

CHRISTOPHER COOL / TEEN AGENT

in

# MISSION: MOONFIRE

By JACK LANCER

Adventure #2 in the Christopher Cool series



**GROSSET & DUNLAP, INC. Publishers**

NEW YORK

CHRIS COOL, TEEN's brilliant secret agent, investigates international intrigue in the Middle East.

After probing into a ticklish Turkish caper in New York City, Chris follows the clue of a flaming crescent moon to the exotic city of Istanbul. With the aid of a beautiful Turkish girl, he picks up the trail of his quarry, a vengeful ex-Nazi scientist known as Dr. Death.

Weird, menacing developments involving a band of fanatical thugs and two objects of antiquity lead Chris and his fellow agent, Geronimo Johnson, to an archaeological dig in Sardis, reputedly haunted by ghosts of fierce whirling dervishes. The daring TEEN agents' hunt for Dr. Death and his political plotters plunge Chris and Geronimo into a dangerous chase in an eerie cone-studded volcanic valley which holds a fantastic treasure and a world-terrifying secret.

## **Mission: Moonfire**

by JACK LANCER

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## 1 . The Ruby Signal

“THERE’S THE PLACE,” said Chris Cool. A red neon sign glowing in the darkness spelled out The Seraglio Turkish Restaurant.

The blond college sophomore swung the wheel and his black bullet-like Jaguar purred smoothly to a stop at the curb.

Chris and his Apache Indian roommate, Geronimo Johnson, climbed out. “I’d still like to know what this war party’s all about,” Geronimo said.

“Ours not to reason why,” Chris replied. “The Great White Father is playing his cards close to his chest tonight.”

A radio call on campus at Kingston University had brought the two youths speeding into New York City on a new assignment against enemy agents. Both Chris and Geronimo were members of TEEN—Top-secret Educational Espionage Network—a corps of brilliant young students serving as an undercover arm of America’s Central Intelligence Agency.

The boys crossed the street to the restaurant. It was in a seedy section of Lower Manhattan on the fringes of Greenwich Village.

A paunchy doorman in baggy pants and feathered turban bowed low and brushed his fingers to forehead, lips, and chest. “Welcome, effendis!”

His popeyes took on a puzzled stare as the long haired Indian youth responded, “Hondaal, shikis.”

“Apache for ‘Hi, friend.’” Chris explained. “He’s just off the reservation—his English isn’t too good.”

A wailing din of Oriental music struck the boys' ears as they entered. The smoky, dingy restaurant was filled with a Saturday night crowd of patrons. All were men and, from their faces, seemed to be mostly Turks, Arabs, and other Middle Eastern types. Some were puffing on hubble-bubble water pipes.

Chris and Geronimo found a table along one wall. A costumed waiter took their orders for shish kebab. Presently he returned with the sizzling hot morsels of roast lamb skewered on long steel spits.

"What do we do now?" Geronimo grumbled. "Just sit here and chow up?"

Chris shrugged. "That's the usual procedure. Unless you want to take the stuff home in a doggy bag."

"You know what I mean, choonday." Switching to Apache, Geronimo added, "When does the action start?"

Chris pretended to check the time on his wrist watch while he twirled the stem to the Control channel frequency. "Kingston One calling Q."

There was a faint hum of radio static. Then the voice of TEEN Control responded in his usual fake British accent, "Q here."

"We're at the Seraglio, sir."

"So I assumed," Q said coldly, "since those were your orders. You will wait there as long as necessary until contacted."

"Understood." As he signed off, Chris glanced across the table at Geronimo. "Got that all straight now?"

“I think I grasp the broad, general strategy namely, wait here until contacted.”

The TEEN agents were eating hungrily when a sudden cymbal crash drew their attention to the trio of musicians sitting cross-legged on a dais at one end of the room.

The master of ceremonies stepped up to the microphone. First in Turkish, then Arabic, and finally in English, he announced, “And now our star attraction for which you have all been waiting—he lovely Circassian Slave Girls!”

“Hm! May help to pass the time,” Chris murmured.

Again the haunting, high-pitched wail of Turkish music rattled the tableware. A group of veiled dancers leaped out onto the floor. Swaying and undulating, moving their arms in graceful gestures, they swirled about the room. Their gauzy costumes glittered with colorful fake jewels.

One dancer, with long red hair, took up a position facing the boys’ alcove. Chris watched her performance admiringly.

“It’s known as the Swiss Watch Dance,” he muttered. “Twenty-one-jewel movement.”

“Iltse! Geronimo hissed a sudden warning in Apache. “That red jewel isn’t just moving—it’s flashing!”

Chris’s eyes widened. Sure enough, a ruby on the dancer’s costume was flashing like a miniature blinker light! Dahdit... dahdit... dahdit. Morse code letter N—the TEEN-agent radio signal for Danger! Beware!

The ruby’s flashes began to vary. Chris translated the code letters in his head as they were spelled out:

S-C-I-M-I-T-A-R.

With another cymbal crash, the music finally ended. The dancing girls unveiled their faces and bowed to a storm of applause. Chris and Geronimo had just time enough to recognize the red-haired dancer before the group hurried off the floor.

“Spice Carter!” Chris gasped in a low voice. Spice, a TEEN agent from Vassar, had recently worked with the two Kingston University students on a thrilling assignment in France, filed under the title *X Marks the Spy*.

Geronimo nodded. “Did you get the message?”  
“Scimitar... Beware Scimitar.”

“What does it mean?”

“Well—you know—a scimitar is one of those long, curved Turkish swords.”

The Apache gave a small snort of disgust. “I know that. I meant the whole message—what was she trying to tell us?”

Chris shrugged. “How would I know? Let Q figure it out. He’s very big on this secret message jazz,”

“Allow me to remind you, choonday, old buddy, that Q is not in any danger there in his steel walled Control tepee. Possibly we are.”

The boys were finishing their meal uneasily when one of the restaurant employees came to their table—a huge, swarthy man dressed like an Oriental palace guard. His head was swathed in a white turban, and a long, curving scimitar hung from his waist sash,

He salaamed low and spoke to Chris. “Efendim, the owner of the Seraglio—Mr. Murad—sends his



compliments. He would be honored if you would come to his office.”

“Really? Well, that’s very nice of him.” Chris dabbed his mouth with a napkin as he eyed the scimitar. “By the way, is that—er—toad-sticker you have there a real Turkish blade?”

The man flashed a toothy grin. “May I borrow your handkerchief, efendim?”

He took the handkerchief from the breast pocket of Chris’s sports jacket and tossed it in the air. As it fluttered downward, he whipped out the blade from its sheath. With a lightning slash, he cut the fine linen cloth in two!

“My scimitar is quite genuine, as you see, efendim.”

Chris and Geronimo exchanged glances.

“Good thing you weren’t blowing your nose when he did that,” the Apache muttered as he took a sip of thick Turkish coffee.

“Thanks for that reassuring thought.” With some misgiving Chris rose from the table and followed the man out of the room. Was this his contact? If it was not, Geronimo was there to back him up.

They went down a corridor and up a flight of rickety stairs to the second floor. The guard opened a door, then stood aside to let Chris enter.

The office was luxuriously furnished with silken drapes and glowingly colored Turkish rugs. An expensive-looking walnut desk stood at one side of the room, but Mr. Murad was seated cross-legged on cushions facing the door.

He was a fat, foxy-looking man with an enormous,

up-twirled mustache. He wore a red fez and was puffing at a water pipe. On the wall above him hung a red Turkish flag with its white crescent moon and star.

There was a long pause while Murad eyed Chris up and down. Then he murmured, “Akshamlar hayur olsun bay, Cool.”

Chris, who was majoring in linguistics at Kingston, spoke Turkish fluently. But he looked blank and pretended not to understand. “I beg your pardon?”

“I wished you good evening, Mr. Cool.” Murad fastened his lips on the stem of the water pipe again, then added, “You are Mr. Christopher Cool, I believe?”

“How did you guess?”

The restaurant owner smiled and spread his hands as if to brush the question aside. “You live in New York?”

“No, just visiting. I’m a student.”

“Ah, yes. A student.” Murad began to chat pleasantly and quiz Chris further.

As he waited for the restaurateur to get to the point, Chris began to feel strangely woozy. “What exactly did you want to see me about, Mr. Murad?”

Murad gestured vaguely to the crescent flag above his head. “The moon is on fire... is it not?”

Chris glanced at the flag, then gaped in astonishment. The crescent moon appeared to be in flames! As he blinked and turned his head to clear his vision, he heard the word “Geronimo.”

Then the flames faded and once again he was looking at an ordinary Turkish flag!

“What kind of a trick was that?” Chris asked sharply.

Murad’s only reply was a shrug. He clapped his hands. The door opened and the guard reappeared.

“It has been most enjoyable meeting you, Mr. Cool,” Murad murmured. “I trust that you and your friend will return often to the Seraglio to enjoy our fine Turkish cuisine.”

As he left the office Chris saw a sly grin on the face of his host. But the youthful TEEN agent’s head was now reeling. On rubbery legs he followed the attendant as far as the stairway.

Then everything went black in front of Chris’s eyes and he felt as if he were toppling into a bottomless pit.

## 2 . Hi-Fi Hocus-Pocus

CHRIS OPENED his eyes slowly. He wished his head would make up its mind and stay one size preferably 7 1/4. It seemed to be swelling and shrinking, in and out, out and in.

A queer jagged line swam in Chris's field of vision. As his eyes focused, he saw that it was a crack in the grimy plaster ceiling. His eyes traveled downward. He was lying on a cot in a bare, cell-like room.

The turbaned attendant was standing nearby, arms folded, like a huge statue. He smiled. "Ah! You are awake, efendim?"

"I'm afraid so. You look depressingly real."

Chris swung his legs off the cot and sat up right slowly and carefully so as not to jiggle his head too much. "I hate to ask foolish questions but where am I?"

"At the Seraglio restaurant, efendim. Do you not remember?"

"I'd rather not, but go on."

"You did not feel well after seeing Mr. Murad." "That figures." Chris nodded glumly.

"You fainted," the guard went on. "You might have fallen downstairs if I had not caught you. So I brought you here to lie down until you felt better."

"That was awfully kind of you. Thanks a lot."

But what had made him black out? Chris had a sneaking suspicion that Murad's water pipe must have emitted some sort of knockout gas. In which case he

had a score to settle.

He levered himself up on his feet. “I do appreciate your hospitality but I think it’s time for me to go now.”

“No, no, efendim!” The attendant strode forward to block his way. “You must rest longer. You are not yet well enough to leave.”

“Please—no coaxing. I’m in no mood for argument.” Chris tried to brush past him.

“You will stay, efendim!” The attendant’s face hardened into granite. He seized Chris’s shoulders and started to push him back onto the cot.

Chris’s fingers stiffened into a “hand-sword” and he jabbed hard into the guard’s solar plexus. As the man doubled up with a grunt of pain,

Chris’s arm axed downward in a karate chop to the back of the neck. The attendant sagged slowly to the floor.

Chris stepped over him and walked to the door. It was not locked. He went out and found himself in the second-floor hallway. Down the corridor was the door to Murad’s office.

Chris hurried toward it and flung the door open. Inside, a fat man with a fez gaped at him in surprise. It was a moment before Chris recognized him as Mr. Murad—minus his mustache.

There was a faint whirring noise. Chris saw that it came from a ventilator fan in the wall. All traces of the water-pipe smoke were gone and the pipe itself had been removed from the room.

“Freshening up the atmosphere a bit, are we?”

Chris inquired as he closed the door behind him.

The restaurateur seemed to freeze. “What is it you want, Mr. Cool?”

“Why, Mr. Murad—you’ve shaved!”

The man’s eyes glinted with cold hatred. “I repeat—what is it you want, Mr. Cool?”

“Let’s start with a few friendly words of explanation as to why you slipped me that knockout gas.”

Murad snarled, “I have no time for games, my young friend. Kindly leave here at once before I call my bouncer.”

“Sorry. Your bouncer just got bounced.” In two quick steps Chris moved across the room. He slapped Murad’s hand away from a wall button and grabbed him by the front of his coat. “Now then, suppose you start talking!”

Murad’s eyes bulged in fear. He pulled loose from Chris’s grasp, darted across the office, and yanked open a desk drawer.

There was no time to stop him before he seized a weapon. Chris whipped out a slim, silver pen and pressed the pocket clip. Murad’s face sagged in a sudden expression of wide-eyed, baby like innocence. Then he slumped to the floor in a mountainous heap. The “sleepy sliver” dart, fired from Chris’s pen, would keep him unconscious for some time.

The TEEN agent hurriedly checked the desk drawer. To his surprise, he found no gun or other weapon. It contained only Murad’s fake mustache and a circlet of blue-green beads.

“Why was he so anxious to get his hands on these?” Chris wondered.

The youth examined the false mustache. As he had expected, the hairs concealed small twin filters which slipped into the wearer's nostrils—no doubt to protect him from the water-pipe gas. Perhaps Murad had intended to uncork more gas somehow to get rid of his unwanted visitor.

The beads appeared to be ordinary “worry beads” of the kind often fingered by Greek and Turkish men for nervous release. Chris could detect nothing unusual about them. Nevertheless, he slipped them into his pocket for later examination.

Drawer by drawer, Chris ransacked the desk. Its only contents were bills, receipts, business correspondence, and ledgers such as a restaurant owner might keep in his office.

The TEEN agent's eyes swept over the room and stopped at a wall safe. Nothing too formidable for a graduate of TEEN's instruction class in locks and safes. The class had been taught by the most expert ex—safecracker available.

Chris wiped his hand carefully and turned the dial back and forth until he heard the tumblers click into place. The door swung open. Inside were several bundles of currency and some legal documents. Chris replaced them after a quick glance and closed the safe again.

The Turkish flag on the wall caught his eye. Chris examined it and felt the material between his thumb and fingers. Apparently nothing but plain cotton fabric.

Chris glanced again at the unconscious figure on the floor. The restaurant owner's plump midriff was moving slowly up and down in the gentle rhythm of

slumber.

“Sleep well, Abu ben Murad,” said Chris and went out of the office, closing the door quietly.

As he started downstairs, his feeling of wooziness returned. Chris clutched the scarred handrail and negotiated the steps cautiously so as not to topple.

In the hallway below, two waiters moved back and forth with trays. They paid no attention as the TEEN agent made his way into the main dining room.

To Chris’s surprise it was almost empty. Only a few guests remained at tables. He must have been blacked out far longer than he realized.

Then a startling realization hit him. Geronimo was gone!

Chris spotted their own waiter spreading a fresh tablecloth in an adjoining alcove. He looked up. “The bill is paid, efendim.”

“Great. But what about my friend?”

“The Indian with the long hair? He said he would go back to the campus by himself-whatever that means-and that he would meet you there later.”

Chris hastened outside, past the doorman. The night air felt good after the stuffy atmosphere of the Seraglio. The Jaguar was still parked across the street. Chris walked over to it, frowning thoughtfully.

Odd that Geronimo had gone off without waiting. Perhaps he had seen someone suspicious and had left the restaurant to trail him or to follow up some other clue.

Chris considered calling his Apache pal on his wrist—watch communicator. No, better not. If Geronimo



was engaged in some stealthy undertaking, the radio buzz might give him away. Better not report to Q, either, until he knew what was what.

For some reason, Chris felt relaxed and not particularly worried. The best thing was to go back to Kingston and wait until Gerry checked in. The Jaguar started with its usual purr, then roared to life as it shot off through the darkened streets of Lower Manhattan. Chris drove through the Holland Tunnel to the New Jersey side and headed south along the turnpike.

Fog was rolling in from sea, mingled with the chemical smells of the Jersey Meadows. It was after midnight. Traffic was sparse enough for him to notice a car following about a hundred yards behind. Presently he turned down an exit ramp onto the road leading to Kingston, and the traffic dwindled away completely.

Under the monotonous drone, Chris began to feel strangely giddy again. Although the speedometer showed fifty miles an hour, everything seemed to be unrolling in slow motion.

“I must still be woozy from that water-pipe gas,” Chris thought. “Better watch it.”

No headlights were visible now in his rear-view mirror. “Must have been imagining things,” he decided.

Suddenly the radiotelephone buzzed under the dashboard. Chris groped for the handset and raised it to his ear.

“Mr. Cool?” The voice sounded strangely muffled. Chris glanced in surprise at the selector switch on the

dash. Someone had turned it from the HQ channel to regular phone. Instinctively Chris pressed an emergency button before replying. "Yes? Who is this?"

"That is of no importance. If you will turn on your car hi-fi you will hear a most interesting tape recording." There was a click as the caller hung up.

A cartridge, Chris noticed, had been inserted in the stereo tape player. He switched it on. Strange sounding Oriental music came from the four door mounted speakers. The Jaguar's cockpit was like an echo chamber, engulfing him in the weird waves of stereo sound as he drove along.

A soothing voice began to speak. At times it rose above the plaintive wail of the Turkish music, only to sink again to a monotonous babble.

What was it saying? Chris heard, yet somehow did not hear. "I'm being hypnotized," he thought, and struggled hard against his lethargy.

### 3. A Figure in The Fog

THE DRONING VOICE went on, “There is no need for worry. You have nothing to fear... You are relaxed now—completely at ease.”

Suddenly it became clearer, more insistent. “At the next side road you will turn. Do you understand? Turn at the next side road:’

Chris shook his head and his lips tried to fashion a retort. Instead he said, “I understand.” Chris heard himself speaking mechanically, like a ventriloquist’s dummy—answering as if the tape could hear him.

“Find a lonesome spot along the side of the road, away from houses and preferably among some trees... Park there and wait with your headlights on... Park and wait.”

A few minutes later Chris glimpsed a reflector sign ahead, indicating a rural road on the right. He slowed as he approached it and swung the wheel. The Jaguar rounded the turn and glided on, down a black-topped country lane.

Chris passed several darkened farmhouses. Then the way sloped gently downhill into a valley. On one side lay woods; on the other, open field. Chris pulled off the road into the wooded area and cut his ignition.

Here in the lowland the fog was gathering more thickly. Mist swirled among the trees, like whitish veils in the cone of his headlights. Noises reached his ears yet failed to register the sounds of a car stopping somewhere nearby.

“I’m in danger,” Chris thought dully. But his pulse scarcely responded to the warning.

Suddenly he blinked as something glinted brightly, dazzling his eyes. Chris threw up one hand and peered through his fingers at the shiny object. It was a curving blade—a scimitar, reflecting the Jag’s headlights!

Slowly a figure materialized out of the mist, holding the scimitar. Chris gasped. Geronimo!

Step by step, the figure came closer. Chris stared in disbelief. Was this really his Apache pal? Or was he seeing a phantom—an illusion created by the hypnotic tape?

The figure spoke in a low, monotonous voice. “I’m your friend, Chris... your friend... Don’t you recognize me?”

“Yes, I recognize you. You’re Geronimo.” The words forced themselves out of Chris’s throat.

“I want you to trust me, Chris. Trust me absolutely. Do you understand? I want you to answer each of my questions clearly. By answering, you will identify yourself and prove that you are really my friend Chris Cool.”

“I-I understand.”

“Good... Now then, you and I are American secret agents, aren’t we?”

“Th-that’s right.” Chris could feel beads of perspiration forming on his forehead.

“To what Intelligence group do we belong?”

Chris’s brain was in a turmoil as he struggled to remain silent. But he heard himself saying, “TEEN... We’re TEEN agents.”

“And why were we sent to the Seraglio tonight?” .

With a terrific effort, Chris reminded himself that he and Geronimo always spoke in his roommate's Indian tongue when they wanted to evade eavesdroppers. He answered in Apache, "We were told to wait there till someone contacted us."

"Answer my question, Chris—in English, please."

Chris felt a stir of excitement, as if he had just succeeded in breaking through some kind of barrier. "What's the matter, choonday?" he queried. "Don't you savvy your own lingo?"

"Answer my question! In English! Why were we sent to the Seraglio tonight?"

Chris struggled desperately not to obey. He knew for sure now, with at least part of his mind, that he was under hypnosis—that the man with the scimitar was not Geronimo Johnson. If only he could resist the command!

"The emergency stimulant!" Chris remembered suddenly. Why hadn't he thought of that before!

His fingers groped for the special fraternity pin on his sports jacket. He pressed the pin with his thumb, jabbing the point deep into a vein in his palm. The action needled a squirt of pure adrenalin into his blood stream. Its effect was like a jolt of electricity, rousing him from his mental fog.

"Answer me!" the figure shouted. But Chris's brain was clear now and the speaker was no longer Geronimo—he was a masked man!

Chris started to flick on the ignition. The swordsman sensed at once that his victim was about to escape. He darted forward and yanked open the car door.

This was no time to argue with a swinging, razor-sharp blade! Chris bolted out the opposite side of the car. With a quick glance over his shoulder before sprinting for cover, he saw the masked man pop something into his mouth.

Chris's momentary pause was almost fatal. His enemy gave a bloodcurdling yell—"The moon is on fire!"—and cleared the Jaguar's hood in a single leap. Then he came at Chris with the ferocity of a madman, swinging the scimitar right and left in terrifying roundhouse slashes.

Chris called on all his skill at aikido, whirling and backtracking to avoid the blade in the precise motions which the Korean master, Duk Sim, drilled into all his TEEN pupils. One false move in the darkness and he was done for!

Step by step, doing the Dance of Eight Directions, Chris maneuvered himself toward a tree. His nerves froze as he backed against the trunk. The scimitar whistled through the air. But Chris was already bowing gracefully, and the blade buried itself deep in the tree trunk.

As he straightened erect, Chris's right arm shot upward in the shotei, or hand-piston movement.

The blow struck the masked man's chin with pile driver force and he dropped like a poleaxed steer.

Chris was still panting and shuddering when he heard the racket of a helicopter. Hastily he made his way back to the Jaguar and got a flashlight from the glove compartment. Switching on the beam, he waved it back and forth.

Presently the chopper took shape in the night sky.

Its brilliant searchlight cut through the ground mist and it hovered down onto the field across the road. Chris ran to meet it.

The pilot was Dick Curry, an ex-Army flier who had learned his trade in the jungles of Vietnam. He greeted Chris with a grin. “Fancy meeting you here. The cool cat himself!”

“Not tonight, boy. I was in a very warm glow just a minute ago.” Chris told Curry what had happened, adding, “How’d you get here so fast?”

Chris knew that when he had pressed the emergency button on his radiotelephone, the call would be traced automatically. The same button had also turned on a homing transmitter, enabling the Jaguar’s position to be fixed if the TEEN agent failed to report in voice code. But even a VTOL jet could not have homed on his signal so quickly, all the way from Kennedy.

“I was already out looking for your buddy Geronimo,” Curry explained.

“Geronimo! What’s that Injun up to?”

“Tell you all about it on the way. Let’s take care of your playmate first.”

Chris unmasked his attacker, but did not recognize the unconscious man. Curry handcuffed the fellow while Chris locked the Jaguar. Then they carried their prisoner across the road and loaded him aboard the helicopter.

As the chopper soared aloft, Curry reported to Control over the radio. “Any more news on Kingston Two?”

“Nothing definite yet—they’re still triangulating,”

the operator replied. “The best fix so far indicates the truck’s heading south along the Jersey coast.”

Curry signed off and turned to Chris. “Tune your wrist watch to the Emergency channel.”

Chris did so and got a faint, steady beep.

“That’s Geronimo’s signal,” said Curry. “He’s in a panel truck somewhere on the highway with your redheaded girl friend.”

“Spice?” Chris exclaimed. “What happened?”

“Apparently the enemy agents at that Turkish restaurant noticed her signaling you two and kidnapped her.”

Geronimo, Curry said, had gone to the restaurant washroom while Chris was upstairs and had taken the opportunity to snoop around the premises. He had seen Spice, tied and gagged, being shoved into a panel truck at the rear of the restaurant.

After hastily notifying Control over his wristwatch communicator, the Apache had chased after the truck as it pulled away and had managed to yank open the loading door and leap into the van compartment. He had untied Spice, but the two TEEN agents had decided to stay aboard and find out where the truck was going. Meanwhile, he had transmitted its description and license number.

“The highway police haven’t spotted it yet?” Chris asked tensely.

“Not yet. Geronimo’s keeping his watch tuned to Emergency Transmit. It hasn’t much range, of course, but Control has every available FCC monitor reporting directional bearings on the moving signal—”



“Sh! Hold it!” Chris broke in. He raised his watch to his ear and listened, then exchanged a worried look with Dick Curry.

The beep had suddenly ceased!

At that moment Geronimo and Spice were being jounced and shaken as the truck roared along.

“I may not be able to wear a bikini after this,” Spice complained. “I’ll be black and blue all over!”

Geronimo was in no mood for quips. “They’ve turned off onto a dirt road,” he said. “Maybe I’d better report to Control again.”

He flicked his watch stem to Voice Transmit and spoke with his wrist close to his mouth. “Kingston Two calling Control... Come in, please! Kingston Two calling Control.”

No response. He put his ear to the watch. There was no trace of reception static—not even a faint power hum. “Ail” Geronimo exclaimed. “My radios conked out!”

“Oh, great! How long do you suppose your signal’s been—” Spice broke off as the truck suddenly ground to a halt.

From inside the van, they heard the cab doors open and two men leap out. Other voices greeted them. Geronimo judged that at least five men must now be outside the truck.

He crouched in the darkness, ready for action. Pulling out his pen device, he whispered, “You stay back. Savvy? I’ll handle this.”

The next moment the van door was pulled open,

letting in the sound of heavy surf. Geronimo gave an Apache war whoop and pressed his pen clip. The man who had opened the door slumped.

Geronimo leaped over him and pressed the pen clip again. A second man dropped with a sleepy sliver in his chest. The other enemy agents recovered their wits and yanked out weapons.

Geronimo barely had time to take in his surroundings. They were on a small wharf.

But now the other three were on top of him. A sweeping blow from a heavy revolver knocked the pen from his hand. Then something struck him hard on the back of his head and the Apache tumbled face forward.

## 4 . Code Name: Moonfire

GERONIMO CAME TO with a throbbing head. Wind and spray stung his face, and he seemed to be rocking back and forth on a hard surface. He tried to move his arms, only to discover that his wrists were tied behind him. His ankles, too, were bound.

The Apache opened his eyes and saw the night sky, then raised his head painfully... Ai! He was at sea, all right, on the deck of a fast, low-sided motor launch. Light streamed from an open pilot house, forward. They were churning through the water at a good fifteen-knot clip.

“How, Sitting Bull!”

Geronimo turned slightly. Spice was lying on the deck nearby, propped against a hatch coaming and also tied.

“Sick Dog is more like it”

“Come, come, boy! Where’s that stoic red-man stuff I keep reading about all the time?”

“White man’s lies.”

“Shut up, Injun!” A vicious kick caught Geronimo in the side.

The Apache turned his head and saw a man in seaman’s dungarees looming over him—one of the thugs who had met the truck at the dock.

“That goes for you too, Redhead.”

Geronimo’s cold obsidian eyes sized up his target. Suddenly he swung his legs off the deck and booted the man squarely in the stomach!

The thug reeled backward, almost falling overboard before he grabbed the rail.

He was about to charge back at the helpless Apache when a whirring noise drew his eyes skyward. "Hey, Max!" he yelled. "Here comes a copter!"

A burly man burst out of the deckhouse, aiming a pair of binoculars.

"Who is it?" the first thug asked.

"Can't tell yet." Max squinted tensely. Geronimo shot a glance at Spice. "Your signal?" The girl agent nodded. "I switched on my watch transmitter after the truck stopped."

Max and the guard were too concerned with the helicopter to notice their whispering. The chopper was closing in fast and the racket of its rotors was growing louder.

Suddenly a brilliant searchlight pinned the launch in its glare. A voice boomed from a loudspeaker on the aircraft, "Heave to!

It was Chris Cool's voice!

Instead of obeying, Max was bellowing to the helmsman to hold course and speed.

Again the loudspeaker boomed. "Heave to! This is your last warning

Max rushed into the pilot house and came out clutching an electric bullhorn. "You're not the Navy, mister," he shouted back, "so don't waste your breath giving us orders! We're outside the territorial limit, anyhow! And don't try firing on us, unless you want to splatter these two all over the deck!" He gestured to Spice and Geronimo.

There was a tense pause. Then a spurt of fire flashed from the copter and a missile streaked downward. It struck the water just astern of the speeding launch, sending up a geyser of spray. Another missile followed.

“They’re trying to knock out the propeller” the first thug yelled.

Max cursed loudly and dashed back into the deckhouse. This time he came out brandishing a submachine gun. Before he could aim it, the brilliant searchlight narrowed to an intense pencil beam that caught Max square in the face. He dropped the gun and clutched his eyes with a scream of pain.

“Don’t try that again the loudspeaker warned. “This beam can blind you permanently

Meanwhile, the launch was losing way, slowing second by second.

“What’s happening, Chico?” Max bellowed. “I can’t see!”

Chico had already run aft and was peering out over the stern rail. “Those weren’t explosive rockets!” he reported. “They must’ve contained some kind of chemical! The stuff’s swelling up into a big mass of phosphorescent goo all over our wake! It’s fouling the prop!”

Max broke into a fresh volley of oaths. But the launch was now helplessly disabled and was soon lying dead in the water.

Twenty minutes later a Coast Guard cutter came racing to the scene, and a boarding party took over the launch.

“This is piracy!” Max stormed as a husky bos’n’s

mate manacled his wrists. "Piracy on the high seas!"

"You're dead right, Jack," said the Coast Guardsman with a thoughtful glance at Spice and Geronimo. "That's what it amounts to when you're holding kidnapped prisoners. The skipper could hold court right now and hang you both from the yardarm."

"Any idea what this caper's all about?" Chris asked her.

Spice shook her head. "Practically nothing, except that it's been code-named Moonfire."

"Moon-fire?" Chris was startled.

"Yes. Don't ask me why. Apparently Control suspected the Seraglio restaurant of being the American cover for some sort of spy plot based in Turkey. That's why I was told to get a job there as a dancer. I was supposed to keep my eyes and ears open, but not to risk trying to communicate until you two showed up at the restaurant. Then last night, just before I saw you, I finally got a break."

"How so?"

"I overheard Murad powwowing with his head waiter. He said, 'Don't worry. The Scimitar will cut down any American agents who get in our way.'

"So that's why you flashed us that warning in Morse code," Geronimo put in.

"Yes. It was the only item I had to pass on:' "But what does it mean?" the Apache persisted. "What or who is the Scimitar?"

Spice gave a helpless shrug. "I've no idea."

A black-and-rust Doberman Pinscher guard dog,

patrolling near the wall, paused to glare at the three TEEN agents. Glossy-coated, with a spring-steel body, it looked mean, intelligent, and powerful enough to bring down a bull.

Spice and Geronimo were hoisted aboard the sleek, six-place helicopter by rescue sling. Since its fuel was getting low, Dick Curry decided to fly straight back to the TEEN base at Kennedy.

It was after 2 A.M. when the chopper landed. At Control's suggestion, the three young TEEN agents taxied from the airport to the Howell mansion on Long Island Sound. This mansion, nestled on a vast walled estate, had been built by a millionaire before he lost his fortune in the stock market. Now it served as a secret TEEN training center.

Chris and Geronimo slept late in one of the spacious bedrooms and came down to Sunday brunch shortly before noon. After eating the hearty breakfast and lunch, they strolled outside and joined Spice, who at that moment was climbing out of the swimming pool.

"You two just up?" the pretty red-haired coed inquired pertly.

"Actually, we've been doing Yoga exercises since seven," Chris fibbed.

"Horizontally, I imagine."

"The system does require meditation with the eyes closed," he conceded.

Spice grinned. "Come on! Walk me around while I dry off—if that's not too strenuous."

She slipped on clogs and a white terry-cloth wrap and they started off through the wooded grounds in

the warm May sunshine.

“Nice doggy,” said Spice.

“Let the nice doggy be,” said Chris. He related his own adventure of the night before.

“How do you suppose Murad found out your name?” Geronimo mused.

“Easy. The doorman saw us drive up. They probably checked the car after they spotted Spice’s warning signal and got my name off one of the textbooks in the back seat.”

“How about that bit with the Turkish flag?” asked Spice.

Chris frowned thoughtfully. “I have a hunch the water-pipe gas was some sort of psycho-chemical that leaves the victim wide open to hypnotic suggestion. When Murad pointed to the flag and said, ‘The moon is on fire,’ he was just checking to make sure the chemical had taken effect.”

“And then while you were blacked out, the hypnotizing tape was planted in your car in order to worm all possible information out of you.”

“Right.” Chris nodded. “The masked man probably trailed me all the way from the restaurant to waylay me after I responded to the hypnotist’s orders. After he’d pumped me for information, he probably intended to kill me and leave my body there by the roadside—with nothing to connect the job back to the Seraglio.”

While the three young people were chatting, Mr. and Mrs. Howell strolled over to join them.

The couple, both retired CIA agents, had been



given charge of the TEEN training estate. Their own two college-aged children provided good cover, since the trainees who came to the estate could be explained as their classmates and weekend guests.

“I gather you three had quite a swinging time last night,” said Mr. Howell, a tall, gaunt man with a jolly air. “By the way, you’ll all be given appointments with Q for debriefing tomorrow.”

Mrs. Howell was carrying her pet lapdog—a pop-eyed, nervous little Japanese spaniel.

“Here’s something I may as well turn over to you, sir,” Chris said, fishing in his pocket. He pulled out the circlet of worry beads which he had found in Murad’s desk drawer.

“Hm! That’s odd. Two or three loose beads like these were found in the pocket of that masked man you captured.”

Howell reached out to examine the beads. As he did so, the jittery little spaniel escaped from its mistress’s arms and leaped to the ground, knocking the circlet from Mr. Howell’s fingers.

The beads came unstrung.

Chris and Geronimo stooped to gather them up. Both started in surprise as the tiny spaniel gave a sudden vicious growl.

The next moment it bounded off across the lawn and hurled itself with bared teeth at the big Doberman!

## 5 . Dr. Death

“Fuji COME BACK!” Mrs. Howell screamed.

The pug-faced little spaniel had sunk its teeth in the Doberman’s throat and was hanging on like a pit bull! The Doberman seemed too astonished to defend himself. But he recovered with a snarl and shook the spaniel loose.

Now the Doberman lunged for the kill, fangs bared. But the spaniel dodged like lightning, snapping savagely at the bigger dog’s Hank.

Chris was about to dart forward and snatch the spaniel away when Howell grabbed his arm.

“Don’t try it, my boy! Once a Doberman’s blood is up, he’d just as soon eat you as look at you!” Howell drew out a zip pen and fired an anesthetic barb which put the spaniel to sleep instantly.

The Doberman sniffed the limp form, and at Howell’s command, backed stiffly away. Howell picked up the unconscious pet and handed it to his wife. “Better take Fuji to the vet, my dear. The poor creature may be rabid.”

“I don’t think so, sir,” Chris spoke up. “I have a hunch he swallowed one of these worry beads.”

“One of the worry beads?” Howell echoed in surprise. He looked at the curious blue-green pellets which the TEEN agent handed him.

Chris told how Murad had tried to reach the beads during their struggle in the office, and how the masked man had popped something into his mouth just before his savage scimitar attack.

The elder agent's forehead puckered in a frown.

"Are you suggesting these beads contain a drug?"

"Right—maybe some chemical that turns the taker into a reckless killer, insensitive to pain."

"Hm! That's an interesting hunch. I'll have these analyzed."

The beads were dispatched to the laboratory at TEEN Control. Before the end of the afternoon Chris's hunch was verified. They contained a rare drug which would drive a person into a savage frenzy.

Howell arranged for a car and driver to take the boys back to New Jersey so Chris could pick up his Jaguar. The bullet-shaped sports coupe was still in the roadside woods.

After a brief search, the TEEN agents also found a black Sunbeam Tiger convertible parked among some trees not far away—evidently the car in which the masked man had trailed Chris. It was equipped with a two-way radio.

The driver who had brought them from Long Island promised to have the car checked out.

That evening, back on campus at Kingston, Chris received a signal buzz on his wrist-watch communicator. He checked in with Control over the Jaguar's radiotelephone.

"You and Kingston Two will report to me at oh-nine-hundred hours tomorrow," Q told him. "And bring your bags packed for overseas assignment."

"Understood." Chris hung up and passed the word to his buddy. "At oh-nine-hundred hours. Don't forget that."

“Wouldn’t dream of it, old boy. We’re being posted out to the colonies, I presume?”

“Indubitably, I should think. But have no fear... Q will be on the quarterdeck of his rowboat in Central Park, keeping the sea lanes open.”

Promptly at three minutes to nine Monday morning Chris’s Jaguar pulled into the service entrance of Luxury Motors on Broadway near Fifty-sixth Street in New York.

There was the usual rigmarole of turning the sports car over to a mechanic and stepping into the service manager’s office to discuss a tune-up job. Then the boys ascended by a secret elevator to the top floor, into a hidden world of clattering teletypes, code machines, and Special Projects gimmickry.

The throbbing heart of Q’s far-flung spider web lay beyond a flush-paneled door at the end of a long corridor. The green light flashed and his barking voice summoned them inside.

A half-empty bottle of milk—solace for Q’s nagging ulcer—stood on his desk beside the TV monitor screen. It was a bad sign.

Q stood glaring out the window, legs spread, hands clasped behind his back in his Admiral Nelson pose. Above the navy-blue blazer he was wearing his usual beat-up yachting cap—in fact, neither Chris nor Geronimo had ever seen him without it.

Chris gave a slight cough. “Kingston One and Two reporting, sir.”

Q swung around peevishly. An unlighted pipe was sticking out of his gray-blond whiskers. The glaring and pipestem-chewing went on a while longer before

he grumbled, “Bad judgment, Cool on that business at sea Saturday night.”

“How so, sir?”

“The launch was almost certainly headed for a rendezvous with a freighter out of New York. SS Aristides. Bound for Turkey. Should have held off till the rendezvous was made. Then the ship could have been stopped and searched. Might have found something interesting.”

“What was her registry—American?”

“No, Greek.”

“Might’ve created an international incident, mightn’t it, sir?”

Q glared, snorted, and poured himself a swig of milk. Wiping the dribble off his whiskers, he walked around to his desk chair. “Sit down.”

The boys sat. Having cleared the air with his preliminary griping ritual, Q was now ready to get down to business.

“Hear about that American-built dam in India being dynamited yesterday?” He tamped his pipe with Queen’s Navy mixture from an oilskin pouch. The stuff always smelled like burning hawser.

Both boys said, “Yes, sir.”

“Latest in a whole series of outrages. Sabotage, assassinations, terrorist stuff all over the world. They all bear the same stamp.”

Q paused to light his pipe before going on. “In every case, as the saboteur or assassin flings his bomb or whatever, he shouts, ‘The moon is on fire’—usually in Turkish.”

“As the masked man did Saturday night,” Chris murmured.

Q nodded. “What’s more, their trail always seems to lead back to Turkey., Now as you know, Turkey is one of our staunchest allies. Finest people in the world. But the conclusion seems inescapable that something rotten is cooking there, unknown to the Turkish authorities.”

“And this setup at the Seraglio restaurant was part of the plot?” Chris asked.

“Definitely. We’re sure it was the American residentura for the assassins’ gang and that Murad was the local agent. That call over your radiotelephone, by the way, came from the Seraglio. We’ve rounded up everyone connected with the place, but so far none has talked.”

“Has Intelligence any leads other than the Seraglio?” Geronimo put in.

“Just one. Ever hear of Dr. Herman Tod? The name is spelled T-o-d, but in German that’s pronounced Tote as in ‘Tote that bale.’ “

A small bell rang in Chris’s brain. “Wasn’t he some sort of Nazi bigwig?”

“Quite right. He was Hitler’s Mad Genius—a fanatical but brilliant scientist who worked on all sorts of Nazi war projects. He had a hand in the V-2 rockets, helped design the revolutionary Type XX-J Electroboats, and performed numerous fiendish experiments on concentration camp prisoners.”

Q paused. “Tod means ‘death’ in German, you see, so eventually he became known as Dr. Death to Allied Intelligence. The ass had him marked as a prime

target and later tried to hunt him down for the War Crimes trials—but he disappeared after the German surrender.”

“What happened to him?” Chris asked. “Quite a lot of people would like to know the answer to that question,” Q replied. “Some thought he was behind TOAD, the deadly secret organization that arose after the war—that it may even have got its name from him. Later evidence indicated that he had been captured by the Russians. Whatever the answer, our Intelligence closed the books on him long ago... until recently, that is.”

Q fiddled with his lighter, got his pipe going again, and continued:

“Two weeks ago the CIA got a report that Dr. Death had been seen alive in Istanbul, Turkey—at the shop of a rug and antique dealer named Turhan Hamid. Now the theory is that Tod may be behind this assassin-saboteur ring.”

“It’s been a long time since World War Two,” Chris remarked. “Could he still be recognized?”

“A good point,” Q conceded. “Tod would be a very old man now. However, his facial features are highly distinctive—so much so that only plastic surgery could change them.”

Q buzzed Central Files and asked for Tod’s picture. Within seconds the Retrieval Computer had plucked it out and was transmitting it over the TV monitor screen. The two TEEN agents came over to the desk to study it.

“Ai! Geronimo muttered. “He fits his name, all right!

The news photo showed a face with a huge, bulging forehead and tiny, pointed chin. In between were glowing eyes set deep in their skull sockets and a small pug nose.

“Death warmed over,” said Chris. “But only a few degrees above Absolute Zero.”

“Quite so.” Q settled back with the smug air of a chess player who has just scored checkmate. “Your job is to find him.”

Before leaving, the boys spent an instructive hour in Special Projects—sometimes known as “The Department of Dirty Tricks”—with Pomeroy, TEEN’s fussy, baldheaded little technical gnome. He showed the boys a small red metal box.

“I call it the Mousetrap,” said Pomeroy. “Quite a neat little device, if I do say so,”

“What’s it for?” Chris asked.

“To alert you if an enemy searches your luggage or belongings while you’re away from your hotel room. The device is set by pushing in this little button. After that, if anyone picks up the box, he will trigger an alarm buzz on your wrist watches.”

“And what if he opens the box?” Chris reached out to try.

“Ah-ah-ah! Wouldn’t do that. A needle will pop out and jab him in the thumb. It contains an anesthetic drug that could put a person out for at least twelve hours—”

“But what if I were forced to open it?” Chris asked.

“Good question. On the side of the case here is another button, practically invisible. It’s the



neutralizer. Incidentally, once set off, the alarm signal changes to a shriller buzz:’

“Suppose the thief just carries the box away with him?” said Geronimo.

“In that case, the motion would trigger off a steady R-signal—dihdahdit, dihdahdit, and so on. Furthermore”—Pomeroy rubbed his hands—“the box has a false bottom containing an electronic bug. So if the thief carried it back to enemy headquarters, you’d be able to eavesdrop on everything that was said!”

The boys congratulated Pomeroy, who glowed with modest satisfaction.

“Now then, a couple of other small gimmicks.” He held up two plastic-encased objects—one green, one yellow—which looked like rifle cartridges. “They’re grenades which you’ll carry in ejection sheaths inside your sleeves.”

To fire them, Pomeroy explained, the wearer had only to press his upper arm tightly against his side while raising his arm.

“Neat, man,” said Geronimo. “But what sort of grenades are they?”

Pomeroy permitted himself a small chuckle. “The green one I call my ‘Lights Out’ model. It’s designed to disrupt an enemy spy post. The grenade releases a gas which instantly corrodes and shorts out all electrical circuitry.”

“And the yellow one?” Chris asked.

“This I call the ‘Curfew’ model. It explodes with a loud report, releasing a dense anesthetic vapor. The stuff is absorbed through the tissues by osmosis—the slightest contact with the skin will put a person

instantly to sleep.”

Pomeroy checked over the boys’ regular equipment, including their rocket-hopper shoes, and sent them on their way to Logistics. This department took care of all transport arrangements and contact details at the point of destination. The TEEN agents also were instructed that on arriving in Turkey, they were to go at once to the Suleyman Travel Agency. This was the local CIA cover with which they were to cooperate.

That evening Chris and Geronimo boarded a Pan American Airways jetliner at Kennedy Airport and settled back. It was Tuesday when they landed at the Yesilkoy Airport outside Istanbul, the ancient capital of the Turkish Empire.

As the boys started out of the terminal, they noticed a tough-looking, hook-nosed man standing near the glass exit doors. He wore a cap pulled low over his forehead.

Geronimo’s elbow nudged Chris in the ribs. “Look!”

The man was fingering a circlet of blue-green worry beads!

## 6 . Mouse Bait

GOING THROUGH THE doorway, Chris glanced back at the man with the worry beads. But the heavy-bearded face showed no sign of recognition.

“Think those beads were the same as Murad’s?” the Apache asked.

“Don’t know,” Chris replied. “I’d need a closer look to be sure, but they seemed to be the same color.”

The boys dared not turn around, knowing they were visible to the man through the glass doors. As they hesitated, a taxi pulled up in front of the terminal from the nearby cab stand. The driver glanced at the two youths, waiting for them to make up their minds.

Chris and Geronimo picked up their suitcases. Just then a man emerged from the parking lot and hurried toward them. He wore a chauffeur’s cap and had a large white badge stuck to his coat lapel.

“Youse gentlemen are Mr. Cool and Mr. Johnson?” he inquired. His face looked like hewn teakwood, with a big black mustache smeared across his upper lip.

Smiling at his Turkish-Brooklyn accent, Chris saw that his lapel badge read: Suleyman Travel Agency. “That’s right.”

The man grinned cheerfully, doffed his cap, slapped it back on his head, and thrust out a pair of brawny hands to take the boys’ bags. “I’m Mustafa. Mr. Vogel sent me to pick youse fellas up.”

Chris and Geronimo exchanged dubious glances. Their instructions had said nothing about being met at the airport. But Mustafa was already starting off,

toting the two heavy suitcases as lightly as if they were packed with feathers.

The Apache shrugged and the two boys hurried to catch up.

“How’s the Golden Horn?” Chris asked. “As beautiful as they say?”

Mustafa’s eyelid drooped in a fleeting wink. “Wait’ll youse see it from the Galata Bridge—it’s really an eyeful!”

So far so good. “Galata Bridge” was the correct response to Chris’s password question.

“We—uh—didn’t expect to be picked up,” said Chris, lowering his voice. “How come?”

Mustafa stopped at a battered green Mercedes, tucked one bag deftly under his arm, and unlocked the car trunk. “We been having a little trouble, see. So Mr. Vogel, he figures it might be better if youse didn’t come to the office. He’ll explain when he meets youse.”

“I see.” Chris looked thoughtfully at Geronimo. “There was a man back there, just inside the door,” the Apache said to Mustafa. “Hook-nosed. He was fingering some worry beads.”

The guide finished stowing the luggage and swung around sharply. “What about him?”

“Was he watching us?”

“Yeah, now you mention it, he was.” Mustafa’s gnarled brown face had taken on a worried frown. He muttered something in Turkish, then said, “Come on! We better scram!”

“Wait—don’t lock the trunk!” Chris exclaimed. He

got the Mousetrap out of the suitcase and wrapped the little red box in a page of a Turkish newspaper which was lying on the front seat of the Mercedes.

“What youse gonna do?” Mustafa asked. “Bait a little trap. For a hook-nosed mouse. You wait here, please. Come on, Gerry.”

“When we go by this joker with the worry beads, I’ll say loudly that I intend to leave this package at the ticket counter and that someone will come by in a few minutes to pick it up.

Savvy?”

Geronimo nodded.

But to the boys’ surprise, the hook-nosed man was gone. Chris decided to go ahead with his plan, anyhow. “Don’t start looking all over for him,” he warned his buddy. “The guy may still be around somewhere, near enough to see us.”

The Apache grinned. “Do I look stupid?”

“You want the truth?”

“Watch that forked tongue, white man.”

At the Pan American counter, Chris showed his ticket stub and spoke to the clerk. “May I leave this package here, please? A friend will come by to pick it up in a little while.”

“Certainly. I’ll put it under the counter.”

As he handed the box over, Chris pressed the cocking button with his finger through the newspaper wrapping. Then the boys hurried back to the car on the parking lot.

Mustafa swung the Mercedes down the driveway that curved past the terminal building and zoomed

onto the open highway.

Chris saw him watching the rear-view mirror.

“Anyone on our tail?”

“Can’t tell for sure with all this traffic. But I think not.”

“Where’d you learn to speak English so well?”

Geronimo asked.

“Me?” Mustafa chuckled. “I used to drive a hack in Brooklyn. And later on I run a grocery store in Gary, Indiana.”

“What brought you back here?” Chris asked.

“Pete Vogel. He’s great guy. I fought with

Turkish Brigade in Korea, see? That’s where I first meets him. Then I meets him again long time later in Chicago and he asks me if I wanna come back to old country and work for him. So I say, ‘Sure!’ “

The boys gave a start as their wrist watches began to buzz. Mustafa glanced at them in the mirror. “What’s up?”

Chris grinned. “The mouse has just taken the bait—I hope.”

But was it the hook-nosed man or someone else? Or was the airline clerk merely moving the package on the shelf?

A voice came through suddenly: “Tesekkür ederim.” Turkish for “Thank you,” as if the package had just been handed over to someone.

The buzz changed immediately to the R-signal: dihdahdit... dihdahdit... dihdahdit. Whoever had taken the box must be carrying it away from the

counter.

The boys' eyes met tensely.

"Now comes the ticklish part," Chris muttered.

Geronimo said, "What happens if he unwraps the package and tries to open the box right there at the airport?"

"So he'll get jabbed with the needle and conk out."

"And suppose the police check up on where the box came from?"

"Why should they? They won't know the box did it."

"They will if someone else picks it up and gets jabbed," Geronimo pointed out.

"You Indians worry too much. More likely they'll search his pockets for identification. Maybe we can hear them read out his name."

But the dihdahdit signal continued, unbroken by the shrill buzz that would have meant the box had been opened. Only one thing was certain. An enemy agent, either the hook-nosed man or someone else, must have been observing them at the airport.

Mustafa continued driving on down the Londra Highway, once the route of the ancient Crusaders. In twenty minutes they were approaching Topkapi Gate in the massive crumbling stone walls around the western edge of the city. Built centuries ago by the East Roman emperors when Istanbul was called Constantinople, the walls had been blitzed by Turkish cannon in 1453 when the city fell to Sultan Mehmet the Conqueror.

"Quite a sight, eh?" Chris murmured.

With its skyline of rounded mosques and slender.

spearlike minarets, the city spread out among its seven hills, above the blue waters of the Bosphorus—the strait which splits Europe from Asia. To the south stretched the beautiful Sea of Marmara; to the north lay the famous branching waterway called the Golden Horn. Huddled slums mingled with splendid modernistic hotels. To Chris’s romantic mind, the whole fantastic picture reeked of foreign intrigue.

They drove into the old section of the city, down the avenue called the Millet Cadesi. At last the Mercedes drew up outside the splendid dome of St. Sophia.

“Youse go in there, boys,” said Mustafa. “Vogel, he’s inside waiting for youse. Tall guy, not much hair, horn-rimmed glasses. He’s wearing a gray suit and blue tie.”

“What about you?” Chris asked.

‘I’ll take your suitcases on to the hotel. We got youse reservations at the Aladdin. Nice place. It’s over in the Beyoglu district—the newer part of the city, across the Golden Horn. Any taxi driver can take youse.”

With a wave, he drove off into the snarling traffic.

The boys walked into St. Sophia, framed by its four needle minarets. The great domed building—once a church, later a mosque—was now a museum of Christian and Moslem Art.

Inside, beneath the great golden vault, tourists and sightseers were drifting about. The two TEEN agents paused to look for their contact. Their wrist watches were still clicking out the R-signal from the Mousetrap.

Chris soon spotted Vogel’s tall figure. He was with a



knot of people listening to a guide describe the jewel—like mosaics.

“That signal’s bound to attract attention, Gerry,” Chris muttered. “You stay here and listen. I’ll go get Vogel.”

Turning off his own watch, Chris walked over and joined the group. He wormed his way closer to the gray-suited man with glasses.

“This is the first place I’ve visited in Istanbul,” Chris remarked chattily. “Haven’t even seen the Golden Horn yet. Is it beautiful?”

Vogel gave him a slow, careful look. “Very much so—especially from the Galata Bridge.”

The older agent’s eyes roved uneasily over the crowd, then returned to Chris. “Be careful,” he muttered under his breath. “I’m afraid your Moonfire mission is already in trouble!”

## 7 . The Face on the Bridge

VOGEL'S FACE REMAINED calm as he uttered his warning. He had the businesslike, "unflappable" air of an old pro who had survived too many tight spots to worry unnecessarily.

"What sort of trouble?" Chris asked. "The travel agency's being watched:' "By whom?"

"Don't know. We haven't been able to identify the stakeout, but it's definitely no one from the İkinci Büro:' This was the Second Section of the Interior Ministry—the Turkish secret police.

Chris pointed up at one of the huge green medallions near the gallery arches as if he were remarking on the beautiful Arabic script that recorded the names of Allah the Prophet and the first Caliphs. "Any idea what attracted attention to your setup?" he asked.

"Mustafa's been keeping an eye on the antique shop—the place where Herman the German was seen," Vogel explained. "Could be someone spotted Mustafa and trailed him back to the agency." "You're—uh—sure your boy's clean?"

Vogel's face hardened. "Don't worry about Mustafa. I know him lots better than I know you, sonny. He saved my life once in Korea and twice over here."

Chris nodded. "Just thought I'd ask. It happens someone was staked out at the airport, watching for my partner and me when we landed."

The TEEN agent told about the hook-nosed man and the Mousetrap.

Vogel looked as happy as if he had just discovered a black widow spider crawling up his leg. “You realize this could mean you’ve been blown—that you’ve already been identified as American agents?” he hissed.

Chris gave another casual nod. “The thought did occur to us:’

The guide was droning on, switching from Turkish to English to French as he told how the mosaics had been uncovered beneath layers of paint after St. Sophia became a museum.

Again Vogel periscoped the crowd milling about the building. “Where’s your buddy?”

“Leaning against that pillar over there.”

“All right, listen. It’s possible I’ve been tailed here. I’m going to walk out. Give me a long head start and see if anyone follows. If the coast is clear, join me outside. Make it the Galata Bridge if we get separated.”

Chris murmured, “Understood.”

Vogel strolled out of the museum. Chris scanned the throng. No one appeared to display any undue interest in Vogel’s departure.

Presently Chris rejoined Geronimo and reported his conversation with the CIA man. The Apache’s wrist watch was still beeping a muted R-signal.

“Anything from the bug yet?” Chris asked. “Just background noise. I think he’s still at the airport. Once I heard something like a flight call coming over a loudspeaker.”

“Okay. Let’s see what’s cooking outside.”

The boys walked out of St. Sophia. Geronimo's hawklike eyes quickly picked out Vogel's tall figure in the distance, going up Hilali Ahmer Avenue in the direction of the waterfront.

"Coast clear?" Chris asked, trusting the Indian's instinct more than his own.

Geronimo hesitated, his dark eyes watchful. "If anyone tailed Vogel here, he may still be hanging around, waiting for us to move."

St. Sophia occupied a whole block, next to the wall enclosing the Topkapi Palace museum—once the original Seraglio, residence of the Turkish sultans. At Geronimo's suggestion the boys separated and circled the block, then rejoined each other and hurried after Vogel.

They finally caught up with the CIA man near the Sirkeci railway station. As they fell into step beside him, Chris heard a faint ringing.

"Telephone—coming over the bug," Geronimo said tersely. He tuned up the volume.

The three agents heard the sound of a telephone receiver being lifted off the hook. A voice said: "Fazil konusyor."

"Fazil speaking," Chris translated.

The sound of a man's breathing could be heard with amazing clarity. Evidently Fazil had set the Mousetrap down close to the phone while he took the call. After several moments they heard him mutter an acknowledgment and hang up.

Presently the dihdahdit beeping resumed.

"He must have been waiting at the airport for that

call,” Chris conjectured. “Maybe orders for his next move.”

Chris’s guess was soon borne out. As they continued walking toward the waterfront, the signal beeping was interrupted again—this time by the sound of a car door opening and slamming, then an engine starting up and the background noises of highway traffic.

“He’s on his way somewhere, Geronimo remarked.

Vogel and the boys paused in the great square fronting the Yeni Cami Mosque near the busy harbor. Ahead was the Galata Bridge across the Golden Horn to the newer section of Istanbul.

To the right, beyond the harbor mouth, where the Golden Horn branched off from the Bosphorus, ocean liners and freighters lay at anchor in the roadstead. In the distance beyond these loomed the Asiatic shores of the city.

“We’ll take a caique—a water taxi—across the Horn, and find ourselves a place to eat and talk,” said Vogel. “Then you two can go on to your hotel.” Crossing by water, he added, would be safer than using the crowded bridge, in case they had not shaken off any shadow.

Geronimo shook his head. “No. Make it two water taxis.” The Apache’s eyes were still darting about restlessly.

Vogel gave him a frowning glance, then nodded. “All right. I’ll go first. Tell your boat man to follow mine.”

The CIA man walked toward the quay near the foot of the bridge. Chris and Geronimo saw him hail a

boatman and embark in the oared skiff.

The two youths followed. It was the evening rush hour in Istanbul and the harbor was busy with waterborne commuter traffic. Ferries were leaving for the Asiatic side of the strait.

Chris engaged a boatman and told him to follow Vogel's caique. The boys settled back to enjoy the colorful scene as their taxi pushed off. Unlike Vogel's, their own craft had a small, fringed white canopy overhead.

Chris turned for a last glimpse of the older section of the city. The setting sun seemed to touch it with the magic of an Arabian Nights' tale. Sails from Greece, Syria, Egypt—the whole Eastern Mediterranean lay clustered at the fish-market quays.

Chris's eyes swept over the Galata Bridge.

It was jammed with homeward-bound workers and fringed with sign poles in Turkish advertising radios and chewing gum.

Something glinted brightly the twin glass eyes of binoculars. A figure had paused at the bridge rail to peer down toward the water.

A sudden sense of danger jolted Chris like a charge of electricity. The next instant he was startling the boatman with a shriek:

“Vogel! Get down!”

Vogel must have reacted by instinct, Hinging himself face down in his boat. A red ray lanced out from the binoculars on the bridge. It shot past Vogel's head and kicked up a sizzling geyser of steam from the water.

A beam from a laser ray gun!

The man on the bridge lowered his binoculars and turned with a glance of rage, trying to discover who had shouted the warning. Then he pulled back from the rail and melted into the moving throng—but not before Chris had had time to glimpse his face.

Bulging forehead, pug nose, tiny pointed chin—the skull-like visage of Dr. Death!

“Ne var? Ne oldu, efendim?” the bewildered boatman was asking. “What’s wrong, sir?”

“Nothing. It’s all right. Keep on rowing,” Chris told him in Turkish.

It was obviously hopeless to reach the bridge and pick Tod out of the throng before he escaped. Chris could not even be sure which way the man was heading. The blond TEEN agent glanced at his pal. Geronimo shrugged slightly, his face impassive as ever. The whole incident had gone almost unnoticed in the busy harbor. Presently they reached the quay on the other side of the Golden Horn and rejoined Vogel.

“It was Tod himself, I’m almost sure!” Chris reported. “He fired from a pair of trick binoculars with a built-in laser ray gun!”

Vogel looked shaken. “Great! So instead of us hunting Tod, he’s hunting us—or me, anyhow. Well, at least this proves he’s in Istanbul.” The CIA man added tensely, “We’d better get out of here.”

They were now in Galata, the business district—an area of tall, huddled gray buildings, clanging trolleys, and cobbled streets winding steeply up the hill toward Beyoglu, where the shopping center and hotels were located.

Vogel hailed a taxi. They climbed in and he gave the driver the name of a restaurant, then turned to the boys. “Now then. About our friend, Herman the German—could he have followed us from St. Sophia?”

“Negative,” Geronimo said flatly. “With that face, we’d have spotted him for sure.”

“Then someone may have seen me leave and radioed that I was heading toward the bridge. Tod may even have sighted me by chance.” The CIA man turned to Chris. “Think he saw you after you shouted to warn me?”

“It’s not likely he could pick me out with all that water traffic.”

“So your cover may still be safe.”

“Providing he didn’t see us together at Yeni Cami before you boarded your boat,” Chris added.

Vogel nodded gloomily. “It’s a cinch he’s wise to the travel agency—and knows American Intelligence is looking for him.”

They drove out of town on the coast road along the Bosphorus, past the Dolmabahce Palace and Mithatpasa Stadium. Finally the cab drew up at an open-air cafe within sight of the thick walled, round-towered fortress of Rumeli Hisar, perched on a steep hill overlooking the shore.

The three agents found a table outdoors under some lime trees. As the waiter approached, Geronimo tuned down his watch, which was still beeping its steady dihdahdit signal, interrupted by occasional background noise.

Vogel ordered fresh-caught swordfish grilled on a spit with bay leaves. While they ate, he told the boys



about receiving the first report that Dr. Death had been seen in Istanbul, at the shop of the rug and antique dealer named Turhan Hamid.

“Hamid’s shop is in the Grand Bazaar,” Vogel went on. “He has a part-time shop assistant—a girl who’s also a student at the University of Istanbul. We figured she might be your easiest approach. Her name’s Gursel—Nilufer Gursel.” Geronimo grunted. “Nilufer? What kind of a name is that?”

“It’s a very beautiful name,” said Chris. “It means ‘pond lily’ in Turkish.”

Vogel pulled a Polaroid snapshot from his pocket and handed it to the boys.

“Gonzoner the Apache muttered. “You’re right, choonday—that is a beautiful name.”

The photo showed an almond-eyed girl with long, jet-black hair.

Chris nodded appreciatively. “I can see this assignment will be no hardship.”

“She’s an orphan, by the way,” Vogel added. “Lives with her uncle, Selim Gursel. He’s a retired professor of archaeology—probably the greatest living expert on Turkish antiquities.” By the time they left the restaurant, darkness had fallen. Moonlight was magically silvering the Bosphorus, and the lights of Asia twinkled from the distant shore.

Chris and Geronimo taxied back alone to their hotel in the Beyoglu district. The clerk told them their bags had already been taken to their room and asked if they would like a bellhop.

Chris shook his head. “Hayir. Tesekkur ederim... We can find our way up, all right,”

As they stepped off the elevator on the third floor, a radio somewhere down the hall was blaring Turkish caz. It sounded like a mixture of rock-and-roll and the wails of a strangling cat. The boys hurried to their own room, unlocked the door, and stepped inside.

As they closed the door behind them and switched on the light, they became aware of another sound. The faint, muted beeping from Geronimo's watch had suddenly swelled to a

loud DIHDAHDIT... DIHDAHDIT... DIHDAHDITI

The Mousetrap!

Chris froze and looked at his Apache buddy.

Geronimo's eyes swept over the room and his hand moved automatically to turn off the noisy watch.

At that moment a voice from the window drapes snarled, "Don't move!" and a menacing figure stepped into view.

It was the hook-nosed man—Fazil.

## 8 . Truth Venom

THE SWITCH BY the door had turned on both the overhead room light and a lamp near the window. The glow from the lamp threw the hook-nosed man's features into sharp relief.

Fazil's blue-black stubble added nothing to his sinister charm. He was holding a pistol-like device in his right hand.

Chris shifted slightly for a better look as their surprise visitor came closer.

"I said, don't move!" Fazil's voice went up a notch. "The results could be most unpleasant"

"We'll take your word for it," said Chris and added, "To what do we owe the pleasure—?"

"I will ask the questions, please. Suppose you tell me what you two are doing in Turkey?"

"We were about to hit the sack before you...Oh—you mean why did we come to Turkey?"

Fazil's face had taken on a dangerous look. His jaw muscles were working. "That is what I mean."

Chris shrugged. "We're American college students. On vacation. Any law against that?"

"Do not waste my time! I saw you being met by that oaf from the Suleyman Travel Agency which I know very well is only the cover for an intelligence network. Probably the CIA!" Fazil smiled suddenly, displaying big tombstone teeth. "What you might call a bull's-eye guess, eh?"

"We might," Chris conceded, "if we knew what you

were talking about. But please go on. Gee whiz, we both knew Istanbul was throbbing with foreign intrigue but we never expected to run into someone like you... This is really fascinating—don't you find it so, Gerry?"

Fazil regarded them with a scowl. "Very well. I will come straight to the point"

"That might be best," Chris agreed.

"I am offering you a deal. Would you be interested in buying some information on the whereabouts of—of a certain elderly man with a large forehead and a small chin?"

The offer caught Chris completely by surprise. His eyes flickered. Then his brain began clicking like a computer, estimating the probabilities. Was it possible that Fazil could lead them to Dr. Tod? Or was the deal only a trap to find out the boys' mission? Chris was tempted—but only for a moment. Somehow Fazil's manner did not inspire confidence.

"An elderly man with a large forehead and a small chin," the TEEN agent mused. "Would we be interested in anyone like that, Gerry?"

"Not me. I don't know about you."

Chris turned back to Fazil and shook his head regretfully. "Not my cup of tea either, I'm afraid. What exactly is this character—some sort of performing dwarf?"

Fazil was clearly not amused. His hook nose seemed to grow more prominent and menacing. "Let me tell you something, my young friends. You see this device I'm holding?"

"It would be hard not to," Chris murmured. "It fires

poison darts. Darts tipped with a compound of cobra venom and holothurin.”

“Ah yes. A poison secreted by the sea cucumber, I believe.”

“Correct. Their effect is so agonizing this is called Truth Venom. You know why?”

“No, but I take it you’re about to tell us—not that we’re really curious.”

“Shut up! It is called Truth Venom because the victim screams out the truth in order to be put out of his agony.” Fazil’s lips twisted. “I will now count to three. At the end of that time, you had better talk and talk fast, my friends. Otherwise you will both find out the effects of Truth Venom -the hard way!”

Fazil began to count. He had reached three when Chris suddenly exclaimed, “Wait I”

“You are ready to talk?”

Chris licked his lips nervously. “All right. I’ll admit we’re secret agents.”

“And why were you sent to Istanbul?”

Geronimo’s eyes were like shiny black pebbles as he watched his partner reply, “Well, it’s like this. When we landed at Yesilkoy Airport today we left a box at the airline counter.

“That box contained the first payment to an unknown agent who was to meet us in our hotel tonight and supply certain information.”

“What sort of information?”

Chris shrugged. “We don’t know. It hasn’t been turned over to us yet.”

Fazil scowled. “You are lying, essek! If this were true, you would have no way to check on its authenticity.”

“That’s not our job. The information would be evaluated by the-uh-travel agency.” Chris pretended to hesitate. “Of course the box may have contained a message...”

“Yes?” Fazil prodded.

“A message telling what kind of information was wanted,” Chris added reluctantly.

There was a moment of tense silence. Wheels were evidently turning in Fazil’s head.

“Pek iyi,” he said at last. “We will soon find out how much truth there is in your story.”

Cautiously he transferred the poison dart gun to his left hand. Then he reached into his coat pocket and pulled out the package which Chris had left at the airline counter.

“As you see, I have the box myself.” Fazil chuckled smugly. “I was waiting to hand it over to my superior. But since we are now getting down to brass nails, I will open it at once and check out what you have told me.”

With his free hand, Fazil shucked off the newspaper wrapping. He darted a quick glance at the small red box. The boys held their breath as he flicked open the catch.

“Aiyeee!” Fazil gave a yelp of pain as the anesthetic needle jabbed him. At that instant Chris and Geronimo pounced before he could trigger the dart gun! No telling how quickly the anesthetic would act.

Although taken by surprise, and already groggy, Fazil thrashed about wildly. His arm hit the floor lamp and it crashed over with an explosive pop from the shattering bulb.

Instantly the overhead light, too, went out! The TEEN agents pinned Fazil to the floor until they felt him go limp.

“What a mess!” Chris muttered. “We must have blown a fuse!”

Geronimo pulled out a pocket flashlight and beamed it through the darkness. The lamp shade had been knocked off and a bulb had smashed against a metal heat register.

“The filament shorted to the duct,” the Apache said. “Probably popped a circuit breaker or blew a fuse controlling a whole block of rooms.”

Doors could be heard opening along the hall, and a sudden babble of voices. The next moment someone knocked on the boys’ door.

“Wonderful!” Chris hissed. “Just what we need—a visitor.”

He scrambled to his feet, strode to the door, and opened it a few inches. A tall, husky, elderly man—American from his looks—was standing outside. He was in shirtsleeves, with his trousers held up by red suspenders.

“I’m your next-door neighbor, Herkimer Nutley,” the man said, thrusting out a hamlike hand.

Chris took it briefly, reaching through the door.

“Glad to know you.”

“Didn’t catch your name?”

“Chris Cool.”

“Everything all right, son? Thought I heard a fight goin’ on. Wall’s kinda thin, you know.” .\_.

Chris gave a nervous laugh. “Just my roommate and I larking around. Boys will be boys! ‘Fraid we broke a lamp and caused a short circuit. Sorry about that.”

“Uh-huh. No great harm done, I guess.” Nutley’s weather-beaten face relaxed. “Just thought you might be havin’ trouble. Never know What these foreigners’ll do. Figgered if you was a fellow American, I might be able to help.”

“Well, that’s kind of you. Thanks just the same, but we’re okay.”

“Uh-huh. I’m a retired police chief, you see.”

Nutley hooked a thumb under one suspender. “If there was trouble, I’m experienced in handling that sorta thing.”

“Oh, is that so? Well, good.” Chris tried to ease the door shut, but Nutley went on:

“Yep. Served thirty-two years as chief of the force in Spring City, Nebraska. Handled all kinds o’ cases. One I remember, an escaped con, he tried to—”

Nutley broke off as the elevator door slid open.

A hotel employee in a business suit, evidently one of the managerial staff, stepped out, followed by a workman with a kit of tools.

“I am so sorry for the trouble with the lights, ladies and gentlemen,” the hotel employee said to the people in the hall. “Our maintenance man will soon have it fixed.”



The mechanic opened a wall panel and fiddled with the fuse box. A moment later the lights in Chris's area of the corridor returned.

"Well, all's well that ends well," Chris said brightly and closed the door in Nutley's face.

Turning back to Geronimo, he let out a long, hissing sigh of relief.

"We're not out of the woods yet, choonday," the Apache said. "What do we do with Jojo the Dogfaced Boy?" He nudged Fazil with his foot.

"One thing at a time, please. I am not yet prepared to cope with these questions of higher policy."

Chris moved toward a chair. Before he could reach it, there was another knock at the door. Flashing a desperate look at Geronimo, Chris went to deal with this latest interruption.

The hotel workman was standing outside, holding a light bulb, whisk broom, and dustpan. "Man next door say you break lamp. I fix it, please."

"Well—er—it really doesn't matter. You can fix it tomorrow." Out of the corner of his eye, Chris saw Geronimo frantically booting Fazil out of sight under the nearest bed.

"But I have everything here, sir," the workman insisted. "I fix right away, fast."

"Well—all right." Chris stood aside. Geronimo's face was expressionless.

The workman set the lamp upright, unscrewed and replaced the broken bulb, and put the lampshade back on again. Then, squatting down, he began whisking the broken bits of glass off the carpet into the

dustpan. Chris felt himself going numb. The industrious Idiot was whisking closer and closer to the bed. At any moment he might reach out to whisk underneath it. Maybe peer underneath.

“That’s good. Very good indeed,” Chris said hastily, finding his voice. “Mustn’t wear the carpet out, eh?” Another nervous laugh.

“Not good to leave broken glass, sir.” Still sweeping busily. “You and other gentlemans might step on it at night in naked feet.”

Chris laughed heartily and planted himself in front of the bed in the path of the advancing whisk broom. “No danger. Thanks all the same. I always put on shoes first thing when I get up. My friend has hard, hornlike feet. He’s an Indian, you see. Used to walking around barefoot on the reservation.”

The workman glanced strangely at Geronimo, then back at Chris, shrugged and stood up.

Chris pressed a tip of five Turkish lira into his hand. “Tesekkur ederim.”

“Has geldiniz, efendim.” The man went out. Chris and Geronimo looked at each other.

“All right, General Custer,” the Apache said coldly. “Get on the blower and call Vogel at that emergency number he gave us. Let him figure out what to do with the guy.”

Chris cleared his throat and picked up the telephone. He gave Vogel’s number to the switchboard operator and waited.

The ringing went on for a long time. No one answered.

## 9 . Over Thy Head

“I AM SORRY, sir. Your number does not answer.”

“Thank you.” Chris put down the phone and looked at his Apache buddy. “Not in.”

“But he told us we could reach him after hours!

You suppose something’s gone wrong?”

Chris scowled as he sank into a chair. “Don’t ask me. We have enough to worry about already.”

There was a thoughtful silence.

“How long did Pomeroy say that stuff would put a guy out?” Geronimo asked.

“At least twelve hours.”

“Which means Fazil may come to by morning.” “A fascinating prospect. I can hardly wait.” “So what happens then?”

“You figure it out, medicine man.”

Geronimo frowned. “It’s a cinch we can’t just turn him loose.”

“And how, we can’t turn him loose! That clown knows for sure now that we’re secret agents. He could blow our cover but good!”

There was another silence. Then Geronimo stood up. “Let’s give him the once-over.”

The boys pulled Fazil’s limp body out from under the bed and frisked him. He carried no identification, but his worry beads appeared to be the same kind as Murad’s.

“Must be the same outfit, all right,” Chris mused.

“Our jolly friends, the Moonfire Boys.”

“Which still doesn’t tell us if they’re hooked up with Dr. Death,” Geronimo pointed out.

“You’re so right. What about that dart gun?”

Geronimo patted his pocket. “I picked it up while you were answering the door.”

As if the Apache’s words were a signal, there was another knock. Chris gave a low groan.

“What is this? Grand Central Station?”

“Never mind that,” Geronimo hissed. “Let’s get this guy out of sight!”

“Please—not under the bed again! This may be the janitor back for more whisk-brooming!”

“All right. Where?”

Chris looked around wildly. His eyes fell on the wardrobe. “In there!”

More knocking. Geronimo grabbed Fazil by the shoulders and Chris took his legs. Together they stuffed him into the wardrobe and shut it. Then Chris darted to the door.

Herkimer Nutley was standing outside, thumb hooked under one suspender. His rugged, homely face bore a friendly smile. “Howdy, Chris. Heard your voices so I figured it wasn’t too late to knock. You fellas aimin’ to do some more steppin’ out this evening?”

Chris struggled to focus his brain on the Nutley problem. Was he about to invite them out for some more reminiscences of the Spring City police force? Better squelch that!

“No, no,” Chris said hastily, pretending to yawn. “Gerry and I are both pretty tired. We’re just going to relax, then hit the sack.”

“Fine! Same here!” Nutley’s smile widened. “Fact my wife’s already gone to bed. Mind if I come in and gab with you for a spell?”

Chris felt like a fish out of water. He tried to think up a fast excuse but couldn’t. “Well—er—sure,” he said in a sickly voice.

Nutley strode into the room and thrust out a huge paw toward Geronimo. “Nutley’s my name. Herk Nutley. Say—you’re Injun, aren’t you?”

Geronimo nodded.

“That’s all right, boy. Don’t you worry about it,” the ex-police chief assured him heartily. “Way I see it, you Injuns got as much right to call yourselves Americans as the rest of us.”

“That’s awfully good of you,” the Apache said.

“Didn’t quite catch the name.”

“Geronimo Johnson.”

Nutley settled himself in a chair. “Reminds me of an Injun ranch hand who came to Spring City one time,” he began.

The story took a long time to tell and was not very interesting. Nutley took out an enormous cigar, bit off the end, and struck a match. He looked good for at least another hour. Chris exchanged an alarmed glance with Geronimo.

“You fellas travelin’ for pleasure?” Nutley inquired, getting a good grip on the cigar.

“That’s right. We’re college roommates.”

“What college do you go to?”

“Kingston.”

“Kinda early for summer vacation, ain’t it?”

“A bit.” Chris smiled blandly.

Nutley twirled his cigar between thumb and forefinger, studying the ash. “Ella an’ me, we been wantin’ to see the world all our lives. Saved up an’ made a few good investments, so after I retired, we figgered it was now or never. Well, sir, we went to this travel agency in Omaha an’ they laid out a real round-the-world tour for us...”

He began describing their travel itinerary in exhaustive detail. Chris’s eyes suddenly focused on Fazil’s hiding place. Good grief! What was happening over there?

Nutley droned on.

Chris stared at the wardrobe in fascinated horror. The door was coming unlatched, all right inching outward slowly but perceptibly! Fazil must have sagged!

Chris became aware of a faint sickish feeling in the pit of his stomach. He began making tiny frantic gestures to Geronimo.

“Somethin’ wrong with your knee there, Chris?” Nutley inquired, breaking into his account of their adventures in London.

“My—er—knee?”

“I noticed you rubbin’ it with your finger as if your kneecap was botherin’ you.”

“Oh. No.” Chris grinned foolishly, sweat beading his forehead. “Just a nervous tic.”

“Uh-huh. Figgered that might be it. You young’uns go at things too hard these days. Too much tension. Always on the go. Gotta slow down, son. That’ll kill you if you keep it up.”

“You could be right,” Chris conceded.

“Sure I am. That’s what’s so great about livin’ out in the wide open spaces. Lotsa fresh air. Time to relax. Know what I mean?”

The wardrobe door was bulging more and more. Chris’s eyes flicked back and forth to Geronimo, trying to direct his attention. What was the matter? Did he need a telegram to get the message?

The wardrobe door gave a faint creak. Chris leaped out of his chair and slammed it shut. Suddenly he realized he was breathing hard.

Nutley regarded him oddly. “Anything wrong?”

“Wrong?” Chris laughed as if the idea was ridiculous. “I-I just have a compulsive urge to make sure all doors are shut tight.”

The ex-police chief returned to his gripping narrative of the Nutleys’ European travels. At long last he arose and stubbed out his cigar.

“Well, I better hit the hay. Can’t stay up all night yamin’. Not as young as you fellas are.” Nutley gave Chris a fatherly glance. “If I was you, son, I’d turn in, too. Nothin’ like rest for what ails you. These nervous tics just get worse, the less sleep you get.”

Finally the door closed behind him. Chris drew a long, shuddering breath. With a scowl, he turned to Geronimo. “You blind or something? Didn’t you see that wardrobe coming open?”

“Relax, choonday. You heard what the man said about nervous tics:’

Chris strode to the telephone. Again he asked the switchboard operator to ring Vogel’s number. The ringing went on and on. Still no answer. Chris finally gave up.

“So what now, Fearless Leader?” Geronimo asked.

“I’ll tell you one thing—we’re going to get Sleeping Beauty out of that wardrobe. Out—out—OUT!”

“Let’s not be hasty now. Vogel may be back by morning.”

“By morning it’ll be too late. How do you think he’s going to get Fazil out in broad daylight through the lobby?”

The Apache rubbed his jaw. Their room had French doors which led out to a small balcony. Geronimo opened the doors and stepped outside. Chris went with him and they peered around in the darkness. Apparently every room had its private balcony. Below lay the hotel garden.

“We might dump him down there.” said Geronimo.

“Two minds with but a single thought!”

The boys went back into their room and began braiding bedsheets together.

“See if the coast is clear,” Chris said.

The Apache stepped out on the balcony again and returned a few moments later. “There are some lights, but this side of the building looks fairly dark. So does the garden. I think we can make it if we watch our step.”

“Good enough. You want to catch or lower?”



“Better let me go down below.”

“Okay. Get going.”

Chris pulled Fazil out of the wardrobe and looped one end of the braided sheets under his arms, tying it to make a sling. Then he dragged the unconscious thug out on the balcony.

Two short Hashes of light from the darkness below signaled that Geronimo was ready. Chris hoisted Fazil over the rail and began lowering. He froze at the sudden sound of a door opening.

Someone was stepping out onto the second floor balcony directly below! Chris saw a woman emerge into view. She leaned over the rail, gazing at the twinkling lights of Beyoglu.

Chris dared not move. Luckily Geronimo had shrunk back out of sight. Meanwhile, Fazil was dangling nonchalantly over the woman’s head.

What if she looked up? Chris closed his eyes, trying to shut out the horrible thought. His muscles were taut under the strain of supporting Fazil’s weight. Sweat trickled down his sides.

At last the woman went back into her room.

Breathing hard, Chris resumed the job of lowering his burden to the ground. Easy does it now... bit by bit... nothing to it, really.

Another sound of a latch opening. Chris’s taut nerves twanged like guitar strings. He whirled around, letting go of the bedsheet.

Fazil’s body plunged downward!

At that moment the French doors swung open on the next balcony. Chris choked back a string of

bloodthirsty words. It was Herkimer Nutley, stepping out for a breath of night air!

He was clad in a man's flannel nightgown. "Hi there, son! Ain't you in bed yet?" he called.

Chris gave a nervous laugh that came out as a croak. "Not quite ready for sleep, I guess."

The main thing was to keep Nutley from looking down. What if the fall had jolted Fazil back to consciousness? Chris moved to the side of the balcony facing Nutley and began a lively chat.

Nutley was only too willing. He resumed his travelogue as Chris convincingly played the part of a spellbound listener.

Finally even Nutley seemed to grow tired of his own voice. With a cavernous yawn, he bade Chris good night and went back into his room.

By this time Chris was jittery with nervousness and suppressed rage. He pulled out his pocket flashlight and signaled to the garden. Two quick flashes came back. All clear.

Chris hurried down to join his buddy. Fazil was still slumbering peacefully, apparently none the worse for his drop. The boys lugged him to some dense shrubbery away from any hotel windows.

"Think we should tie him?" Geronimo whispered.

"Better not. If anyone found him like that, it could stir up a real investigation by the police. We'll just have to take our chances,"

With the braided sheets wrapped around them under their coats, they returned to the hotel. Chris decided to try Vogel's number again, using the lobby

phone. He listened tensely to the ringing. This time someone picked up at once.

“Evet?” It was Mustafa’s voice.

Chris asked for Vogel and was told he had been called out on urgent business.

“We had a visitor,” Chris said. “Fellow from the airport. He had a fainting spell, so we’ve taken him out for some fresh air.” Chris explained the situation tersely.

“Hokey-dokey. Youse boys go to bed. I’ll try and reach Mr. Vogel,” Mustafa promised.

Chris and Geronimo went up to their room uneasily. The Apache was soon sound asleep. Chris, too, dropped into a fitful slumber.

When he awoke, it was broad daylight. His watch showed 9:07. Geronimo was in the shower. Without pausing for breakfast, the TEEN agents dressed and hurried down to the garden.

After glancing around at the hotel windows, they strolled toward the clump of shrubbery. Chris casually toed the bushes aside.

Fazil was gone!

## 10 . Bingo Alley

“WELL, YOU WANTED to get rid of him, choonday,” said Geronimo, breaking the heavy silence.

“This is no time for Indian humor. If that joker walked off under his own power, we may be in the soup!”

“Let’s check with Vogel.”

“Right.” Chris glanced tensely at his watch.

“Have to call him at the travel agency. Come on. We’ll use the lobby phone again.”

Vogel came on the line promptly.

“Wunny Kingston here,” said Chris. “About that friend of ours, he seems to have left on a tour somewhere. I was wondering if the travel arrangements were made by your office?”

“Yes, indeed. I laid out a very interesting itinerary and he left early this morning, In fact, we provided transportation from the hotel.”

Chris gave a quiet sigh of relief. “Good. I’m so glad you were able to arrange his trip.”

“By the way,” Vogel added, “do you yourself have any sightseeing plans this morning?”

“Nothing lined up so far.”

“In that case may I suggest the Galata Tower?

It offers a splendid view of the whole city. Take a taxi down Istiklal Caddesi—that’s the avenue running through the fashionable shopping center, Then, at the foot of Beyoglu, switch to the Tunel. It’s the oldest

subway in the world. Also the shortest.”

“That’ll take us from the Beyoglu district down to Galata?” Chris inquired,

“Exactly. Lets you off right near the tower,”  
“Sounds like a very good suggestion.”

The boys breakfasted hastily and caught a cab at Taksim Meydan, the Times Square of Istanbul. Following Vogel’s hint, they hopped out of their taxi at the end of the avenue and dashed into the Tunel entrance to shake off any possible shadows. In two minutes the underground cable car deposited them in Galata.

Near the subway exit loomed the huge gray column of the Galata Tower. The boys hurried to it and mingled with the stream of sightseers about to ascend in the elevator,

Vogel was waiting on the top floor. He was gazing out a window, across the Golden Horn and the old city toward the Sea of Marmara.

“Quite a breath-taking view,” Chris murmured, Vogel nodded. “The first tower was built here fifteen hundred years ago during the Byzantine Empire...”

“What’s the word on Fazil?” Chris whispered. “Don’t worry. He’s now being taken care of by the Turkish police.”

“Any clue on who’s behind him? The terror gang?”

Vogel shook his head. “I don’t know, but I’m fairly sure Fazil had no advance information on you two.

“Then what was he doing at the airport?”

“Apparently he and another agent named Rahmi tailed Mustafa there from the agency, They each had

cars. Once they figured where Mustafa was heading, Fazil speeded up and got there first. Then he planted himself by the air terminal doorway to see whom Mustafa would meet.”

“And it turned out to be Gerry and me,” “Right. Rahmi stayed out in his car, waiting to follow Mustafa’s Mercedes when it left.”

Chris frowned. “But Mustafa saw no one trailing us.”

“Rahmi didn’t need to keep your car in sight.”

Vogel gave a sour smile. “He’d planted a radio beeper under the rear fender. All he had to do was follow the signal with a loop antenna.”

“Great,” Chris said dryly. “So he followed the Mercedes all the way into Istanbul. I suppose that’s how Fazil found out our hotel.”

“Looks that way. Rahmi evidently followed Mustafa into the lobby when he took your bags there. Later he must have phoned Fazil at the airport to tip him off.”

Vogel added that Mustafa had discovered the radio beeper on his car after leaving the hotel and had managed to trap Rahmi. “As far as we know, neither Fazil nor Rahmi had reported to their control so your cover probably still is safe.”

Geronimo had been peering out the tower window as if the three were discussing city landmarks. Suddenly he touched Vogel’s arm. “Did you come here in the Mercedes?”

“Yes, it’s in that alley down there. You can see it from—” Vogel broke off with a gasp as he realized what had caught the Indian’s eye.

The Mercedes was parked in an alleyway about a block from the tower between two stone-walled buildings. The car's hood was up and a man had his head poked underneath.

Vogel whipped a small device from his pocket which both TEEN agents recognized at once. It was an ultrasonic oscillator designed to detonate suspected bombs from a safe distance.

The man put down the hood and walked away as Vogel took aim. There was no one else around.

Ka-boom! The car seemed to come apart like an exploding toy. Chris had a split second's glimpse of the fleeing man being struck on the head and knocked down by a flying fragment. Then a pall of smoke shut out the view.

The noise of the blast roused a babble of excitement from other sightseers in the tower.

"Think you got him," Chris muttered.

Vogel nodded. "I'm going down and frisk him before the police show up. Don't leave with me.

By the way, that girl gets out of class at five-thirty."

The TEEN agents remained in the tower, watching the scene below. When the smoke cleared, the man was no longer in sight. Evidently he had only been stunned and had escaped up the alley.

Chris and Geronimo saw Vogel worming through the crowd. He paused as he discovered that the saboteur was gone. Then he turned and swiftly left the scene.

"Another little reminder from Dr. Death:"

Geronimo remarked in Apache.

“Right. We’d better watch our own step!”

By the time the boys came down from the tower, two police cars had arrived and uniformed officers were questioning the onlookers.

The TEEN agents crossed the Golden Horn and spent the rest of the morning prowling through the streets of old Istanbul. After lunch at a waterfront restaurant, they caught a ferryboat at the Galata Bridge for an hour-long ride to the Princes Isles, scattered like colored jewels on the placid blue waters of the Marmara.

At Buyuk Ada the boys disembarked. The island was a lush little paradise of blue-green pines and cypresses, white villas, and elaborate Turkish gardens aflame with roses. Chris and Geronimo rode around in a horse-drawn surrey, sipped sherbet at an open-air cafe, and finally ferried back to the city.

Shortly before five-thirty they sauntered through the huge gateway fronting the campus of Istanbul University. The two TEEN agents lounged near the Beyazit Tower and watched the scene.

People were passing in and out of the entrance to the main building. The coeds, like most Turkish girls, were highly attractive.

“There she is,” Geronimo said presently, nudging Chris.

“Trust old Hawkeye to spot a squaw!”

A girl with long black hair had just emerged from the building. Chris intercepted her as she was walking past a sculptured monument to Kemal Ataturk, the founder of modern Turkey.

“Affedersiniz—excuse me. Do you speak English?”



The girl paused and gave him a friendly smile. “Yes, of course.” Big, glowing amber eyes—a real Turkish delight, this one!

“Is your name possibly—Nilufer?” Chris asked. “Why yes.” The amber eyes widened. “How did you know?”

“Well—uh—it’s a long story.” He gestured to Geronimo. “My friend and I just came to Turkey. And there was this dinner party, you see. Someone showed us a snapshot of a beautiful girl and said, ‘If you’re going to Istanbul University be sure to look up Nilufer Somebody.’ “

“You mean, someone showed a picture of me?”

“That’s right. Someone at the dinner party.

Your last name didn’t mean much to us, but the face we could never forget.”

Nilufer blushed prettily. “Thank you. I-I suppose it must have been someone who was a student here. I’ve had several American friends. Was it Mary Jane Murphy? She was here last year, but she’s gone back to the United States.”

Chris gave a vague shrug. “That name sounds familiar but there were so many people around—”

Nilufer giggled. “And I suppose you know so many girls, it’s hard to remember.”

“Oh, not always. We certainly remembered you.” Chris introduced himself and Geronimo.

“My name is Nilufer Gursel,” she responded.

Chris snapped his fingers. “Gursel! Of course that was it”

“Did you say that you two are going to enroll at

oIstanbul University?” Nilufer asked.

“Well, we’re thinking about it. We’d like to transfer as exchange students for some courses in Middle Eastern archaeology.”

“How interesting! That’s my uncle’s field,”

“You mean he’s an archaeologist?”

“He was before he retired,” Nilufer explained.

“He taught here. Professor Selim Gursel.”

Chris looked startled. “Not the Professor Gursel? The famous expert on Middle Eastern antiquities?”

“Yes. Have you heard of him?”

“Of course we’ve heard of him! He’s one of the people we most wanted to meet over here—isn’t he, Gerry?”

The Apache nodded stonily. His glance implied, “Let’s not ham it up too much, choonday:’

Chris hesitated. “Look, I-I know this is short notice, but would you and your uncle care to be our guests at dinner tonight?”

Nilufer dimpled into a smile. “It is very short notice. But since you are Americans and guests in our country, perhaps one might make an exception. However, you must ask my uncle. I’m an orphan, you see, and I live with him.”

It was decided that the boys would accompany her home to meet Professor Gursel. Chris hailed a taxi and they rode back across the Golden Horn to the newer section of the city. The Gursels lived in a modernistic white apartment building overlooking the Bosphorus.

Professor Selim Gursel was a white-mustached

man with a scholarly stoop and spectacles perched on the end of his nose. He was working at a desk in one corner of the living room amid stacks of books.

“It is most kind of you young gentlemen to include me in your invitation,” he said after Nilufer had introduced the boys, “but I am sure the three of you will find enough to talk about without me. I am an old man and seldom go out any more. For an archaeologist, alas, that leaves only books.” He smiled absent-mindedly and gestured to the heap of open volumes.

The walls of the apartment were hung with gorgeous Turkish carpets of colorful geometric design. Ancient carvings and pottery from the professor’s digs were scattered about the room.

Chris picked up a small jar of painted clay in the shape of a lion. “Urn—Hittite, isn’t it?”

“Quite so, quite so,” said Professor Curse!. “From the royal tombs of Alaja Hoyuk, dating to the middle of the Third Millennium, B.C.”

He began a long, rambling account of his Hittite excavations, moving about the room and pointing out especially interesting finds. Nilufer excused herself to change clothes for the evening. It was more than an hour later when the three young people left the apartment.

They dined on delicious Turkish food at the Abdullah restaurant on Istiklal Caddesi, then danced and watched the floor show at a night club called the Kervansaray.

Nilufer told the boys of her part-time job at the antique shop in the Grand Bazaar and insisted on

getting home by eleven o'clock. As they said good night in the vestibule of the apartment building, a man came down in the elevator and walked out the front door. He was wearing a tan raincoat and carrying a small package.

Chris and Geronimo left soon afterward. Their taxi was parked in front, its driver dozing at the wheel. The boys were about to waken him when sounds of a scuffle reached their ears.

Near the corner of the dimly lighted street, three figures were locked in a struggle. One was the man who had just left the apartment building.

He was being attacked by two thugs!

"Come on!" Geronimo exclaimed.

The TEEN agents raced to the man's aid. One of the thugs had an arm crooked around their victim's throat while the other tried to wrest away his package. The man was kicking and thrashing about wildly. A blow to the temple, stunned him and he slumped to the ground just as the boys reached the scene.

Seeing the two youths, the thugs whipped out long blades and poised themselves to attack!

## 11 . The Moon Goddess

CHRIS SKIDDED TO a halt as the knives flashed.

The thugs' faces twisted into vicious snarls. "Ay yaniyorf" they cried.

Chris recognized the words, "The moon is on fire!" He leaped and swung a hard kick at his assailant's knee. The thug tottered, then jerked around—his knife tracing a deadly arc in the moonlight. Chris had already whirled to meet the new attack. His toe came up in a kick that sent the knife flying!

Chris followed with a sweeping stiff-hand blow that cracked against the man's nose. There was a gush of red and the thug reeled backward. He tripped over the stunned robbery victim, who was now coming to, and landed heavily on the ground.

Geronimo, meanwhile, had done a baseball slide when the other thug lunged at him. As the blade slashed downward, he rolled clear and leaped catlike to his feet. The thug, losing balance when his blow met no resistance, had stumbled to his knees. Geronimo booted him in the pants and sent the man sprawling. But he rolled aside almost as fast as the Apache had done and came up still clutching his knife.

Chris's opponent had lost heart. With his weapon gone and his face a reddish smear, the thug darted off into the darkness.

The remaining attacker sprang to his feet with a snarl of rage and fear. Brandishing his knife menacingly, he backed away from the trio, then suddenly turned and fled.

"Whew!... Thanks a lot!" The man who had just

revived got up with a helping hand from

Chris. "You two sure came along at the right time! You look like Americans, by the way."

"That's right. From dear old Kingston U." Chris introduced himself and Geronimo.

"My name is Kane. Jack Kane." They shook hands.

"Any idea who those goons were?" Chris asked.

"Never saw them before in my life. They just jumped me as I came along the street"

"Want to notify the police?"

Kane shook his head. "I'm in service. Air Force major. Doesn't do to get mixed up in the wrong kind of publicity when you're stationed in a foreign country." As he spoke, Kane brushed off his raincoat and bent down for his package.

His eye lit on the thug's knife. The long, deadly looking blade had a double-curved edge, and bore an inscription. Kane whistled. "Were both those hoods armed with a shiv like this?"

"It's called a yataghan, I believe," said Chris. He studied it and read the inscription: Allah buyuktur.

"Looks old, but it's razor-sharp. It took real nerve for you fellows to tackle those guys!" Kane slipped the knife into his raincoat pocket, then hastily snatched up his package before Geronimo could lay hands on it. "Just want to make sure this isn't damaged," he murmured.

The object was wrapped in thick felt cloth. Kane unwound the material, revealing what looked like a small idol. In the dim light Chris could make out the glazed terra-cotta figure of a woman with a horned

crescent moon on her head. Kane took a brief look to make sure the figure was still in one piece, then rewrapped it.

“Moon Goddess, isn’t she?” Chris asked. “Selene, or Artemis?”

Kane shot him a quick, frowning glance. “I wouldn’t know,” he said with a careless shrug. “Just something I picked up at an old archaeological site. I figured on taking it home as a souvenir.

“You ought to have an expert look at it—it might be valuable,” Chris suggested blandly. His face showed only polite interest.

“Good idea. Maybe I will.”

The boys offered Major Kane a lift in their taxi but he declined, saying his own car was parked around the corner. After thanking them heartily again, he walked off with his package.

Chris was thoughtful on the way back to their hotel. Geronimo broke the silence.

“You suppose Kane had been up to see Professor Gursel?” he queried. “Or is the archaeological bit just a coincidence?”

“Too big a coincidence for my money. You know what those thugs yelled as they came at us? ‘The moon is on fire!’ “

Geronimo gave a low whistle. “And they were after the figure of a Moon Goddess!”

The next morning Chris called Vogel and asked him to run a checkout on Major Kane.

Before lunch, the boys taxied to the Kapalicarsi, the Grand Bazaar, in the old section of Istanbul. The huge

market place was like a city in itself gathered under one vast roof. Its narrow, cobbled streets, lined with four thousand shops and stalls, were covered with high vaulted skylights and domes.

The place was crammed with merchandise. Rugs, furs, silks, hammered copperware, glass, china, jewelry and trinkets of every description lined the walls and display counters. Most of the shops were mere cubbyholes in which the owner could sit and reach out to touch any item. Some merchants hawked wares from their doorway.

Turhan Hamid's shop was one of the larger stores, with ample room for shoppers to browse. Moslem weapons and helmets from the days of the Turkish sultans dangled from the walls, along with glowing Oriental carpets. Open cases displayed antique jewelry, carvings, and coins.

Hamid himself greeted the boys. He was a skinny man with a bald, blue-veined head, a huge nose, and the beady eyes of a ferret.

"Good morning, baylarr he oozed. "Welcome to my humble shop! You are Americans, no? If you are looking for a fine Turkish carpet or an antique dagger, I can offer you the most fantastic bargains in the whole Grand Bazaar!"

His limp, long-fingered hands seemed to be wiping themselves on an invisible towel.

"Actually we came to see your assistant," said Chris, "but I notice she's busy, so if you don't mind we'll just look around."

"Of course! Look as much as you like."

In one corner of the shop, Nilufer was showing a



huge amethyst ring to a stout lady tourist. She gave the two boys a friendly smile.

Chris picked up a carved stone seal which looked as if it might have come from some ancient Greek or Roman ruins along the Turkish coast.

“You have quite a few old things like this, don’t you—archaeological items, I mean?”

“Evet, certainly!” Hamid waved his hand about the shop. “Coins—carvings—ancient pottery. What would you like?”

“I saw something the other day that caught my eye. A small Moon Goddess figure. You know—a woman with a horned crescent moon crowning her head. Would you have anything like that?”

Hamid’s eyes took on a veiled, reptilian look. “A Moon Goddess? Yok! I know of nothing like that... Where did you see this figure?”

Chris shrugged and moved on to inspect a tray of old Roman and Byzantine coins. “Somebody we met had one. I forget his name:’

The woman customer soon left the shop and Nilufer came over to greet the boys. Chris and Geronimo invited her to lunch. After a hasty discussion with her boss, she accepted.

“How’d you like to play hooky from your classes today?” Chris asked outside the bazaar.

“Hooky? What is that—a game of some kind?

Like hockey, perhaps?”

Geronimo’s stony face twitched in a smile.

“No, like skipping,” Chris explained. “Skipping school, to be precise. We were hoping you might take

the day off and show us around Istanbul.”

Nilufer hesitated gravely, then burst into a gay laugh. “A wonderful ideal We take education seriously in Turkey, but just this once can do no harm. After all, the sun is shining, the sea is blue, and it is not every day that I have two handsome Americans to escort me around.”

Geronimo nodded approvingly and fingered his black hair. “This squaw will go far,” he murmured in Apache.

After lunching at pandeli’s, the famous tile walled restaurant over the old Spice Market, they strolled and taxied up and down the hills of Istanbul and along the Marmara seacoast. Water sellers and fruit vendors cried their wares amid the street smells. Nilufer showed the boys the Aqueduct of Valens, pointed out famous mosques, and took them into the Sirkeci railway station near Seraglio Point as the glamorous Orient Express came steaming in from Paris and the Balkans.

As they were inspecting the jeweled treasures of the Topkapi Palace, Chris remarked, “There’s someone else we’d like to meet in Istanbul.”

“Who is that?” Nilufer asked.

“A famous German scholar. I wonder if your uncle might know him.”

“Perhaps. What is his name?”

Chris frowned thoughtfully. “It’s right on the tip of my tongue. He’s quite an old man. Big bulging forehead and little pointed chin. He has a face like a mummy—or a skull.”

“Oh, yes! He came to our apartment once. I

remember that he spoke with a German accent.”

Chris shot a glance at Geronimo as she went on, “Uncle Selim did not introduce me, but you can ask about the man when you take me home.”

Late in the afternoon they ended their sightseeing with a visit to the beautiful Blue Mosque. Coming out, they strolled through Sultan Ahmet Square with its tall obelisk and columns. A man waved and strode toward them. He had crew-cut hair and a flashy plaid sports coat. Chris recognized him as Major Jack Kane.

“Hi! Didn’t expect to see you fellows again so soon. Much pleasanter than last night, eh?” Kane added with an admiring grin at Nilufer.

Chris introduced him to the Turkish girl. He thought Kane’s eyes flickered on hearing her name, but the officer made no mention of knowing Professor Gursel. Nilufer looked shocked when Kane told about the episode with the two thugs.

“But that is terrible!” she said. “You should have called the police at once!”

Kane shrugged. “No harm done, thanks to Chris and Gerry. Say! How about letting me return the favor a bit by taking you all to dinner?”

The three young people agreed. Nilufer telephoned her uncle and they stopped briefly at Kane’s hotel, where he treated them to refreshing fruit drinks. Dusk was gathering when a taxi finally dropped them at the gateway of an old walled courtyard which had been converted into an open-air restaurant.

“An Air Force buddy told me about this place,”

Kane said. “They put on quite a floor show.”

Lights were strung about the courtyard. Dancers and Turkish musicians performed while the four ate dinner. Later, as they were sipping cups of thick sweet coffee, a group of men oddly clad filed into view. They wore high, cone-shaped hats and flowing white robes.

“Dig these guys,” Kane whispered. “They’re whirling dervishes!”

Nilufer looked surprised, then scornful. “These are only fakes who perform for tourists,” she said.

“Real dervishes are religious monks. One no longer sees them openly in Turkey.”

“Maybe so, but these cats can sure swing!”

Arms outstretched, the men began turning slowly to the music. As the tempo increased, they whirled faster and faster, gyrating wildly and rolling their eyes. They seemed to be passing into a state of half-crazed ecstasy.

Suddenly the lights went out! Chris heard something whizz past his head. With a boing! It struck a wooden screen behind their table.

Chris jumped from his chair and groped in the moonlit darkness. His hand closed on the hilt of a long dagger!

## 12 . Ancient Ghosts

“WHAT IS IT? What happened?” Nilufer asked anxiously,

“Nothing to worry about,” Chris told her. He wrenched the dagger loose and sat down.

An excited babble of voices came from the tables around them, but the music was still blaring, Suddenly the lights blazed on again, The restaurant customers grinned in relief and began cracking jokes. Gradually they gave their attention again to the dancers.

The dervishes were whirling and gyrating as if nothing had happened.

Meanwhile, the waiters moved hastily among the tables, explaining that someone had accidentally pressed the switch.

Chris had been sitting with the dagger across his lap. As their own waiter turned away, he laid it on the table.

Nilufer’s amber eyes widened, “Yay babam vayr she gasped, “Is that what I heard?”

“Someone threw this, It stuck in that screen behind us—right between me and Major Kane,”

“Jump in’ Jupiter!” The major’s tanned face had a sickly grin, “May I see that a second?”

Chris handed him the knife.

“But who could have thrown it?” Nilufer exclaimed, gazing around the courtyard,

“Don’t know, Might have been one of the dancers,

or a guest. Even a waiter,” As he spoke, Chris glanced at his partner, The Apache gave a faint shrug, his face impassive,

Kane was thoughtfully fingering the long, double-curved blade.

“Another yataghan,” Chris remarked. “Just like the one you picked up last night,”

Kane’s eyes shot up, boring into Chris. Then he lowered his gaze to the dagger again and nodded. “Same kind of marking, too.”

“Let’s see,” Chris took back the weapon and examined it. The blade was engraved with Arabic script, partly worn away but still visible in the steel. “Allah buyuktur—God is great,” Chris translated.

“Why, that must be an old Janissary knifer Nilufer exclaimed.

Major Kane looked at her blankly. “What does that mean?”

She paused while the music swelled to a wild climax and ended in a clanging crash of cymbals. As the metallic din died away, the dervishes stood limp and shuddering with their eyes closed. Nilufer stared at them, impressed in spite of herself. Slowly they seemed to come back to life, then filed out of the courtyard.

The Turkish girl tore her gaze away from the departing dancers and turned back to Major Kane. “The Janissaries were old-time Turkish soldiers,” she explained. “They were elite troops—the flower of the sultan’s army.”

“You say were. Don’t they exist any more.

Nilufer shook her head. “In time they became too powerful and troublesome. They actually ruled the Ottoman Empire behind the throne. Finally Sultan Mahmud II crushed them and disbanded the corps after a bloody uprising about a hundred and fifty years ago.”

“The Janissaries were Christian at first, weren’t they?” Chris inquired.

“Yes, at least the recruits were boys taken from conquered Christian countries. But they were raised as fanatical Moslems. You see, they were really warrior monks—like your Knights Templar in the Middle Ages.”

Nilufer paused suddenly, her lips parted in a look of puzzled surprise. “That’s odd...”

“What’s odd?” Kane asked.

“I just remembered. The Janissaries were members of a special order of dervishes!”

The three Americans glanced at one another.

“Hm! Then those whirling cats we just saw may have been the real thing!” Major Kane remarked grimly.

Later, after bidding the major good night, the TEEN agents took Nilufer home. She invited them up to the apartment for a chat with her uncle. Professor Gursel was studying a broken piece of clay pottery under a powerful magnifying glass, amid his usual heap of books. While Nilufer went off to make coffee, Chris told him about the knife incident.

Professor Gursel’s bushy white eyebrows gathered in a thoughtful frown. “Most interesting! I should say this yataghan was undoubtedly a Janissary weapon.”

“And the Janissaries were connected with the whirling dervishes?”

“In a way. Their own dervish order was formed by a mystic named Ali Bektash. But of course all dervishes are bound together in religious brotherhood.”

Professor Gursel took down a history book and showed the boys several pictures of Janissaries. They wore strange-looking headdresses and marched with fluttering horsetail standards, topped by golden crescents.

“It is odd that a Janissary weapon should turn up just now,” the professor mused.

“Why so, sir?” Chris asked.

“There have been strange stories about Janissaries recently. Oh, nothing sinister—mere superstitious peasant gossip, no doubt. But it is said that a troop of ghostly Janissaries has been seen at night, led by a man on an iron-gray horse, waving a Hashing scimitar.”

“Ghostly Janissaries?” Chris felt a stir of excitement. “Whereabouts?”

“In central Anatolia, the real heartland of Turkey.” Professor Gursel shrugged and stroked his mustache with a faintly embarrassed smile.

“Mere folk tales, as I say, but then a good archaeologist must never ignore folk tales. Often they hold important clues to the past. Our folk heroes, you see, are always said to ride an iron gray horse, called demirkirat. In the Middle Ages, his rider was Koroglu, the Turkish Robin Hood.

“More recently, the late Premier Menderes is supposed to ride the waves of the Bosphorus on



demirkirat. And now this latest ghostly leader in Anatolia.”

Nilufer returned from the kitchen with a tray and served cups of coffee.

“By the way,” Chris went on, “I was asking your niece about a certain German scholar someone we would like very much to meet.”

“A German scholar?” Professor Gursel frowned. “Yes, we thought you might know him. He’s an elderly man with a rather unusual face—sort of skull-like, with a big forehead and tiny chin,”

The professor’s own face, seamed and weatherbeaten from years of archaeological digging, had suddenly gone pale.

“His name just came back to me,” Chris added. “I believe it’s... Dr. Tod.”

Professor Gursel gave a violent start, knocking over his coffee cup. His mouth dropped open but no words came out. He clutched his chest and seemed to stiffen in his chair.

“Uncle Selim!” Nilufer cried anxiously. She dashed out of the room and came back in seconds holding a pill bottle and a glass of water.

“What is it? What’s wrong with him?” Chris asked. The boys were both on their feet.

“His heart! He sometimes has these attacks when he becomes excited!” She shook out two pills, gave them to her uncle, and supported him with one arm while he swallowed them.

Professor Gursel’s hand trembled so much that Nilufer had to steady the glass of water. “S-s-stay

away from Tad!” he croaked at the boys. “Whoever you really are—whatever you want with him—I warn you...I—look no f-f-further!”

With a gasp, the professor’s voice failed. “Please! Help me get him to a bed! Quickly!” Nilufer begged the boys.

Chris and Geronimo carried the old man into his room and laid him down gently. Nilufer telephoned for a doctor. The medic, who lived only a block or two away, arrived in minutes.

“Is there anything we can do?” Chris asked Nilufer.

“Thank you, no,” she said coldly. “Judging from the effect your question had on my uncle, you have done quite enough already.”

The TEEN agents returned to their hotel in glum silence.

“Ghostly Janissaries,” Geronimo muttered in disgust. “I can just hear what Q would say about that!”

“Nothing ghostly about that knife,” Chris remarked as he peeled off his clothes for bed. “The question is, was it meant for Kane—or me?”

Some time later Chris awoke in the darkness. He lay still, wondering what had roused him—the sound of a door opening? But he could see the line of light under the door to the outside corridor. That one was definitely closed.

What about the French doors leading out on the balcony? Chris turned over in bed to glance at it. Then his heart jogged and an eerie chill ran down his backbone.

A glowing figure stood outlined in the moonlight

just inside the room. It was clad in the headdress and booted uniform of a Janissary!

## 13 . The Walled Villa

CHRIS NEEDED ONLY a moment to recover from his shock of surprise. This was no ghost! He sprang out of bed and darted across the room.

But the weird Janissary had already taken flight! Moving with lightning swiftness, the phantom streaked out on the balcony and swung the French doors closed behind him.

Geronimo was awake and on his feet as fast as a cat. He, too, caught a glimpse of the fleeing specter. The Apache dashed after Chris toward the balcony doors.

Chris was yanking at the latch but it refused to turn. "He must have jammed it from the outside!" the blond TEEN agent exclaimed.

With a violent twist, Chris freed the mechanism and pulled open the curtained glass doors. The ghostly Janissary was gone!

"Over the rail!" Geronimo said. Both boys rushed out and craned into the darkness. A figure was climbing down the thick creeper which grew up the wall of the hotel.

An instant later he plunged into the shrubbery, then scurried off through the moonlit gloom of the garden. Pursuit was useless.

"You saw that get-up he had on?" Chris asked.

Geronimo nodded. "One of those spooks the prof was talking about—with phosphorescent dye on his clothes. What was he doing when you spotted him?"

"Nothing. I think he'd just got into the room. But

we'd better make sure."

The boys checked their clothes, luggage, and other belongings. They could find no sign of any tampering or searching by the phantom. The yataghan from the restaurant was still in the dresser drawer.

Chris rubbed his jaw thoughtfully. "How do you suppose the creep got onto us?"

The Apache shrugged. "Could have happened lots of ways. Maybe Fazil or his pal did report to their boss before they were nabbed."

"I don't think so. In that case we'd have had a visit sooner than this. Last night, for instance. And probably not so friendly."

"What do you mean—friendly?"

"At least he didn't slip us one of those poison darts, or leave us a hole in the head to remember him by. He probably could've nailed us both. Instead he lammed. Seems to me more likely he was after information."

"That still leaves a few possibilities," Geronimo said. "Hamid at the antique shop. Kane. Professor Gursel. Any of them could have sent the guy. Even Nilufer—remember she asked us where we were staying."

"True. So did Kane when we stopped at his hotel. Not that it matters. The guy could simply have tailed us here and then bribed one of the hotel employees to find out our room."

Baffled but still uneasy over the weird episode, the TEEN agents finally went back to bed. This time they secured both the hall door and the balcony doors with improvised noisemakers to awaken them if the phantom returned. But the rest of the night passed

peacefully.

Early the next morning the boys left the hotel, heading for a cafe in Billurcu Street. A taxi swung out from the curb and pulled alongside them.

“Taxi, baylar?”

Chris was about to shake his head when he glimpsed the mustached driver.

“Mustafa!”

The agency guide chuckled, his rugged brown face wrinkling like a walnut. “Hop in, boys! Free ride!”

The TEEN agents climbed into the rear seat. “Youse had breakfast yet?” Mustafa asked.

“Just going out to get some.”

“Hokay. I’ll takes youse to a good place:’ He jerked the gearshift lever and the car lurched forward like a panicked steer.

“I assume you didn’t drop around just for the privilege of driving us to breakfast?” Chris queried.

“Nope. Mr. Vogel, he’s runned that check on Major Kane. Figured youse might want the lowdown on him.”

“We do. Let’s have it.”

“Looks clean. He’s regular Air Force man. Got a chestful of decorations:’

“What’s he doing in Istanbul?”

“On leave. He’s stationed down at Izmir on the coast.”

“Izmir?” Chris frowned. “That’s the Eastern Mediterranean Headquarters of NATO, isn’t it?”

“Uh-huh. This guy Kane, he’s attached to the Headquarters staff.”

Chris gave a low whistle and exchanged a thoughtful glance with Geronimo. NATO, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, was a main military bulwark of the free world. As a staff officer, Kane would have access to all sorts of confidential data—data for which enemies of either America or Turkey would pay a great deal of money.

“Anything youse fellas wants me to pass back to Vogel?” Mustafa inquired over his shoulder.

“Yes. Tell him we had a visit from a ghost last night:’ Hastily Chris filled in the driver on their adventures since their last telephone contact with the CIA man.

A few minutes later Mustafa dropped them at a grimy-windowed cafe. “Don’t look so good from outside,” he said, “but that fat clown who runs it, he’s best cook in Istanbul. Youse just tell him you’re friends of Mustafa’s:’

“Okay,” said Chris.

Inside, the boys breakfasted heartily on yogurt, fresh-fried, delicately seasoned octopus, omelet, melon, and figs. As they ate, they talked over their plans for the day.

“I have a hunch one of us ought to keep an eye on Kane,” Chris remarked. “For some reason, the Moonfire gang wants that goddess figure. Sooner or later they’re bound to make another move.”

“Let me watch Kane,” Geronimo volunteered. “How about you?”

“I’d like to find out more about the figure itself—

which calls for a bit of research. I'll have to play it by ear, but the local museums might be a good place to start."

Outside the cafe, the boys split up. Geronimo headed for Kane's hotel. Chris, after stopping for information at the Turkish Airlines office, went on to the Archaeology Museum near the Topkapi

The taxi stopped near Ortakoy in an area of drowsy sun-baked streets and scattered villas nestled among clusters of cypress, myrtle, and mimosa. Chris paid off his driver and quickly found the place which Geronimo had described.

The villa lay well back from the street behind a high stone wall with a wooden-gated archway in the center. At one corner, among the dense surrounding shrubbery, stood a tall tree. Chris hurried to it and saw Geronimo peering down at him from the branches.

"Come on up, choonday"

The blond TEEN agent grabbed a limb and swung himself up beside his buddy. From their vantage point, Chris could see down into the courtyard and garden. There was a small gatehouse near the archway, but its occupant, if any, was invisible from the tree.

The pink stucco villa was V-shaped, enclosing a small inner patio with a wrought-iron table and chairs grouped near a fountain.

"Where are they?" Chris whispered.

"They were down there at the table on the patio," Geronimo replied. "Kane and someone else. They went inside about ten minutes ago. I couldn't see the



other guy too well, but from his profile I'm sure he was Dr. Death. A skinny little old character with a monocle."

"Hm! Looks as though one of us may have to go in and wire 'em for sound."

Palace and the Museum of Oriental Antiquities just across the street in the Gulhane Park.

He spent the whole morning in the two museums, browsing among sculpture, pottery, tablets, and all sorts of artifacts. He also questioned several curators. Then, after a late lunch, he moved on to the Istanbul University library to read about the Greek and Roman excavations along the Aegean Coast and the ancient civilizations of Asia Minor.

Shortly after three o'clock there was a buzz on his wrist-watch communicator. Chris hastily ducked out of sight among the dusty stacks to answer the call.

"Kingston One here."

Geronimo spoke in Apache. "Something's cooking, choonday. Better get here fast! Kane's having a secret powwow with someone. I think he's smoking the pipe with Dr. Death!"

"Tod!" Chris stifled a gasp. "Where are you?"

"A villa in the suburbs north of Istanbul, near the Bosphorus. I managed to trail Kane here in a taxi.' He gave directions tersely.

"Stay put. I'll get there as fast as I can."

He caught a cab outside the university and offered the driver a twenty-five lira tip to crowd the local speed limit, if there was any. Soon they were bucking their way through the traffic over the Galata Bridge,

then bowling northward along the Bosphorus coast road.

The boys flipped a coin. Chris won the toss. He dropped lightly into the courtyard from an overhanging branch and darted toward the villa. Several windows stood open. Chris peered into one and hoisted himself cautiously inside.

He was apparently in the main drawing room of the villa. It was furnished in a mixture of European and Oriental styles with a huge, ornate chandelier, mirrors, divans, and cushions. No guards were in sight, but a faint sound of voices came from somewhere overhead.

Tiptoeing, Chris made his way up a curving staircase to a railed balcony overlooking the main floor. He went along the balcony and around a corner into an enclosed corridor, then paused near a richly colored wall tapestry as the voices grew more audible.

They were coming from a doorway farther down the hall. The conversation seemed to be in English, but one voice—thin and high-pitched betrayed a guttural German accent.

Holding his breath, Chris inched closer, trying to make out the words. An instant later he froze with a start as a sharp point of metal pricked the back of his neck.

Then a low, deep voice behind him growled in Turkish, "Put your hands up and do not move, or my scimitar will strike!"

## 14 . A Swinging Send-off

THE GROWLED THREAT and the tickle of cold steel sent a chill down Chris's spine. As his hands rose slowly, one brushed the wall tapestry.

Suddenly Chris's fingers clawed at the hanging fabric. He ripped it down and whirled in a lightning sweep, using the heavy stuff to smother the scimitar blade and knock the guard off balance. The man staggered backward, spluttering and cursing.

Before he could recover, Chris leaped past him, heading for the balcony. A bellow of rage followed him around the bend of the corridor. The shout seemed to rouse the whole household to action. Two guards came running toward him. Chris saw he had no hope of reaching the stairs. Grabbing the rail, he swung himself over. For an instant he clung to the balustrade with one hand and one foot. Then, like a flying trapeze artist, he dived across empty space.

With a straining gasp, he caught hold of the huge chandelier. There was a screech of rending metal as the impact set it swinging like a pendulum. At the outward end of its swing, Chris let go and dropped to the floor.

Guards poured down the staircase as he raced for the windows. The chandelier was rocking and shuddering convulsively, its crystal ornaments tinkling like sleigh bells.

A moment later the last dangling shred of support gave way. The whole monstrous assembly ripped loose and plunged downward—just as the leading guard passed beneath it! The chandelier crowned him with a

clanging thud, followed by a noise like an explosion in a glass factory as it crashed to the tiled floor on top of him. The guards behind him, unable to halt their rush, tripped and went sprawling across the tangle of limbs and wreckage.

Chris never paused to look back. Reaching an open window, he leaped through and landed in a flower bed.

A sentry had rushed from the gatehouse at the sound of the crash. He bawled at Chris to halt. Instead, Chris sprinted across the courtyard toward the overhanging tree.

The sentry raised his weapon to fire but Geronimo's pocket pen spat first. Pinked by a sleepy sliver, the sentry collapsed.

Chris leaped for the tree and caught a limb. The Apache's hand yanked him safely up among the branches.

"Deeka! Let's go!" Chris gasped.

The boys dropped to the ground outside the wall and fled down the road. At the first cross street, they cut through a lush flower garden, came out of a high-walled alley at the rear, and plunged into a twisting maze of back streets and lanes.

The sound of a car suddenly reached their ears as it skidded around a corner in top gear. Geronimo grabbed his buddy and pulled him down into a clump of bushes. A big gray Rolls-Royce roared past with several of the armed guards from the villa.

"They're hunting for us!" Chris muttered. The TEEN agents crouched in their hiding

place for ten minutes. Then they emerged from the

bushes and took off on a run, heading in the general direction of the Bosphorus, where they finally caught a cruising taxi.

On the way back to Istanbul, Chris ordered the driver to stop at a roadside cafe. Here he found a telephone and called the Suleyman Travel Agency. Vogel listened to his terse account of what had happened at the villa.

“Good work,” the CIA man said, “but you’re both hotter than firecrackers now. That Janissary business last night probably means they have you spotted. I suggest a change of scene—and some live fish at eight o’clock tonight.”

Chris hung up with a frown. Live fish? Dinner at eight?

The boys taxied back to their hotel, packed swiftly, and checked out.

“You are leaving Istanbul, baylar?”

“Yes. We’re joining a friend on a motor tour of Turkey,” Chris told the desk clerk.

“Wonderful! It is a beautiful country. I am sure you will enjoy yourselves most heartily:”

“Not a dull moment so far,” Chris agreed.

A cab dropped the boys at the Sirkeci railway station. A few minutes later, after mingling with the crowd there, they caught another taxi. This time, Chris told the driver to take them to the Istanbul Hilton. The splendid modernistic hotel, on the heights above Beyoglu, was the best-known hostelry for American tourists—therefore, the TEEN agents hoped, the last place their enemies might think of looking for them.

“By the way,” Chris asked the Hilton clerk as they registered, “what’s the best live-fish restaurant in Istanbul?”

“Canli Balik, of course, sir!” the clerk assured him. “It is on the Bosphorus at Sariyer. The seafood is magnificent all over Istanbul, but at the Canli Balik, the fish are kept alive until just before they are cooked. You can pick out your own meal for the chef to prepare.”

Chris grinned. “Might have known. Canli balik means ‘live fish’ in Turkish, doesn’t it?”

The boys wasted no time in unpacking. As soon as the bellhop had deposited their luggage and left the room, Geronimo turned to his buddy.

“What about Kane, choonday? Think we ought to put the sleeve on him?”

“You took the words right out of my mouth, Indian boy. By all means, let us powwow with the bird soldier and find out what he was doing in the enemy camp. But we’d better keep our eyes open for Tod’s men!”

The TEEN agents taxied to Major Kane’s hotel, where they were informed at the desk that Kane had left.

“You mean he checked out?” Chris asked. “Evet, efendim—he checked out before noon but his luggage was still here. A few minutes ago he telephoned and sent a messenger to pick it up.”

The boys walked out of the lobby, looking thoughtful.

“How do you read it, Gerry?” Chris said.

The Apache shrugged. “Gone with the wind,

choonday. Which leads to a nagging suspicion that Tod has also quietly folded his tent.”

Back at the Hilton, the boys stretched out on their beds to await the evening appointment with Vogel.

“What about that museum research you were doing?” Geronimo inquired. “Turn up anything?”

“A bit. Not much. I have a hunch the figure came from Sardis.”

“Where’s that?”

“About sixty miles inland from Izmir, the place where Kane’s stationed. It’s the site of an ancient city—the place where coins were first invented, as a matter of fact.”

“How do you deduce the Moon Goddess came from there?”

“Guesswork mostly,” Chris admitted. “The workmanship looked similar to some pieces from Sardis that I saw at one of the museums. Also, the figure had an inscription around the base. I didn’t get much of a peek at that, the way Kane was holding the goddess, but it looked to me like ancient Lydian—and Sardis at one time was the capital of the Lydian Empire.”

He paused. “There’s only one hitch.” “What’s that?” the Apache asked.

“As far as I can find out, they didn’t worship the Moon Goddess at Sardis.”

Vogel was already occupying a table at the Canli Balik restaurant when the boys arrived there, a few minutes before eight. He nodded bleakly as Chris and Geronimo joined him.

Chris asked in a low voice, “What’s the word on our doctor friend?”

“Zero. I tipped off the İkinci Buro right after you phoned and a squad of Turkish police raided the villa. It was empty.”

“No trace?”

“Nothing. Tod and Company had cleared out.”

“Ditto for Kane,” Chris reported. “We checked his hotel. He never went back there—just sent someone to pick up his gear.”

Vogel gave another nod, equally bleak. “I know. He was booked on a six-thirty flight back to Izmir but didn’t show up at the airport.”

“When’s his leave up?” Geronimo put in.

“Eight o’clock tomorrow morning, but Air Force Intelligence is already putting out a dragnet.”

Vogel wrote a number on a scrap of paper and shoved it across the table.

“What’s this?”

“Captain Lomax, Air Force Intelligence. Call him at that number when you get to Izmir.”

The TEEN agents looked at each other with a slight lifting of eyebrows.

“We’re going to Izmir?” Chris asked.

“Be a good idea, I think, if nothing else turns up here. Try backtracking on Kane’s movements. It’s a hundred to one Tod’s gone to ground somewhere outside of Istanbul—but if he and Kane have been doing business, you might latch onto a clue there in Izmir.”



Early the next morning the telephone rang in the boys' room at the Hilton. Chris answered, spoke for a few minutes, and hung up.

"That was Mustafa at the travel agency. Kane's now officially AWOL and we have tickets for a two-thirty flight. Guess where."

The Apache grunted. "Any objections?"

Chris gave a troubled shrug. "I suppose not."

Only I still think Prof Gursel knows a few answers—maybe too many for his own good,"

Abruptly he reached for the telephone again. "What're you going to do, choonday?"

"Call Nilufer."

"You think that's safe?" Geronimo objected.

"What if Hamid's one of the bad boys? We're supposed to have left Istanbul yesterday. On a motor tour of Turkey—remember?"

"I didn't figure on calling her at the antique shop. If her uncle's still laid up, she's probably home."

Chris gave the Gursels' name and address to the hotel switchboard operator. She rang their number, a girl's voice answered.

"Nilufer? . . . This is Chris Cool."

He heard a stifled gasp. "I must see you as soon as possible!" she said quickly. "The same place we lunched Thursday."

There was a click as she hung up.

## 15 . Dagger in the Dark

CHRIS PUT DOWN the telephone with a frown. “What’s wrong?” the Apache asked.

“Don’t know, but something must be up. She wants to see us.”

Shortly before noon Nilufer joined the boys at a table in Pan deli’s restaurant. Her amber eyes darted fearful glances about the room,

“It seemed safer not to have you come to the apartment,” she explained abruptly. “I was afraid someone might see you.”

“You mean the place is being watched?”

“Maybe. I’m not sure, but I-I was even afraid someone might be listening on the phone,”

Chris’s eyes narrowed. “Who, for instance?”

“I don’t know...” Her voice faltered.

“Major Kaner’ Nilufer looked startled, “Why him? My uncle has never even met the major.” “You’re quite sure of that?”

“Of course, At least as far as I know,”

“Look. Your uncle has always been a professor, hasn’t he?” Chris asked, “I mean, he’s never been mixed up in politics-or any kind of plotting or intrigue?”

“Certainly not”

“Then whatever he’s afraid of must have something to do with his archaeological work.”

“I-I suppose so,”

“Has he ever mentioned a Moon Goddess figure?”

The girl’s eyes suddenly grew huge. “A Moon Goddess figure?”

“Yes. Does that mean something to you?” “M-m-maybe, Please tell me about it,”

“Major Kane owns a small terra-cotta statuette of a Moon Goddess,” Chris explained, “He was carrying it when he was attacked by those thugs. We thought he might have been visiting your uncle, perhaps consulting him about it,”

Nilufer shrugged, “I do not know. But last night during one of his spells, Uncle Selim gave me a message for you,”

The TEEN agents exchanged eager glances. “What was it?” Chris asked.

“He said to tell you to find the valley where the Temple of the Moon Goddess rises to the sky,”

The conversation paused as a waiter took their orders, Nilufer’s gaze began flicking nervously over the room again.

“How’s your uncle?” Geronimo asked. “Better, but still very ill, The doctor says he can see no one... I-I am sorry, by the way, for what I said the other night.”

“About us causing your uncle’s attack?” Chris looked uncomfortable. “It was my fault, Nilufer. I shouldn’t have upset him.”

She shook her head, “It wasn’t your fault. I realize now that something has been preying on his mind, He’s frightened, absolutely terrified of something—or somebody.”

“But you don’t know of what, or whom?” “No. You

see, he was in shock for a while, and incoherent. I can only judge from what he said.” Nilufer hesitated, then plunged on desperately. “Apparently Uncle Selim knows something. Some terrible secret. And because of that, there are people who might kill him—perhaps kill me, too,”

“What people?” Geronimo put in.

“I tell you I don’t know”

“That German scholar I mentioned?” said Chris. “Perhaps:’ Nilufer frowned thoughtfully. “Yes, I am sure he must be involved somehow. You saw the way Uncle Selim reacted when you asked about him... Who is this man?”

“He’s—he’s a well-known German scientist,” Chris said evasively. “What about Major Kane?”

They were interrupted as the waiter served their food. During the meal Nilufer, with her long black hair and glowing almond-shaped eyes seemed like an exotic Oriental statue herself, sitting stiffly and saying little.

When luncheon was over, she excused herself hastily. “It would be best if I left here alone.”

The boys taxied to Yesilkoy Airport to catch their flight to Izmir. As the sleek airliner flew over the Sea of Marmara and Asia Minor toward the Aegean coast, they mulled over their meeting with Nilufer.

“What do you make of that ‘valley of the Moon Goddess’ jazz?” Geronimo mused.

“Not much... except that we’re still up to our eyeballs in archaeology.”

“Maybe. Then again the prof may have been out of

his head and raving.”

“The archaeology angle still figures,” Chris argued. “How else would Kane’s Moon Goddess figure come into the action?”

“Search me. But we came to Turkey to find Dr. Death and a ring of assassins—remember? Where do they fit in?”

“For one thing, their war cry seems to be ‘The moon is on fire’” Chris frowned. “Put that together with a Moon Goddess, and we could be up against some kind of crazy religious cult.”

“And ghosts, choonday—ghosts in uniform.”

The Apache bared his teeth in a mirthless grin.

Izmir was a bustling, pleasant port on a bay of turquoise blue. Once called Smyrna, the city lay spread along a hillside among farmlands rich in figs, grapes, olives, and tobacco. Its streets were white with dazzling sunlight and dotted with green-fringed palm trees.

American GI’s and sailors from the Sixth Fleet mingled with its Turkish inhabitants. Warships rode at anchor in the bay.

The boys registered at a sleek tourist hotel. Then Chris called the number Vogel had given them. A crisp American voice answered, “Lomax.” “Kingston One and Two,”

“Oh yes, I’ve been expecting you fellows.” “Any news on Kane?” Chris inquired. “Negative. He hasn’t reported back from leave and we’ve had no communication from him,” “Where does he live when he’s on duty here?” “Apartment in town, Empty. We’ve looked.” “May I have the address?” Chris said.

Lomax gave it and the apartment number. He added, "Any particular plan of action in mind?"

"Not yet. We'll check with you later."

As Chris hung up, Geronimo flashed him a quizzical glance. "What's the drill, choonday?"

"I got Kane's address. Let's case the joint."

The apartment was located in a busy quarter of town within sight of the harbor. The TEEN agents strolled past, keeping their eyes open,

"Want to go inside?" Geronimo murmured.

Chris shook his head. "Better not. Tod may be having the place watched."

The boys killed time for the rest of the afternoon and enjoyed a leisurely dinner. After nightfall they managed to slip into the apartment building by a rear entrance.

Kane's apartment was on the second floor. Chris picked the lock and they stepped inside quietly.

They had scarcely closed the door when Geronimo froze in the darkness. An instant later he dropped to the carpet and pulled Chris down with him. "Someone's here!" the Apache whispered.

Chris felt a twinge of doubt. He had heard not the slightest sound. The Hat exuded a still, stuffy air of vacancy as if no one had set foot in it for days. Maybe Gerry's imagination was working overtime. All the same, his instinct had never let them down. Indians had some way of scenting an enemy, like a coyote sniffing poisoned bait. Better not take any chances, Chris decided.

"How'll we handle it?" he whispered back. "Split

up. One buzz if you spot him.”

The room was pitch dark except along one wall where traces of light filtered in through the not-quite-closed slats of Venetian blinds. From his sports coat pocket Chris took out a fountain pen, unscrewed the cap, and held it to one eye. Geronimo did the same. The devices were infrared snooperscopes. Slowly the boys rose to a crouch, then moved about silently, sighting through their scopes.

There was a sudden quick buzz on Chris’s wristwatch communicator. He held it to his ear. “Koya! Over this way!” came Geronimo’s hissing voice. “He’s crouching behind something.”

Chris circled toward the target area. His scope picked out a reddish ghostly form huddled behind the dark mass of an easy chair.

“Watch yourself, choonday,” his buddy warned. “He has a knife, I think” As Geronimo spoke, his hand groped over a nearby table and closed on something that felt like a cigarette box. He hurled it across the room!

Through his scope, Chris saw the man’s head jerk up and around as the box crashed against the far wall. A split second later a bloodcurdling Apache war whoop split the air.

The Indian had grabbed up a straight chair and was holding it as he rushed up at the stranger. The man struck out wildly with his knife but the point buried itself deep in the wooden seat!

Chris lunged and hooked one arm around the man’s throat. The next moment the TEEN agent was swung off his feet as the man struggled upright and

fought back like a trapped tiger!

The fellow seemed superhumanly strong. Twisting and Hailing his fists, he carried both boys with him in a moving tangle of limbs and bodies. There was no chance for judo tricks. Chris let go a looping left hook that caught the man on the side of the head.

Then Geronimo's clawing fingers found a pressure point under the ear and the man suddenly went limp. The boys stepped back, letting him slump to the floor.

"Caught a wildcat that time!" Geronimo panted.

Chris tightened the slats of the blinds and switched on a lamp. Somebody pounded on the floor above, and from the next apartment an irate man shouted "Quiet!" in Turkish.

The man on the floor was squat and powerfully built. He had the broad cheekbones and slanteyed Tartar look that Chris knew was sometimes seen among the Turkish peasants of Anatolia.

Geronimo pulled the knife out of the chair to examine it. "Another yataghan."

Like the other Janissary blades, this one also bore the inscription Allah buyuktur.

"Was he here to kill Kane?" Geronimo wondered.

"My guess is he was after the Moon Goddess," Chris replied.

"Too bad we can't make him talk"

"He wouldn't have spilled anyhow—not him." It was obvious from the depth of the man's stupor that he was not likely to regain consciousness for some time. The boys searched him. In one pocket they found a handful of loose blue-green worry beads.



“No wonder he put up such a scrap,” Chris remarked. “He must have gulped one.”

From another pocket, Geronimo pulled out a small paperback book, finely printed in Arabic characters. “Hm! What’s this?”

“Let’s see.” Chris leafed through the slender volume and translated the title page. “Well, well! This is the Awarif el-Maarif—The Gifts of Deep Knowledge—by Sheikh Suhrawardi.”

“That means something?”

“Plenty. It’s a sort of standard textbook for dervishes. I ran across a reference to it at the university library yesterday.”

The apartment was small, consisting of one main room with a tiny adjoining kitchen and bath. While Geronimo poked about in search of clues, Chris went through Kane’s desk, which looked as if the intruder had been ransacking it. He found nothing of interest except an appointment pad on which the name “Parnell” had been jotted several times.

Chris showed Geronimo the notations and added, “Did you turn up anything?”

“Just that doodad on the wall over there.” Geronimo pointed to a small bronze plaque hanging near the door. “Looks as if it might have come from some archaeological dig.”

Chris walked over to examine it and whistled.

The plaque was worn and weathered—obviously very old. “This ties in, Gerry! It definitely came from Sardis. That lion-and-bull design shows up on all sorts of artifacts—it was the emblem of the kings of Lydia.”

“So your guess that the moon figure came from Sardis must be right.”

Using the phone on Kane’s desk, Chris called Captain Lomax and reported what had happened.

“Okay, leave your prisoner right there,” Lomax said. “We’ll deal with him.”

“What about that name ‘Parnell’? Does it ring any bells?” Chris asked.

“Not offhand, but it might be worthwhile to talk to Kane’s secretary. She’s off duty today and tomorrow but I think I can reach her.” Lomax promised to arrange a meeting for eleven o’clock the following morning.

The next day was Sunday. Izmir had taken on a leisurely air. Chris and Geronimo sat at an outdoor cafe with tables along the quayside, looking out over the blue waters of the bay. Palm trees lined the promenade and horse-drawn carriages clip-clopped past in the sunshine.

Chris was just glancing at his wrist watch when a heavy hand fell on his shoulder.

“Howdy, fellas! Small world, ain’t it?”

Chris looked up into the rugged, smiling face of Herkimer Nutley.

## 16 . Smell the Pretty Posy

NUTLEY'S HOMELY COUNTENANCE beamed with good will. Chris, however, felt an urge to bash him. The impulse was tinged with suspicion.

Was it just a coincidence that this bore kept turning up at such awkward moments? Or was he something more sinister than an ex-police chief?

Nutley, meanwhile, pulled up a chair without waiting for an invitation. With a wave of his hand, he bellowed to the waiter to bring him a gazozu—the orange-flavored drink that the boys had been sipping.

“Just left Ella over at the hotel,” he explained. “Thought I’d stretch my legs a bit an’ get some salt air. First thing you know, I spot you two birds. Yessirree, it’s a small world!”

“Come to think of it, we’ve never met your wife, have we, Mr. Nutley?” Chris remarked.

“Herk’s the name—and by George, you’re right. Mebbe us four oughta make a dinner date. Or us six if you fellas can pick yourselves a couple o’ dates. Turkish dates—get it?” He chuckled, winked, and jabbed his elbow into Chris’s ribs.

Chris mumbled something incoherent. Nutley gulped a swig of gazozu and went on talking.

“Yep, Ella an’ me, we been seein’ quite a bit o’ Turkey. Took off last Wednesday, day after I met you two. We flew down to Ankara an’ then come back west to the coast. Believe you me, we really had some adventures!” The stopper was out and Nutley was off on another travelogue.

Chris wistfully fingered the long Janissary knife which they had taken from the man at Kane's apartment. Playing a hunch, he suddenly whipped it out of the long sheath-pocket inside his sports coat. The gesture was aimed at startling Nutley. Chris wanted to see his reaction.

Years of experience on the Spring City police force, however, seemed to have made Nutley a hard man to discombobulate. He barely blinked an eyelash. "Where'd you get that little number?" he inquired, pausing in his monologue.

"Here in Izmir. Ever seen one like it?" "Uh-huh. Just the other day."

"Whereabouts?" Chris asked.

"Town called Konya that we stopped at on the way here. The tourist guide took us to a dervish museum. You know—them whirlin' dervishes?"

Chris gave a startled nod.

"Well, I saw a knife like yours there," Nutley went on. "I remember it on account of what happened. One o' the sightseers picked it up off the stand an' drew the blade across his thumb. Testin' it, I suppose, the blame fool. Must've been razor-sharp' cause it drew blood."

"Careless of him," Geronimo commented.

"Got him in trouble, too, touchin' something like that on display. A fella come over an' give him quite a talkin' to later on."

Chris sensed a clue. "The curator?" he asked. "No, some other big Turk with a mustache."

Geronimo caught Chris's eye and tapped his watch.

Chris looked at his own timepiece. The big hand was close to eleven. Kane's secretary might be along at any moment. And what if the "ex-police chief" were, indeed, an enemy agent!

Chris glanced helplessly at Geronimo. The Apache grinned. An old woman with a shawl over her head was coming along the quay, selling flowers to the cafe customers. The Indian beckoned her over, bought a rose, and tucked it into his lapel.

"Didn't know you Injuns cared for flowers," Nutley said, looking peeved at the interruption.

"Oh, yes. Very much. I'm afraid you have quite a false picture of the American red man. As a matter of fact, we grow lovely prize roses back at the Mescalero Apache Agency."

Chris coughed to keep from smiling. Gerry was setting Nutley up for the "pretty posy" bit. Inside both boys' coats was a tube running from the lapel to a rubber bulb in the side pocket.

"Mm!" Geronimo smelled the rose. "Isn't that great?" He held out his lapel invitingly.

Nutley gave the Indian a puzzled frown but bent forward politely to sniff. Geronimo squeezed the bulb and caught him full in the face with a spray of invisible tranquilizer mist!

Nutley's rugged features seemed to relax in a benign smile. "Say... that smells real nysh! Yesh, shir."

The words trailed off. Herkimer Nutley settled back and gazed peacefully out at the bay.

"You can hardly get much more tranquil than that," Chris remarked. Nutley seemed not to hear his words—or indeed anything at all.

Moments later a horse-drawn landau reined to a halt near their table. A stunning blond girl in a silky summer dress smiled at them from the open carriage. The boys got up quickly.

“You are—Suna?” Chris asked.

She nodded. “Evet. And you two are Wunny Kingston and Tooey Kingston, I think.”

Chris left a generous tip for the waiter and gave Nutley a pat. “Cheery-bye, Herk. You’ll be your old talkative self again in no time.”

The boys climbed into the carriage. With a Hick of his reins, the driver started the two horses. His back was turned to the passengers. Chris glanced at him, then at Suna.

“All right to talk?”

“Oh, yes. He has NATO clearance,” the girl replied. “In fact, he works for NATO security.” “Good. And how long have you worked for Major Kane?”

“About a year and a half.”

“Ever hear him mention the name ‘Purnell’?”

Suna wrinkled her pretty forehead thoughtfully. “Yes. Once or twice in telephone conversations.”

“You mean the major was talking to someone named Purnell or about him?” Geronimo put in. “To him. It was Purnell who called.”

“American voice?” Chris asked.

“Evet, I believe so.”

“How long ago?”

The secretary shrugged uncertainly. “Within the last few weeks or months:’

“But you’ve no idea who he is?”

Suna shook her head. “I am sorry, no.”

The horses clip-clopped briskly along the waterfront. At a traffic circle ahead loomed a magnificent statue of Ataturk on his charger, pointing seaward with his sword as if to say he had driven the invading Greeks “thataway.” Their driver turned right at the circle, heading for the beautiful Kultur Park.

“Did Kane ever speak of Sardis?” Chris went on.

“The site of the ancient ruins? Oh, yes. He even went out there several weeks ago.”

“Do you know why?” Chris asked eagerly. “To sightsee, I suppose. He did not say.” “Can you think of anything unusual about his behavior recently? Anything he said or did?”

Suna’s dark-brown eyes grew troubled. “Once, before he left for Istanbul, he joked in a strange way about becoming rich.” Seeing the look that passed between the two Americans, she added, “But I am sure Major Kane is no traitor, if that is what you are thinking!”

“Let’s hope you’re right,” Chris said grimly.

As they lunched at the park, Chris made a point of jotting down the Turkish girl’s phone number and address. “In case I think of any more questions,” he explained casually. Geronimo gave him a poker-faced Indian stare.

After escorting Suna home, the TEEN agents taxied back to their hotel.

“How do we kill the afternoon, Fearless Leader?” Geronimo asked on the way. “Go to Sardis?”

“You read my smoke signals right, Chief Crazy Horse. But first we need transportation.”

With the help of the hotel tourist assistant the boys managed to hire a Porsche sports car and started for Sardis. The broad modern highway ran eastward through the valley of the Gediz among wheat fields, orchards, and vineyards.

The site lay south of the highway where the Pactolus River rushes down from the mighty snow-capped range of Mount Tmolus. The boys gazed around for a moment after stopping the car.

Traces of the ancient citadel crowned a huddle of reddish cliffs, but the city had spread down over hundreds of acres. Along the highway and river were open excavations, revealing crumbled brick walls and terra-cotta water pipes. Here and there rose a few lonely marble columns.

“Golden Sardis, they called it,” Chris said. “Once it was the richest city in the world.”

The Apache grunted. “Not much left of the place now.”

“No, but it must have been a swingin’ town while it lasted. That river was a regular Klondike—they panned gold from its sands.”

Only two tiny peasant villages survived from all the former greatness—one called Sart-Mustafa near the river, and another to the north called Sart-Mahmut. Since the day was Sunday, no work was being done at the site. However, in Sart-Mustafa, the boys found the man in charge of the current archaeological digging, an American university professor named Dr. Windish.

Windish had his living quarters in a small stone



farmhouse. He was a tall, bony, weather-beaten man with sun-bleached hair. Just before the boys came to talk to him, he had been sorting out a heap of muddy artifacts on a table. On a hunch, Chris asked if one of the archaeologists was named Purnell.

Windish looked at the TEEN agent sharply. "Yes, Dr. Purnell is a member of our expedition," he replied. "May I ask what you want of him?"

"We'd like to speak to him," Chris said.

"I'm afraid that's impossible."

"Could you tell us the reason?"

Windish seemed to hesitate. "Dr. Purnell," he said slowly, "disappeared last Friday night."

"Disappeared!" Chris was startled. "How did that happen?"

"I've no idea," Windish said curtly. "He may have been kidnapped. All we know for certain is that he was missing from his hut yesterday morning."

Chris shot an excited glance at his pal before asking, "Have you notified the authorities?"

"Naturally. And the Turkish police are investigating. That's all I can tell you." Windish appeared reluctant to discuss the matter.

"You have no clues at all?" Geronimo inquired. The archaeologist shrugged. "Some of the peasants seem to think a gang of—of night raiders carried him off. Sounds like nonsense to me! Are you friends of Purnell's?"

"Not exactly," Chris said. "But he knew an Air Force acquaintance of ours named Major Kane. Kane has disappeared, too."

“Ah, I see!” Windish nodded and seemed to unbend slightly. “That’s very interesting. I recall now that Purnell did have an Air Force friend in Izmir, whom he visited once or twice.”

“We’ll appreciate any information you can give us,” Chris added hopefully.

The archaeologist toyed with a piece of pottery. “Purnell was talking over our radiophone a few days ago. I happened to come in just before he signed off and heard him say something about a ‘crisis.’”

“Did you ask him about it?” Chris inquired. “In fact I did. He seemed disturbed that I had overheard, but said it was nothing.”

Chris continued, “Dr. Windish, has a small figurine of a Moon Goddess been dug up here at Sardis recently?”

“A Moon Goddess? I must say that’s rather an odd question, but the answer is no. Oh, there are ruins of a temple of Artemis here, but that was built during the Greek period when she was worshiped mostly as a nature goddess. It was only later that Artemis became identified with Selene, the Moon Goddess.”

“That’s when artists began to show her adorned with a crescent moon?”

“Mm, yes, although she didn’t get the crescent from Selene. You see, here in Asia Minor, Artemis also blended with various Asiatic nature deities, such as the Cappadocian goddess Ma. It was from them she took the crescent.”

Dr. Windish went on talking for several minutes about nature goddesses and moon goddesses. Now that he was dealing with a more familiar subject, his

manner became more friendly.

Chris finally managed to steer the conversation back to Purnell's disappearance. "This gang of raiders you mentioned—just what do the villagers say about them?"

Windish's face reddened irritably. "The whole thing is quite ridiculous. They claim that the raiders were ghosts... ghosts clad in the uniforms of janissaries!"

## 17 . Password in Blood

GHOSTLY JANISSARIES AGAIN! Chris felt a tingle of excitement. “Where do the peasants think these phantom raiders come from?” he asked with a casual smile. “Out of a gopher hole?”

Windish Hung up his hands in disgust. “Heaven knows! Out of the graves we’ve disturbed, more likely. Or down from the mountains. I don’t suppose the question even occurs to them.”

“But Dr. Purnell was no ghost—he couldn’t just vanish into thin air,” Chris persisted. “What do they think happened to him?”

“Carried off, as I told you. One of our diggers claims that the sound of the struggle woke him up. He peered out his window and saw the Janissaries actually lugging Purnell away. And of course the troop was led by a rider on an iron-gray horse, waving a scimitar.”

“Demirkirat?” Chris asked, remembering the ghost horse Professor Gursel had mentioned.

“Demirkirat/ Precisely!” Windish beamed at Chris triumphantly. “I see you’ve heard the old folk legends. In this case, they say his rider is someone called the Scimitar of Allah.”

Chris’s eyes met Geronimo’s as both boys suddenly remembered Spice’s warning at the Seraglio restaurant and Murad’s words which she had overheard: “The Scimitar will cut down any American agents who get in our way/”

Windish went on, “Believe me, these wild peasant yarns have been told for hundreds of years, and they’ll

still be telling them centuries from now.”

“I-I assume you’ve heard these same ghostly Janissaries have been seen in Central Turkey?”

“Of course—which only proves my point.” In spite of his scoffing, positive manner, the archaeologist gave the uncomfortable impression of a man who was trying to convince himself.

“Getting back to Dr. Purnell, the police must be withholding the news of his disappearance,” said Chris. “It wasn’t in the paper and we heard nothing about it on the newscast.”

Windish nodded. “I asked the police to say nothing for the time being till we were sure he hadn’t gone off somewhere on his own. They were only too willing, in order not to frighten tourists.” He cleared his throat awkwardly. “Any wild publicity, you see, would be most embarrassing to the university foundation which is financing our dig.”

“You have no idea what he was talking about when you heard him mention that word crisis over the radio?” Chris asked.

“No idea at all. Perhaps I misunderstood him.”

The TEEN agents thanked Dr. Windish and returned to their car. On the way back to Izmir, they talked over the latest mystery.

“More ghosts,” Geronimo grumbled. “Looks as if we’re up against another blank wall.”

“Maybe not,” Chris mused. “I have a hunch we’ll find the answer somewhere in Central Turkey. That’s where the Janissary spooks were first reported.”

“That covers a lot of territory.”

“But we have one definite lead,” Chris went on.

“The dervish museum Nutley told us about/”

“Not to mention all those knives.”

“They fit into the puzzle all right, choonday.” Chris said. “I think it’s worth following up.”

When the boys arrived back in Izmir, Chris called Captain Lomax. He told the Air Force Intelligence officer what they had learned at Sardis, then asked if they might borrow a helicopter from the U. S. Forces attached to NATO.

“Does it have to be a copter?” Lomax asked.

“It would be best,” Chris said. “We may want to look in places that have no airstrips.” “I take it you can handle a chopper?” “Affirmative.”

“Okay. Let me see what I can do.”

Lomax called back an hour later and told Chris he could pick up a military helicopter at ten o’clock Monday morning at Cigli Airfield outside of Izmir. The craft would have its insigne painted over.

“We’d better prepare ourselves for anything.” Chris said as they dressed the next morning.

“Okay, choonday, read the check list.”

When every trick device was in place, including the sleeve grenades, the boys took off in their silver whirlybird and skimmed eastward, heading for the high inland plateau country of Central Turkey. It was past two in the afternoon when they came down on the grassy airfield north of Konya.

Chris, who was thumbing a guidebook as they taxied into the city, mentioned that this was where the Greek hero Perseus had cut off the head of the snake-

haired Gorgon monster Medusa and mounted it on a pillar.

The Apache grunted. “Interesting, but not particularly helpful.”

“Just thought you might like to know. It says here that’s how the town got its ancient name, Iconium, meaning ‘city with an image.’ “

“I’ll file the information,” said Geronimo.

Konya was a pleasant city of whitewashed buildings and innumerable mosques. After lunching at a restaurant, the boys made their way to the Mevlana Museum through a maze of narrow streets. The building, set among roses, with its towers and domes tiled in glittering turquoise, struck even the impassive Geronimo with its beauty.

“This was home base for the whirling dervishes p” he asked Chris.

“So the guidebook says. It was a dervish monastery and contains the tomb of Mevlana Celaleddin-i Rumi, the mystic poet who founded their order .”

Inside were magnificent works of Turkish art and displays of carpets, cloth, books, manuscripts, and even old kitchen utensils used by the dervish monks. Not only Rumi but many of his disciples were buried here, each tomb topped by a high woolen dervish cap. A tape recording filled the museum with an eerie, wailing music.

Presently the TEEN agents found the Janissary’s yataghan which Nutley had mentioned. The knife was lying on a scarlet cushion, embroidered in gold with an elaborate Oriental design. Chris asked one of the curators about the history of the weapon.

“The knife was a recent gift,” the curator said.

“Oh? May I ask from whom?”

“The donor preferred to remain anonymous. He gave a large bequest to the museum, asking only that the weapon be placed on exhibit here. It belonged to one of his ancestors, who was once an aga or commander of the Janissaries.”

Chris slowly drew out the yataghan which he had brought from Kane’s apartment in Izmir. “This one seems to be just like it.”

The curator examined the blade. “It does, indeed, sir. Even the same inscription.”

Geronimo’s gaze roved keenly over the sightseers moving about the museum. He noticed a tall, dark, mustached man watching them with a look of furtive interest and alerted Chris in Apache. “Big eyes over there on the left. Mustache.”

Chris returned the knife to his inside pocket without looking around. All at once Nutley’s story about the man cutting his thumb flicked through his mind. Was this the passkey for contacts?

As the curator walked away, he picked up the museum yataghan from its cushion and drew the blade deliberately across his thumb. A thin line of red spurted out.

Instantly the mustached man approached. Chris’s pulse quickened. Was his hunch about to payoff?

“Excuse me, sir,” the man said in halting English. “You look to be Americans, no? I am most interested in that knife you showed the curator.

Could you tell me where you obtained it, please?



Chris studied the stranger for a moment without replying. Then he hissed in Turkish, “Ay yaniyor!” The moon is on fire!

A startled expression came over the man’s face.

Chris added urgently in the same tongue, “I must see the Scimitar at once!”

The stranger looked nervous. He hesitated and moistened his lips with his tongue, his eyes flicking back and forth uncertainly between the two TEEN agents.

“Perhaps,” Chris probed, “I will find him in the Valley... of the Moon Goddess?”

For a moment the man had seemed to relax. But at Chris’s final words, his face suddenly hardened. “Go to Kayseri and wait there—at the Mausoleum of Honat Hatun,” he said in Turkish. He added with an ominous note in his voice, “You will be contacted.”

## 18 . The Crescent Clue

WITHOUT ANOTHER WORD, the mustached man turned and walked away. As the boys watched him disappear among the throng at the museum, Chris translated what had been said.

“Sounds as if you struck gold, choonday,”

Geronimo muttered.

“Let’s hope it’s not fool’s gold.”

“What’s our next move?” the Indian asked. “Back to the airfield. We can talk on the way.”

Outside the building, the TEEN agents caught a taxi. As they drove off, Chris suddenly saw the mustached man again. He was watching from the blue-railed, colonnaded porch fronting the museum entrance.

“Think we can trust him on this Kayseri setup?” Geronimo asked.

“No, but we’ll have to chance it.”

“We could be walking right into a trap.”

“Too true, shikis, but it’s our only lead. And you’ll have to admit it looks like a hot one.” Chris frowned and tugged his lower lip. “Maybe we can cover ourselves a bit.”

“How?”

“We’ll have to leave that to Lomax.”

The taxi dropped them at the airfield, where they refueled and prepared to take off again.

“Where is this place we’re going?” Geronimo asked as they pored over the flight chart.

“Kayseri? It’s a town northeast of here.” Chris measured its position on the map. “Not quite two hundred and fifty kilometers. Say a hundred and fifty air miles.”

During the engine run-up, Chris detected a power drop on the left magneto, and the boys had to check for the trouble. It was almost six o’clock before they were able to take off.

Once airborne, Chris contacted the NATO base at Izmir over the radio and managed to get through to Captain Lomax. In guarded language he reported what had happened at the museum. “We’ll have to play this by ear,” Chris ended.

“Things could get sticky.”

“Understood,” Lomax responded. “I’ll see what I can do at this end. Good luck.”

Head winds slowed the copter’s speed as they churned along through the waning daylight, guided by a ribbon of highway below. Northward, the broad expanse of Lake Tuz glinted in the red rays of the setting sun. To the south rose the steep foothills of the Taurus Mountains.

Dusk was falling as they approached the town of Nevsehir. Chris, who had turned the controls over to his buddy, was studying the chart. “There’s a place up ahead called the Goreme Valley. Let’s give it the once-over.”

The Indian assented. “What’s the angle?”

“Just trying to outguess that guy at the museum. If I’m reading him right, a valley—some valley—is a good

place to look for the Scimitar. Only it's not called the Valley of the Moon Goddess."

"That figures. But why the Goreme Valley?"

"The place we're looking for," Chris explained, "namely, the gang's base, may be somewhere not too far from Kayseri. And from what I've read, the Goreme Valley sounds like a perfect spot—it's a badland area. Also, it's right in the heart of the region that used to be called Cappadocia in ancient times."

"What's with Cappadocia?" asked Geronimo.

"The crescent moon on Kane's goddess figure, remember? According to Dr. Windish, the crescent might indicate a Cappadocian goddess."

The Apache looked doubtful. "Seems like a long shot. Still, what have we got to lose?"

The sky deepened in color from burnt orange and crimson to a glowing purplish gray and finally to black. But a bright moon picked out the terrain in sharp relief.

Presently they sighted the Goreme Valley. Below lay an eerie lunar landscape of weird, unearthly beauty. Cones, pyramids, and needlelike spires of eroded volcanic rock studded the valley floor.

Geronimo gaped at the scene. "It's like some thing out of our own Southwest—only crazier."

"Like stone tepees," said Chris. "The funny thing is, some of them are tepees."

"You mean people live in those rock formations, the way Indians do in pueblos?"

"In some places around the valley they do. That stuff is soft pumice—it carves easily. Many of those

cones and chimneys are honeycombed with caves. In olden times, Christian monks and hermits used to hide out here. They even carved out churches inside and decorated them with frescoes.”

Geronimo slowed the helicopter until they were skimming slowly over the fantastic moonscape. Here and there were spires with odd shaped overhanging caps. Apparently the softer rock beneath had weathered away first, leaving a slab of harder rock balanced precariously on top. “Choonday!” the Indian exclaimed suddenly.

“What’s the matter?”

“Look over there—on the right!”

Geronimo maneuvered the copter in that direction and Chris saw a rock cone topped with a slab almost-perfect crescent shape!

“Hiawatha, my boy, you may have found something!”

“Sure. A hunk of stone shaped like a crescent moon. But does it mean anything?”

“Could be. That’s a good-sized rock spire it’s perched on. And remember our message from Prof Gursel-Find the valley where the Temple of the Moon Goddess rises to the sky.”

Geronimo gave his partner a startled glance. “You think that cone of rock may be the temple?”

“It’s possible. If men carved churches out of those rock formations, why not a temple?”

By this time, they had cruised on well past the moon-capped cone. Geronimo prepared to circle back. “Shall we land?” he asked Chris.

“Definitely. But first let’s make a quick sweep of the valley before the moon clouds over and see what else we can spot.”

Geronimo increased speed and the copter resumed its skimming flight. Moments later Chris saw a fiery flash and a brief streak of light. “Hey! That looks like —”

His words broke off as a dull boom reached their ears. There was another flash and streak, followed by the sound of another report.

“Some one’s firing at us!” Chris cried.

Geronimo gunned the engine, but Chris saw a third flash. The copter jolted violently as they heard the boom!

“We’ve been hit!” Geronimo exclaimed.

Chris’s stomach was churning with fear and excitement. From the impact, the missile must have struck aft of the cabin. His eyes widened as he wrenched around to peer out of the canopy.

“A bazooka shell, Gerry! It’s sticking right out of the fuselage!”

The shell was evidently a dud, but it might still explode at any moment!

“Must’ve hit the oil tank” Geronimo pointed to the oil gauge—both the pressure and temperature needles were in the red danger sectors of their dials! “Once the engine seizes, we’re done for, choonday! We’ll have to put her down!”

The gunner was still firing, but the helicopter was arrowing fast toward the ground. Chris radioed Izmir frantically, his mind still on the shell. Would the

shock of landing set it off?

There was a jarring thump as Geronimo brought the craft down—but no explosion. Both boys leaped from the cabin.

“Come on! Let’s blow!” Chris yelled.

They sprinted off through the moonlit darkness. It was certain the enemy must have seen the copter go down. Armed searchers might already be heading for the spot.

“Didn’t know the natives were hostile around here!” Geronimo wisecracked as he ran.

“Hundred to one it’s the Scimitar’s gang!” Chris shouted.

For the next few moments the TEEN agents saved their breath for running. They paused as they reached a sheltering cluster of rock spires.

“Now what?” Geronimo panted.

“Let’s head back toward that crescent rock you sighted! At least that’ll take us in the opposite direction from the bazooka boys!”

Half an hour of tortuous trekking brought them back to the up thrusting, crescent-capped tower of rock they had seen from the air. From the ground, the shape of the cap was almost unnoticeable. Both Chris and Geronimo might have missed it had they not fixed the site in mind.

“You said these rock cones were hollowed out?” the Apache asked, gazing up at the formation.

“Some are, if they’ve been inhabited.”

“Doesn’t look as if this one is—unless there’s an underground entrance.”

The boys clambered around the cone, seeking an opening. But they saw only blank rock until Geronimo's foot dislodged a boulder and sent it rolling down the incline.

“Koya, choonday! I've found a hole!”

The aperture was big enough to admit a man. Geronimo, then Chris, squirmed through and switched on their pocket flashlights. At once they sensed that they were in an ancient crypt, undisturbed for centuries. Three shallow stone steps led upward!

The boys climbed the steps and found themselves in a round, domed chamber with four supporting columns hewn from the soft rock. Their flashlight beams played around the room and came to rest on a niche in the far wall.

In the recess stood a Moon Goddess figure with a crescent crown—a life-size replica of Kane's figurine.

The boys walked closer, breathless with awe. Lettering was carved around the base of the statue. Chris knit his brows as he studied the ancient characters.

“That crisis Purnell was talking about!” he gasped. “Gerry, I think I've solved part of the mystery!”



## 19 . Target Tonight

“GREAT! I CAN use a little good news,” said Geronimo. “But how does that inscription explain the crisis Purnell was talking about?”

“If I’m right,” Chris replied, “there was no crisis. He was saying ‘Croesus,’ the richest king of olden times. Had all that river gold at Sardis flowing right down to his doorstep, remember? Well, Croesus was finally knocked off by the King of Persia, and Sardis was taken by storm—but no one ever knew what happened to his treasure.”

Chris paused dramatically. “Up until now, that is.”

Geronimo’s eyes widened. “Are you trying to tell me we’ve just stumbled on it?”

“You know it, boy! What’s more, I have a hunch that’s what Kane and Purnell were after but we’ve beaten them to it!”

“Never mind them. Where is the treasure? Stashed away somewhere in this temple?”

“Give me time,” said Chris. “It takes a while to decipher this gobbledygook. So far, all I’ve got is: ‘I, Croesus, King of Lydia, offer sacrifice to the Goddess Ma—who is one with Artemis and Cybele—and give unto her protection all the treasure of Golden Sardis.’”

“Are you reading that or making it up?”

“Listen, you cigar-store Indian, you’re talking to a linguistics major. It’s all down here in two languages. One is Classical Greek. That’s duck soup. The other is Lydian, which is a lot tougher—in fact, only a few experts like Professor Gursel can translate it.”

“And Lydian’s the lingo you thought you saw on Kane’s Moon Goddess?” Geronimo asked.

“Right. You know, Gerry, I’ll bet that’s why Kane was consulting the prof—to get a reading on the inscription on the figurine.”

“Could be. But get on with your translation.”

Chris found himself perspiring with excitement as he pored over the ancient Greek lettering. Finally he turned to his pal. “Okay, here’s the picture. When the Persians went on the warpath, Croesus marched east into Cappadocia to fight them and brought his treasure along. This is where he cached it for safekeeping before the battle. I guess he wanted to keep the loot out of the Persians’ hands even if he lost.”

“And it turned out he did lose?”

“Not right away. The first battle was a draw, I think. Then Croesus went back to Sardis and that’s where they finally clobbered him.”

The Apache growled impatiently, “Then how do we know his bundle’s still here? He may have carted it back to Sardis with him.”

“Maybe, but it doesn’t sound that way.” Chris read aloud: “Here may my treasure remain until mine enemies taste death and the moon turns.”

“The moon turns?” Geronimo gave Chris a puzzled stare. “I don’t get it.”

There was a baffled silence as the boys studied the statue. Both exclaimed as the same idea struck them. “Her crown!” Geronimo gasped.

He reached up and twisted the crescent moon atop

the goddess's head. It turned like a handle or lever! Slowly the top of the pedestal moved backward, carrying the figure with it and revealing a large hollow space beneath. Chris shone his flashlight inside and the TEEN agents gasped in awe.

The compartment was crammed with gleaming coins, ornaments, and jewelry!

Chris plunged a hand into the treasure trove and held one of the coins up to his flashlight. It bore the same lion-and-bull device they had seen on the bronze plaque at Kane's apartment—the royal emblem of the kings of Lydia!

Before either boy could speak, faint barking and baying reached their ears. Chris let the coin drop as they jerked around, closed the treasure cache, and darted back to the stone steps. Now the baying grew louder mingled with the staccato sound of horses' hoofs.

Chris turned and shone his flashlight beam around the chamber. "Any place we can hide?"

"Not a chance if those dogs have our scent!"

The boys drew their anesthetic pens. In moments they could hear their pursuers reining to a halt outside amid a chorus of bloodthirsty growls.

A huge hound came charging into the temple opening. Others surged at his heels. Chris dropped the first with a sleepy sliver and Geronimo the one just behind. The rest drew back, snarling, at a shout of command as the TEEN agents waited tensely.

"Come out with your hands up and you will not be harmed!" a voice bellowed in English.

Chris and Geronimo looked at each other, racking

their brains for a way of escape. Their pens would be of little help in fighting their way out. More than likely any attempt would be greeted with a hail of gunfire.

Pomeroy's sleeve grenades seemed equally useless. The "Lights Out" model was not an antipersonnel weapon. And if a "Curfew" grenade were fired to explode among the enemy outside, its anesthetic vapor was bound to seep in and affect the boys as well.

Moments went by. Suddenly a bundle of burning brush was hurled through the opening—then more.

"Ai! They're going to smoke us out!" Geronimo muttered. The brush had landed at the foot of the stone steps, leaving no way for the boys to extinguish it without exposing themselves.

The TEEN agents began ripping open their neckties to form emergency gas masks from the special filter material contained in the lining.

"You in there!" the voice shouted again. "I am giving you one last chance! If you wish mercy, come out with your hands on your heads—but decide quickly! Soon we will begin blocking up the opening and entomb you inside forever!"

The boys exchanged looks of desperation.

"I guess this is it, Gerry," Chris gritted. "Come on! At least we'll have more chance on the outside than we do in here!"

The Apache nodded. Chris led the way down the stone steps. Worming past the still-smoldering brush, they emerged from the temple.

A strange sight greeted their smoke-bleared eyes in the moonlit darkness. A troop of phantom horsemen were ranged about the rock formation, the hounds

whining and trembling with eagerness at their stirrups. Only a word was needed, it seemed, to set the beasts at the boys' throats.

The riders were uniformed like warriors of the old Turkish sultans, with the high, odd-shaped Janissary headdresses. Their faces were ghastly white with make-up. Each carried a carbine at the ready and a cutthroat yataghan thrust in his waist sash.

Most imposing of all was the leader—a black-bearded, slant-eyed giant of a man on an iron-gray horse. His curved, murderous-looking blade glittered in the moonlight.

“So you're the Scimitar,” said Chris.

“Evet. And you are the two young American fools who learned how members of our Brotherhood contact one another at the Mevlana Museum—even tried to pass yourselves off as True Believers.”

“We've been trying to find you,” Chris said. “We want to join your Brotherhood.”

The slant-eyed man roared with laughter. Then he said sarcastically, “We've been equally interested in your activities, ever since you were seen in Istanbul at Professor Gursel's apartment and Hamid's shop.”

“Well, now you know why we're here,” said Geronimo.

“And soon we will know much more—this I promise you!” The Scimitar growled an order and several of his Janissaries dismounted. They slapped the boys' chests, sides, and waists in a rough frisk for weapons, then turned out their pockets.

After the TEEN agents' wrists had been tied behind their backs, they were hoisted into the saddles of two

extra horses. Each was roped to his mount. Then, at the leader's command, the troop started off with a clatter of hoofs.

They rode hard across the badlands, skirting their way around the weird volcanic formations. In twenty minutes they came to a sprawling cluster of spires and cones. Passing single file between two of the rock towers, they were saluted by armed guards.

Inside was a broad clearing where several vehicles were parked and horses stood tethered. Evidently all the cones had been hollowed out for living quarters. Lights gleamed from their openings and the hum of generators was audible.

As the boys were being taken off their horses, a stooped, skinny man stepped into view. He looked incredibly old. His shrunken face, pugnosed and skull-like, wore a monocle clamped in one bony eye socket. He stared at the prisoners in silence, his gaze settling finally on Chris. A dry, rasping noise that might have been a chuckle or a death rattle came from his throat.

“Ach ja! The spy who invaded my villa at Istanbul, is it not?”

Chris stared back in horrified fascination. “Dr. Tod, I presume—or should I say Dr. Death?”

“Quite correct. And you, no doubt, are an agent of the American CIA, like that Schweinehund Vogel—nicht wahr?” When Chris made no reply, Tod's deep-sunken eyes swung to Geronimo and back again.

“Speak, aptal!” Chris felt the Scimitar's blade across his throat.

“What am I supposed to do? If I say no, you won't

believe me anyhow.”

Tod emitted another ghastly chuckle. “In time even the most stubborn can be made to talk.”

“Time is precious, Doktor bay,” the Scimitar said. “These two may have radioed from their helicopter before they were shot down. It will be best to proceed at once with our plan.”

Tod inclined his head. “All is ready. You have only to give the word, Kilic Aslan.”

“Kilic Aslan?” Chris echoed, recognizing the name of a line of sultans of the fierce Seljuk Turks who had swept down from Asia. “The Lion Sword himself, eh?”

The Scimitar’s slant eyes glittered approvingly. “You are acquainted with our Turkish history, I see. But I am also known as the Scimitar of Allah—he who is destined to restore the great Turkish Empire.”

“Quite a large order. I suppose that’s why you’ve raised this band of thugs and assassins your so-called Brotherhood?” Chris asked.

“Of course. My men are trained to kill or destroy at my command, regardless of risk to their own lives. Already they have struck terror throughout the world! Their services are for hire, you see, to any espionage group or political plotters able to pay our price. And the money goes into our treasury to finance the next stage of our movement.”

“Then the drug in those worry beads they carry must be quite a help, I suppose.”

Asian’s black beard parted in a toothy grin. “Ah! So you know of that, too. It was formulated by Dr. Tod, needless to say—but that is only a small part of his aid to our cause. Actually the doctor’s technical genius has

been lent to a far more important purpose.”

Chris’s eyebrows lifted. “Which is—?”

Asian’s smile became more sinister. “You have heard our cry, no doubt—’The moon is on fire!’ Let me show you what it stands for.”

With Dr. Tod, he escorted the boys toward the largest of the surrounding rock cones.

“As you may know,” Tod told the prisoners, “many of these formations have been carved or shaped by nature into hollow chimneys. From their inner central shaft, living spaces were often hewn out at a number of levels. It was Kilic Aslan’s brilliant idea to use one as a sort of natural gantry.”

“A gantry?” Chris gaped in disbelief as Tod led the way through the entrance of the cone. Inside, a sleek missile loomed in deadly grandeur, its nose poised ten feet below the cap of the hollow rock. From overhead came sounds of men at work on the monster.

Chris and Geronimo looked dumbfounded as Aslan said boastfully, “We have been assembling this for more than a year with materials obtained through the doctor’s associates at TOAD. My followers believe it to be a moon rocket, which soon will demonstrate to the world the rebirth of Turkish power.”

“Oh? And what is it really?” Chris asked. “An oversized rocket piggy bank?”

Aslan’s teeth gleamed menacingly. “You may find the truth less amusing. This is a ballistic missile with an atomic warhead—which will be fired tonight across the border into Russia! The Russians will assume it was launched from an American missile base in Turkey and will retaliate. Can you imagine the nuclear



holocaust?”

The Scimitar threw back his head and roared with laughter. “Both America and Russia will be wiped out in a storm of blood and fire!”

## 20 . Badland Blast-off

AN ATOMIC ROCKET! The TEEN agents stared aghast at the Scimitar's threat.

"You can't be serious," Chris said huskily. "Deadly serious, I assure you," Dr. Tod replied. "But why? What good will it do?"

"Surely the answer is obvious," Aslan mocked.

"With America and Russia blasted to ruins, the way will be open for Turkey and the Orient to rule the world!"

The Scimitar's eyes blazed. "Do not forget that we Turks came from Central Asia. It is eastward we must look to reassert our great destiny. And I—Kilic Aslan, the Lion Sword—shall lead the way!"

"You're out of your mind," said Chris. "Turks chose the free world of the West long ago."

"Fool!" Aslan broke into a wild laugh. "My people will follow the Scimitar of Allah!"

"And suppose your own country gets wiped out in the atomic cross fire?" Geronimo said.

"No danger of that. Russia's counter strike on Turkey will be limited to the American missile bases near the border. The main bombs will be aimed at Washington and other American cities."

Chris turned desperately to Dr. Tod. "Where do you fit into this? You're not Turkish."

"Quite so." The skull face gloated. "But it was your country and Russia which crushed the Nazi Reich. Now at long last I shall have my revenge!"

“It’s useless, choonday,” Geronimo muttered.

“They’re both crazy.”

Tod walked to a wall phone and issued orders for the countdown over a loudspeaker.

Chris’s brain worked frantically. If only he could buy time somehow! There was a chance that Lomax might have directed police or military units to the valley. “How long is your countdown?” he asked Tod.

“No more than an hour. Our trajectory requires only the crudest accuracy and I have eliminated all unnecessary circuitry to keep our launch simple. The rocket is designed for solid fuel, which is already aboard.”

“Then maybe you’d answer a question.”

“About what?”

“The treasure of the Moon Goddess,”

“Ach, so you found out about that, too, eh?” “Yes, It was Major Kane’s Moon Goddess figurine that clued us in,”

“Of course,” Tod nodded thoughtfully. “I wondered how much you might have learned.”

“The answer is plenty. Do you know the treasure is hidden here in the Goreme Valley?”

This time Tod was surprised. “So! We are on the same track, it seems, But the real question is where, eh? The valley is a large place—forty three miles long,”

“How did you know the treasure was here?” Geronimo prodded.

Tod seemed eager to talk. “I became interested in Turkish archaeology during my work for His

Excellency, Kilic Aslan,” he said. “One of his Janissaries uncovered an old tablet with a curious inscription, which I could only partly decipher. Then one day in Istanbul I showed it to Turhan Hamid, a member of the Moonfire Brotherhood. Unfortunately I was seen at his shop by one of Vogel’s agents—but that is another story. Hamid directed me to Professor Gursel.”

“And the professor translated the tablet?”

“ja, It indicated that Croesus had buried a great treasure somewhere in the valley before his battle with the Persians—but no precise location was given.”

Chris said, “Then you found out Major Kane was also after the treasure, eh?”

Tod nodded. “Hamid met Kane by chance one night at a certain dervish restaurant in Istanbul, which is a local headquarters for the Brotherhood, Kane made the mistake of talking too much and even showed Hamid the goddess figure,”

“With the result,” Chris put in, “that two Janissaries attacked him while he was leaving Professor Gursel’s apartment later that night:’

“Quite so. But he escaped with the aid of two Americans.”

“What about the knife that was thrown at the restaurant—was it meant for Kane or me?”

“Merely a threat to Kane, As a result, he was easily—shall I say, persuaded?—to come to my villa and talk business.”

“I take it,” Chris said. “that he didn’t realize you were Dr. Death?”

“Nein. The fool knew nothing of my real identity. I offered to join forces with him—only to find out how much he knew about the treasure, you understand. His Moon Goddess figure, however, also failed to give its exact location.”

“But you had him and Dr, Purnell kidnapped anyhow—and brought here, I presume?”

“Of course. Why should I take the chance of them finding the treasure on their own? Besides, Kane was dangerous to me, once you had seen us together at the villa.”

“What about that Janissary who tried to raid our hotel room?” put in Geronimo.

“Hamid had warned me that you two came to his shop, asking about a Moon Goddess figure. So one of our men trailed you to your hotel from the Gursels’ apartment. He was told to search your room and find out why you were in Istanbul—if possible, perhaps frighten you off the scent. But it seems you did not scare easily.”

“Does Professor Gursel know you’re Dr. Tod?”

“Unfortunately, yes. My face, I fear, is rather unmistakable. Consequently I had to insure his silence with threats of what might happen to both himself and his niece.”

Chris said, “You got wise to Vogel, I suppose, by having his agent trailed from the bazaar back to the travel agency. But how about that laser shot from the Galata Bridge—did you just spot him by chance that day?”

“Partly by chance. One of the Brotherhood who was shadowing him radioed that he was heading toward

the bridge from St. Sophia. Was it one of you who shouted the warning?"

"Yes. I did." Chris turned to Aslan. "Is Herkimer Nutley one of your men?"

"Nutley?" said Aslan. "You jest. He is one of yours. But a very convincing tourist."

Chris shook his head. So the old police chief was genuine!

Now the countdown came over the P.A. in crisp

Turkish, and workmen scrambled down to the base of the rocket.

Chris tried to pump the madman further. "My partner and a girl were kidnapped from your New York setup and taken out to sea. Did you intend to put them aboard the Aristides?"

The Scimitar shrugged. "No word reached me here, but that is most probable. The captain of the Aristides works for TOAD. His ship delivered much of the hardware for our rocket."

"Come," Tod interrupted. "It is nearly time."

The boys were taken out into the clearing again and Aslan said coldly, "We have answered your questions. Now you tell us a few things."

Chris's heart thudded. It was now or never.

"Are you interested in a bargain?" he asked. Aslan's slant eyes narrowed. "Name it."

"Our lives in trade for the treasure."

Aslan and Tod exchanged startled glances. The old man's voice came out in a croak, "You wish us seriously to believe that you know its location?"

“Why else would I offer the deal? I want to go on living for a while. My partner can make his own decision. It happens we spotted the treasure site before we were shot down.”

Dr. Tod stroked his pointed chin and looked at Geronimo. “Is your friend speaking the truth?”

The Apache grinned coldly. “He won’t last long if he isn’t, will he? We’ve found it, all right, and you can count me in on the deal.”

“What are your terms?” Aslan asked Chris.

“We lead you to the treasure—you turn us loose. But first untie our hands and give us each a horse so we can get out of the valley alive without being tracked down and chewed up by your hounds. You can keep us covered, of course, till you actually have your hands on the treasure. As for letting us go, you’ll have nothing more to worry about from the CIA anyhow, once that rocket blasts off.”

There was a long silence as Tad and Aslan considered Chris’s offer.

“Jawohl. I am in favor,” Tad said at last.

Aslan nodded. “Pek iyi. We have nothing to lose. They are not armed. At the first sign of treachery they will die—most unpleasantly.”

“Bully for you,” said Chris. “I’m sure we can depend on your word of honor.”

“Naturally.” Aslan’s bearded lips twitched in a cruel smile. “But then you have no other choice, have you?” He barked an order and two Janissaries untied the boys’ hands.

Chris muttered something in Apache as he chafed

his rope-sore wrists. Suddenly he raised his right arm, pressing it against his side on the way up.

*Bo-o-om!* A thunderous echo shattered the night as the “Curfew” grenade exploded!

Before any of their enemies could recover from the shock, the boys had leaped in the air and kicked their heels together. The exhaust blast from their rocket-hopper shoes sent them shooting high up over the rocket-gantry cone!

Below them, men were dropping like tenpins as the dense anesthetic gas billowed over the clearing. Geronimo sent a “Lights Out” grenade streaking down on the gantry cone. There was a dull report from inside. In seconds all electrical circuitry on the rocket had been shorted out by the corrosive gas.

It was more than an hour later when the boys finally made contact with Turkish Army units. They had been sent out to search the valley in response to Lomax’s urgent alert.

“I’m afraid you may have to wait a while to go inside the Scimitar’s stronghold,” Chris told their captain. “Even gas masks won’t protect your men against that osmotic anesthetic. By the way, you’ll find two American prisoners.”

Next morning at the nearest town, Nevsehir, the TEEN agents talked to Major Kane and Dr. Purnell. They learned Purnell had unearthed the Moon Goddess at Sardis but had kept his find a secret. He had deciphered enough of its inscription to guess that the treasure was located somewhere in Central Turkey and had enlisted the aid of Major Kane, a pilot, to help find it. At Purnell’s suggestion, Kane had taken the figure to Professor Gursel, in order to get the



inscription translated.

He had told the professor a false story of how it had come into his possession.

Vogel and Captain Lomax arrived at the boys' hotel while the conversation was going on.

"I contacted the Gursels to let them know the danger from Dr. Tod was past," Vogel reported. "Miss Gursel sends her regards and said to tell you her uncle seems fully recovered."

"Good," said Chris. "There's a job waiting for him down here. He's probably the man the Turkish Government will want to take charge of inventorying the treasure of Croesus."

"Oh, and there was a radio message from Q before I left Istanbul," Vogel went on. "Couldn't quite make it out. Something about Vassar One asking if you knew of any bookings for exotic dancers here in Turkey. TEEN code, I suppose."

Chris and Geronimo grinned. "Morse code!" they murmured.