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HE HAD A LITTLE SHADOW

by CHARLES B. CHILD

THE BOY WAS A WAIF WHO FRE-
quented the great bazaar of
Baghdad. He was small for his years,
which were perhaps eight, very slim
and high-waisted, with delicate hands
and feet, a bright elfin face and large,
dark eyes. He wore a ragged gown
girdled with a piece of rope, his
turban was a wisp, he had never
owned shoes; his only possession was
a basket which he used to carry the
purchases of shoppers for a few
pennies.

Chafik J. Chafik, an inspector of
the Criminal Investigation Depart-
ment, stood on the steps of the
Imperial Bank and idly watched the
child who flitted through a patchwork
of evening sunlight and shadow with
the basket balanced on his head.
The boy sang in a thin treble, some-
times skipped and clapped his hands,
and the Inspector, troubled by end-
of-the-month bills, had a moment
of envy. He was turning away when
he saw a man lurch from the crowd.

The man wore the tribal dress of a
minor chieftain of the Muntafiq.
His magnificent build was typical
of the marsh Arab, and so was the
hair-trigger temper that made him
turn on the boy, with whom he had
collided, and strike him in the face.

It was a brutal blow and the
youngster dropped the basket and
clapped his arms over his head, but

they made a frail barrier. When the
man raised a heavy brassbound stick
with intent to continue the senseless
beating, Inspector Chafik ran down
the steps, wrenched it away, and
threw it behind him.

He said mildly, "Temper is as
intoxicating as alcohol."

The man turned. He had pale
lips, flattened to his teeth, dilated
eyes staring with madness. Normally
authority was Chafik's protection,
and he was suddenly and painfully
aware of muscular inadequacy; but he
drove his elbow against the man's
nose, bringing a bright gush of blood.
Then, rising on his toes in an effort
to increase his stature, he used his
forearms as clubs.

A constable intervened oppor-
tunely with a swinging gun. Inspector
Chafik said, "Two blows are enough.
This head is not a nut, there is no
sweetness in it. But I advise hand-
cuffs. We have madness here."

There was blood on his sleeve and
he looked at it with disgust, for he
was a meticulously neat man. Irritably
he took out a pocket mirror, exam-
ined his thin face, gently touched
a bruise on his swarthy cheek, and
straightened his polka-dot tie. Then,
recovering his *sidarrah* which had
fallen in the dirt, he brushed it and
adjusted it to the correct angle on his
long head. He sighed with annoyance.

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"As an angry cockbird ruffles its feathers, so I have ruffled my clothes," he said to the boy.

The face that turned up to him was white and frightened. Tears welled in the big eyes, but the boy held them back with courage, even with dignity, a quality engaging in a waif who begged his daily subsistence. There were too many fatherless children in Baghdad; lack of organized welfare made boys like this grow up with minds sharpened by animal cunning, and in time most of their names were added to police records. Chafik sighed and took money from his pocket.

"Go fill your belly," he said as he thrust the coins at the boy.

A grubby little hand touched his own, clung to it. "Sahib," the boy said. "You are my father, sahib —"

It was a pleading, not a wheedling, voice. Chafik smiled, but was startled when he saw how worshipfully the boy looked at him. "How are you named?" he asked.

"They call me Faisal."

"That is the name of our young king. Who named you so royally?"

Faisal shook his head. "There was once a woman who called me Faisal. Very long ago when I was small. She died," he added vaguely.

"And now you are a man?"

"A man, sahib. I work. Truly I do not steal much." The big eyes glowed with gratitude and adoration. "That one would have killed me. I saw it in his face. You are my father, sahib. I will go with you."

The Inspector was embarrassed. He had been married many years and was childless, a circumstance which could be adjusted by polygamy under Moslem law. But he was devoted to his wife; although he knew she was distressed by lack of children, he had convinced himself they would have disorganized his well-regulated home.

"Take the money and eat," he said, and turned his back.

The constable had secured the man, and Chafik bent and rolled back an eyelid, then announced, "One sees the reason for madness."

"He has eaten the forbidden fruit, sir," said the officer.

"Yes — hashish —"

The Inspector clasped his slender hands with unexpected emotion. For several months he had been trying to stop a flow of narcotics responsible for a crime wave in Baghdad. In spite of his efforts hashish continued to enter the city and in its wake came violence and death. The attack on the boy was typical.

Chafik said harshly, "Let God pardon me, for I wish death, and not an easy one, for those who peddle this evil."

He shrugged, lighted a cigarette, and looked with loathing at the hashish eater, who struggled against the handcuffs. When a police ambulance arrived the Inspector walked away.

The cigarette had a bitter taste and he dropped it, but could not discard the bitter thoughts. He threaded a path between the benches

that overflowed from the cafés, turned right at the intersection of Samawal and Al-Rashid Streets, and walked under the shabby arcade to his headquarters. He had the sensation of being followed as he entered the narrow doorway, and turned swiftly.

He saw an elfin face and appealing eyes. "Sahib!" Faisal pleaded. "You are my father, sahib —"

"Away with you!" Chafik said, and losing dignity he ran up the worn steps to his office.

Inspector Chafik was received by his assistant, tall, gaunt, unemotional Sergeant Abdullah, who was sufficiently stirred by sight of his superior's bruised cheek and ruffled clothes to say in a solemn voice, "Sir, I trust the individual who assaulted you is detained."

"In the hospital, my dear Abdullah. But I did not put him there. He is the victim of hashish."

"Sir, we have many hashish victims today. I bring you the reports. Two killings. Five assaults with intent to kill —"

"The menu is unappetizing and unvaried," said Chafik. "There is always a list of crimes over the weekend." The Inspector took a manicure set from a drawer and began to clean his nails. After a moment he said, "My conclusion is no hashish is stored in Baghdad; if it were, it would be distributed more evenly throughout the week. It is smuggled in. But when? And how? I am a policeman, not a seer. What

is the source of the drug? Does it come from Syria? From Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, or Persia? Or is it brought by sea from India?"

The sergeant said gloomily, "So many places, sir."

"And so many routes. There are highways, a railroad, the transdesert autobus, aircraft, and innumerable camel caravans."

"We watch them all. The frontier checks are severe —"

Inspector Chafik interrupted, "Can we guard every mountain path? One man with the legs of a goat can carry enough hashish to poison half Baghdad." He put away the manicure set, breathed on his nails and gave them a final rub with a silk handkerchief. "Our records show crime increases with the waning of the week and in this is a clue. But like a photographic negative the image does not appear until developer is applied. If we had the formula —"

He went to the window and looked over the vast dun-colored city. Here and there the cubist pattern of flat roofs was relieved by the blue dome of a mosque, and in the distance the Tigris made a tawny highway through groves of date palms. It was a noisy city. Harsh sounds always jarred the Inspector, and when a car pulled up with a screech of brakes in the street below, he winced and looked down.

A boy had darted across the street and now squatted on the other side with his feet in the gutter.

"Am I to be haunted?" Chafik asked indignantly.

"Sir?"

"You have three daughters, Abdul-lah. Do they follow you about and regard you with admiration?"

"They do, sir."

"You find it embarrassing?"

"Sometimes, sir. But it also gives me a warm feeling here." The sergeant struck his breast.

"Then the emotion is normal," said Chafik. His voice had the hollow sound of one who speaks a thought unintentionally; hearing himself, he flushed, irritated by his incurable habit. "We must find the means of developing the image hidden in our records," he said hastily. "But enough for the day."

He was too preoccupied to see the boy who lurked under the arcade, but when he reached his car parked on the city square, he was roused by a light touch. An eager voice began, "Sahib! My father—"

It pulled the trigger of temper and the Inspector shouted, "Out, Pestilence!" and slammed the door of the car.

He drove over the great steel bridge that spanned the river. His home was on the Street of the Scatterer of Blessings, off Mansour Avenue. The yellow brick house, which was small and typically suburban, was cooled by breezes from the Tigris. Chafik latched the street gate, carefully wiped his shoes, and let himself into the softly lighted hall.

His wife, a dark, slim little woman, was there to make him welcome. Her face was freshly powdered and she

wore an attractive dress. After fifteen years, Leila knew the wisdom of working at marriage. She was a woman of considerable intelligence and combined a Westernized appearance with a degree of meekness expected of an Eastern wife. She said, anxiously, "You are late, my man."

"It was a question of a formula for extracting from our records what is surely hidden there. You would not understand."

"No," said Leila, "But I understand you are tired."

She maneuvered him into a chair, removed his shoes, and brought his slippers. He sniffed the appetizing odor of the waiting meal, sighed and said, "Yes, I am tired. Also hungry. One cannot eat records."

After eating it was possible to relax. The only sound in the house was the ticking of a clock, and he was grateful for the quiet and closed his eyes.

Leila stood at the window, hidden by the curtains, watching the street. She liked to speculate about those who passed; her interest in the foibles of humanity filled gaps in her day, times of idleness inevitable in a childless household.

Suddenly she said, "The house is watched —"

Chafik sat up. "What?"

"There is a boy outside. He has been there for some time."

Her husband joined her and saw Faisal leaning against the gate. The elfin face was white and pinched in the light of the street lamp. Chafik

reacted with confusion. He felt compassion, as for a lost and weebegone puppy, then anger came and he went to the door, but changed his mind and came back. "This foolishness must end," he said to Leila, and explained what had happened. "He follows me everywhere," he complained.

"Such a little boy, and he has such charm," Leila said wistfully.

"A waif. He doubtless has lice."

"He has a hungry look —"

"I gave him money for food. That was my mistake."

"Many give him money," Leila said wisely. "His hunger is not only for food. He walked far to be near you. Oh, pitiful! He makes his bed on our doorstep. Could he not sleep in the shed in the garden?"

Chafik heard the tenderness in his wife's voice and felt a twinge of an old pain. "I forbid," he said angrily. "Once you brought a cat into the house and I was inundated with kittens. You are too impulsive."

"Such a little boy —" said Leila, sighing.

Her husband realized she had not heard a word. Irritably he announced, "I am going to bed," and left her still at the window.

He slept heavily, but not well. In the morning, when he went out, the familiar small figure was waiting. He noticed crumbs on the mouth that curved to greet him and had a dark thought for his wife as he brushed past the boy.

During the day he caught glimpses

of Faisal and continued to ignore him. When he came home in the evening, the boy appeared so quickly outside the house, Chafik guessed he had stolen a ride on the back of a car, perhaps his own. He felt helpless and his wife gave no comfort; she was suddenly withdrawn.

Estrangement was rare between them. He was aware of the reason, and at any other time would have used tenderness to relieve the futile longing that happened sometimes to Leila, like the aching of a tooth which is really sound. But the problem of the drug smuggling was a leech in his mind and he could think of little else as midweek approached and, with it, the dreaded increase in hashish crimes.

He was tormented because he was certain the answer of when and how the drug entered the country was in his records. These records were amazingly detailed, and included files on all regular travelers to and from Baghdad, and on all known criminals in the city. But to attempt to unearth the answer in his crammed filing cabinets without a key would be as difficult as finding the proverbial needle in a haystack.

On Thursday morning, when Chafik found Faisal waiting as usual, he got into his car and recited a few calming verses from the Koran, then reopened the car door. "Come, Pestilence," the Inspector said. He remembered Leila in the window and was embarrassed by his odd impulse toward the boy.

Faisal began to chatter gaily. The pleasant young voice disturbed thinking, but when the boy said, "Sahib, today I shall make money," Chafik came out of preoccupation and wondered a little irritably what could be done for the persistent child.

"How will you make money?"

"A train comes. There are things to carry. People tired with travel pay well," Faisal added wisely.

"So today you will eat. But what of tomorrow?"

"Tomorrow does not matter if I eat well today, sahib."

"I envy you your philosophy," Chafik said. "Myself, I would be distressed by such ups and downs. The graph of my life follows an even line; if yours were plotted it would soar to a zenith, then plunge to the nadir. And again to the zenith and so on, indefinitely. Such a graph would be untidy, but the pattern would reveal the fluctuations of your belly, the days when —"

His voice died and he forgot the boy. He was fascinated by his hand which had left the wheel to trace a wavy line in the air. "A graph!" he shouted. "The key — the formula —" The car shot ahead through traffic lights and was parked hastily. For the second time in these few days the sedate little Inspector astonished the guard outside headquarters by running up the stairs.

Sergeant Abdullah was waiting with a pile of reports, but Chafik said, "I have no time for routine. I have found the key."

"Sir?"

"The hashish matter," Chafik explained impatiently. "Abdullah, if we could fix the day when the crimes begin to mount, the exact day every week, perhaps the same day, would it not aid our investigation?"

"Indubitably. A fixed day recurring weekly over a period of several months would permit the narrowing down of means of entry. It would be possible to eliminate certain routes of transportation. For example, sir, highways are sometimes closed by sandstorms —"

"Then bring me squared paper."

"Sir?"

"Paper marked with squares. I am going to make a graph. We will plot all crimes committed by hashish addicts during the past three months. Thus the data from our records will emerge visually."

When Abdullah brought the paper, Inspector Chafik prepared the frame of the graph and indicated weeks and days of each week along the bottom line. He explained, "I shall count one vertical square for each incident. You will now read me the daily hashish reports from the files."

The sergeant read in a courtroom voice that reduced crime to its proper level, unglamorous and monstrous. Chafik's pencil moved up and down marking the level of crime for each day. When he reached the end of the week he linked the daily tallies with a red line.

It was tedious work. The sergeant opened the collar of his tunic and

permitted his ramrod back to ease against the chair. The clock over the Mustansiriyah buildings had struck ten before he closed the last file.

He said with feeling, "Police work is sometimes unexciting."

Chafik showed his assistant the completed graph. It resembled a mountain range.

"Here is a genuine picture of a crime wave," the little Inspector said, smiling. The joke was lost on his sergeant and he demanded brusquely, "What do you observe?"

"Sir, I observe the parabola of crime begins to rise each Thursday. Then there is a variable peak period of about three days, then a decline."

"What does that mean to you?"

"It proves supplies of hashish are released on that day."

"By what means, Abdullah?"

The sergeant ventured sarcasm. "Perhaps the graph shows how."

"It does," Chafik said. "Today is Thursday. What transport arrives from foreign parts this day?"

"Sir, solely the international train from Turkey, the Taurus Express. But it is a semiweekly train. There is another on Sunday."

"Where are your wits?" Chafik asked. "The crimes begin Thursday, their peak declines on Sunday. Therefore this man who smuggles the hashish travels only on Thursdays. Storms interfere with the desert autobus, with aircraft and the camel caravans, but they rarely stop a train. It is the means of entry." He made it a statement of fact.

Sergeant Abdullah was critical. "But we always search the train."

Chafik again gave attention to the graph. "He has a means of tricking us," he said. He put his finger on the red line where it oddly flattened for a two-week period before leaping to a new high. "What happened here?" he asked.

"Apparently no hashish was available, sir. I remember the period. Many people went to hospital sick through lack of the drug."

The Inspector lighted a cigarette, took a few puffs, then stubbed it. He was shaking with excitement, and said, "This graph is clairvoyant. Bring me our lists of Taurus Express passengers for the past three months. Fortunately it is a short train."

These lists were always taken at the border and copies were sent to the Inspector's office. They checked the names of regular passengers against the police records, but their work was unrewarded.

Abdullah said, "Your thought was admirable, sir, but —"

"I object to 'but.' It is a sly conjunctive that conceals a dagger. You do not think my thought admirable." Chafik shrugged. "We have eliminated the passengers, but there are others. The Taurus Express is an international train. True, the engine, its crew and the conductors are changed at the frontier, but the day coaches continue to Baghdad. Also one sleeping car and a diner. Read me the names of the staff attendants."

Six men made the midweek run

from Istanbul to Baghdad, all were regulars. There was a *chef de train*, a sleeping-car attendant, two cooks, and two waiters.

While his assistant read the names, the Inspector followed the dates on the graph. Suddenly he looked up. "That was a new name," he said.

"Yes, sir. It would appear that Najar Helmy, a waiter, was replaced for the week in question."

"Does Helmy ride the train the following week?"

"No, sir, but he is back the third week —"

There was a dry snapping sound. Sergeant Abdullah looked at the Inspector, who was huddled over the desk. A broken pencil fell from Chafik's hand and he said in a choked voice, "By God and by God!"

"Sir?"

"Have you forgotten the two-week period when the graph flattens, when no hashish came to Baghdad? Najar Helmy's absence coincides. But is it coincidence that all other Thursdays when Helmy worked the run the telltale line of my graph mounts?"

The sergeant was inarticulate. When he found voice he exclaimed, "Without leaving your office! Sir, without leaving your office you have solved it, even to the name. Let us go seize this Helmy —"

"He who seizes a scorpion in haste repents with haste." Chafik looked at the clock, saw it was nearly train time, and said briskly, "But I confess I am curious to meet this man."

They went to the Baghdad North

Station and waited in the office of the railroad police, which commanded a view of the platform. The train had arrived and the scene was bedlam. Kurdish porters, clad in rags, cursed and fought over the baggage. A merciless sun beat on the iron roof and dust blew across the platform.

Chafik pressed his face to the window, but drew back when a familiar pair of eager eyes met his own. He had forgotten Faisal. The boy's presence was natural, for he had said he would make money from the arrival of the train, but the Inspector was annoyed and ignored Faisal's salute.

He waited patiently as the passengers streamed through the exit gate. A detective of the railroad police was at his side and presently said, "There is Helmy. He stands on the steps of the restaurant car, sir."

Najar Helmy was a Turk, short, stocky, and olive-skinned. He stood bowing to a belated passenger, the picture of the perfect attendant who earns his tips.

"You know him?" Chafik asked the detective.

"We are acquainted, sir. He always stays overnight at the Parliament Hotel on Hassan Pasha Street."

The station became quiet, a field after battle, littered with cigarette stubs and torn paper. The attendants bustled in and out of the diner and sleeping car, putting everything in order for the next day. The attendant of the sleeper dragged a hamper of dirty linen to a locker room, and then

Helmy appeared with a garbage can.

The Turk held one handle; the other was clutched by Faisal, who used both hands as he strained under the weight of the can.

Chafik said in a worried voice, "The boy is at ease with this man. He knows him."

Helmy and Faisal disappeared into the yard at the back of the station. When they returned, Helmy the Turk gave the boy money and dismissed him. Soon, the Turk again left the train, submitted a suitcase for inspection and went up the platform toward the yard and the employees' exit.

Sergeant Abdullah said, "This time he is without hashish."

Chafik was puzzled. "But why should he change his routine?"

"Perhaps he was forewarned, sir."

The Inspector exclaimed and abruptly left the office. Faisal was squatting on the platform, and Chafik took his arm and pulled him roughly to his feet.

"The man who gave you money," he said harshly. "You know him?"

"Sahib, my arm," the boy said plaintively, trying to break free. "I did nothing wrong, only helped carry rubbish, as I often do. The man gave me twenty *fihs*. A lot of money —"

"What did you say to him? What did you tell him?"

"Nothing, sahib! Nothing — you hurt —" Faisal squirmed away, looked up reproachfully, and then fled.

The Inspector's anger cooled but his face remained grim. He said to Abdullah, "We have been tricked. I think I know how he took out the hashish." He ran up the platform to the station yard.

A garbage can stood upside down behind a stack of rusting oil drums. Flies swarmed over the scattered rubbish.

Abdullah began, "Sir —"

Chafik said, "Our heads are of the same density. Who would think of searching that filth? When Helmy went out a few minutes ago, he merely upturned the can and took what was concealed there. That is his regular method — and the boy helped him carry the can —"

"If Helmy went directly to his hotel he has the supply with him, sir. We can take him."

"Not yet. I wish to learn how he distributes the hashish."

The Inspector called headquarters, ordered a check, and soon learned Helmy was at his usual hotel. Arrangements were made for a man to register there, for others to be placed strategically throughout the quarter where the hotel was located. Chafik installed himself in a nearby café, ordered coffee and his favorite honey cakes, and waited. But the coffee grew cold and the cakes were untouched; even honey could not sweeten his thoughts.

"A policeman should not have emotions," he announced.

Sergeant Abdullah began, "Sir, you think this boy —"

"It does not matter what I think," answered Chafik discouragingly. He looked up and down the street and was silent for some time. Then he said, "There he is!"

"The Turk? I do not observe —"

"The boy." Chafik darted across the street to an alleyway.

Soon he returned and said harshly to Abdullah, "He escaped me. But how long has he been spying? Has he gone to report to the Turk? Call our man at the hotel."

The sergeant came back to say Faisal had not been seen. "But he is small, he has the ways of a mouse," he added.

"Or the ways of a rat," Chafik said bitterly.

Shortly after sunset the signal came that the man was leaving, and presently they saw him, strolling in the cool of the evening.

Chafik said, "Keep away from me, Abdullah. You are too obvious in uniform." He got up and followed Helmy to another café.

The place was crowded and the Inspector sat beside a portly sheik, using the man's bulk to screen his slight figure. Helmy was alone at a table, reading a newspaper.

Presently a man came in and greeted the Turk effusively. Helmy offered a cigarette and after a few puffs his companion made a gesture of pleasure. The Turk smiled expansively and took a box from his pocket and passed it across the table; his pantomime seemed to say, "You like my cigarettes? Then take this as

a gift." At that moment the bulky sheiks engaged Chafik in conversation and when the Inspector looked again Helmy was alone.

During the next hour the incident was repeated, another stranger received, as a close friend, a gift made of two boxes. Watching without interruption this time, Chafik saw something pass in return for the cigarettes. When the second man had gone the Turk also left the café.

He went to a cabaret in the Bab-el-Sheik district. Once again Chafik saw the play of a stranger, a cigarette, and a gift. When the stranger left, the Inspector signaled an assistant to watch Helmy and then joined Sergeant Abdullah outside.

The stranger was still in view and Chafik said briefly, "He has a box of cigarettes I wish to examine."

Abdullah glided into the shadows. Chafik followed slowly; he heard nothing, but when the sergeant reappeared he had the box. Unemotionally he said, "Sir, I took the precaution of silencing him. His skull was thin and the wall hard."

"That may not be a misfortune," Chafik said.

The small oblong box was inscribed with the name of a famous brand of Turkish cigarettes, but inside the sealed foil was a block of brownish-green resinous substance. It had a faint and peculiar odor and Chafik looked at it with loathing. "This is where the graph led us," he said.

"Hashish, sir?"

"The essence of the crude bhang."

His thin shoulders expressed what he thought. "Helmy is a very clever man," he went on. "He is the wholesaler. Agents meet him at the various cafés. They buy the hashish cash down, as I observed, then distribute it to their own customers. Helmy takes the lion's profit and avoids the danger of dealing directly with addicts. He has a virtue rare among criminals — he works alone and does not let his business become too big."

They returned to the cabaret. Outside was the man Chafik had left to watch the Turk. He said in a worried voice, "Sir, I have lost him."

"What!"

"A man came shortly after you left. He spoke to Helmy and they both went to the cloakroom. When they did not return I investigated and found an open window . . ."

Chafik's face darkened. "Did a boy speak to Helmy or to this other man?"

"I did not notice, sir."

The Inspector put aside suspicion for the moment. "This man was obviously a bodyguard," he said. "When he saw me follow the agent, he warned Helmy. It is a pity, but not too important. We now know how hashish enters Baghdad and this beast who batters on human weakness is trapped within our city. His arrest is certain."

He called headquarters and ordered a general alarm, then went with Abdullah to Helmy's hotel. The man had not returned. They searched the room and found many boxes of

hashish. Chafik said, "He takes only a few with him when he goes to meet the agents. Such a cautious man."

They left men to watch and returned to headquarters. The general alarm was in operation; every officer in Baghdad was alerted, mounted patrols had sectioned off the city, motorized squads stopped all cars on the highways. In the middle of this web Chafik sat at his desk.

But he had troublesome thoughts. Once he announced, "It could be coincidence Faisal carried the garbage, but why was he hidden near the café?" Later he said, "I dealt roughly with him; he may have been afraid to show himself. I am naturally suspicious when followed." This time he pounded the desk with vexation.

"My habit becomes intolerable," he told Abdullah. "I shall go home and rest. Helmy has a good hide-out." As he left he said in the familiar hollow voice, "Must I tell Leila about the boy? What can I tell her that will not give pain?"

He walked to his car parked on the landscaped square near a clump of rhododendron. He had a feeling of letdown and was not his usual alert self.

As Chafik opened the door of the car, a man rose from the bushes and struck a shrewd blow with a black-jack. Then he bundled the inert Inspector into the front seat, got in, and drove away.

Two policemen coming up Al-Rashid Street saluted as the familiar car passed.

Chafik was in a room, lying on the floor. The first thing he saw was a vaulted ceiling decorated with arabesques in gilt paint. He announced, "Turkish influence. This is an old house." He tried to sit up, but pain stabbed his head and he closed his eyes again.

The next time he opened them he saw a man astride a chair, arms folded on the back. The man said, "A very old house and a convenient neighborhood. Your police will search for days."

Chafik blinked against pain. His head was clearing and he stared at the man, thinking: This is what I hunted. An ordinary man, one who might have been my neighbor. Aloud he said, "Nevertheless, you cannot hide here indefinitely. Arrest is inevitable."

Another man came within vision, a squat barrel-chested man who was doubtlessly the bodyguard. The man held a leather blackjack.

Helmy said, "Restrain yourself, Ali." And to Chafik he said, almost with apology, "He is like a mastiff."

"I, too, have a faithful henchman." Chafik thought of Sergeant Abdullah, the comfort of those broad shoulders and accurate gun; then he had another thought that was not comforting, and asked, "Is the boy also faithful to you?"

Helmy was puzzled. "What boy?"

"The one who helped with the garbage."

"I always use a brat to help me, it disarms suspicion. But I don't

use any particular boy," he said.

Chafik smiled in relief. "My mind is clear of an unjust suspicion," he said.

Helmy pulled the chair close to the Inspector. At near view the Turk's mouth and eyes warned Chafik that this was not a neighbor who lived within society, and the laws protecting it. Here was one who coldly calculated chances, made crime a business. Such a man would know no pity.

"I have a proposition," Helmy said conversationally. "You will write a note to cancel my arrest. I will leave on the train tomorrow."

"A simple proposition, I agree. But not practical. Such an order would be questioned by my superiors."

"You will say in the note you use me as bait to catch others."

Inspector Chafik thought: He is clever. There is a chance such a request might be approved. But he said, "It is known you work alone. Furthermore, I am not in the mood to write such a note."

Ali struck him with the blackjack. Helmy kicked him, then pulled him to his feet. They had him between them, knocking him from side to side; when he fell down they lifted him again and beat him again. He heard screams, recognized his own voice, thought: How demeaning that I should evidence pain!

"Well?" Helmy asked.

The Inspector tasted blood, screwed up his face in disgust and said, "This

does not help. Your arrest is inevitable."

They did it over again. All Chafik said was, "My work is finished and I am now expendable." He began to recite from the Koran in a high voice which gradually became unclear, then incoherent. Unconsciousness released him from the agony of waiting for the next treatment.

He did not hear the sound of feet on the stairs, but he revived with the crash of the door. He heard Helmy's oath and the violence of gunfire and somebody familiar who shouted, "Dogs! Devils!" The guns talked once again; then there was silence and the Inspector dared raise his head.

Near him was the body of the Turk. The other man crouched against the wall, coughing blood. The room was filled with police, among them Sergeant Abdullah.

Chafik said, "Did I rub a magic lamp?" He laughed hysterically, but managed to check himself when Abdullah raised him.

"Praise to the Merciful One!" exclaimed the sergeant. "If it had not been for the boy—"

"The boy?"

"Sir, I refer to the waif. He was in the back of your car, apparently waiting for you, hidden on the floor. He saw you struck. With commendable restraint he remained silent while you were driven to this place. Then he ran back, found me at headquarters, and so —"

"Faisal!"

"That is his name, sir. I detained him in your office."

Chafik said humbly, "God works in strange ways." Then he added urgently, "Let us go there quickly." Moving, he was reminded of pain and was glad to lean on Abdullah.

In his office he stood and looked at Faisal. The boy was asleep in a chair, cheek on his arm, his face smeared with recent tears. In sleep his little hands were clenched into fists and he stirred restlessly and once murmured, "My father . . ."

The Inspector said, "May I be forgiven!" Then he quoted in excellent English, "I have a little shadow, he goes in and out with me—" After a pause he added, "But the use of him I *do* see."

He went to the telephone and was again reminded of a dozen pains. He dialed the number and, waiting for his wife to answer, his eyes were tender, but hearing her voice he said casually, "I will be with you soon, Leila. I fear I am a little bruised and have ruined good clothes, but it is not important. And I have to announce a decision." He drew himself up and said very firmly, "I have decided to make an adoption."

There was no answer. He rattled the telephone and shouted, "Leila! You hear me? I am adopting a boy."

The voice of his wife came mildly. "I hear you, my man. All Baghdad hears you. Please come very quickly. I have had Faisal's room waiting for him these three days, now."