdam, Van Joost had been murdered, apparently by a thief, more likely by members of the same group who had killed Adelgate.

The briefcase from which the papers had been taken was in the hands of the London police. A maid in a sailor's boarding house had found it under a mattress and had almost thrown it out, but had decided to tell the constable at the corner first. There were clear fingerprints on the metal, but they couldn't be matched with any in the files. No one in the boarding house could be sure of the appearance of the man who had occupied the room in which the briefcase had been discovered. Turnover had been heavy that week.

Inquiries had been made at all the major shipping lines in London. No crewman was missing, but nearly four hundred sailors of Latin birth or probable appearance were on leave or signed off at the moment; sailors from Italy, Corsica, Spain, and the Central and South American countries. This list didn't include the dozens of small two or three ship

companies, or the tramp steamers. Investigations were going on; they might take months.

All in all, Dain decided it was a mess. There was no way of predicting where the thief would turn up, what he would do or who he would try to contact. Dain could only wait, keep a constant watch on reports, and stay close to Susan Bellows. She was the only witness he had at present. Although she had been kept out of the news, her life had to be considered in danger.

The big question was, who would the thief approach next?

CHAPTER 12

JULIAN SCARBOROUGH was a young man of precise habits and modest ambitions. Early upon his appointment to the State Department through the good offices of Senator "Hal" Wallins, Scarborough had patterned himself upon the best models available for a young diplomat, and had molded himself to them to the extent allowed by good taste, self-esteem, and a knowledge of station. Scarborough was eclectic; his speech, originally flavored somewhere west of Boston, had softened and lengthened, and now you might think he was an Englishman trying valiantly to overcome Standard English. In dress, Scarborough was correct but not presumptuous. His suits were modestly and unaggressively British, his hats and ties tended toward the quieter Italian models, and, in deference to his post in Paris, his sports clothing was purchased in the better French shops. Julian Scarborough was a model of assimilation, having altered himself, in little more than a year, from a tentative and self-effacing upper-classman on the campus of a huge midwestern university, to a quiet, self-assured, decisive junior diplomat. Even his sponsor, Senator "Hal" Wallins, who had done no more than perform a routine favor for the son of an influential constituent, was pleasantly surprised. He had been heard to say, "I'll be damned if I don't think that boy is going somewhere after all." Hal's faint note of surprise can be attributed more to his general feeling that the young were going to hell in a basket than to anything specific he saw in Julian. For his part, Julian worked well and hard in his job as a junior

assistant attaché in the American Embassy in Paris. His future seemed assured; a modest gentleman's rise up an almost imperceptible slope of success. Only luck, which has been known to lurk even in the corridors of embassies, could accelerate his progress; or, conversely, retard it utterly.

Luck, in its usual beggarly disguise, was given its chance. Every day, rain or shine, Julian left the Embassy at noon, sometimes with friends, more often alone, and lunched at the Cafe Margot, a modest establishment which Michelin had overlooked. Here Julian fought to reconcile the contradictions between his American palate and the world-famous French cuisine. In the evening, sometimes with friends, more often alone, he left the Embassy and went straight to the Spagna, another excellent place where the food was diced and sauced, herbed and spiced, and its native taste concealed utterly in a triumph of French artistry. After nibbling there, Julian walked ten blocks to the Anais, a Left Bank place which had found itself on the right bank, and whose clientele was mostly young diplomats who enjoyed watching bearded and irreverent bohemians drinking coffee. A pleasant hour could be spent there reading a bound copy of Figaro or Temps for the improvement of his already very acceptable French; and then home to bed.

On the night when double-faced luck was given its chance, Julian had reached the Anais at ten o'clock in the evening, had ordered his coffee, and was already absorbed in an article on Javanese influence in West Africa. Julian did not think of this sort of reading as work; it was no more than his duty to keep up-to-date on political situations anywhere in the world.

He became aware that a man, sitting at a table nearby, was staring directly and rudely at him. Julian was not discomfited; diplomats of any rank must learn to live in the often unwelcome spotlight focused by those whose destinies they determine. Julian glanced at the fellow once, coolly, and returned to his paper.

But absurdly enough, he was unable to concentrate. The article on Javanese influence in West Africa, although written with that French lucidity and clarity which is the envy of the world, failed to hold him in its spidery grasp. He had seen that staring fellow before.

Julian prided himself upon his ability to recall names and faces. Now he flipped quickly through the file cards of his memory, trying to place that shock of black hair, those small, deep-set black eyes, that olive skin and short, muscular

body. Cards for two Latin American anarchists, a former Italian prime minister, and a Finnish press correspondent popped into view, and were rejected. But now that he thought of it, this fellow had been skulking around the Embassy grounds for the past few days, had almost certainly followed him to the Cafe Margot one afternoon, and here to the Anais perhaps more than once.

"You from the American Embassy?" the man asked, in barbarously accented English. Julian's one swift glance had been enough to precipitate a conversation.

Julian nodded. Nothing more seemed required. As graciously as he could, he turned back to his newspaper. But the man, in the unflinching fashion of boors anywhere in the world, refused to let the embryonic conversation die so easily. He came over and sat down at Julian's table.

"You a diplomat? In the secret service, maybe?"

Julian turned once again to the unkempt stranger. He did not believe in insulating himself completely from all contact with the non-diplomatic world. That meant being out of touch; and lack of contact with the hordes they served had been one of the most signal failures of the older diplomacy. On the other hand, it was difficult to see what could be gained from this particular contact.

"I am in the American Embassy," Julian said. It seemed a perfectly safe answer.

"But not secret service?"

"I prefer not to discuss specific assignments."

"Sure, sure. You're a diplomat," the man said, showing a keenness of perception surprising in an obviously unlettered man. He frowned. "You're sorta young to be a diplomat."

"That is as it may be," Julian replied, quickly and crushingly.

The man nodded, his shock of coarse black hair bobbing ludicrously. Despite Julian's very apparent reserve, the man was determined to be friendly.

"I bet you work on all kinds of important stuff. Huh?"

Julian smiled faintly.

"That's good," the man said. He looked swiftly around him in a ludicrous conspirator's glance. Then he turned again to Julian.

"You ever buy any secrets? Huh?"

The questions they asked! Julian smiled and turned back to his coffee.

"On account of I've got a pal who's got a secret to sell for only five thousand dollars cash."

There was no adequate retort. Julian simply raised his eyebrows.

"This pal of mine," the man continued, "he stole this top American secret. I think maybe he didn't really steal it, but anyhow he got it. He thought about selling it to the Russians, but I told him he shouldn't do that. It isn't right. Besides, the Russians can't always be trusted. I told my friend, look, if you're going to do this thing, why not sell the American secret back to the *Americans*, no? The Americans got more money than the Russians, and it is better to deal with the Americans. This is what I told my friend. He said to me, 'Juanito, I do not care who I sell secrets to as long as I get my money. But I do not know any Americans who buy secrets.' So I told him I would see what I could do."

The olive-skinned little man looked at Julian hopefully. Julian looked back with a total lack of expression.

"So anyhow, my friend said, 'Juanito, you see about it if you want to. Me, I don't trust the Americans or the Russians. I'm going to stay out of sight, and if you want to see me, you speak to this friend of mine, who knows another friend of mine.' He's clever, this man, and no one could find him if he didn't want to be found. But I think he will sell his secrets if you and the other Americans want to buy them. He only wants five thousand dollars, because he says it is a small sum for a government, and it is all he needs."

"Is that all?" Julian asked icily.

"Isn't that enough?"

Julian put his fingertips together and stared at them judiciously, in a manner similar to that employed by the senior assistant attaché in the Embassy. He looked up and said quietly, "My friend, what kind of a fool do you take me for?"

"Huh?"

"Have you any conception of the number of people who come to the American Embassy or approach its personnel with an offer to sell secrets?"

"It is a big market?"

"No, you don't seem to understand. I'm trying to tell you that every confidence man in Europe seems obsessed with the idea that Americans are big, happy, dull-witted people who cheerfully put out money for anything labelled secret. The number of fraudulent secrets we are offered even in a single month is almost unbelievable."

"But sir—"

"Secrets?" Julian said, warming to his subject. "There are more secrets for sale in Europe than fake Persian rugs in the Near East. Urchins on street corners try to sell us secrets. People even *give* us secrets, *gratis*. It calls for the work of an entire department just to check and discard the secrets that we get in the course of a normal working day. And I'm told the Russians experience the same difficulties."

Although he had followed Julian with difficulty, the little man apparently understood most of what he heard. He said, "I didn't know it was like that."

"Take my word, it is. Tell your friend to try it on the Russians. We Americans aren't handing out any free money this year."

Although obviously discouraged, the little man was not yet defeated. He said, "Perhaps other people in your Embassy—"

"They'll all give you the same answer," Julian replied. "We simply do not buy unsolicited secrets."

"I can understand now your fear of being cheated," said the little man. "I had not thought of it before. But in this case the secret is a real secret, a true and valuable secret. Listen! In London, not more than a week ago, an American was robbed of his secret by four ambulance men. Perhaps you have heard of this affair?"

"Go on," Julian said.

"The ambulance men were in turn robbed by my friend, who saw his opportunity and seized it. This is true, this can be verified. Then a day later, in Amsterdam, when my friend tried to sell his secret to a Soviet agent, he was very nearly captured by the police. The papers were *that* important, and American secret service men had worked *that* fast. But there is even more. After that, when my friend had come to Paris, a friend of his read to him aloud from a Dutch newspaper. He wanted to see if the newspapers in Amsterdam said anything about him. And there in the newspaper it said that this man to whom he had tried to sell the secrets—do you follow me, sir?—that this Dutchman who was a Soviet agent had been killed in what the newspapers *said* was a robbery. Have you heard about this?"

"I have not," Julian said.

"But surely you have heard of the first, the stealing of the secrets in London—"

"We have not heard of it," Julian said. "And I can assure

you that, had it happened, we would have heard of it. News like that is relayed instantly to the more important embassies. I am afraid that your friend's story is nothing more than a tissue of lies from beginning to end."

The little man wanted to argue, but Julian cut short any further discussion. He paid his bill and left, once again advising the man to try his story on the Russians.

At the Embassy next day, Julian and several of his friends had a good laugh over the story. Obviously the 'friend' had been the man himself; and obviously the story had been the product of a vivid but undisciplined imagination.

It was too good a story to keep in Julian's immediate circle. His superior was told, and chuckled appreciatively. He had encountered similar things himself. He told his superior, who also found it amusing. Then the story began to fade, and might have been forgotten if an American security agent had not made his obligatory visit to the embassy soon after his arrival in Paris. The agent—a CIA alarmist—saw nothing funny about the story. Astoundingly enough, he took it seriously. And even more astounding, he had documentary evidence of the truth of the little man's assertions.

Julian spent the next week in a frantic, unrewarding search through the more unsavory parts of Paris. The little man seemed to have vanished from sight. This was unfortunate for Julian Scarborough's career. Detection of the spy whom luck had thrown across his path would almost certainly have meant promotion. As it was, Julian came very close to dismissal. He was saved only by the fact that his superior and his superior's superior had laughed with him at the story, and had told him that he had handled the whole thing very well indeed.

CHAPTER 13

BARDIEFF KNOCKED on Czettner's door and went in. Czettner was sitting in an armchair reading a book on the industrial uses of atomic energy.

"No word?" he asked.

"Nothing," Bardieff told him. "The man has dropped completely out of sight."

"He'll appear again. The plans are useless to him. He must find a buyer, and we represent the logical buyer."

"The thief may not be a logical man."

"It's just a question of waiting," Czettner said. But he did not seem to enjoy the waiting. His fingers tapped an insistent tattoo against the side of the armchair. As soon as he became aware of it, Czettner stopped.

"I'm going out for dinner," Bardieff said. "Would you care to join me?"

"I don't think so," Czettner said. "I had planned to have dinner sent up. There are several reports I must write."

"I don't believe you've eaten in any of the good restaurants here."

"I haven't, as a matter of fact."

"Czettner, a plate of French food will not corrupt you. I think you owe it to yourself to try it. Western man must sometimes be understood through his appetites. A direct knowledge of those appetites would serve your education very well."

"I understand the people in France very well," Czettner said, a little angrily. "Perhaps I understand them better than you."

"Perhaps," Bardieff said. "What's the matter with you tonight? Are you trying to pick a fight with me?"

Czettner turned away, his face sullen. After a moment he raised his head. "I received a letter from home today."

Bardieff knew that. He nodded politely.

"My wife is leaving me," Czettner said. He added quickly, "It is not a matter of any concern. We were never in love, never the slightest hint of it. We did find ourselves attracted to each other. But there was no talk of love."

Bardieff nodded and sat down on the edge of Czettner's bed.

"We both had our work to do," Czettner said. "We agreed beforehand not to impose any artificial limits on each other. We recognized at the start that the arrangement might not be permanent. It would have been ridiculous to think otherwise. Naturally we agreed to grant each other immediate freedom at any time, with no sentimental nonsense about it."

"How long had you been married?" Bardieff asked.

"It would have been two years next month."

"That is a fairly long time," said Bardieff, who had been married for close to twenty years.

"I thought the relationship was stable," Czettner said.

“Still, it makes no difference. It isn’t as though either of us had been in love.” He hesitated, then added, “But I wasn’t prepared for it. I will admit that I find its effect depressing. I would rather have been told to my face.”

Bardieff nodded. The two men sat in silence for a few seconds, and then Czettner’s forefinger began to tap against the side of the chair.

Bardieff stood up abruptly. “I am going to dinner. Will you join me, Czettner?”

This time, Czettner didn’t hesitate. “Yes, I’ll be pleased to join you. What should I wear? I have a dark blue suit—”

“That will be perfectly acceptable,” Bardieff said.

An hour later at a restaurant near the Opera, Czettner was picking his way through a bouilabaisse and declaring it tasty but effete, and not really comparable to plain fish soup. He protested when Bardieff ordered wine; it was ridiculously expensive, and besides, he had drunk French wines at home. Bardieff insisted that the product should be tried in its native environment. Czettner sipped judiciously and agreed that it was superior to the wines that could be obtained at home. He drank a second glass and called the waiter over.

“What exactly is the alcoholic content?” Czettner asked.

The waiter didn’t know. Bardieff said that the content by volume was much less than in vodka, perhaps two thirds less. Czettner said that was obvious. He himself preferred vodka. French wine, he said, bore a spiritual resemblance to American Coca-Cola. It could not be considered a manly drink. It was palatable, however. He and Bardieff finished the bottle, and over Czettner’s protests, Bardieff ordered a second.

“Do you know?” Czettner said later, “I’m glad I came out to dinner with you. My sense of depression seems to have vanished.”

“Have another drink,” Bardieff advised.

Czettner refused at first. Alcohol in quantity was a drug no less potent than heroin or cocaine. A realist did not have to have his mind clouded by drugs. Nevertheless, as the evening progressed, Czettner absentmindedly drank several more glasses from a third bottle which Bardieff had ordered.

When they left the restaurant, Czettner was in remarkably good spirits. It was his suggestion that they take a stroll through Montmartre. In a dim little cafe, Bardieff asked if Czettner had ever drunk Scotch. He had, but he had not as yet sampled rye or bourbon. In spite of the prices, Bardieff felt that these typically American drinks should be

tried, too. Czettner allowed himself to be persuaded. He found that he did not like the taste of rye or bourbon, and by mutual consent they switched to vodka.

By two in the morning there was a flush on Czettner's cheeks, a faint thickness in his speech, but no sign of unsteadiness in his walk. Bardieff, who had been taking one drink to Czettner's two, was amazed at his colleague's capacity. Now he was frankly curious. He decided to push the experiment a step further.

Czettner came awake with a start. He found he was sitting in an overstuffed chair, and his left foot had gone to sleep. In his nostrils was a smell of soiled linen and florid perfume. He shook his left foot, and an acrid taste of nausea rose in his throat. He gulped down hard and looked around.

He was in a small, cheerless parlor, flanked on their side by floor lamps that rose above him like disapproving sentinels. Across the room sat a middle-aged woman dressed entirely in black, knitting something black. She lifted her head and looked at him, continuing to knit with what struck Czettner as a maniacal speed and intensity.

"Where is my friend?" he croaked in miserable French.

"He left two hours ago. He said he would see you at the hotel."

"He left me here? Asleep?"

"You were not asleep then, monsieur. You were extremely lively."

"Was I?" Czettner asked.

The woman nodded grimly. Czettner turned slightly away; the sight of those flashing needles was beginning to make him dizzy.

"Extremely lively," she said. "You insisted upon ordering four bottles of champagne."

"Did I drink them?"

"A portion of them. The rest you gave to the girls."

Czettner racked his memory, but he couldn't remember any girls. He couldn't even remember how he had come to this place. His head was pounding now. He had never felt so sick in his life.

"So there were girls here," Czettner muttered, determined to outline the main points of the evening.

"Certainly," the woman said. "What else would there be here?"

Czettner shuddered. He pulled himself to his feet and turned to find the door.

The woman said, "There is the matter of payment."

"Didn't my friend—"

"Of course. But there is also the time you spent here after your friend left."

Czettner extracted a wad of francs from his wallet, crossed the room and held them out. The woman put down her knitting long enough to take most of them. Czettner hurried to the door.

"Au 'voir, M'sieu," she called after him.

It was well past dawn when he returned to the suite he shared with Bardieff. The chilly morning air had cleared his head and quieted his stomach. He found Bardieff in the living room, wrapped in a bathrobe, reading a book.

"My dear Czettner, I was just going out to see how you were."

"Why did you take me to that place?" Czettner asked in a voice of iron.

"Take you? Czettner, *you* took *me!* You insisted!"

"That is impossible. I don't know the location of any places like that."

Bardieff explained patiently how Czettner, made somewhat carefree by a mixture of alcoholic beverages, had wanted to proposition the first woman who passed by. When restrained from this, he had asked—demanded in fact—that they find a suitable place. No visit to Paris, he had declared, was complete without an inspection of its most notorious commodity.

Czettner listened with a mixture of horror and fascination to the actions of a stranger who, it seemed, was himself.

"What happened then?"

"We found the sort of place you wanted. Actually, you found it. You positively seemed to have an instinct."

"Bardieff, this can't be true!"

"It is, I assure you!"

"Why did you leave me in that place?"

"I stayed with you for over an hour," Bardieff said reproachfully. "I tried to bring you home, but you opposed the idea quite vehemently. I left, finally, so that we would have at least one person here to answer the telephone."

"You say I was vehement?"

"To put it mildly."

"Did I talk much?"

"You hadn't come there to talk."

"My behavior must have been disgraceful," Czettner said tentatively.

"Not at all!" Bardieff said. "Quite the contrary, your behavior was amazingly forceful. It reminded me of the old days when we first entered Berlin. You should have gone into the army, Czettner. Perhaps someday you will."

"It was completely atypical of me. I'm afraid it might be misunderstood."

"There's no reason why anyone should know about our little evening," Bardieff said. "No reason at all."

Czettner stood perfectly still. He focused with difficulty on Bardieff, noticing the small smile, the quietly folded hands.

"Bardieff, you are a bastard! I'll repay you for this, I swear I will!"

He might have said more, but suddenly he was forced to turn and run into the bathroom. Bardieff watched him go, then lighted a cigarette. It was really a pity about poor Czettner, he thought. A brilliant young man, but just the slightest bit unstable. It would be Bardieff's duty to put some indication of this on Czettner's monthly fitness report.

CHAPTER 14

OVER THE NEXT DAYS, nothing new was heard about the thief. Agents and informants of east and west could find no trace of him. Word of their failure drifted back to Moscow and Washington; questions were asked of embarrassed intelligence officials, and appropriate reinforcements were sent to Paris.

For Bardieff, the reinforcements were an unpleasant surprise since they were put under Czettner's command instead of his. At the same time, he received word that General Prokoff, the head of Security West, had been transferred from his Moscow command to the Fifteenth Army stationed near the Afghanistan border. Prokoff was Bardieff's sponsor, a tough old soldier of sound political views, characterized, like Bardieff, by his ability to favor no faction openly, to show no unseemly desire for power, to do his job and ignore the inner struggles of the regime he served.

Bardieff spent several hours considering the implications of the General's transfer. Had the old man become too outspoken? Or too reticent? Or had this move been made simply to put a new man into Security West, a man who would commit himself more fully to current faction politics? No matter

what the reason, Bardieff knew that his own position had been rendered insecure. He was caught, whether he willed it or not, in the byzantine politics, the tortuous intrigues, of the Moscow high command. Czettner was now in the ascendancy; a hundred Czettners were cautiously exercising a modicum of increased responsibility, waiting to see if the wind had really changed or if it had just veered momentarily. The Czettners were coming into their own; and soon, the cities of Asiatic Russia might reap a new harvest of administrators.

Bardieff found nothing dismaying in the prospect. He had survived too much to become alarmed over power struggles in high places, or even to worry very much about his own survival. He would fight for it, but he refused to worry about it. This sort of thing had happened a dozen times in the past; and now, like then, the last word had not been spoken. If a first round had gone to Czettner and those he represented, there were still other rounds to fight, and, somewhere in the unreadable future, a victory to be gained.

Therefore, sustained by a stoical philosophy, steadfast against hope or despair, Bardieff continued to work with Czettner, singlemindedly and to the best of his ability, toward the goal of contacting the spy and the ancillary goal of eliminating Dain and the woman Susan Bellows.

But he couldn't repress a sigh of regret at the thought of not writing the fitness report on Czettner. At present, there was no one he could sent it to.

Stephen Dain was in a comparable, though less delicate, situation. He had been given five thousand dollars from Special Projects with which to buy back the stolen papers, but the thief had not turned up again. There weren't even any promising leads, and this led to divided opinions in the Paris branch of Central Intelligence. These opinions were reflected upon in Washington. After considering all sides of the problem, the relevant authority in Washington sent out a directive stating that something had to be done immediately. Something was done; early one morning, Dain's presence was requested at Army Intelligence in Paris.

Two armed guards examined his credentials and took him to a receptionist, who examined his credentials again. Then the guards escorted him to the office of Colonel Nester.

Nester was a bulky man, short and red-faced, almost neckless, with close-cropped gray bristles and small, deep, very blue eyes. It was well known that Nester didn't hold with bureaucratic fumbling. He was a military man, twenty-

eight years in the service, and he didn't approve of civilians. This was not to say that he didn't like them; some of his best friends were civilians. He simply didn't approve of their tortuous way of doing the simplest and most obvious things, their insistence of finding shades of gray in the most clear-cut black and white issues, their general 'muddle-headedness. Civilians seemed incapable of going directly to the heart of a matter. Even congressmen, usually a soldier's best friend in the outside world, couldn't understand the real simplicity of most things. Although naturally sympathetic to military needs, congressmen sometimes felt impelled to talk about such vague generalities as public opinion, the easily bruised feelings of allies, the state of the budget, and other inapropos subjects. Colonel Nester couldn't understand that kind of thinking. If a thing had to be done, what was the sense of worrying about the social consequences? Especially since everything the military did was *for* society?

Nester had frequently talked these matters over with his colleagues, who, varying with their temperaments, found civilian obstructionism amusing, pathetic, inevitable, or irritating. Nester fell into this last class. He occasionally expressed his opinions very frankly, a fact which had much to do with his remaining a colonel for seven years. And he insisted upon an immediate, precise, no-nonsense solution to any problem.

It was this last quality which had brought Nester to his present position as operational head of Army Intelligence for Europe. It was well known that Nester could and would be as tough as any Red. Nester could never be accused of the vague good-heartedness, the amiable naivete, which stigmatized so many Americans. Nester could play the Commies' game, and play it better than the Commies. And after too many setbacks in too many places, this gave Nester's superiors a sensation of confidence. Nester's sector of the Cold War, at least, would not be lost through lack of effort or a misplaced nicety in the exercise of means.

"Dain," Colonel Nester said immediately, "we aren't getting results."

Dain began to outline the situation, but Nester interrupted him.

"I've read the reports. I know what has been done and what is being done. It isn't enough. We aren't getting results."

"At the moment," Dain said, "there isn't anything to do. We have to wait."

This was precisely the sort of thing that was guaranteed

to make Nester angry; this passive civilian insistence on waiting for somebody else to do something.

"You think we should just sit around? Is that it?"

"There's nothing else to do at the moment."

"Isn't there?" Nester said scathingly. "Perhaps you don't appreciate the importance of those stolen papers."

"I think I do."

"It doesn't sound that way to me. Dain, we want those papers back. Not 'it would be nice to have them back,' or 'we'll take them back if something nice happens.' No! We *want* them back. And we're damned well going to *get* them back."

"How?" Dain asked.

Colonel Nester nodded approvingly. "That's a little more like it! *How*, that's our problem. Not *when*, or if something *nice* happens, but *how!*"

"Yes, Colonel."

"Let me sum up the facts. We know that a man of probable Spanish or Latin American nationality has possession of those papers. This man is probably a sailor. We surmise that he is a free-lance spy, unaffiliated with any activist political organization. We know that he has made two attempts to sell the papers, once to the Russians and once to us. He has been frustrated at both attempts. Do you agree with that?"

Since it was excerpted largely from his own reports, Dain nodded in agreement.

"Next," Nester said, "we must predicate, to the best of our ability, the man's next move. I've had a talk about that with the planning board. It's a simple matter, really; a question of putting yourself in the other fellow's shoes and deciding what would be your best plan. Well, his best plan would be the following: to learn the names, either from newspapers or friends, of communist agents, diplomats or sympathizers here in Paris, and to contact them through an intermediary. Do you agree?"

"Abstractly, that might be his best plan," Dain said. "But I think we must allow for other possibilities. The thief hasn't got a planning board. He might do something quite different."

"Yes, he might do something different," the colonel said "but this would be his *best* plan. We can't concern ourselves with a thousand possibilities. The man might drop dead of a heart attack, that's possible too. No, we must deal with the most probable plan, and deal with it to the absolute limit of our ability."

"I think we're doing that."

"I do not. Do we have a cover on every known communist in Paris? On party members, important sympathizers?"

"That's physically impossible."

"It is not," Nester said. "I've called in Intelligence men from all over Europe. We'll cover Paris like a blanket."

"What if the thief goes to a different city?"

"That's not our concern at the moment. We must take the most probable line of action and follow it to the limit of our capabilities."

"Even if it means leaving ourselves dangerously undermanned elsewhere?"

"It will be dangerous," Nester stated, "only in the event of strong enemy activity in another sector. When that happens, we will deal with it. *If* it happens. But we will not attempt to deal with it while it remains only one of a thousand possibilities."

"We need secret service coverage over the rest of Europe," Dain said.

"I'll have to correct you on that. We need secret service coverage *at specific times*. When those times come, we will provide for them—instantly. It's an old infantry tactic, Mr. Dain, to concentrate your forces if you aim for a breakthrough, instead of dispersing them over a hundred points."

"Infantry tactics are not the same as intelligence tactics," Dain said.

"They're close enough. The rule is surely capable of many applications."

"Also," Dain said, "many of the men you're recalling are on specific and very important assignments. To interrupt them now—"

Nester waved his hand impatiently. He hated this sort of petty detail. It only obscured the main issue. "That's my decision and my responsibility," he told Dain. "I have already issued the necessary orders." The colonel hesitated over a bit of tricky phraseology. "I trust that you will accommodate yourself to this scheme? We need every trained man we can get in Paris. I've drawn up a master plan—"

"I'm sorry," Dain said.

"I beg your pardon?"

"I'm not under your command."

"Your orders are to cooperate to the fullest with Army Intelligence."

"It's a reciprocal order. Army Intelligence is also requested to cooperate with me."

"Dain, you're being obstructive. What do you propose to do?"

Dain smiled and shrugged his shoulders.

"I must know," Colonel Nester said, with unusual patience. "It has to be coordinated with the plan."

"I don't know myself," Dain said. "When there's an opportunity to do something, I'll do it. In the meantime, I'll wait."

"That's a sloppy way of working."

"Your predecessor didn't think so."

That was a sore point. Nester's predecessor, now a lieutenant general, had gone on to greater things. No such promotion was in sight for Nester.

The colonel rose to his feet. "I ought to take this up with Washington!"

"I wish you would," Dain said. "Is there anything else, colonel? Fine, I'll contact you if anything happens."

Dain left the office. The colonel sat down again, brooding on the blatant way in which civilians were losing the cold war after the military had saved their skins in the hot war.

CHAPTER 15

THEY SAT TOGETHER on a park bench in Vienna, their limbs stiff from the long coach ride across Europe. Overhead, pigeons wheeled against a desolate slate sky, and Vienna's soiled yellow and gray buildings stood like aged and indifferent sightseers behind the wide boulevards.

"No," Anna said, "I don't think you should do it."

Carlos didn't answer. He looked at the blonde woman with something not far from hatred. What did she want, this foreign woman who had attached herself to him with the remorseless ease of a burr sticking to clothing? She had helped him buy a second class ticket in Amsterdam, and she had talked to him about unimportant matters on the train to Paris. There she had gone with him, docile as a dog, undemanding and unsurprised, to live in a tiny room and wait while he plotted his scheme for riches. He hadn't minded. He was used to having a woman somewhere around. They were usually foreign, and therefore mute and without influence over him. Their voices were like the singing of birds,

enjoyable and never to be taken seriously. Women were a part of life, indispensable, but not to be valued for their individuality. All except this woman Anna, who had somehow crept deeper into the recesses of his life than any woman he had ever know except his mother.

He had let her live with him, without question. Why question a thing so natural? He had let her share that small, vital portion of his life that centered on food and bed. And one night in Paris, suicidally depressed over his failure with the American diplomat, he had told her the whole story of the Top Secret.

She had listened without comment, seemingly without comprehension, her pale hair drawn back, hands folded placidly in her lap. But she understood. Anna understood everything he said in his strange English, translating his tone and the expression of his hands even faster than the words themselves. Like him she was a foreigner, forced to listen to other people's languages. She had understood far more than his words, for the strain showed clearly on him, the strain of trying to seize a fortune from violent, quick-tempered men who killed each other for the sake of words on paper.

Carlos knew that a fugitive was like a diseased man; others heard the leper's bell and ran. But Anna had stayed with him, accepting his forced marches toward disaster, watching the unskilled novillero, possessing nothing but his cape and his courage, try to find wealth and happiness between the curving horns of the bull. She had shared her money with him, and Carlos had taken it, for that was the sort of thing which women did.

Proximity gave her courage. She had asked, finally, why he had to sell the plans.

"I want money."

"What for?"

"To buy a farm somewhere in Australia."

She had looked surprised. She had been born on a farm, she told him. Farms were filthy affairs, farms meant the guts of chickens and the entrails of cows. Why would anyone want a farm?

"Listen to me," Carlos said. "I know what a farm is. I know a farm is stupid. Do you think I love cows and chickens? Am I such a fool as to *enjoy* corn or wheat? I know what a farm is."

Then why did he want one?

Carlos struggled to tell her. With a sensation of the terrible inadequacy of his words, he spoke to her about the cities

and the ports of the world, the break-back labor, the starving man's wage, the lifetime of filth in the bowels of a machine.

"Listen to me. Do you know those buildings, those great white buildings that stand near the docks in Vera Cruz, London, New York, anywhere in the world? Those have been built because of the ships, and those buildings are kept white on my wages. In order for there to be buildings and ships we live like the filthiest Indian, we live worse. Some of us are sailors, and others push big carts of dresses in New York or dig in the mud of Tampico or wash dishes in Galveston. It is all the same. We live, it is bearable, we hope, but then we die and the hope is also dead. Can you understand what I'm talking about?"

In the dim light he thought she nodded, so he went on.

"All of them hope, the sailors and the men who farm on shares and the dishwashers and the cart pushers. I tell you I've talked to them, they have hope, they never realize they'll die. And that's just what happens. There's never enough time to do anything about their hope, and they die."

Carlos stared down at his feet. His face might have been carved from obsidian. His hands twisted together with growing tension.

"Sometimes I've sat with them, I've watched them die. And then they understand they've been cheated. Man has cheated them, and they know in their hearts that God will cheat them, too. Then those dying ones wish they could rise from the bed and smash the white buildings. They wish they could take something from life. But then it's too late. They were spoken to like children all their lives, and the soldiers of the police walked around with guns, so they thought they had too much to lose. They kept on washing dishes, and only when they were dying they realized that there was nothing to lose, nothing at all."

Carlos paused for breath. Anna sat silently, waiting.

"Do you know what men like that believe?" Carlos said. "They believe that everyone lies. The man who owns the ship, the man who owns the store, and the priest who owns the church, they lie, all of them lie. The priest talks about heaven, but do you know what these men believe? They believe there will be dirty dishes and pushcarts even in heaven. That's what God had in mind. That's why He made them practice their trade on earth."

"You shouldn't blaspheme," Anna said. "Priests can lie, but God never lies."

Carlos shrugged his shoulders. Women were filled with

strange little beliefs. They accepted what men told them, even priests, and they continued to believe even when they were dying. His mother had been a believer, she had never wavered, the priest had prayed over her, and perhaps the black flies that hovered over her face had prayed too.

"It doesn't matter what's in heaven," Carlos said. "I'm telling you what's on earth. I've seen the world and it's filled with filth and there's nothing to hope for. That's why I must become rich, so I can buy a farm."

"And then you will employ others to work on your farm?"

Carlos shook his head vehemently. "No others, only me. A farm and a rifle, that's what I want. I'll do the work of three men, but it must be entirely my own."

"You'll die like all the others," Anna said.

"That's all right, as long as I die on my own land, in my own filth."

Perhaps she agreed with him. In any event she didn't try to argue. He wanted a farm like children want the moon. And she wanted him, stayed with him, would go to a farm or to death itself with him. Not out of love; that was too luxurious a feeling for her, and too expensive for him. She stayed with him because she had met him and liked him, grown quickly used to him, because he was short and muscular and brown, feverishly alive, because he could still grin as he ran across Europe with death wadded into his jacket pocket, because he possessed in spite of himself that strange masculine ability to hope when there was absolutely nothing to hope for. Even if his dream was absurd and suicidal, the man himself was not. He had become hers, so she stayed with him.

Carlos would have scorned a marriage in a church; but Anna knew when she had become his wife. And then she gave him advice.

"We must leave Paris now."

"Anna, are you crazy? Leave this place before we sell the secrets?"

"Too many people are looking for you here. I read it in the newspapers."

Carlos had to bow before the superior wisdom of a newspaper reader. With the last of their money they had gone to Vienna, far from Paris, far from the ocean. Anna had explained her choice.

"It is a big city, like Paris, easy to hide in, and I can understand the language. It is near the countries which the Russians rule. The newspapers say there are always plenty of

Russians in Vienna. It will be easier to sell the plans there.”

Carlos had accepted her greater knowledge of the political world, but not happily. Women could talk very logically, but they always left something out. So here they were in Vienna, a cold, ruined city. They were without money, without a room, without food, and still no closer to selling the damned secrets.

As if that weren't bad enough, Anna was now opposing the only good idea Carlos had thought of.

“Listen to me,” Carlos said. “We are sitting on a bench, without food, without money. I can't just walk up to some Russian and sell the secrets, you said so yourself. It will take a few days at least. And what will we eat in that time, where will we sleep?”

“I don't want you to steal,” Anna said, as though she hadn't heard him.

“You don't want me to steal! How do you think I got the secrets?”

“That was something else. That was something important, something for the farm.”

“And how will I live to see this farm if I don't eat?”

“If you steal, they will catch you.”

“Never.”

“It will bring bad luck.”

“The only luck I've ever had has been bad. What do I care about luck?”

“Still, to risk the farm . . .”

“I thought you didn't like farms.”

“I don't, but it's as you say. It's better than anything else I can think of. Will we both go to this farm in Australia?”

“Of course, why not?”

“What will you do if you can't get money for the farm?”

“I will kill myself.”

“Promise me that you won't.”

“Of course I won't. Now let's stop this stupid talk. Sit here. I'll be back in an hour.”

Carlos was gone much longer than an hour. Anna sat on the bench in watery sunlight, among wheeling gray pigeons, watching the crowds. Policemen went by; they gave her a quick professional look as they passed. They could sense something wrong in a woman who sat alone on a bench while others went about their jobs. One policeman stopped and asked her, with ominous politeness, whether he could be of service.

"I am waiting for my husband."

Of course, she was waiting for her husband. But she had been sitting on the bench for a long time. Was this husband lost, perhaps?

"He has gone to look for a hotel room. I was tired, I said I would wait for him here."

Her clothes were still good enough. She hadn't spoken to any of the passing men, and had turned away from the few who had spoken to her. Her calmness was fatalistic, but the policeman took it for innocence.

"I hope he comes soon, madam. If I can help in any way—"

"Thank you very much."

She was an inconspicuous woman except in the eyes of Carlos and the police.

Carlos returned shortly after sunset, his eyes glittering, his shirt torn and stuffed loosely into his pants. He was nervous and happy. He had gone hunting in the market and had caught a fat purse.

"What happened then?"

"They tried to chase me."

"Your shirt?"

"An accident. I caught it on a railing."

"The purse?"

"I dropped it in a trashcan."

He showed her a respectable wad of schillings. He was a careful thief, cunning and patient, and he had waited for the right prey and the best opportunity. He detested stealing because it hurt his pride; but he was willing to make even that sacrifice for his dream.

"All right," Anna said. "We must find a hotel now, and eat a meal. And then I shall do something about your ridiculous secrets."

"You?"

"Of course me. They know what you look like. It's better if I do it, or if I hire someone—the friend of a friend of the thief."

"I can do that myself," Carlos said.

"And get killed."

"Don't be stupid."

But she convinced him of the necessity, and Carlos, with ill grace, agreed.

As they left the bench, Anna asked, "Did anyone see you when you stole the purse?"

"I suppose so. I was forced to knock down a policeman."

CHAPTER 16

SUSAN BELLOWES awoke suddenly and completely. She lay in bed with her eyes closed, dizzy from the sleeping pills, trying to remember what she had been dreaming. Dreams were very important; her analyst in New York was always interested in her dreams, and Susan faithfully jotted down the details whenever she could remember them. This time it seemed to her that a deep, distant voice had been calling her name. What else? Something unpleasant, her dreams were usually unpleasant; men flowed into animals, landscapes became alive and threatening. There was no escape from the Freudian goblins, the witches and warlocks, the shape-changers with whom she lived or from whom she fled for one third of every twenty-four hours. Eight hours a day were spent in a country of black enchantment and supernatural menace. The analyst hadn't changed that. Quite the contrary, he had gloried in it, practically gloated over it. The dreams were important, they were a step past suppression. She sometimes suspected that he was crazy. Suppression was so much easier to live with; it was unfashionable but cozy. If you could suppress, then perhaps you wouldn't have to spend a third of your time walking across a landscape that had never existed, the victim of a magic that had never taken place.

She opened her eyes, sensing at the same time the emptiness of the bed beside her.

"Dain!" she called sharply. "Where are you?"

"Right over here." He was standing in front of the bathroom mirror, knotting his tie.

"What's wrong? Has anything happened?"

"I just got a phone call from CIA."

"And I didn't hear it?"

"You didn't hear a thing. The thief has been seen in Vienna."

She got out of bed, the nightgown falling away from her shoulders. Dain finished knotting his tie. She slipped on a dressing gown, trying to restrain a shudder. The waking up afterward was always bad, especially if the man was dressed.

"Vienna?" she said.

"That's the report."

"Are they sure it's the right man?"

"No. But the description checks. I think it's worth looking into."

"Just a minute," Susan said. "I'm going with you."

"You don't have to. The man was seen stealing a purse, but the police weren't able to capture him. If they do pick him up, I could send for you."

"What makes you think I'd come? I want to go to Vienna now."

"All right," Dain said. His tone was casual; but his features were cold in the morning light, and she thought she could detect a self-conscious stiffness in his movements. Even his voice sounded unnatural. Men always liked to act as though nothing had happened, but they were never quite able to bring it off.

She dressed quickly. When she was ready, just before they left the room, she touched Dain on the hand.

"Steve. Do you despise me?"

Dain was about to laugh, but he checked himself when he saw that she was perfectly serious.

"Of course I don't. Isn't that obvious?"

She hated herself for asking. These morning quizzes were embarrassing, they were stereotyped and grotesque. But she couldn't stop herself. The words, like the syllables of an outworn and meaningless incantation, poured out.

"Are you sure? Are you really sure? The way I threw myself at you—"

"I'd call that mutual."

"But you must have ideas about women who do that. Haven't you? Honestly now, haven't you?"

"Susan, I swear to you . . ."

She heard Dain say all the proper things. He held her in his arms, he kissed her. For a moment she realized that he was shy beneath his poise, genuinely fond of her, and uncertain of himself when he entered the jungle of human emotions. But that meant nothing against the driving force of her own anxiety. She listened to the reassuring words, but they had no effect on her. The incantation always failed. She summoned all her will power and pushed him away.

"I'm ready to go now."

"Are you sure you feel all right?"

"Of course. Why shouldn't I?"

Dain didn't answer. Only analysts, who understood everything and felt nothing, tried to answer that question. She walked with him out the door.

Dain spent the rest of the day at CIA headquarters. He checked out reports of the thief been sighted in Rome, Athens and Beirut, and decided that the Vienna report was the most reliable. He left a message for Colonel Nester, found that there was no night flight to Austria, and booked two seats on the Arlberg-Orient Express. The train left at 2:20 in the morning. They had time for a leisurely dinner and a movie.

By the time they left for the Gare de l'Est, the waiters were taking in the chairs from the sidewalk cafes, and the Paris streets were almost deserted. At the station there was plenty of activity. It was just as Susan had remembered it; a huge gray structure with tobacco booths and souvenir shops stretching away into an infinity of covered distance. At any hour of the day or night, people hurried through this vast, multi-leveled cavern to the tall iron gates, behind which were the trains, the romantic ones with names like Arlberg-Orient or Treno del Sole, the common ones without any name—only a destination.

They had nearly half an hour to wait before the train took on passengers, so they walked to the waiting room, past a troop of shivering German boy scouts in khaki shorts.

In the waiting room they sat down opposite a bearded young man who slept on his lumpy knapsack. Beside him was a well-dressed man in his fifties, a rolled umbrella across his knees, reading a day-old *Express*. An attendant shuffled slowly across the room, sweeping the cigarette butts and candy wrappers. Gray tobacco smoke coiled around the brown benches. Outside, Susan could hear the hiss and grunt of a steam train. From a far corner of the station, a loud-speaker voice grumbled incomprehensible words, speaking its own strange amplifier language.

She felt warm and sleepy, very comfortable beside Dain, not at all apprehensive. She studied the people around her with only slight interest. They were crumpled on the hard benches, suspended between waking and sleeping, listlessly fighting fatigue with cigarettes and newspapers, or yielding to it and sleeping on the straight-backed wooden benches like travellers at night anywhere in the world. The room was filled with sleep, gray with it, and it was intensified by the short steady scrape of the attendant's broom across the stone floor. She could find hypnotism anywhere; in the tick of the

wall clock, the drifting smoke shapes, the dray scrape of a broom. The attendant moved past her, angular in a faded blue uniform, black leather cap pulled down hard over his closed face. He was a careless sweeper; bits of paper and crushed cigarette packs escaped the sides of his broom. He ignored them. He seemed to be shoveling a trail rather than sweeping a floor. He moved with short steps, and then she saw that his broom caught nothing at all. He glanced at her and looked quickly down again.

That was like the slow, almost imperceptible beginning of a nightmare, the first suggestion that something in the normal surroundings had changed. It was a man in a sweeper's blue uniform and black leather cap, who moved across the room like a puppet, but who only pretended to sweep.

She had thought that Dain was asleep, but when she turned to him she saw that his eyes were hard and brilliantly awake. She touched his arm, and Dain nodded. "Yes, I see it. Just pretend you don't notice."

That made the sense of nightmare complete. Pretend you don't notice, perhaps it will go away . . . But it never did. The act of observation, no matter how subtly done, always set the mechanism into motion. Now, as she watched, the old gentleman across from her folded his newspaper with a well-practiced air. His umbrella rested across his knees, the ferule pointed at Dain. He folded and re-folded his newspaper into a square he could hold with one hand. The other hand rested lightly on the handle of his umbrella. She had heard about things like knife-canes and single-shot umbrellas. But he looked so ordinary with his brown tweed suit and knit tie, his tufted gray eyebrows above a mild, empty face. Perhaps he was ordinary; some of them in the waiting room had to be ordinary.

The man in the faded blue uniform finished doing his imitation of a sweeper and leaned against his broom near the door. The bearded young man continued to sleep on his lumpy knapsack, his face in repose.

"Are you sure?" she murmured to Dain.

"Yes."

"Is it the old man with the umbrella?"

"He's one of them."

"Who else?"

"The sweeper, and the man in the blue raincoat. Probably others I haven't spotted."

The man in the blue raincoat was short and stocky, dark-jowled, villainous-looking. He sat at the end of a bench be-

tween them and the door. She should have picked him out immediately.

The wall clock ticked, and the minute hand jerked forward. It was fifteen minutes to train time. No one left the waiting room. Susan and Dain continued their whispered conversation.

"You're sure they're after *us*?"

"Yes. I know two of their faces from the files."

He had an advantage over her. He had seen those faces before, so for Dain it wasn't a nightmare."

"But why?"

"They think you're the only person who can make a positive identification of the thief. They don't want us to find him. They want to do that themselves."

"But can't we *do* anything?"

"Not yet."

The black edge of the clock's minute hand sheered off another two minutes. Two old ladies gathered up their net bags and left the waiting room. The bearded young man awoke to the sound of some internal alarm clock, rubbed his face and picked up his knapsack. He sat and adjusted the straps, not moving from his seat. So he was also probably one of them.

"In another two minutes," Dain said, "we'll leave here and go to the train."

"But what about them?"

"That's probably what they want us to do."

She wondered if Dain had a plan. His face gave away nothing. He sat in his own silence, sleepy-eyed, disinterested, his hands jammed into his pockets. The old gentleman re-folded his newspaper, and now the umbrella was pointed at Susan. Abruptly the man in the blue raincoat left the waiting room. The attendant leaned his broom against the wall and tugged his cap down harder on his head. The bearded young man glanced at the wall clock and checked it against his wrist watch. The clock gulped two minutes.

"All right," Dain said. "We're going now. Don't panic. When you get away from here, go straight to Colonel Nester at Army Intelligence. Tell him everything you know and ask him to relay it to Central Intelligence."

"Am I going to get away?"

"Of course."

"And you?"

"I'll meet you at Nester's office," Dain said. "We may have to split up."

Dain stood up and helped her to her feet. The old gentleman cleared his throat explosively and stood up. Dain and Susan walked out of the waiting room. The bearded young man finished adjusting his straps, swung the knapsack over his shoulder and followed them. One behind and one ahead. They heard the clatter of the attendant's broom. He too was walking behind them.

At the far end of the station she could see the troop of German boy scouts boarding a train. A scattering of people hurried back and forth. She and Dain walked with their retinue toward the Arlberg-Orient Express. And suddenly, horribly, Susan knew they would never be allowed to board it. They would be killed on the platform where the crowd was thinnest, by men who would drift back into the station and be gone before the police could be found and brought to the scene of the crime. As she passed the iron gates it seemed to her that this death in the gray morning hours of a Paris train station must have been ordained. The people around her—old man, bearded man, uniformed man, blue raincoat man—were figures out of a morality play, representing nothing. This was the real morality play they were performing under the blind eyes of the sooted train windows, a play without reason and without end, in which murder marked nothing more than a brief intermission. Potential players passed; a trainman with high cap and oil can, two fat men with briefcases, a hunter with his rifle in a cloth bag slung over his shoulder. She glanced hopefully at the hunter, but Dain, one hand on her arm, urged her forward. The other actors weren't cued in, they moved to the smoky wings.

Dain and Susan walked down the platform past rows of second class cars. The platform was deserted now except for their own special group. Ahead, she could see the last cars of the train, and past them, the hazy black night sky. The others saw the sky, too. They edged in like herding sheepdogs. Their actions were more obvious now, and therefore less horrible.

Dain whispered, "When the break comes, run as fast as you can."

"Break? What break?"

He didn't answer. They reached an open first class car and started to pass it. Abruptly Dain swung around and she felt his hands on her waist. She was being lifted, she was falling. Dain had thrown her up the steps into the vestibule of the train. She landed on her hands and knees, stood up quickly and looked back. Dain, tall and shadowy in gray

smoke, had turned and clutched the man in the blue raincoat and the old gentleman with the umbrella. The attendant was shouting something and trying to get past the group, which blocked the entrance to the train. The bearded young man had come around Dain's side. He was clubbing him with something shiny in his fist, swinging as methodically as a man driving nails.

She ran across the vestibule and out the other side of the train. For a moment she hesitated, looking up and down the tracks. Then, hearing footsteps behind her, she plunged toward the open night sky.

She ran for a long time, ran and fell and ran again. When she couldn't run any longer, she hid behind a row of diesel barrels.

She stayed there for the rest of the night. For a while she heard footsteps, and once a flashlight probed past her, almost catching the edge of her skirt before it moved on. But they didn't find her. Later she must have dozed off, for after sunrise a French railway detective almost stepped on her. After sufficient explanation, he took her to U.S. Army Intelligence.

She had barely enough strength to report what had happened. The railway detective could not affirm or deny her statement. To the best of his knowledge there had been no disturbance in the station last night. The Arlberg-Orient had left on schedule.

The only evidence was her torn and dirty clothing and her scraped legs; that and the fact that Dain still had not reported.

CHAPTER 17

WHEN DAIN RECOVERED consciousness, he found that he was stretched out on a couch in a dark, dusty room. The room was windowless except for a barred skylight in the sloping ceiling twenty feet above his head. There was a tender lump behind his right ear and another above his forehead. A branched stream of blood had dried on his temple and cheek. He was very thirsty and his head ached. There were raw welts on his wrists and ankles, showing that until recently he had been tied or wired.

He stretched his neck back, easing the triphammer in his skull. He flexed his numb fingers. This looked as though it was going to be a bad time.

He was as ready for it as an intelligent man could be; that meant not ready at all. Hope played very little part in his makeup. If he were inclined toward despair, he would have given up the game long ago at the sight of history ponderously serving the side he didn't work for. He was held to his profession by cold intellectual conviction; but it was the strongest bond he could have. There were no revelations in store for him, no man-made wonders to behold and worship. He had seen the People's Democracies of the east. Unlike some of his colleagues, he hadn't rejected them instantly and emotionally out of hand. Instead, he had examined them with an interest that bordered on political heresy. He had to consider himself a free agent. The expression of political freedom for Dain had been to inspect, as honestly as he could, the doctrines of his country's enemies. For him to have served in any other way would, he felt, have been robotic. And when he had finished, it was with a great relief that he chose freely to serve the political system of his own country. He liked to think that, had the circumstances called for it, he would have had the courage to change sides. But he was glad past all expression that what he had found in communist theory and practice was inalterably opposed to everything he wanted for himself and for others. The essence of his being lay in a sense of individualism that bordered on anarchy. Mass coercion and indoctrination anywhere seemed to him a perversion of more than the mind; it felt like a maniacal use of the very earth upon which men existed in such individual and irremedial profusion.

He had made up his mind. As long as he could think, he would be the man he was serving the cause he served. When he could no longer think, he would no longer be Dain. He worked without exultation, but with conviction, for the forces he believed least bad. This served as his meagre political philosophy. It suited his temperament, which was pragmatic rather than idealistic. It fitted the man, who was a dissenter rather than an affirmer. He was radically moderate, a man who killed without believing in the necessity of murder, who acted without feeling that any individual action would make a difference, who held himself responsible for anything he had done or had omitted to do, and who expected to pay for any involuntary abuses of responsibility.

During the years between OSS and the present, Dain had

become a political man, inevitably, and to his regret. He had viewed his own evolution with the deepest suspicion. He felt that too much of human importance had become merely accessory to him. He suspected a lessening of himself in the very act of trying to serve Humanity rather than humans. It was suspect, like trying to serve God or Nature, it hinted at a barrenness that could only partially be explained by natural austerity, a coldness that no political necessity could obliterate. He felt that he was less than he should be, and that his choice of work masked a man who had failed as a human.

This view of himself was not necessarily shared by others. Some, in fact, would quite vehemently oppose it. But Dain believed it, and for him that made it true.

He knew that he was not alone. He belonged to that terrible brotherhood whose best friends were machines or relics or dogmas, whose passion was for abstractions removed as far as possible from the soil which had given them birth, whose children screamed in the stratosphere or were mute in heaven. Dain could accept this state of affairs and live by it; but he didn't have to like it. Even more important, he didn't have to wish it on others.

Czettner questioned him several times during the next twenty-four hours. Czettner placed Dain as a detached and uncomfortable intellectual serving a cause without real conviction. There were arguments to use with such men, and Czettner used them. He considered it possible that with the proper reorientation, Dain could be brought around to accept a new set of conclusions about the nature and function of society. From these conclusions, a new basis for action could be laid. And Dain, alive and serving the proper cause, was infinitely more valuable than a dead and recalcitrant Dain.

Czettner pursued his goal in a textbook manner; Dain was nothing more than a puzzle to be solved, a tangle to be straightened, a set of reflexes to be conditioned. But the textbooks, coming into contact with stubborn and contradictory life, failed utterly. Dain had his own arguments, which Czettner considered irrational, but which tended to insulate the man from the force of any prosyletizing religion. No fire burned in Dain's soul at the thought of the masses; he was indifferent to the sacred course of history.

Still, Dain and Czettner had one quality in common, which they shared almost gratefully when the obligatory po-

litical discussions were out of the way. They both liked to talk shop. Dain was very interested in the manner in which Czettner had transported him from a Paris train station to this present location, which, he learned, was on the outskirts of Vienna. Czettner was only too happy to tell him. Abstract social theory had never really been his strong point.

Czettner expanded visibly as he explained the elaborate plan, the alternatives, the stage-setting. He brought out maps and showed how he had placed men here and here, automobiles here and here. Leaving Paris had been simple. Crossing the frontier into Germany and then into Austria had been a more complicated matter. The correct border posts had to be chosen, of course. After that, Czettner had relied on his bookish understanding of human nature.

Although Dain hadn't known it at the time, he had been wired and gagged and put in the trunk of a car. The car had been driven by three attractive French girls presumably on vacation. There had been no difficulties at the frontiers, and Dain applauded the plan.

When Czettner left the room for the last time, he felt a little sorry that a man as good as this had to be killed after all possible information had been extracted from him.

Bardieff entered later, smiling and mournful, bearing a bottle of wine and a box of cigars. They had met once before at the end of the Second World War, when Bardieff was an infantry major and Dain a captain in OSS. It had been at an embassy party in Berlin, and they had exchanged no more than four sentences. Since then they had heard of each other through secret service papers and intelligence reports. Their brief meeting had been enough to put flesh on the bare facts noted in the dossiers.

They sat for a while in companionable silence. Then Bardieff, examining the glowing tip of his cigar, asked Dain what he thought of Czettner.

"He's very young."

Bardieff nodded.

"And willful."

Bardieff poured out two more glasses of wine.

Dain said, "You must find him an uncomfortable sort of colleague."

Bardieff shrugged, his lips turned down. A delicate question hung in the air. Dain voiced it.

"Bardieff, will you let me go?"

"That would be quite impossible," Bardieff said, in a horse trader's voice.

"It would be eminently practical."

"Why?"

"Because," Dain said, "I would promise to kill Czettner for you."

"My friend, you must be out of your mind! Kill Czettner? What on earth for?"

"In order to save your life. And of course mine."

The question was voiced now, but unacknowledged. Bardieff said, "Dain, the wine has gone to your head. You're talking the sheerest nonsense. Why would I want to see my friend Czettner killed?"

"My information is that your chief has been transferred to the Afghanistan border. That leaves you, Bardieff, like a hand without an arm."

"Ah," Bardieff sighed, "the winds of policy."

"You've survived many changes of policy. How have you managed to do it in the past?"

Bardieff looked thoughtfully at his hands.

"Exactly," Dain said. "Are you going to refuse a useful instrument when it comes within reach?"

"Quarrels in the family are our own business."

"It's your head," Dain said.

They sat again in silence. After a while, Bardieff said, "I am not a traitor."

"I do not consider you one. The question doesn't arise."

"If you don't consider me a traitor, what makes you think I would perform a traitorous action?" Bardieff asked it solemnly, but his eyes were shining.

"This is my line of reasoning," Dain said. "Your sponsor is out of favor. Therefore you are out of favor. Your political position is now considered wrong."

"Temporarily."

"Yes. But you want to live—temporarily. Czettner and his friends will sweep clean as soon as they are consolidated. The very best you could hope for is a twenty-year sentence in a penal colony."

"I might be sent to one of the Asiatic cities as an administrator."

"That seems quite unlikely."

"Go on," Bardieff said.

"I don't question your patriotism," Dain said. "In fact, I'm relying on it. Who, in your opinion, is better fitted to serve your country? You or Czettner?"

"I am in favor of myself."

"Then you have already decided upon your course of action."

"Not so fast," Bardieff said. "What would it gain me if someone killed Czettner? That would not change policy."

"It would buy time, and you know how valuable time is. Policies change."

"Not for me," Bardieff said. "Not when I am asked why I let the prisoner Dain escape."

"You will not let me escape. Czettner will. After all, he's in charge at present. The guards are his, and the responsibility is also his. Any mistake will be considered his own fault."

"What will Czettner's mistake be?"

"A sin of pride. He has neglected to have me searched thoroughly."

"That was certainly a mistake," Bardieff said, grinning openly. "Would you require much equipment to effect an escape?"

"Very little."

"Your chances would still be slight. We are on an estate about twenty miles from Vienna. There are guards, dogs, and an electrified wire fence."

"That's all right."

Bardieff stood up. Looking down at Dain, he said, "Do you really know what you're doing? I can be more dangerous than all the Czettners in the world."

"I believe that," Dain said. "But I'll stand a better chance against you alive."

"You'll lose."

"We'll see," Dain said. "For the moment, let's concentrate on staying alive—both of us."

"That *does* seem to be the primary condition," Bardieff said.

CHAPTER 18

LATE IN THE EVENING, Czettner received good news. The thief had made contact with a minor official of a Soviet trade delegation in Vienna. The official, fortunately, had been briefed on this possibility. Following orders, he had

asked for a chance to speak to his superiors, and had agreed at once to the thief's terms for the next meeting. The official had then gone to his embassy, and the embassy had sent him to Czettner.

After a detailed questioning, Czettner decided that the matter sounded genuine. The man who had contacted the trade official had obviously not been the thief himself. He was a large, shambling man, the official had said, red-faced, dull-witted, not very steady on his feet. Obviously a heavy drinker. Probably a local petty criminal whom the thief had hired to act as contact man.

The asking price for the papers was the ridiculously low sum of five thousand dollars. Czettner agreed to this at once. The thief could ask for a million, or a hundred; it would not be paid. There was no necessity of doing so, since the thief's organization was quite apparently impromptu and easily traced. Now that a contact had been made, the papers could be regained without spending a cent.

Czettner never spent money unnecessarily. But there was a more important issue involved than the expenditure of five thousand dollars. Czettner had suffered a loss of face because of the disruption of his original plan. This could be corrected now. The thief probably thought he was safe; he would soon find out how difficult security really was. Although the next meeting was set for tomorrow noon, agents had already found the contact man drinking his wages in a bar near Esterhazy Square. They were keeping him under surveillance, but leaving him strictly alone. Unless he was much cleverer than he looked, he would lead them to the man who had the papers.

Czettner explained all this to Bardieff, sitting in the big front room of the lodge with a glass of soda water beside him. Bardieff agreed that the plan seemed excellent. In a burst of generosity, Czettner began to explain the detailed workings of the scheme. He was interrupted by the furious barking of the dobermans outside the lodge. At the same time, a guard hurried into the room to announce that the prisoner was no longer in his room.

Czettner reacted quickly. He ordered all the estate lights on, and sent the guards out with orders to shoot the man on sight. He threw a switch which electrified the fence around the estate. Then he and Bardieff went to examine the prisoner's room.

They found that Dain had escaped with ridiculous ease. He had turned the couch on its end, propped it against the

wall and used it as a ladder. With some sort of tool he had broken the lock on the barred skylight. He had cut the glass with another tool and had gone out over the roof. There he had knocked out a guard and lowered himself to the ground with a slim nylon cord which was still fastened to a chimney.

"A fantastic business," Bardieff said when they had returned to the front room. "How do you suppose he procured the tools?"

"I don't understand it," Czettner said.

"He couldn't have had them on his person," Bardieff said, in a tone of obvious disbelief.

Czettner didn't answer. His marble skin took on a slight rosy flush.

"No, no," Bardieff said. "That would be quite impossible. You had him searched, of course."

"Everything was so rushed. There seemed no necessity—"

Bardieff's expression was incredulous. "You did *not* have him searched? My dear Czettner!"

"It doesn't matter," Czettner said. "He can't escape from the estate."

"But not to search a man like that!"

"I tell you, it doesn't matter. We will recapture Dain within the hour."

"For all we know," Bardieff said thoughtfully, "he may have a pistol."

"No. He would have used it earlier."

"Who knows what a man like that would do? I think we must assume he is armed."

Czettner's lips tightened. He opened a drawer and took out an automatic. "I had better direct this hunt personally. Are you coming?"

"Of course," Bardieff said. "I was simply waiting for you."

Klaus knew that it was a vicious circle. Only alcohol in massive doses had a real effect on him, and he never had enough money for a massive dose. Even tonight, after performing a discreet and dangerous job, he didn't have enough money to achieve intoxication. They had paid stingily, that little dark foreigner and his woman; just enough money to bring on a mild haze. Not enough to turn the world into the joyous place God meant it to be.

He ordered another muscatel, noting with regret that it would have to be his last. Carl the bartender would sell

him drinks even if he lay retching on the floor; but he would not extend one schilling in credit. Still, Carl was better than most. Carl's bar was a place for serious drinking, and the prices were low. Neither Carl nor the patrons gave a damn who you were or what you did. Even foreigners liked to come here; like those three over in the corner. They had been drinking steadily all evening, ever since he had come in. They had been drinking bottled beer, and talking very little. Foreigners were strange.

Like the little man who had hired him. That man had made two promises. Five hundred American dollars if he did his work right; and an absolutely certain death if he tried any tricks like running away with the money. Hired killers were watching, the foreigner had said. A gunman on a rooftop or in a car would kill him if he didn't obey orders exactly. That was what the foreigner, speaking through his blonde woman, had said. And then they had both stared at him to see how he would take it.

Well, it was all right with him. He wasn't ambitious. Five hundred dollars was nice pay for two days' work as a messenger. He had told them that and perhaps they had believed him. Whether they did or not, Klaus knew that he would follow orders exactly. That dark nervous little foreigner looked as though he would hunt a man to the ends of the earth if he wanted revenge.

Five hundred dollars! It was a very good sum of money. He would be smart, he would let his sister keep it for him. He would tell her, "Give me this a little at a time." Of course, she might cheat him. Or worse yet, she might force him into a business. Perhaps he should put his money into a bank.

He fell into a fantasy over his empty glass. He imagined a special tavern reserved only for drinkers like himself. With absolute honesty it would administer the funds possessed by drinkers, and it would advance them unlimited credit. This tavern would be clean and pleasant, its prices would be lower than Carl's, and it would have free bedrooms for the use of the patrons. In fact, a man would never have to leave. This tavern would take care of drinkers and protect them from the cold, sober, unscrupulous jackals who preyed on a man's enjoyment.

Carl the bartender tapped him on the shoulder and looked questioningly at his glass. Carl always knew how much money a man had in his pocket. He was a lean and sober

jackal who never touched a drop, who could tell from the set of your shoulders when you had finished your last drink of the night. No dreaming over empty glasses here. Come back tomorrow with more money.

Klaus left, nodding a polite good night to Carl. The foreigners were leaving too. In fact, they were out the door before him. Outside, one of them waved goodbye to his friends and turned down a side street. The others were walking in Klaus's direction, on the opposite side of the road. They were probably looking for a place with girls.

Klaus's steps were not quite certain. He walked in a moist dream, thinking of his foundation, wondering how he could keep his five hundred dollars safe but within easy reach. Soon he was on Argentinierstrasse, and in another ten minutes he had reached his destination. The blonde woman was waiting for him in a room on the third floor of a decayed building.

"I saw the Soviet official today," Klaus said. "He has agreed to everything you asked."

"Did anyone follow you here?"

"Certainly not."

"Are you sure?"

"As I told you before, no man living can follow me through the streets of Vienna if I don't want to be followed."

The guarded expression on the woman's face didn't change. Klaus felt a secret embarrassment, and with it a dark tinge of resentment. It was true what he had told her. The police had always been following him, years ago, when he worked on the black market. They had never been able to trace him to his source. That had been a long time back, of course, during the Occupation. But he was as good a man now as he had ever been.

The blonde woman's face relaxed a little. "All right," she said. "I think it sounds all right. You'll come here tomorrow morning, then you'll meet those Russians at noon."

"That's right."

"And you won't get drunk? Tomorrow is the important part."

"I promise you I won't get drunk," Klaus said. "I'll go straight to my room now."

"And you'll come back here at nine in the morning?"

"Why so early? I don't have to see them until noon!"

"Nine o'clock," the blonde woman said firmly. "We may have to change the plan or something."

"All right."

"And as soon as it's over, there'll be five hundred dollars for you."

Klaus nodded. Suddenly he thought of the foreign men. Could they have been detectives? No, probably not. They would have arrested him by now. He decided not to mention them. If the woman knew he had been careless, she might not give him the five hundred American dollars.

Besides, it was her own fault. She shouldn't have given him any money yet. Everybody knew that.

She went to the window and peered through the curtains. She said, "There's no one in the street."

"Of course not." He was safe. The foreigners must have gone away.

Dain moved quickly away from the house, a shadow gliding among shadows. Floodlights went on; their brilliant glow produced more profound patches of darkness for him to pass through. Behind him he could hear dogs barking, and there was a tramp of heavy footsteps as the guards came out the doorway and vanished into the gloom. There were woods within fifty yards of the house, and beyond them lay the perimeter of the wire fence.

He reached the margin of the woods just as the first doberman reached him. He stopped, taking aim with the Beretta which Bardieff had given him. Then he changed his mind and shoved the gun into his belt. The sound of a shot would bring the guards directly to him. He could never expect to get over the fence in time.

The dog came for him, a black streak against gray shadow. Dain moved around a tree to break the speed of the dog's charge. Once, long ago, he had learned about the habits of killer dogs. He hoped he would remember the lessons now.

The doberman spun around and leaped. Dain leaned back against the tree and lashed out with both feet, catching the dog in mid-flight, knocking him down. Instantly Dain threw himself on the doberman, caught the forelegs and hindlegs in his hands and broke the dog's back over his knee. He slung the corpse over his shoulder and plunged on through the woods. Blood was trickling from his wrist, a scented path for the doberman's mate to follow.

The other doberman reached Dain before he had covered twenty yards. She was smaller than the first, and faster. A patch of moonlight illuminated her, a slim blotchy evil streaking across the ground. Dain dumped her mate directly

in front of her. That gave the dog something to think about. The doberman slowed long enough for Dain to club her with the butt of his Beretta. A final blow at the base of the skull finished it.

Carrying both corpses now, Dain trotted toward the fence. His fight hadn't gone unnoticed; that was too much to hope for. Flashlights probed the ground where he had been. Men were in the woods now, and Dain moved quickly until he reached the high fence that surrounded the estate.

The fence hummed. It was about ten feet high, composed of six strands of wire separated by glass insulators. It seemed to wait for him in the uncertain moonlight. The footsteps of the men were getting closer.

Dain fired two shots at random. He shoved the Beretta back into his belt, lifted one of the dogs and flung it across the topmost strand. The dog hung there. The wire sparked, and he could smell burning hair.

Dain backed away and sprinted at the fence. He leaped, using the body of the dog as a support, and vaulted over the top wire. He landed heavily on his shoulders on the other side, lay flat and massaged his numb arm.

Men were running to the fence. They had seen the blue flash, they thought he was frying on the top wire. Dain took out the Beretta and waited. Panic-stricken flashlights swept the fence, stopping when they saw the dog. The moon broke through for a moment, and Dain was able to make out Czettner's face. Steadying the gun with both hands, he fired, and knew instantly that he had missed. An answering fire from automatic weapons kicked up dirt near him. Dain backed away, crossing into a hollow. He heard the bullets flying harmlessly over his head.

He was tempted to go back for another try at Czettner, but he decided against it. The way things were going, there would be plenty of opportunity to keep his promise to Bardieff.

Still, he felt bad about it as he walked across gently rolling land to a dirt side road.

CHAPTER 19

CARLOS LAY ON THE BED, his hands clasped behind his neck, staring at the flaked ceiling. His body was in repose, an unwilling posture he had forced on it. He was worried. Already the enterprise had the smell of failure about it. This matter of selling the secrets was not going right. His plan had seemed simple and effective, the very best he could devise. Now it was unsatisfactory. The pressure of events was reshaping it, forcing him to improvise. Now he knew why most men never became wealthy. There were horrors to face in the procurement of riches.

Anna said, "It's almost noon."

"I know."

"Klaus still hasn't come."

"I know that, too."

She crossed the room in three steps and sat down on the bed beside him. Although her expression had not changed, Carlos could tell she was frightened. He was an expert on fear. He had often been witness to it, had seen it strike as dramatically as a fever. There were many kinds and types of fear, but the kind Anna had was one of the worst. It came before there was any real danger, and sometimes it didn't end until it had destroyed the ability to think. He was annoyed by her fear, afraid that he might catch it from her. He sat up abruptly.

"Klaus is not coming. I'll have to go myself."

She shook her head vehemently.

"There's no other way," Carlos said. "We shouldn't have used Klaus at all. You can't trust a drinker. He probably passed out somewhere."

"He's probably afraid."

"Shut up," Carlos told her. He didn't believe in naming things like that. Only a woman would do it. He had to move, to shake off the uncertainty that was settling on his mind. He bent down. From under the mattress he took the cheap cardboard briefcase he had bought the previous day. Anna reached out and took his wrist in a surprisingly strong grasp.

"Don't go," she said.

He tried gently to pull his hand free. "I have to do it."

"It's no good without Klaus. Wait fifteen minutes more."

"He's not going to show up."

"Then don't go. Not today. Make another plan in a few days."

"No," Carlos said. "We don't have enough money to go through it all again."

"Steal some money!"

He stared at her, slightly shocked. "You said you didn't want me to steal."

"I don't care what you do. I want you to stay alive."

He shook his head angrily. Only women talked like that. A man would be ashamed. He wrenched his hand free.

"You're going?" He nodded, and she said, "Carlos, let me kiss you goodbye."

He shook his head, it was bad luck. He gripped her by the shoulders, squeezed her, grinned at her. After a moment she smiled back. He looked affectionately around the room. In a queer way it felt like a home.

"I'll be back in an hour," he said. "Don't worry."

She wanted to tell him to be very careful, but she restrained herself.

Once outside, walking in the sunshine, Carlos felt better. His mood of uncertainty had passed, left behind in the gray third-floor room. He was moving, he could feel his body again. That gave him confidence. He was beginning to think that the whole thing would work out after all. But he wished that Klaus had showed up. He couldn't understand a man who became too drunk or too frightened to collect five hundred dollars for an hour's work.

There was a light knock at the door. Susan Bellows opened it and saw Dain smiling at her. Her first reaction was of overwhelming relief. He was alive! She could hardly believe it. She had been so certain of his death in the ghost-filled Gare de l'Est. But here he was, talking to her, and now he was drinking a Scotch and soda she had prepared for him.

He told her about how he had escaped, and she found it curiously moving to watch his face, animated and boyish now. She didn't really listen to any of the details, no more than she had when Charles and his friends had talked about the war. All that sort of thing was the peculiar province of men, their mystery of mysteries. She supposed that discussions of guns and hairbreadth escapes gave them a reassur-

ance of their masculinity. God knows, Charles had needed reassurances that a hundred years of war could not have supplied.

She became very detached. Dain's mouth moved, his hands gestured. He affected her, and she didn't like it. Her retaliation lay in trying to see the man beneath the professional veneer.

She saw a pleasant American male in his thirties, lean and sexually attractive, curiously lopsided in some ways. He had never discussed books or music with her; presumably he was uninterested in the arts. He seemed homeless and friendless, fitting anywhere and nowhere. Perhaps that was because men liked to become their occupations. Like her ex-husband, for example. Charles truly had a physicist's mind. Even his dreams had concerned fragments of matter and lines of force. He and several of the men in his lab had once built a machine designed to take in mathematical data and give consistently wrong answers on the basis of it. They had built the machine in their spare time. That was their idea of amusement. Dain, similarly, seemed to have a social life that was an exact counterpart of his business life. Lines on a map, fragments of policy, dossiers and intelligence reports, little insider jokes with the boys. Men were such idiots.

Some expression on her face must have changed, for Dain asked her what was the matter.

"Nothing at all. Would you like another drink?"

"Not right now."

"What are your plans?"

"I still have to find the thief."

"What about your Russian friends?"

"I suppose they're still around."

"And they want you dead."

Dain nodded.

Susan said, "It's all so infantile! It's like little boys playing with guns!"

"Do you really think it's like that?" Dain asked.

"Of course it is!" But she had a sudden terrible feeling that she was talking about something she knew nothing about.

"In what way?"

"Just look at yourself, running all over Europe, getting shot at, shooting at people!"

"What would you have instead?"

"A little common sense!"

"How would you implement it?"

"That's not up to me. That's up to people like you."

"If I could think of a better way," Dain said, "I'd do it."

"Would you really? Don't you think you'd feel lost without your trusty six-shooter?" She heard herself with horror; *she* was the one who sounded like a child now. But she couldn't stop. "Wouldn't you be naked without all the paraphernalia?"

"No. Why should I be?"

"To hell with it," she said wearily.

"We'll talk about it sometime," Dain said. "Right now, there's the problem of the thief."

"For you. Not for me."

He looked at her questioningly. She was glad to see that she had startled him. For the first time, he looked unsure of himself.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean I've had enough. I'm through chasing around Europe after some mysterious papers. It's simply all too silly."

"I can't force you."

"Of course you can't." She loathed him now. He was saying all the wrong things. "I want to go south to Italy or Greece. I want some sunlight."

Dain nodded. "Will you act as witness if and when we catch the man?"

"I suppose so."

There was nothing more to say after that. Dain finished his drink and left, wishing her a good trip. She was furious at him for his lack of perception, at herself for her inevitable ability to destroy what she wanted. How had it started, why had she done it? She had no idea. It was another riddle for her analyst to explore and classify.

It was almost noon. Dain took a taxi to a new building on Schwarzenbergplatz where the American intelligence services had their offices. A special agent named Haines was waiting for him. Haines had all the available information on the thief carefully collated and arranged by time sequence and order of probability. Dain removed his coat and went to work.

All the NATO countries had been affected to some extent by the loss of the American plans; therefore as a matter of course each of them had assigned men to the case. The reports of these men were often colorful, but yielded no positive information. Previous rumors of the thief being seen in

Beirut, Rome and Athens had been followed up by the Central Intelligence Agency. The results so far were negative. Army Intelligence, in cooperation with French and West German agents, was following a new story of the thief being seen and wounded in Istanbul. There were no results on that yet, but the outlook was dubious. There was a British report that a man answering the thief's description had been seen in Hong Kong. This was put aside as unlikely. An attempt had been made to tail known Soviet agents in Vienna, but it had proven unsuccessful; too many of the agents of East and West knew each other's faces.

Dain studied the carefully amassed collection of hopes, dreams and guesswork for an hour, then gave it back to Haines. Before he left, he was told that Colonel Nester of Army Intelligence would like to see him.

Nester seemed subdued, perhaps depressed. Remembering their last conversation, Dain asked him if he had called Washington.

"As a matter of fact, I did," Nester said. "Not to complain about you, I might add. I just wanted a more clear-cut directive."

"Did you get it?"

"They told me to get those papers back in any way I could, but to make sure I got them back. And they told me to cooperate with you to the best of my ability."

"That was very nice of them," Dain said.

"You've got some good friends in Washington," Nester said gloomily. "I wish I could say the same for myself. It doesn't matter, though. Washington says we have to get those damned papers back. They don't seem to realize it isn't as simple as all that."

Dain nodded. He realized that he was watching the slow metamorphosis of a soldier into an intelligence officer.

"Do you have any ideas?" Nester asked.

"Not one."

"I don't either. I'll be damned if I can think of anything else to do."

"We'll have to wait," Dain said. "There just isn't anything to do at the moment."

"I suppose not," Nester said doubtfully. He got up and paced slowly across the room. "You were in the army, weren't you, Dain?"

"The Office of Strategic Services."

"Well, that was a branch of the army." Nester paced, chewing thoughtfully on his lower lip. "Do you know, I've

been thinking of transferring back to the infantry when this case is over."

"Why?"

"I'm really starting to think this branch of the service isn't for me."

"I think you're wrong," Dain said.

Colonel Nester stopped pacing. "What do you mean?"

"You want to be where the fighting is. Today, most of the fighting is here."

Nester thought about that. He said, "That's true enough. And I thought I could do a good job in Intelligence. Get some organization into it. Get some guts into it. But I don't know . . ."

"It needs all of that," Dain said. "But it also needs a great deal of patience and flexibility."

"Those aren't exactly my strong points."

"Don't be too sure," Dain said. "Your superiors must have thought about that before they put you in here."

For the first time, Nester looked cheerful. "Dain, that shows how very damned little you know about the army. Still, we'll see, we'll see. What are you going to do now?"

"Go back to my hotel and wait for something to happen."

It was a mark of Colonel Nester's powers of adaption that he was able to keep his temper. After a moment he said, "Yes, I guess that's best for now."

CHAPTER 20

CARLOS WALKED down Wolfischgasse and stopped near the Vienna Opera House. His briefcase was tucked tightly under his arm. A sightseeing bus had parked nearby, and a thin, sad-eyed man was addressing a group of tourists. Carlos walked past them and came to a fluorescent hole in the ground which spewed people out by escalator. A sign above the entrance read "Opernpassage." He rode the escalator down and looked carefully around the arcade beneath the street.

He had picked this place himself. There were six exits from the Opernpassage, and a circular restaurant in its center. Shops lined the outer wall, and the place always seemed to be crowded. From his limited knowledge of Vienna, he

had been unable to find a safer or better place for the meeting.

He circled the glass-fronted restaurant, staying near the outer wall of the arcade. Now he wished he had chosen a meeting place outdoors, in the air, in a park perhaps. But that would have been dangerous. It was better to do the business here, in this crowded underground place with too many people and stale air. When it was completed he could have a lifetime of air, his own air; there would be a solid column of air rising above his own land.

There was the man he was supposed to meet. He was sitting at a little table inside the restaurant, wearing a white carnation as Carlos had insisted. He was young and handsome, and he looked like an undertaker with his white carved face rising above a dark necktie. Another man sat at the table with him, an older man, round-faced, with very good posture. That was all right, that had been agreed on, too. The older man carried a small black satchel. So far everything was fine except that he was doing the business himself instead of the drunken Klaus.

Carlos looked at the tables near them. He saw two teen-aged boys and a girl drinking coffee and arguing. Just past them, a bearded young man with a knapsack on his shoulders was nodding to sleep over a glass of beer. On the other side, two men sat at different tables and read newspapers. One of them looked like a truck driver. The other was old and well-dressed and carried a tightly rolled umbrella.

Everything seemed all right. Carlos entered the restaurant and sat down opposite the man with the carnation.

"This seat is not occupied?" he asked.

"Not for another half hour," the man with the carnation answered.

That was correct. Carlos had been told about passwords by Anna, and he had insisted on having one. Now he knew that these were the right men.

A waitress came over, and both men ordered coffee. Carlos also ordered coffee. He was surprised to find that his heart was racing. The two men looked calm and slightly bored, as was proper for the representatives of a great power. They probably bought secrets often; it must be a regular business with them. A regular business! He had the feeling that this might turn out all right. Important men either do business with you or refuse immediately. These Russians were surely too rich and important to bother trying to steal back the se-

crets without paying. But if they did try, he was ready for them.

"Have you brought the papers?" the younger man asked.

Carlos nodded. "The money?"

"Of course." The older man tapped the black satchel. He looked as though something amused him, and Carlos decided at once that he didn't like that man. He wasn't going about this in a serious, businesslike way like his friend with the carnation.

"Shall we exchange?"

"Yes," Carlos said. He passed over his briefcase and received the black satchel. He opened it. There was nothing inside but packaged strips of newspaper.

The young man with the carnation was glaring at him across the table. He had put down the briefcase after a quick look at the blank sheets of paper inside. The older man was smiling.

"What is this?" the young man with the carnation asked. He sounded genuinely indignant.

Carlos shrugged. "I did not bring the papers. You did not bring the money."

The young man tried hard to control his temper. "Obviously we must see the papers first before we can pay. How did we know you wouldn't run away with the money and leave us with nothing?"

"That was exactly my problem," Carlos said sadly. He felt resigned to difficulties now. Business was very hard without trust.

"My friend has the money on his person. We are still prepared to pay. Where are the papers?"

Carlos gave him a broad grin. "In a safe place."

"You have them with you?"

"Of course not. Pay me and I'll bring you the papers."

The young man shook his head. "How can we trust you?"

"There is no other way," Carlos said. "You are men of a great government. You have many soldiers, much influence all over the world. I have only me. So you must trust me if you want the papers. I promise that as soon as you pay me—"

"No. We will go get the papers now."

Carlos glanced down, following the direction of the young man's eyes. He saw that the older, smiling man was holding a little gun in his lap. The gun had a curious barrel.

"It is silenced," the young man said. "Don't act foolishly. We are prepared to shoot."

Carlos looked at the older man. Yes, that man was certainly prepared to shoot.

"There would be no more than a click," said the young man. "You would double over with a pain in your stomach. We, your friends, would assist you outside. It would be very easy."

"Yes," Carlos said.

"Will you tell us where you have hidden the papers?"

"If I do, will you pay me?"

"Of course."

Carlos knew that the young man lied. He made a gesture of resignation. "Then I will have to trust you."

"Where are the papers?"

"I will take you there."

The older man didn't like that idea. He seemed ready to argue the point, but the young man shook his head. They stood up. The older man had the little gun concealed in the folds of his raincoat. The young man paid, and they started out the door. As they passed, the bearded man with the knapsack woke up abruptly.

Carlos stopped. "I have left my briefcase."

"You won't need it."

"I will. Without it, I won't be able to find where I put the papers."

While they were thinking about that, Carlos took three steps back into the restaurant and picked up his briefcase. "Thank you," he said. The knife in his sleeve slid into the palm of his hand. He turned and flung the knife at the older man's heart.

The man was amazingly agile. He started to move as Carlos's arm went back. The knife caught him solidly in the left shoulder, too high for a fatal wound. Carlos followed the knife with himself. He burst through the men at the door and ran toward the nearest exit. Behind him, he heard a woman scream. Then he was at the top of the escalator and hurrying into the crowds along the Opernring.

The policeman arrived at the restaurant in the Opernpassage with amazing promptness; fortunately, as it turned out, for the foreigners seemed to have an almost morbid dread of publicity. They didn't even want to press charges at first. But, as the policeman pointed out, a knifing in Vienna in broad daylight simply couldn't be ignored. The man who could commit such a crime had to be extremely dangerous.

For the public good, it was necessary for anyone who had observed the knifing to bear witness.

The foreigners—Russians, as he found out—saw his point at once. But perhaps matters like this were handled differently in Russia, for these men wished merely to make a short statement and be gone. That, of course, could not be allowed.

The policeman was slow and thorough. He wrote down their names and addresses in his notebook, examined their passports, and then asked for an account of the crime.

The older man, Herr Bardieff, gave it. Holding a bloody handkerchief to his shoulder, Bardieff explained that the man had asked permission to occupy the empty chair at their table. They had let him. He had sat down, and almost immediately had tried to pick a fight.

“Without provocation?” the policeman asked.

“None that we were aware of,” Bardieff said. “I think the man was slightly out of his head. He wanted to argue politics.”

“And then?”

“We rose to leave. We did not care to discuss politics. The man muttered some abuse. Then, quite unexpectedly, he threw this knife.”

Bardieff handed the policeman a bone-handled, spring-blade knife.

The policeman said, “You should not have handled it, sir. We might have recovered fingerprints.”

“Forgive me,” Bardieff said. “I found it uncomfortable in my shoulder.”

“Of course, I beg your pardon.” The policeman scribbled hastily in his notebook. “Would you be so kind as to give me a description of the assailant.”

“He was of average height, dark-haired, tanned. He had a moustache—”

“No, he didn’t,” a middle-aged American woman said from the crowd. She stepped forward, her handbag clenched firmly in both hands. “I saw the whole thing. As a matter of fact, I screamed.”

“Did you see the assailant’s face?”

“I certainly did. He practically ran over me.”

“What did he look like?”

“Well, he didn’t have any moustache. And he was very short.”

“Ridiculous,” Czettner said. “We were at the same table with the man. He had a moustache.”

"He didn't," the woman said.

9 A young man with a knapsack on his back came forward.

"I saw the man, too. I was at the next table."

"Did he have a moustache?"

"Oh, yes. And I would say he was well above medium height."

"You couldn't have really looked," the woman said.

"Are there any other witnesses," the policeman asked.

No one in the crowd answered. An old man with a rolled umbrella cleared his throat explosively, but did not step forward.

"All right," the policeman said. "I request you four to come with me to the station house and make a full statement."

The woman looked indignant. "But I've already made my statement."

"It's true," Bardieff murmured. "We really have nothing more to add."

"I'm sorry, it is the law," the policeman said. "There must be an official statement made up and typed, then signed by each of you. Come, you wouldn't want a maniac to be running around loose?"

"Of course not," Bardieff said. "I will join you at the station house as soon as I have had my wound attended to."

"You must have the kindness to permit our police surgeon to do that."

"It isn't necessary. We have our own doctor in the embassy—"

"But your embassy is a long way from here," the policeman said. "The station house is less than a block away."

Czettner said, "Officer, I will appear at the station house in two hours. I have some very important business to take care of first."

"So do I," said the man with the knapsack.

The policeman shook his head. He was used to this sort of behavior from witnesses. "No," he said, "we must go right now. You will be detained only an hour."

"An hour may ruin my business," Czettner said, almost to himself.

By now, three more policemen had come into the Opernpassage.

"I think it will be all right," Bardieff said, bowing to the inevitable. "Besides, it would be unnatural for us not to make an official statement."

"Exactly," the policeman said. "And perhaps it will take less than an hour."

He led his four witnesses to an exit. The well-dressed old man with the rolled umbrella watched them for a moment, then went to a different exit. The crowd slowly began to break up.

CHAPTER 21

ALMOST IMMEDIATELY, Carlos heard police sirens coming from both ends of the Opernring. He slowed to a walk. Twenty feet ahead, a policeman emerged from the Opernpassage and walked purposefully toward him, scanning faces in the crowd. Carlos turned around. He saw the old man with the rolled umbrella, not walking, standing and peering into the crowd. Carlos moved away from him and joined a group of sightseers clustered around a guide at the entrance to the Opera House.

"The present building was erected in 1778 during the last years of the reign of the Empress Maria Theresa . . ." The guide was a middle-aged woman, stocky in flat shoes and floppy hat, with a yellow no-nonsense face. She told them about the Opera House, and several sightseers began taking pictures of it. Watery spring sunshine glistened on the black Rolleis and Leicas. Carlos edged deeper into the group.

Standing next to him was a man in a corduroy jacket with two cameras slung around his neck. He had a small, carefully trimmed moustache, and he looked like an American. His wife was beside him, a woman with a sweet, non-descript face, blinking at the building through thick glasses. The man said to Carlos, "What do you think of it?"

"Very nice," Carlos said.

"You don't like it?"

"I know very little about buildings."

"I know a hell of a lot about them," the man said moodily. "This one isn't worth photographing."

The guide said, "Just one moment, ladies and gentlemen. Your attention, please."

Everyone looked up.

"I am sorry to say that several people have joined us who do not belong to this group. I must ask them if they will please move back."

Carlos stood his ground. After a moment, two men and a woman walked away.

"Thank you," the guide said. "I did this only because it is difficult for our own group to hear me when there are too many. You have paid me, you have the right to hear me. Now we will return to the bus, please. Our next stop is St. Stephen's Cathedral."

Carlos went with the group. The guide stood at the door of the bus watching the tourists file in. Hardly daring to hope, Carlos walked past her. He was among the last to board, and he saw that the bus was half empty. The guide was paying no attention to him. She had accepted a cigarette from the bus driver and was saying something to him in German.

"I guess she'll make sure we get our money's worth," said the man in the corduroy jacket.

"I think she will," Carlos said.

"What part of South America are you from?" the man asked in good Spanish.

Carlos swung around in his seat. The bus had started.

"I am from Bolivia."

"Thought so!" the man said. He nudged his wife. "Didn't I tell you? Bolivia or Peru. It's the accent."

"Are you a language expert?" Carlos asked.

"Hell no, I'm an engineer. Spent three years in South America. Learning Spanish was bad enough, but when it came to Indian dialects—"

"Very difficult," Carlos said. He didn't want to talk about Indian dialects. Desperately he said, "I have lived many years in Africa."

"Well I'll be damned," the engineer said. "I've spent some time there myself. What part?"

Carlos could feel his mind going numb. "Zanzibar," he said. He had worked on a ship which had put in there once.

"Never got over to East Africa," the engineer said. "What was it like?"

"Hot. And dirty."

"Yeah," the engineer said sadly, "I thought it was probably like that."

He settled back in his seat. The guide was pointing out the sights they passed. Carlos watched and calculated the direction they were going. Later he consulted the American's map, which showed the places covered on the tour. It worked out very well. He would leave them at Mariahilfe, only a few blocks from where he wanted to go. When his business

was completed he would strike out to the southeast, toward Turkey. He had eluded the Soviets, the Americans and the Austrians during the first dangerous hour. Now he had no doubt that with proper precautions he could elude them all indefinitely. He was beginning to feel good. He had stolen many things in his life, but this was the first time he had ever stolen a guided tour.

Susan Bellows had friends throughout Europe, but none of them were in Vienna at present. Still, she knew where to go to make new friends. At the bar next to American Express she fell into conversation with a languid, amiable American named James Blake. He was an art dealer in Europe on his annual buying trip, and he had found very little worth purchasing this time. The really good furniture had vanished years ago, the paintings were growing scarcer. There was plenty of second-rate stuff, profitable to handle, but esthetically uninteresting. It looked as though he would have to go into Greece to make the trip at all satisfactory; and his stomach couldn't tolerate the food south of Vienna.

He wasn't much, but he helped her fill the afternoon. They left the bar and strolled toward Stephansplatz. Blake pointed out the sights with the air of a man passing a five-and-ten-cent store window. He was tired of Vienna, and the American embassy had refused to grant him a visa to Budapest.

"What's that?" Susan asked.

"St. Stephen's. Some of the best stained glass in Europe."

They walked past the guided tours which crowded around the entrance. She was depressed by the sight of all those people dipping themselves in culture in the hope that some of it would stick. Still, what else was there to do? Sight-seeing was horrible, but it was what Europe was there for. One did penance to culture by walking for miles on tired feet, staring at cracked paintings hung along miles of corridors in the Prado, the Louvre, the Royal Academy. If only one could meet the people . . . But who the hell wanted to meet the people? The people were worse than their culture; unstable, self-satisfied little monsters who loved their Europe under glass. What do you think of our European music, art, architecture? All slightly moldy. She didn't want to meet the people. All she ever met was distorted reflections of herself.

"What's the matter?" Blake asked. Susan had stopped suddenly.

She had caught a glimpse of a short man with coarse black hair standing in a crowd of sightseers. Before he turned away, the edge of his profile had been familiar.

"If he's a friend of yours," Blake said resignedly, "I suppose we could go up and say hello."

The sightseers were entering the cathedral.

"It doesn't matter," Susan said. "Where are we going?"

"There's a pretty nice bar not far from here. By the way, are you free this evening?"

"Absolutely."

The last of the tourists had passed through the cathedral's high bronze doors. The short man went in with them. She couldn't be sure if he was the same man she had seen in London.

"What about that drink?" Blake asked.

"Lead on," she said.

CHAPTER 22

"YOU'RE SURE?" the woman asked.

"Certainly, madam," Bardieff told her. Czettner gave a stiff little nod of agreement. And the young man with the knapsack said, "Don't you remember now, ma'am? That guy definitely had a moustache."

She turned away from the three witnesses. They watched her, and the policemen in the musty station house also watched. The duty sergeant, behind his tall, paper-littered desk, stared at the ceiling and absentmindedly stroked his own moustache.

She had given her occupation as schoolteacher, primary grades. She prided herself on her keen powers of observation and her excellent memory. She had led her classes on numerous walks through the sparse Connecticut woods, pointing out the bob-white and the whippoorwill—unerringly. She had taken several hundred pictures of Europe on her last vacation, and had been able to identify them all years later, quickly, easily. Her students liked her; only those bigots on the School Board complained that she was absent-minded and eccentric. And they did that simply because she was new in the town, simply because she needed six more months for tenure. Only six more months! If she was careful, if she was

discreet . . . And here were two Russians and an American college boy insisting that the man had had a moustache. Their identification was wrong. If she left it uncorrected, a dangerous maniac might escape. But if she persisted against the certainties of three men, might not her name get into the newspapers? Would anyone hear of it in Connecticut? She had stuck to her views too often in the past, and she had had to change jobs too often. Now, although the spirit sometimes rebelled, all she wanted was peace, quiet, and tenure.

"It must have been a very small moustache," she said. Compromises always began in a small way.

"Exactly," said the young American with the knapsack. "It was sorta a hairline moustache."

"That is what I would call it," Bardieff said. And Czettner curtly nodded agreement.

The American said, "Do you remember now, ma'am?"

No more difficulties, she told herself. "Yes, I do remember. I'm afraid I'm a little absentminded."

"Not in the slightest, madam," the older Russian said. "Memory is a tricky thing, and identification after the event is very difficult. I would not remember the moustache if the man had not been sharing our table."

She nodded, she was grateful to him. He seemed like a nice man. She had always felt that the Russians were ordinary people just like the rest of us, if only you could meet them away from their rulers.

"Then that's it," Bardieff said to the sergeant. "We all agree that the man had a moustache. He was of medium height, perhaps slightly taller than medium—"

She didn't remember that at all. But it was too late to disagree.

"—and he spoke with a foreign accent."

"Could you place the accent?" the sergeant asked.

"Definitely Italian. I'm sure of it," Bardieff added, "because I spent some years in Italy. It's all in my statement."

"Do you agree?" the sergeant asked Czettner.

"Yes. He was Italian."

"Is there anything else you can think of? Very well. Madam, would you care to amend your written statement in regard to the moustache?"

She changed it where the sergeant indicated, then signed it. The rest of them signed their statements.

"There is an excellent chance of catching the man," the sergeant said. "I can't make any promises, of course. But the chances are good." He handed the statements to a police-

man. "Now sir," he said to Bardieff, "please permit me to have your shoulder attended to."

Bardieff smiled and shook his head. "Thank you, no. It is only a scratch."

"Scratches can become infected."

"I'll paint some iodine on it later."

"But we would feel remiss if you didn't allow us to do this," the sergeant said. "Our police surgeon is here in the building, just down the corridor. I would take it as a personal favor if you would let him look at it."

Bardieff realized that the sergeant was worried about the possible effect of this incident on Russo-Austrian relations. The man should have been a diplomat! Smiling, Bardieff refused.

"I'll have our doctor at the embassy look at it. Don't worry, sergeant. No possible blame can be attached to Austria or the Austrian police."

The sergeant looked grateful. Czettner had difficulty concealing his distaste for Bardieff's tactics. Anything, no matter how small, should be used to increase the tensions already implicit in a bourgeois society. It was axiomatic—among those who had not forgotten the real nature of the class struggle.

The sergeant came down from his desk and shook hands with them all. He walked with them to the door of the station house. The young American waved cheerfully and walked toward the Opernring. The schoolteacher hesitated, then went the same way. Bardieff and Czettner walked in the opposite direction, toward Maria Theresien-Platz.

"And now it's too late," Czettner said.

"Perhaps not. If the others did their work properly—"

"Even if they did, it will make no difference. Those damned policemen! The thief is probably across the border into Switzerland by now."

"That would be wisest for him," Bardieff said. "But thieves rarely do the wisest thing. We must count on their innate stupidity. Come, Czettner! The game is far from lost. You and I have some serious business which calls for our undivided attention."

Czettner looked into Bardieff's clear, frosty blue eyes. He nodded. Yes, there was serious work to do, and no time for personal rivalries. At a time like this, united in purpose, he felt almost an affection for Bardieff. It was too bad the man was being sent home next week.

CHAPTER 23

THE JUKE BOX PLAYED "Zigeuner." The bartender, gemütlich in flowing fair moustache and leather apron, served two more Gibsons. On the panelled walls were frescoes showing scenes from Strauss operettas. The ashtrays were shaped like little woodsmen's cottages. Susan Bellows, with her fourth Gibson for the day clutched in her hand, looked steadily at her companion.

"Is anything wrong?" Blake asked.

"I don't like your hands."

"My hands?"

"They haven't any hair."

Blake laughed nervously and rubbed his hands together. "Have another drink."

"Wanna drink me into bed?"

"Good lord!" Blake said. "I just thought you might enjoy another drink." He lit a cigarette in order to have something to do with his hands. Since college days, he had been taught that the quickest and surest, if not the neatest, way of bringing a young lady to bed was through the judicious administration of liquor. On the part of the administrator this required an extremely careful regulation of one's own drinking; like tasting poison to assure the victim that the potion was perfectly safe. Without careful regulation, Blake was apt to find himself unable to perform once the desired moment had been reached. With a certain coarse type of woman, this could result in shocking language and horrifying accusations quite damaging to an already fragile ego. Blake had long ago accepted, with melancholy, these hazards to the cold-blooded pursuit of seduction.

"I'm having another," he said. "What about you?"

"Pour on, MacDuff," Susan said. "Pour me a drink with your hairless hands."

Blake smiled, inwardly wounded. He was hairless all over; perhaps this time it would be best not to . . . But Susan had suddenly clapped him on the shoulder. She was peering into his face with disconcerting green eyes half hidden by a sweep of smooth blonde hair.

"I think you're all right, Blake," she said. "You're a

bloody shocking heathen, but you broke a British square.”

“Right-o,” Blake said, and took a tiny sip from his Gibson. Susan had finished her fourth and started on her fifth.

But she was not drunk, and decidedly not amorous. Whenever she bedded with a man she did so cold sober, faintly amused, faintly repelled, but above all, fully conscious. She used liquor for an entirely different purpose; as an excuse to release certain hostile tendencies. Her analyst had pointed this out, but so far had not effected a change.

“Yes, Blake,” she said, “I think maybe you’re all right.”

“Why don’t you call me Jim?”

“I wouldn’t call a dog Jim. Have another drink, Blake. You’re filthy sober.”

All hope of seduction gone, Blake swallowed half his Gibson. Then Susan was leaning over him, her warm and joyously rounded left breast pressed into his hairless right arm.

“Blake, what do you think about life?”

As casually as possible he transferred his drink to his left hand. Hope began to flicker again. “Life? That’s rather a big order—”

“Don’t give me that. You’re a man of arts, you oughta have an attitude on *life*, for chrissake.”

“Well, of course.” She was pressing even more firmly against him. Was it possible she didn’t realize it? Women sometimes didn’t.

“OK,” Susan said. “Let’s hear what you think about life.”

“It seems to me,” Blake said, as lightly as he could, “that life is the avoidance of pain.”

“*That’s* what you think life is? Blake, you disappoint me.”

Blake was astonished to realize that he suddenly felt like punching her in the nose. But the breast, promising pleasures unspeakable, was still against his arm, almost in the crook of his elbow.

“You know what life is?” Susan asked. “I’ll tell you. Life is a runty little black-haired man scurrying across Europe. What do you think about that?”

“It’s a very interesting image.” He eased his arm across the back of the booth. Centimeter by centimeter he lowered his arm to rest upon her shoulder in carefree camaraderie.

“That’s what life is,” Susan said. “You know the man I saw at that big church?”

“St. Stephen’s?”

“Yeah. Where do you think that man is now?”

"How on earth should I know?" Blake asked. His arm was resting on her shoulder. She was sitting close to him, thigh to thigh. The self-conscious undergraduate manual of seduction opened before his eyes.

"Use your head," Susan said. "He was with a guided tour. Where would the tour be now? I'm serious, Blake!"

Blake always tried to humor a lady's whims. He concentrated. "Let's see, that was about an hour ago. Those tours usually circle the city in two hours. The Opera House, the Rathaus, the Messeplast—"

"I know you're an experienced traveller, Blake. *Where* exactly would he be?"

"Probably at the old church on Mariahilfe. I believe it was built just after the first siege by the Ottoman Turks—"

Susan stood up. "Drink up, me lad."

"Susan, I really don't think—"

She bent over him and took his face in her hands. "Blake, you don't realize it but the fate of all Europe, nay of all Christendom, rests in our hands. I am a lady operative disguised as a drunk. We must find that nondescript little man and send word to headquarters. If we fail, I can't answer for the consequences."

Blake paid and accompanied her. She was playing some crazy sort of game; but he knew that most games ended in bed.

He hailed a cab. In ten minutes they were driving through the granite slums of Mariahilfe, to the church, squat and round like a watch tower, set back from the street and dwarfed by the huge new Osterreichesches Museum. In front of the church a crowd of tourists reverently read their light meters. A guide recited past glories.

"Built in 1532 to commemorate the victory of Maximilian over Suleiman and his Turkish hordes, this structure occupies a section of what was the old wall around Vienna. Please observe the slit windows—"

"Blake," Susan said, "You are a genius. The organization has need of you."

"Do you see him?" Blake asked.

Susan walked around the crowd, ignoring the marked displeasure of the sad-faced little guide. She stopped, and her face lost animation.

"He isn't here."

"It was only a guess," Blake said. "His tour might be somewhere else."

"Of course it is. I'm a damned fool."

"Oh well," Blake said, putting his hand lightly on her shoulder. "I'm sure—"

"Wait a minute!" Susan said.

Another party of tourists was coming out of the church, led by a large woman in a floppy hat. Susan gripped Blake's arm fiercely.

"He's there! That's him!"

Blake nodded. He wasn't impressed by the dark little man. Susan certainly had some strange friends and some bizarre tastes.

"Do you see that?" she asked. "He's walking away! He's leaving the tour!"

"I don't blame him," Blake said.

"I'd better not lose sight of him. Look, I'd appreciate it very much if you'd go to the nearest telephone and call Stephen Dain. Have you got that? Stephen Dain."

"Now just a minute—"

"Dain's staying at the Excelsior Hotel. If he isn't in, U.S. Army Intelligence should be able to reach him."

"Susan—"

"Tell him where I am. I'll be following that man, so he'll have to look around for me."

It reminded Blake of Hell Week at NYU. Phone this person, go up to that person, beg a hundred pennies before dawn. He said, "Susan, I'm not going to do anything of the sort. Don't you think this joke has gone far enough?"

"We're wasting time! I'll lose him!"

"Susan, did you hear me?"

She turned and gripped him tightly by the lapels. "Blake, do this for me. I swear it's no joke. That man is really a criminal."

Blake looked dubious. "If this is some sort of silly trick—"

"Thanks, Blake! Stephen Dain, Hotel Excelsior. I'll meet you tonight in the Hungary Bar. Around nine."

She hurried off in the direction the dark little man had taken. Blake stood in front of the church, his hands deep in his pockets. Why did he always get mixed up with women like that? What was he going to get out of it? Tonight at the Hungary Bar . . . Yes, there was always hope. He could call up very casually, pretend he was in on the joke. What was the man's name again? Somebody at the Excelsior Hotel. He walked slowly away from the church.

CHAPTER 24

VIENNA WAS FILLED with churches. This one at Mariahilfe reminded Carlos of a prison. He stayed at the rear of the crowd as it came outside into the gray slate courtyard. The guide, her hat pushed back, was saying something about frescoes. The American engineer and his wife had moved to the front to hear her.

Carlos looked around once, quickly. People passed on the street, and a pretty blonde girl was arguing with a man. It looked all right. He was on Mariahilfe, and the tour was as close as it would come to where he wanted to go.

He slipped away into a side street, walking easily but prepared to run. Already he felt safer in the maze of narrow streets and courtyards. This was the kind of section in which he felt at home anywhere in the world.

First he had to visit the drunken Klaus. There was no avoiding it. But immediately after that, he and Anna would get out of Vienna. It was no place for him, this cold dead city far from the sea. He had angered the Americans, the Soviets, and now the Austrians. The Austrians were nothing, but it was there country. The Americans might not kill him, but they would surely lock him up for a long time. The Soviets would kill him.

He came to Klaus's street and walked to the third cellar door on the left. He entered quickly, stopping just inside the entrance until his eyes became accustomed to the gloom. On one side was a furnace, its peeling white arms clasping the low ceiling. On the other side, just past the coal bins, was Klaus's room. Klaus lived in it without paying rent, in return for helping the janitor.

"Klaus?" Carlos called, standing in front of the door to his room. There was no answer. He knocked, then pushed the door open.

A single window set at street level allowed a dirty gray light to filter into the room. By it, Carlos saw Klaus lying against the wall with his mouth drawn petulantly down, his eyes half closed. He looked completely drunk.

"Wake up!" Carlos shouted. But when he bent down to shake him, he saw that a knife protruded from Klaus's neck.

The knife was bone-handled and narrow in the blade, very much like the knife he had left in the Russian. This one had been driven hard into the windpipe, and Klaus's chin rested on the handle.

Carlos jumped back and whirled around. He listened, but there didn't seem to be anyone else in the cellar. They had done their work and gone.

He examined the room. It had been quickly and savagely torn to pieces. The cot had been slashed apart, and each of its wooden legs had been broken. Klaus's few possessions, which he had kept in a cardboard box, were scattered over the floor. The oil lantern had been smashed, as well as the naked overhead light bulb. Klaus's clothing had been cut apart, searched and flung down. They had reasoned better than Carlos had anticipated. They had expected to find the papers here.

It was necessary for him to move quickly and surely now, but Carlos felt paralyzed and without strength. Klaus stared at him through half open eyes. Carlos said, "Klaus, it would have worked out if you had been careful and stayed sober. Five hundred dollars for you. Klaus, you idiot, I was going to take you to my farm, you and me and Anna. The farm was worth more than anything, more than a hundred thousand dollars. Klaus, you fool!"

He cursed the dead man until he couldn't think of any more curses. Then he tried to close Klaus's eyes, but the eyelids wouldn't stay down. After that, with considerable embarrassment, Carlos mumbled a prayer over the corpse. He wasn't a religious man himself; he knew all that sort of thing was nonsense. But perhaps Klaus had been a believer. He wiped his hands on his pants, looked around the room again, and went to the shattered light bulb.

Gently he unscrewed it. Inside, folded into the socket, were the secrets he had copied onto onion-skin paper. He had burned the originals days ago. Those men had searched well, but they had not looked behind a broken light bulb.

He found another bulb under Klaus's bed, put the papers back in the socket and screwed in the bulb as far as it would go. It wouldn't light, of course, and now there was no Klaus to guard it. But he had no other place to put the papers, and he didn't dare carry them on his person. With luck, they wouldn't be found for a few days more. They were his final hope if everything else went wrong.

He wiped his hands again and looked sadly at Klaus. The Austrian police would probably blame him for this. It had

been clever of the Russians to use a knife. He had to go to Anna at once . . .

But if they had known where to find Klaus, they must also know where Anna lived. Klaus had visited Anna several times. He must have been followed. Therefore it was impossible to go to her. She would have to do as well as she could. Now, right now, was the time for him to leave for the nearest border.

He cursed himself for an idiot, because he knew he couldn't do that. What would they do to her? He couldn't just leave that placid blonde woman to take whatever happened. Even though the world was full of women, this one had become part of his dream, part of his life. He hadn't been able to help Klaus, who had died because of him. He had to try to help Anna.

He knew, as he left the cellar, that he had doomed himself. But he refused to think about it. He would get Anna out of the room, they would leave Vienna separately, they would meet in Turkey. He could still do it, they hadn't killed him yet.

CHAPTER 25

ANNA SAT ALONE in the hotel room with an unread fashion magazine on her knees, staring vacantly at a discolored blotch on the wall. Carlos had been gone for nearly three hours, and fear had taken his place. Fear, the exact size and shape of a small, black-haired man, crept around the narrow room showing its new wounds and begging for Christian burial. Fear proved the folly of resisting a world which killed the presumptuous.

She had known it, she had told him so, but men never listened. She had known the end from its beginning, and she had been determined to stay as she had always been—uninvolved, passive, uncaring. There was safety in that posture of the mind, laboriously learned, cunningly preserved in spite of all the rages and passions of men. She had kept herself for herself. Implicit in her amiable, dull-surfaced passivity was the hidden resistance of meagre emotional equipment kept carefully detached, a jewel of high value only to herself.

But now fear had crept under the door to take Carlos's place, and the shadow of death had stroked her with cold fingers, lain beside her in the bed, stripped away her defences like so many articles of clothing which outlined what they were meant to conceal. Life had produced a wound in her soul which had mercifully scabbed over; and death the fine surgeon had picked the scab away. Now, much too late, she was helplessly and terribly in love with a foreigner who thought he could match his wits and his turbulent vitality against a world which endlessly swallowed the energy and dreams of men. Like all good things, love had come too late. But even now, waiting for word of Carlos's death, she could not regret her sudden vulnerability. She promised herself that she would never regret it.

And then, disconcertingly, Carlos was in the room, as suddenly as a jack-in-the-box, grinning, peering around, coming quickly to the bed and pulling her to her feet.

"Listen to me, Anna, this is important. You must leave this room at once. You must go to Istanbul and wait for me."

"Istanbul? Why Istanbul?"

"I've been there on a ship. It's a good city."

"What happened?"

"That drunken Klaus is dead. Nothing else. You must leave at once."

"With you?"

"No, it's safer if we go separately. I still have some business here."

She understood what he meant and pulled him fiercely to her. She could not deny herself a moment of loving Carlos in the flesh before the long weary years of loving him as a memory. She felt his hard body press against her, his forehead against her cheek. Then, violently, he pushed her away.

"Anna, stop this foolishness! Get out of here at once!"

She walked slowly to the door. "Will we have the farm in Australia?"

"Of course."

"And where will we meet in Istanbul?"

"At the American Express. I don't know where it is, but you can ask someone. We'll meet in front of it at noon."

"On what day?"

"Any day."

She reached the door, opened it and stepped into the hall. Then Carlos, moving noiselessly behind her, touched her on the shoulder. As he did, she also heard the tread of footsteps on the floor below.

"Go up to the next landing," Carlos said. "I don't think they'll bother looking for you. In an hour you can come down and leave for Istanbul."

"Carlos, isn't there some way—"

He shoved her roughly toward the stairs, his face suddenly enraged. "Get upstairs!" he whispered. "If there was another way, don't you think I'd take it? I'll meet you in Istanbul. Don't forget."

She nodded and hurried up the stairs. The last thing she could do for him now was to leave him alone. She ran up five flights, all the way to the top of the building, in order not to hear what was happening below.

CHAPTER 26

SUSAN BELLOWES stood in front of a liquor store pretending to be engrossed in its window display. In the dusty glass she could see the reflection of the building into which the thief had gone. A man stood beside her, prettily handsome in a beige linen suit and perforated yellow shoes. He also was pretending to look at the display, but out of the corner of his eye he was watching her. He softly cleared his throat over and over again, preparing himself to address her. "Ahem," he said, a tentative and hopeful little sound; and he edged a step nearer.

She knew it was her own fault. She had been standing in front of this damned window for a full fifteen minutes. It had given him ideas. She wondered if other lady secret service agents ran into this sort of difficulty.

She'd thought the thief must have spotted her when he went into that cellar several blocks from here. She had seriously considered leaving her post and trying to find a policeman. But she didn't know if Dain and his people wanted to mix the Austrian police in this. And what would she have said? Some melodramatic line in her vestigial German: "Officer, arrest that man, he is an espionage agent wanted by East and West."

They would have laughed at her. She might have pretended that he had stolen her purse, but that idea didn't occur to her until much later. The truth was, she had been afraid of making a fool of herself. Besides, Dain had not asked for

help from local law enforcement agencies. Perhaps it just wasn't done. Who the hell knew what was done?

She was sure of one thing, she had done a good job of following the man. When he had gone into the cellar she had taken off her light spring coat, thus effecting a sort of disguise. It had been a good improvisation. But the thief, emerging ashen-faced five minutes later, had been too abstracted to notice her even if she had walked at his side. She had followed him to this building without difficulty, and now the job was almost over. He was as good as caught, if Dain would only come.

She glanced at her watch. It had been over half an hour since Blake had telephoned. *If* he had telephoned.

The man in the yellow shoes smiled at her and said, "It is annoying to be kept waiting, is it not?"

She ignored him. A big gray Mercedes sedan was pulling to the curb in front of the thief's building. She saw at once that Dain wasn't in it. Two men in dark business suits got out and went directly into the building.

"You are from America?" asked the man in the yellow shoes.

A third man remained behind the wheel of the Mercedes. He kept the motor running.

"I have heard," said the man in the yellow shoes, "that America is a very beautiful country." He spoke with easy friendliness; they might have been old acquaintances meeting on a street anywhere. Attempted pickups were always like that, always grotesque. She had to remain silent. That was best, to pretend that this ingratiating old friend simply didn't exist, that no one at all was speaking. Done properly, the old friend became aware that he wasn't a fact at all, wasn't even a substance. Denied existence, he would fade away into the landscape.

"Have you been in Vienna long?" He seemed determined to make his presence felt. His shoes squeaked aggressively, he was real, he was here, he wanted recognition. He had a life and a mind, habits and possessions. A word from her and he would become a person. But the word was not spoken and he walked regretfully away, merging into the background, a corporate part of the sights and sounds of Vienna.

Now, as she watched through the dusty glass, the two men emerged from the building. They were supporting a third man between them, the thief, limp and unresisting, his eyes open and unfocused like the eyes of a drunk. They bundled him tenderly into the car, and she watched, furious, unable

to do a thing. The door slammed shut. The car pulled smoothly away from the curb. She whirled around and glared as it drove sedately to the corner, turned right and vanished from view.

It was then, too late, that Dain came driving up in a little red Triumph sports car. She climbed into the bucket seat beside him.

"You just missed them. All of them. They turned right at the corner."

She was thrown back as the Triumph accelerated suddenly and swung around the corner on two wheels. Three blocks ahead she thought she could make out the square back of the Mercedes.

"What took you so long?" she said.

"I was taking a bath," Dain said.

CHAPTER 27

DAIN'S FACE was calm and unreadable. He had one hand on the steering wheel, the other on the shift as they cut through city traffic. It seemed to Susan that they were travelling at a suicidal speed; but the Mercedes held its lead, even gained half a block. They were just able to keep its square gray rear in sight.

Buildings flashed by in long streaks of gray and yellow. Pedestrians, already warned by the Mercedes' passage, leaped for safety. Cars moved far to the right, except for an occasional truck, solid and immovable as a road block, its driver looking up startled as the Triumph swept around him.

In the thickest downtown traffic, the Triumph was able to gain almost four blocks on the less agile Mercedes, coming up less than a car's length from its rear bumper. But then they were in the outskirts of Vienna, rushing past a long factory complex. The Mercedes slowly began to pull away.

"Where does this road lead?" Susan asked.

"To the Czechoslovakian border near Stupava."

"Is there a barrier?"

"I think so. But they might be able to drive right through it."

"Isn't there anything ahead to stop them?"

Dain thought for a moment. "There's an Austrian Army training camp further down, but it's only used for spring maneuvers."

"I don't suppose they're holding the maneuvers now?"

"Not for another week."

"For God's sake . . . Then they might be able to cross into Czechoslovakia?"

"It's entirely possible," Dain said. "I don't know what's going to happen. Susan, if we have an opportunity to stop or slow down, I want you to get out."

"Not a chance."

"I think you should. This is going to get very dangerous."

"No."

Combatants were made, not chosen, and for whatever inadequate reason, Susan Bellows had come fully into the fight. Dain concentrated on his driving. They were beyond the city limits now, going down a road lined with stunted poplars. The Mercedes was still gaining.

Dain said, "Reach into my jacket pocket. The other side."

She did, and took out a long-barrelled revolver.

"There's a box of cartridges. Get that, too."

When that was done, Dain said, "Do you think you can control the wheel? I want to try for a tire."

"I know damned well I can control the wheel."

She reached across him and took it. Dain leaned over the windshield, the revolver gripped in both hands, trying to draw a sight. The cars whipped around a gentle curve. Dain began firing, emptied the revolver and reloaded. The Mercedes showed no signs of damage.

"How far away is the border?" Susan asked.

"About twelve miles."

On their left they were passing flat fields. On the right were woods. Dain started firing again. With his fourth shot, the left rear tire of the Mercedes went flat. The car went on, but now the Triumph was beginning to gain on it. Dain reloaded, then dropped the gun on his lap and took the wheel again.

They were about twenty feet from the Mercedes when the road cut sharply around a corner of the woods. As they came out of the curve, Susan saw something small and black, like a billiard ball, bouncing on the road in front of them. Dain saw it at the same time. He accelerated hard, trying for the extreme outer edge of the road. The grenade exploded, rocking the Triumph high on one side.

They came down in a cloud of dust. When they could see the road again, the Mercedes was gone. Susan had the impression that it had simply vanished into the air.

Dain drove slowly ahead. There was no sign of the Mercedes on the straight road in front of them, nor on the flat fields to their left. They looked along the woods, and came to a dirt road. Tire marks showed clearly in the dust. Beyond them, tacked to a tree, an aluminum sign in German read: "Fourth Army Training Encampment. All Unauthorized Personnel Forbidden."

Susan said, "Why have they gone in here?"

"Nowhere else to go," Dain told her. "If they stayed on the main road, they wouldn't have a chance. With their flat tire, I'd outrun them to the border." He looked down at the fuel gauge and frowned. "I'd have just enough gas for it. They'd never get through if the guards were ready for them."

"But where can they go from the army camp?"

"Straight across the fields into Czechoslovakia."

Dain turned down the dirt road. At the end of it they came to a high barbed wire fence. Two guards in olive drab sprawled beside the partially open gate. Dain drove in.

He was on a rectangular training ground the size of a football field. On one side was a group of low buildings. On the other side were three tanks, some machine gun emplacements, and several old Bofors cannon. A heavy fence enclosed the entire field and its installations. At the far end they saw the Mercedes.

They drove to it and saw that it was empty, parked near the barbed wire and reinforced concrete that blocked off the field from the land beyond. A sign in German warned that the land beyond this point, along the Czechoslovakian border, was mined.

"Then they can't get through," Susan said.

"Not that way. Looks like they're stuck here."

Dain whipped the car around and headed back toward the gate. Almost immediately, another engine roared into life. A tank lurched out of the group of three, picked up speed and headed toward the gate. At a glance, it looked like a Second World War Sherman, armed with a seventy-five millimeter cannon. The tank was relatively slow; Dain clashed through four gears as the little car leaped forward.

Then he braked and swung sharply away. The tank, travelling much the shorter distance, had reached the gate first. Unable to stop in time, the tank slammed into the gate,

bulging it outward. For a moment it was stopped dead, and Dain wondered if it had broken a tread. Then the tank backed out and its turret began to traverse, its cannon swinging toward the rear of the retreating car.

CHAPTER 28

CARLOS LAY in the heart of the tank, still drugged, watched over by the chauffeur from the Mercedes. Above, in the open turret, Czettner struggled with the unfamiliar mechanism of the cannon. Bardieff sat below in the driver's seat, peering through a slit in the armor plating. In front of him, dimly red in a swirl of dust, he could see the Triumph. Giving full throttle, he went ahead to ram it. Above and behind him, he could hear the turret traversing. Czettner had figured out that much, but he still hadn't solved the problem of loading and firing the rack of shells beside him.

With the Mercedes straining against a bent axle, they had driven up to the gate, catching the two guards by surprise. Czettner had shot them as they walked up to investigate. They had driven into the training camp, to the far side of the fence. Czettner had wanted to climb the fence and go across the fields, taking his chances with the mines. Bardieff had said no. Even if the fields had not been mined, it was too long a distance on foot. There was nearly ten miles to walk through flat, open country. Dain, in his quick little car, could reach the Austrian frontier hours before them. Patrols in the area would be doubled and redoubled, reinforced by helicopters. Bardieff saw at once that their only chance of getting through was along the main road—in a tank which could do thirty miles an hour, which could burst through barriers erected only to stop automobiles.

They would have to reach the border before the Austrian guards had been warned and anti-tank defences set up. To do that, they had to finish off Dain.

The tank, its turret open and its engine fueled, its ammunition in place for next week's maneuvers, had seemed the perfect answer. Bardieff had often ridden in tanks during the war, and had watched the drivers operating the controls. He had never tried to drive one himself, of course; he

was a colonel of infantry. Still, it had looked easy enough. But now, sitting behind the controls of a thirty ton machine, he was beginning to have some doubts.

There seemed to be some special trick to operating these clumsy monsters. Its engine bellowing, the tank lurched from side to side as Bardieff struggled with the clutching. His visibility was very poor, limited to the narrow dimensions of the slit. He was choking on the clouds of dust churned up by the treads, and he had no goggles to protect his eyes.

Worst of all, his shoulder blazed with pain where Carlos had knifed him. The blade had driven deep into the muscles of his shoulder. He had hastily bound up the wound in the car, but now his exertions had torn it open again. Blood stained his jacket and dripped down his left hand. A wave of nausea passed over him when he had to use that arm.

The red car was still directly ahead of him. Parallel to it he could see the fence. The ground was broken here, and the Triumph had been forced to slow down. Even at a reduced speed, the little car leaped and bounded over the potholes like a frightened hare. Sometimes all four wheels left the ground. Going like that, Bardieff thought, Dain might well break an axle. He maintained his speed, staying slightly outside the car, herding it toward the fence. Then another line of fence cut across his vision. He had maneuvered the car into a right-angle corner. He had trapped it.

Bardieff gritted his teeth and bore down on the accelerator. For a moment, dust and pain clouded his vision. When it had cleared, the car was directly in front of him. It had stopped, its radiator pointed into the angle of the fence. Now he could see Dain and the girl clearly, and he swore at Czettner for not getting a gun into action. He got ready to smash the Triumph into the fence.

Then, as he was holding his breath for the impact, the car started to glide backwards, going in reverse away from the fence. Bardieff swung the tiller over. He was too late, and a flash of red shot past the vision slit. Enraged, he gave full throttle and tiller, bearing down too hard. The tank spun around on its tread, slamming into the fence, jolting his wounded shoulder.

He backed out, trying to find the car. He couldn't see it. "Czettner!" he roared. "Direct me!"

Standing in the open turret, Czettner was having his own troubles. He was struggling with too much unfamiliar machinery at the same time, and making a poor job of it. The

operation of the turret gun was problem enough; but now Bardieff also wanted directions. How was he supposed to transmit them over the thunder of the tank's engine?

He looked around. At the rear of the turret he saw an unconnected intercom, its headphones and jacks lying in a tangle of red and blue wires. He picked it up and looked for a place to insert the jacks. There didn't seem to be any place. Then he remembered that Bardieff wasn't wearing ear-phones.

There was too much to do, and not nearly enough time to do it in.

The Triumph was moving warily, fifty feet from them and far back on their right flank. Czettner threw down the intercom and shouted instructions into the tank. He felt it come sharply around and move toward the red car, herding it toward the far side of the fence. The woman was steering, and Dain had turned to face the tank. Czettner shouted more instructions as the Triumph zigzagged right and left; then bullets flew around the turret and ricocheted off the armor plating. Dain had opened fire with his revolver. Czettner ducked down into the turret.

The tank turned, following the red car. Czettner had time to work again on the loading mechanism of the cannon. He managed to get it open. Then Bardieff was shouting once more for directions.

Czettner stuck his head out of the turret, and saw that Dain had been leading them straight into a sand trap. He screamed a warning to Bardieff as they dipped into it.

The tank slewed around, its treads throwing up a shower of sand and soft dirt, refusing to take a purchase. Bardieff applied more power. The treads howled, scooping out deep parallel trenches, digging into the sand like a monstrous insect trying to bury itself. Then Bardieff reversed, just in time, before the tank's full weight had slid into the trap. He backed away and continued chasing the car.

They were coming to the far end of the fence. The car, twenty feet away, cut around sharply on two wheels. Czettner was shouting at him, but Bardieff had already turned the tank. He knew, suddenly and terribly, that Dain had tricked him. The Triumph, with its head start and superior speed, was gunning down the length of the field toward the gate. Bardieff gave full throttle, and the tank lumbered in pursuit. But he knew he could never get there before the Triumph had gone through, to the main road, to the border. He cursed himself for an idiot. He should have stayed near the

gate and waited until Czettner had learned how to operate the cannon.

Ten yards from the gate, Dain jammed on the brakes. The Triumph skidded to a stop. The heavy iron gate was sprung off its hinges where the tank had hit it, bulged back into a closed position against the fence. Dain jumped out and tried to pull it open, without success. The lower part had been driven hard into the ground.

"We can still get out of here without the car," Susan said.

"We wouldn't have a chance," Dain told her, getting back into the driver's seat. "They'd drive right through that gate. And we couldn't outrun a tank."

"Not even in the woods?"

"No."

The tank was coming at them again. Dain released the clutch too quickly, stalled, started again and speeded out of the tank's way. He took a shot at Czettner, missed, and turned down the field again.

Bardieff could hardly believe his luck when he saw that the gate was jammed shut. He turned the tank as the red car drifted out of his field of vision. Above him, Czettner was shouting directions. He continued to turn. Low buildings came into sight, passed, and he saw again the gate and the woods beyond. He had made a complete circle and still hadn't seen the Triumph.

Then he realized that the car was behind him, turning with him, utilizing its greater speed and maneuverability. Enraged, Bardieff slammed on the brakes and reversed. He was rewarded with a quick glimpse of the car. Then it slid away behind him and he turned again, wincing as he used his left arm.

Carlos stirred feebly. The tank lurched over a rise and he was slammed into the steel wall. Bardieff managed to save himself from the worst of the impact. His shoulder felt as though it were on fire.

He knew that Dain was playing for time, and winning. If the battle continued like this, in a stalemate, it could only end with the arrival of the Austrians and the ruin of everything he had planned. He tried to think of some new way to trap and destroy the elusive little car.

He heard an explosion, and the tank shuddered slightly. For a moment he thought that Dain was throwing grenades.

Then he heard the slam of a breechblock, the thud of a rejected shell. Czettner had finally managed to bring the seventy-five millimeter cannon into action. The stalemate was ended.

The Triumph zigzagged away. When Susan looked back, she could see the black eye of the cannon winking red at her. She turned around quickly. The cannon was plowing craters near them. They reached a supply shed, and Dain cut around it so fast that Susan was almost thrown out.

Dain could hear the tank's engine roaring as it came around the building after them. He circled, keeping the shed between the car and the tank, trying to think of something better to do.

The tank reversed abruptly and came around the other side. But its engine and treads gave ample warning, and Dain turned the car around in time.

Glancing down, he saw that the fuel gauge read close to empty. There was a reserve, of course, but he wasn't sure how much. Driving like this, they probably had another fifteen minutes before they would be stalled and helpless before the pursuing tank.

Then the tank changed the nature of the battle again. It charged straight into the low supply building. The pine walls barely checked it. It went right through, and the roof of the shed slid onto the tank's turret, clung a moment and dropped off. The tank turned and charged through the next building. Without stopping, it demolished the entire row.

Dain stayed on the outer edge of the tank's path of destruction. The last building went down, and Czettner's head came out again. The turret traversed. Dain had formed his plan now. He slipped into second and drove the Triumph directly toward the tank.

The target was closing rapidly. Czettner fired, depressing the gun as the car moved in. Then the Triumph was racing along beside the tank, almost near enough to touch. The seventy-five, even at its extreme depression, was not low enough to hit the car. Its shells flew harmlessly over Dain's head. Czettner shouted this down to Bardieff.

Bardieff understood the problem immediately. He had to maintain a sufficient distance from the car so that Czettner could use the cannon. But the solution was complicated

by the fact that Bardieff could not see the car. And this, together with the speed and agility of the car, presented him with an almost insuperable problem of coordination. He was like a very clumsy elephant trying to crush an unusually nimble mouse.

His first attempt was to drive the tank over the ruins of the buildings, where the car couldn't follow. But Dain was able to dodge back and forth faster than Czettner could traverse and aim from the savagely lurching tank. Bardieff came back onto the field and roared toward the fence, the Triumph moving back onto position on his flank. He swerved back and forth, hoping to shake off the car.

Bardieff heard the turret gun going off in rapid fire. Then Czettner was shouting something at him. He turned the tank around and saw that the car had stopped. Could it be out of gas, he wondered. Could it have broken an axle over the rough field? He drove forward to ram it.

Czettner was firing the turret gun, missing as the range closed. He could see Dain and the girl sitting in the car. Dain had turned to face him, and at less than twenty feet he started firing with his revolver.

Czettner had been concentrating completely on the cannon, paying no attention to Dain and his revolver. A revolver had seemed such a pitiful weapon against a tank. Now he realized that he was standing upright in the turret, exposed. He tried to dive out of sight, and almost made it. But as his head was going down below the armor plating, a bullet took him just to the left of the nose, smashing upward into the brain. Czettner tumbled into the interior of the tank.

Bardieff didn't know what was happening above and behind him. He kept on driving straight for the Triumph. The tank slammed into the car, knocked it onto its side and rolled over it.

The tank came free and Bardieff turned it left and right. He saw the girl running down the field, ignored her and turned the tank again in search of Dain. He couldn't find him. Perhaps he was crushed under the car . . .

Something slammed into his back. Bardieff turned and found Carlos, his eyes blank and sick, grappling at him. Pain exploded in Bardieff's shoulder as he threw Carlos off. The chauffeur grabbed him, but Carlos fought free, hit him in the face and tried again to get at Bardieff. Bardieff hit him across the neck with his good hand. Carlos staggered back, drove his elbow into the chauffeur's belly and leaped at

Bardieff. Measuring his distance, Bardieff hit him solidly on the jaw, a blow with his full weight behind it. Carlos collapsed.

Bardieff turned back to the controls, then looked around, startled. It had grown suddenly dark inside the tank. The chauffeur was shouting something, but Bardieff already knew that Dain was coming down, firing through the turret.

The chauffeur screamed and fell. Bardieff released the controls and pulled out his automatic. Dain was inside the tank now, moving toward him, and Bardieff raised the automatic.

The tank, with no one at the tiller, slammed into the fence. Bardieff was thrown into the controls, against his wounded shoulder. Blackness washed over his eyes and he felt himself falling. He pointed the automatic at where he thought Dain was and pulled the trigger. He thought he heard an explosion reverberate within the tank.

Then he felt the gun pulled out of his hand. He had not released the safety. His fall into the darkness became swifter, and he lost consciousness.

CHAPTER 29

IT WAS AFTER SUNSET in Vienna when Stephen Dain, accompanied by Colonel Nester and four military policemen, drove up to the building in which Klaus had been killed. The entrance to the cellar was cordoned off by Austrian security police. Dain, Nester and the MPs were allowed through. They went straight to the little room in which Klaus's body had been found. The body was gone now, removed after a thorough police examination, and the room had been cleaned.

Nester said, "I think you made a mistake, Dain. To believe the word of a man like that—"

"We'll see," Dain said. He walked to the middle of the room and began to unscrew the unshielded light bulb hanging by a cord from the ceiling. Nester and the four MPs watched.

Nester didn't like any of this; he had a feeling of imminent disaster. He could very well appreciate the courage and resourcefulness which Dain had shown in engaging a

tank with nothing but a sports car and a revolver. That had called for guts. But damn it, intelligence work also required the exercise of *intelligence*. And Dain, after killing Czettner and the chauffeur, after clubbing Bardieff into unconsciousness, had suddenly lost his grip.

The light bulb wobbled in Dain's fingers. Nester exhaled gently when the bulb came free. He watched as Dain probed inside the socket. As he had feared and expected, Dain found nothing there.

"So you had the thief's word that the papers were here?" Nester asked.

"That's what he said."

"And he didn't mention any other place? A safe deposit box, possibly, or a railway station locker?"

"No. He only said the papers were inside the light socket in Klaus's room."

Nester made a strenuous effort to be fair. "Dain, I believe I can understand the difficult circumstances you were in. You say that the thief was armed when you found him inside the tank?"

"He had taken the chauffeur's gun."

"He could have shot you?"

"Of course."

"Why didn't he?"

"Because he wanted to bargain with me."

"How did he know you had the five thousand dollars on you?"

"He didn't. He took the chance. He also took the chance that I would shoot him."

"Why didn't you?" Nester asked. "At least, why didn't you wound him?"

"That sort of thing isn't as easy as it sounds," Dain said. "Especially if the other man has a gun on you."

"Well . . . Did you have to pay him the entire amount?"

"He wasn't prepared to take any less," Dain said. That at least was true. When he had brought Carlos back to consciousness, weak and half dazed, the thief still had his mind set inexorably on the money. With suicidal despair, he wanted five thousand dollars and not a cent less. In the end, Dain had believed the thief, and had given over the money in return for the information.

Dain had told Nester the last part of the story. He had thought it more politic to conceal the first part under a romantic fabrication.

Dain said, "I still think he was telling the truth."

"People like that never tell the truth," Nester said. "Do you have any idea where he is now?"

"None."

"Do you think we have any chance of stopping him? Perhaps at a border post?"

"I think it's very unlikely."

"Obviously," Nester said, "he tricked you. He's got those papers hidden somewhere, and he'll try to sell them again."

Dain said nothing.

"But at least we have his woman," Nester said. "It won't be difficult to bring charges against her. I'll make damned sure *he* never sees her again. Not that it'll make much difference to a man like that."

"You can never tell," Dain said. He turned to one of the MPs. "Would you mind getting the janitor of this building?"

The MP caught Colonel Nester's nod and left the room. He returned in a few minutes with the janitor, an unshaven old man with a sullen hangdog face. The janitor stared anxiously at Colonel Nester's imposing uniform.

"The police told me there was nothing to worry about."

"There isn't," Dain said. "I'd just like to ask you a few questions."

"Yes sir."

"Did you clean up this room?"

"Of course. The police told me I could."

"Did you also change the light bulb?"

"I beg your pardon, sir?"

"You unscrewed the light bulb in this room," Dain stated.

"That's right."

"And you found some papers inside the socket."

The janitor looked bewildered. "How did you know?"

"Just tell me about it," Dain said.

"Well, I tried to turn on the light and it didn't work. So I unscrewed the bulb and saw that Klaus had stuffed some papers into the socket. He must have been drunk when he did that. He was always doing crazy things. When I took the papers out, the bulb worked fine."

"What did you do with the papers?"

"Were they important?" the janitor asked. "I threw them out."

"Show us where," Dain said.

The janitor led them to a huge garbage barrel. Dain pushed it over and knelt down beside the scattered orange peels and coffee grounds. He began to sift through them.

After a moment, Colonel Nester drew on gloves and helped. The MPs quickly joined in.

They found the papers, carefully folded, stained with wine. The janitor looked at them wonderingly.

"Are they really important?" he asked. "I don't want any trouble. I just thought that Klaus—"

"You can go," Dain said.

The janitor hurried off with evident relief, then stopped when he heard Dain's voice calling after him.

"But first I want the duplicate tracing you made."

The janitor seemed to shrink. His breath rattled in his throat. "Sir, you can't believe—"

Dain's voice was suddenly furious. "Take this bastard to the Austrian police!"

"Sir, please! Gentlemen . . ." He looked at Nester and the four MPs. They stood around him as immobile as statues. Dain stepped forward, his face like stone. The janitor's nerve crumbled abruptly. He plunged a hand into his pocket and drew out some papers. "I must have been out of my head. I don't know why I did it, I swear to you—"

Dain examined the papers, then turned them over and looked for carbon smudges. Finding none, he gave them to Nester. He told one of the MPs to take the janitor outside.

"We'll have to search his room," Nester said. "Just in case he made other tracings."

"I don't think he did," Dain said. "But it'll be best to search. And to keep him under surveillance for a while."

"Yes, we'll do that," Nester said. "It looks as though you were right about that other man. Apparently he told you the truth."

"He seemed like an honest thief," Dain said. "I don't suppose you'll bother holding his woman now?"

"Why the hell should I? Come on, let's get out of here."

They emerged from the cellar onto the dark street. Nester said, "The plans are invalid now, of course. Those particular bases will never be built. Not as long as there was any possibility that their location was compromised. But we had to have them back."

"Of course," Dain said.

"Other bases will be built somewhere else," Nester said thoughtfully.

Dain nodded, grinning. For some reason he seemed to find that amusing.

Nester said, "Would you bring around that girl who identified the thief? I'd like to thank her personally."

"Can't do it," Dain said. "She's gone to Athens with a man named Blake. She left about half an hour ago."

"What on earth for?"

"I believe she's interested in antiques."

Nester shook his head doubtfully. "And the thief. We still don't know his name. Did you learn it?"

"No."

"Do you have any idea what he's going to do with the five thousand dollars?"

"He did mention that he might buy a farm somewhere," Dain said.

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