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# Once Departed

*Mack Reynolds*

## *Chapter One*

After the elevator had passed the eighth floor without either of its two passengers making any signs of debarking, Quint said, "Three'll get you five we're heading for the same party."

The other said, in surprise, "You're an American."

"Sorry."

"No, I meant... So am I, but you don't look like an American."

"What does an American look like?" Quint said. Actually, the man could have been his twin in many respects. They were both about five foot ten, one hundred and seventy, in their early thirties and dressed conservatively. They differed in that the other wore a crew cut and no beret, spoke in a voice a trifle louder and more hurried than did Quint. On top of that, he had the air of aggressiveness that types Americans to Europeans.

His fellow passenger laughed and held out a hand. "Bart Digby," he said. "I hope you're going to the Dempsey party."

"Quint Jones," Quint shook. "That's right. But why *hope*?"

The other looked uncomfortable. "Well, I was supposed to come with a friend. Englishman named Brett-Home..."

"I know Ronald, more or less. Met him at a few cocktail parties, and we work out at the same gym."

"Well, he didn't meet me when we agreed. But earlier he insisted that it was okay for me to crash the party."

Quint said definitely, "Nobody has ever crashed a Dempsey party." Then, when the other looked increasingly uncomfortable, "They're all open-house affairs. Anybody, anybody at all, can wander in. They're invariably informal affairs. Brawls."

"Oh." Bart Digby suddenly grinned a boyish grin that went with the crew cut. "I wanted to meet this Nicolas Ferencsik. Ronald said he'd be here."

"Interested in surgical medicine, or looking for a pet?"

"A pet?" Digby said blankly.

They'd reached the penthouse and the elevator boy opened the door for them.

Quint Jones chuckled. "Didn't you read about that latest experiment of Nicolas Ferencsik's? He grafted a second head on a dog and it lived for over a month. Now, that's something I could use around the apartment A two headed dog. Talk about a conversation piece."

They were both laughing as they entered the penthouse foyer. There was no one there to greet them but party sounds erupted from several directions. The elevator door closed behind them.

"At any rate," Bart Digby said, "if Ronald Brett-Home isn't already here, I wonder if you'd, well, sort of introduce me to our hostess?"

Quint had to chuckle again. "You just won't believe me, eh? By this time of the evening Marty Dempsey is probably so stoned she doesn't know she's the hostess and this is her own home."

To make a liar of him, a fluttery woman in her early fifties and making

no attempt to hide the years, zeroed in on them.

"Quentin," she screamed. "*Dahling!*"

Quint winced. "My mistake," he muttered. "Marty must be taking the cure again." He turned on the faucet of his charm, kissed her on the cheek, then turned back to his new-found companion.

"Martha, may I present an old, old friend of mine, Bart Digby. Mrs. Dempsey, our hostess. You might say Bart and I came up together, Marty. Side by side we rose to the heights."

Marty Dempsey simpered at the newcomer. "How thrilling. So *both* of you dahlings are writers."

"Writers?" Digby said blankly. He looked at Quint in accusation. "Quint Jones," he said. "She called you Quentin. Holy smokes, you're Quentin Jones."

Marty Dempsey looked from one of them to the other. Didn't get it. Decided it was beyond her. Looked vague. Said, "I suppose you dahlings can find your own," and wandered off.

Quint laughed in easy self-deprecation. "Don't tell me I've got a fan."

Digby said earnestly, "Listen, those three or four articles you did on segregation. You know what they did in my home state? They *ended* segregation there. It was laughed out of existence. Listen, those articles were damn good."

Quint was embarrassed. "Well, thanks," he said. He hated this sort of thing. One of the reasons he lived abroad was so that he could avoid gushing readers who seemed to be able to find considerably more message in his columns and articles than he usually intended to put into them.

He said, "Shall we join the party? From here on in, you're on your own. Anybody might be here and you probably know as many of the guests as I do. The last party the Dempseys threw, the guest of honor was the head of the anarchist underground in Spain, sort of a left-over from Spanish Civil War days. While the police were searching for him on the streets—tracking down rumors he was in town—we were drinking champagne with him up here." Quint added dryly, "He told us what he

and his buddies figured on doing to us decadent capitalists after the anarchists took over."

Bart Digby said, "Ronald told me they liked to base their get-togethers on controversial figures. Any rate, thanks again, uh, Quint. I guess the party's center is over in there."

"That's pronounced bar," Quint told him. "See you later."

Quint cornered himself a Scotch at the commercial size bar which dominated the Dempsey living room, and began drifting around through the shrill, milling guests. He would have preferred Fundador brandy, but the Dempseys were of the breed who drank nothing of Spanish origin—at least not so long as they were in Spain. He had a sneaking suspicion that when they made trips to Scotland they ordered Fundador in bars and hotels, and that probably they drank French cognac in the States, and bourbon in France. He brought out a tiny notebook and scribbled a few lines in it. Might make a gag bit of business for the column.

He spotted his host, Ferd Dempsey, at the far side of the long room in heated discussion with two other obvious Americans and turned off in another direction. Ferd was in his arguing stage. Two drinks more and he'd start reciting quatrains from the Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam. At that point, Quint usually made a practice of going home.

Somebody said, "Hi, Quint. Long time, no see." The words were American but the accent was Spanish.

He turned and said, "Hello, Senor Garcia."

"Joe to you," the other told him. He was a man of middles. Middle age, middle height—given his lift heels—middle in weight. The man was a hanger-on of the foreign colony, and especially the Americans. Quint Jones didn't particularly like him, for no particular reasons. Like the rest of the group, he used Jose Garcia Mendez when he needed some red tape cutting, or some information pertaining to life in Madrid. How to locate an apartment. Where to find a maid. How to keep your car in Spain after the six months legal deadline had elapsed. And, like the rest of the group, was hence obligated to tolerate the man.

A maid went by with a tray of *entremeses* and Quint snagged one. The Dempseys were doing themselves well tonight. They'd remembered to

serve food. Often enough, Ferd and Marty, when on a binge, couldn't stand the sight of refreshments other than alcoholic ones. But for that matter, the party seemed out of the usual, anyway. Quint Jones couldn't put his finger on just why.

He said, to make conversation, "Seems to be a lot of newcomers around tonight."

Garcia nodded, sipped his champagne, wiped his mustache dry with a forefinger. "Should be some fun and games before the evening's through, eh? You know who that sleazy looking character is over there?" He indicated direction with his head, but before Quint could answer said, "Vladimir Nuriyev. Nice guy, Vlad. Used to be a top hatchetman for the *Chrezvychnaya Komissiya*. Killed more innocent people than the plague. I doubt if it was a matter of his conscience ever hurting him. The story has it that the C.I.A. paid him a hundred grand to defect and spill his guts. So he's spending it here in Spain. Where else?"

Jose Garcia loved American idiom. Unfortunately, Quint thought, he was always about twenty years behind on the latest slang terms.

Garcia was going on. "And that weepy looking type talking to Dave Shepherd? That's Albrecht Stroehlein. Albrecht used to pick up the tab at the beerhalls in Munich, back when Hitler didn't have a pot to..."

"Plant a flower in," Quint finished for him. He looked over at the German his companion was talking about. A man of about sixty. From what Garcia said, probably one of the former Nazis who had fled to Spain to avoid Nuremberg.

Garcia said, as though with satisfaction, "You can imagine how our guest of honor is going to react to those two."

Garcia was the town crier. The gossip who knew all, and if there wasn't anything to know, invented something. Quint wasn't usually interested in the ins and outs of his fellow expatriates in Madrid. He said, "Why shouldn't Professor Ferencsik get along with them? What connection have they got with his field?"

The Spaniard grunted amusement, sipped his bubbly wine again, stroked his fingernail over his mustache again. "Pal, you just aren't up on the news. Our Hungarian scientist's *second* biggest interest in life is

medicine.”

Quint was becoming irritated with the conversation, actually, but he said, "All right, all right, drop the other shoe."

Garcia laughed, as though he had accomplished some minor triumph. "His first interest is the achieving of the One World. Of World Government. He's a fruitcake on the subject. That's why he left Hungary. Couldn't stand the fact that they wouldn't allow him to sound off about it."

Quint said dryly, "And he came to Spain seeking freedom of speech?"

There was a subtle difference in Garcia's tone. "But there are no restrictions on freedom of speech pertaining to foreigners in Spain. The anti-Franco bugaboo you read in the foreign press is largely commie inspired."

Quint said, "Ummm. But for some reason my agent doesn't seem to be able to place my column in any Spanish papers, although it's in just about every other country in Western Europe."

The party swirled up and around them, and when it receded Quint found the Spaniard had disappeared and that Marty Dempsey had taken his place. Marty had, by this time, acquired a drink, which made her look more natural. Neither of the Dempseys looked normal unless they were wearing a glass in the right hand.

She said, "How's the party going, dahling? Have you seen that drunken husband of mine?"

"It's going fine," Quint told her automatically. "He was somewhere around a moment ago." He looked around the room, and tried to peer out onto the dark terrace. "Don't see him now."

Marty was looking about unhappily, as well. "That Ronald. He was supposed to be here by now."

"Ronald Brett-Home?" Quint said.

She giggled archly. "It was his idea to give this party, you know. You'd think he was nothing but a playboy, wouldn't you?"

Quint shrugged. "Guess so."

She tapped him on the arm, and her voice dropped into a conspiratorial whisper. "He's actually connected with the British Embassy."

"Oh? Empties the wastebaskets, or something?"

"Dahling, you have no idea. Actually, I mean *actually*, Ronald is a very sinister type. Cloak and dagger and all that. He was very famous back during the war. Parachutes behind the lines and all that."

It seemed unlikely to Quint. He'd met the Englishman a few times. The other seemed to be a quiet character. Soft spoken. Sort of gentle. Quint said, "How do you mean, his idea? Is there supposed to be something special about this party tonight, pet?"

"*Well*, dahling," Marty said, hooking a fresh drink from a passing tray and depositing her empty glass at the same time, "according to Ronald Brett-Home..."

*Ronald Brett-Home was a bit late, he knew. He finished tying his black tie. Gave it a final adjustment. He grimaced into the mirror.*

*If the truth were known, he rather dreaded the evening. There would be some sort of a rowdydow, of course. He was glad that American chap, Bart Digby, would be there. Efficient, these American operatives. Must really give the chaps credit. What was the name of that one during the war? Brunner, or something. Gestapo finished him there on the outskirts of Prague. Held them off, singlehanded. Sort of rearguard action, whilst Brett-Home escaped with the equipment. Damn good man.*

*He opened the bureau drawer and scowled down at the black Baretta. He supposed he'd better take it, in spite of the fact that it would bulge his pocket. Accurate guns those Italian fellows made. A bit light as to caliber, but frightfully accurate. He took the automatic up and slipped it into his trousers pocket.*

*He gave himself a final check in the mirror. He'd really have to get going. He'd already missed his date with Digby and would have to meet him at the party. Quit dreading this and get a move on, you know. If the*

*truth were known, he was getting too old for this sort of thing. Should leave it to younger chaps. Twenty or twenty-five years ago, yes. He had been frightfully keen about doing in the enemy counter-espionage fellows, and that sort of thing. But, really now, a chap in his mid-forties should let them assign him to a desk. MI6 was all very fine, but the field work ...*

*The bell rang. Ronald Brett-Home frowned and went to the door. He couldn't imagine who...*

*He opened up and for the moment didn't recognize the large, one might almost say hulking, figure standing there. But then he did. Impossibly, unbelievably, did.*

*But it was twenty, almost twenty-five... No, it was impossible. Absolutely impossible. He tried to say something. Took a step backward. The other followed him and large, blunt fingered hands began to come up.*

*Ronald Brett-Home's mouth twitched silently. His face worked. He had never felt fear before in his life. Not real fear. Not this fear.*

*But it was almost twenty-five years, and the other had not been young, even then.*

*He stepped back again, almost tripped on the rug. All of a sudden his hand, shaking, fumbled for his trouser pocket. The Baretti came out, flaming, the first shot blasting into the rug, but the second and third, so close together as almost to be a single roaring, thudded into the bulk of the oncoming...*

*... the oncoming horror that was upon him, rending and tearing, muttering gutturally in its throat.*

*"... according to Ronald Brett-Home," Martha Dempsey was saying, "all sorts of sparks will fly when Professor Ferencsik meets with some of the other guests. Ah, there the wretch is!"*

*The wretch was evidently her husband, Ferd, whose voice boomed out from the darkness of the terrace.*



"And much as Wine has play'd the Infidel,  
"And robb'd me of my Robe of Honor—Well,  
"I wonder often what the Vintners buy  
"One half so precious as the stuff they sell."

Quint's hostess was off and he grunted amusement and looked about the room for further entertainment.

Someone said, "Avoiding me, Quentin?"

"Good grief, no. Didn't expect you to be here. Doesn't school start in a few days?"

It was Marylyn Worth, looking impossibly blue of eye, improbably blond of hair, and fantastically the nice American-girl type. She had an honest freshness about her that you didn't find in the Madrid expatriate circle.

He knew that she knew he liked the light touch. And he also knew that she attempted to achieve it, for his sake, although her own nature was to be on the overly earnest side.

She said brightly, making an amusing gesture with her champagne cocktail, "That's exactly why I'm here. To get a bit of  $C_2H_5OH$  into my blood stream before I have to take over drilling knowledge and ethics into the little monsters."

"What's  $C_2H_5OH$ ?" he asked her.

"Alcohol," she told him. "Hmmm, the great columnist doesn't seem to be up on his chemistry."

Over her head he could see a small group beginning to gather about Nicolas Ferencsik who was talking to the ex-Russian hatchetman, Nuriyev, and evidently becoming animated about something.

"Talking about monsters," Quint said, "we ought to get in on that argument over there. Everybody's been telling me that fur is supposed to fly when our guest of honor meets some of the others here tonight."

"Oh?" she frowned. "What has Professor Ferencsik got to do with monsters? I thought he won Nobel prizes and things like that."

Quint chuckled. "Yes, but by performing such feats as transplanting the brain of a chimp into the skull of an orangutan."

"But you can't do that. They're different species."

Quint laughed. "Argue that with him. You're the science teacher."

Marylyn's frown deepened. "You go ahead. I hate arguments. Perhaps I'll avoid meeting the Professor. Besides, I wanted to see Marty Dempsey about something."

"Okay, see you later, pet." Quint took up a fresh drink from the bar and strolled toward the growing group centered about the Hungarian medical genius. He decided he would see more of Marylyn before the evening was over. The girl was beginning to grow on him, in spite of the fact that he preferred being the aggressor in the boy-meet-girl game.

Nicolas Ferencsik, up closer, turned out to be a smallish feisty man, in the vicinity of fifty-five though his energy belied his years. By the time Quint arrived, he'd already got to the point where his eyes were flashing the passion of his belief. His English was excellent.

"... man has gone beyond the days when he could afford to be split up into different camps, each at swords point with the others. State lines, national lines, countries, flags, kings and presidents are as antiquated as armies and navies. The modern world demands unity. We either unite or we die as a race. There can be no more countries. World Government cries to be born."

Quint sipped his whisky. A little on the flowery side, he thought, but well stated.

The Hungarian was answered hesitantly by the heavy-set German Jose Garcia had pointed out earlier. What was the man's name? Albrecht Stroehlein, or something like that. Quint had never heard of him. He couldn't have been a very prominent Nazi party member.

Stroehlein said weakly, "But Herr Ferencsik, you seem to ignore the wave of nationalism that sweeps the world, eh? The African nations, the

former Asian colonies. Each wants, most of all, independence as countries. They want no world government. They would distrust world government dominated by we whites, eh? They want no more domination by whites. No more colonialism." The German blinked moist eyes as though apologetic for having a difference of opinion.

The Hungarian glared at him. "Do not call me Herr Ferencsik," he snapped. "And do not speak to me of domination of the World Government by whites. I am no believer in Herrenvolk, sir. If the One World is ever to be established it must be a world in which race is meaningless."

Vladimir Nuriyev, the Russian defector, who reminded Quint of no one so much as Basil Rathbone at his most sinister, said smoothly, "And what would the socio-economic system of this One World of yours be, Mr. Ferencsik? The feudalism of Saudi-Arabia, the ultra-capitalism of the United States, the pseudo-socialism of Sweden, the..."

Ferencsik snapped, "Certainly not Russia's so-called communism, my friend. It would have to be, could only be, an economic system under which a man was rewarded according to his contributions."

Somebody else who Quint didn't make out, said, "Free Enterprise."

The Hungarian, really getting into stride now, spun at that and sneered open contempt. "Do you labor under the illusion that under that gobblydygook term—gobblydygook, is that the word?"

"That's the word," Quint said wryly.

"Under that term, that there is truly reward according to a man's contributions? In the United States..." the sneer was all but a snarl now "... did Thomas Edison die a wealthy man? Did Albert Einstein? And just what do your Barbara Huttons and Doris Dukes contribute that resulted in their being awarded so greatly?"

"Hey," somebody in the rear protested in a slurring voice. "I thought you were a refugee from Budapest, or wherever. You still sound like a damn red to me."

Bart Digby had drifted up while the discussion was in swing. Quint hadn't seen him since they had left the elevator together. Now Digby said,

"What I'd like to know is how you're going to get around to starting this World Government bit. How're you going to get such countries as France and Switzerland, Egypt and Israel, not to talk about the United States and Russia, to give up their national governments and all submit to this One World state of yours?"

"Hear, hear!" Quint said under his breath.

The controversial Hungarian scientist turned to the American. "I don't deny that's a most important question. But I would wager that already a majority of the world's population wishes there was such a government and an end to all this international conflict. I am not a leader of men, myself. I realize my shortcomings in that regard. However, the new world cries to be born and somewhere, somehow, the spark will be struck which will start men to seek their salvation in World Government. Perhaps a new, great leader will come to the surface to point out the way."

Quint said with a twist of mouth, "I'm afraid I don't exactly trust these great leaders who come along. They're too apt to turn out to be misleaders. We've had our bellyful, this last half-century of Hitlers, Stalins, Mussolinis, Maos, Titos and the rest of the great leader types."

Ferencsik's eyes gleamed but he nodded his head in abrupt jerks. "Your point is well taken, my friend. However, there are not only the Hitlers and Stalins. There have also been such leaders as Jesus, the Buddha, your own Jefferson, Gandhi, Solon of Greece, and Confucius of China. Our times call for a man as far above ordinary levels as these were above the norm of their days."

"Superman!" the drunken voice that had earlier accused the Hungarian of being a communist, slurred from the audience that had gathered.

Nuriyev, his hands easily in his trouser pockets, said suavely, "And supermen are hard to come by in any age, are they not?"

"Wasn't it Marx who said, the times produce the men?" the Hungarian snapped back at him. For some reason, Quint decided, the scientist was more irritated by the former communist agent than anyone else whose opinions differed from his own. "Very well, I will accept the term. The world needs a superman to lead it to the goal of World Government. I am of the opinion that such a superman will be found."

"I still think the whole thing sounds like a red plot," somebody growled.

"Oh, shut up," a feminine voice rasped.

Quint decided the second tone indicated a wife had entered the fray. He also decided that he might as well take off. The argument from this point on was undoubtedly going to disintegrate into alcohol-inspired opinions.

He began to drift toward the bar, although his glass was still half filled. Bart Digby fell in step beside him.

Digby said, scowling, "What'd you think, uh, Quint? Is this Hungarian still a commie?"

Quint looked at him. "I didn't know he ever was one. Just being a Hungarian doesn't make you a communist. From the way he was talking, I'd say he was as anti-communist as I am. And that's rather anti—though admittedly, not for the usual reasons."

The other didn't seem to get that. "How do you mean?"

Quint was inwardly amused. He said, "As a student, I decided to read Marx and Engels just because I was always hearing about them, but nobody seemed to have actually read what they had written. I had a hard time getting their books. Oh, you can get criticism of Marx, and criticism of criticism. But getting the original can be difficult. But I did. And I became anti-Soviet as a result. Poor old Marx must be spinning around in his grave like a whirling dervish at what's going on in Russia, supposedly in his name."

Bart Digby looked at him blankly, that I-don't-know-if-you're-kidding-or-not look on his face. Bart Digby wasn't the type who took to joking on a political level, Quint decided.

Digby said, "But what are the unusual reasons you're anti-communist?"

"They're not radical enough for me," Quint told him. And then, so he wouldn't have to top his own gag, said, "Pardon me, I see a girl I wanted to talk to."

Laughing inwardly as the other stared after him, Quint followed Marylyn Worth out onto the terrace.

When she saw him she smiled brightly and said, "What's so funny?"

He told her, chuckling.

Marylyn finished her glass of champagne cocktail and put it down on the stone barrier that surrounded the terrace. She said, frowning, "You'll get a reputation as a bolshevik yourself, if you talk like that, Quentin. And that certainly wouldn't do your career any good."

Quint grinned down at her. "I haven't heard that term, bolshevik, for a long time. You're old fashioned, Marylyn, but I'll tell you something about the articles that I do. Already the type person who believes that anybody who doesn't belong to the Birch Society is a communist, has branded me one. Contrarywise, the type person for whom I really write knows that not only am I not a communist stooge but could never become one. It's an intellectual impossibility for me."

"Well," she said, smiling up at him, "That's a relief."

He grunted at that, and said sourly, "However, I am not prejudiced. Some of my worst friends are communists."

"Oh, you fool."

How it happened, he didn't later have the vaguest idea, but suddenly she was in his arms. Her breasts pressed against him, her eyes blinking her own amazement.

"Why... Quentin..." she said inanely. The way a spinster science teacher, somewhere in her late twenties, or early thirties, would react to suddenly being caught up in a man's arms. Far back in his consciousness he was amused by the scene.

However, he bent and kissed her squarely and thoroughly. Her mouth, he decided, hadn't known a great many kisses. She reacted to the stimulus of his own mouth upon hers as an unpracticed girl would react, or an older woman, past the years of romance.

"Why... Quentin..."

"Why, Marylyn," he mocked her. "How long have you wanted me to kiss you?"

"Why, what a thing to say." She looked up at him, blinking.

"See here," Quint said, keeping his voice serious. "What was the name of that town in Nebraska you said you came from?"

"Why, Border."

"Stop saying *why*," he told her. "Don't they have men there? Didn't they have boys when you went to high school?"

"I... I didn't have much time for boys when I was going to school," she said lowly. "And, besides, my parents were very strict." She made no effort to extricate herself from his embrace.

He said, "Are you telling me, pet, that at your age and with your looks and figure, I'm the first man..."

"Quentin Jones, I said no such thing. And don't be so condescending with me. Why I've had loads of beaux..."

"Beaux!" he laughed. "Where did you get this terminology?" He smiled down at her. Gave her another peck of a kiss. "And where do you get that faint trace of accent? I thought you were two hundred and two percent Mid-Western American."

"You're joshing me. Do I have an accent? My grandmother was German. She raised me. You could cut her German accent with a butterknife." She took a breath and added, wistfully, he decided, "I'm sorry if I'm old-fashioned."

He said, and was sorry the minute it was past his teeth, "Next you'll be telling me you're a virgin."

She held the silence for a moment, then said, "I... I guess I'd better be getting along, Quentin. You were right, earlier. School does start in a few days and I've got things to do."

## ***Chapter Two***

Quint Jones groaned in excruciating anguish. He picked up his coffee

cup. It was empty. For a moment his face brightened. He could get up, go out into his efficiency kitchen and get himself another cup. If the pot was empty, better still, he could take all the time involved in making another. Anything to get away from...

But then he realized he was already drowning internally in coffee. There was no escape in that direction.

He reached for one of his pipes. A shell briar he'd bought a few months ago in Gibraltar. But then he realized that he had a pipe lit, that he'd just put into the ash tray a moment ago. His tongue was already raw from smoking. He put the shell briar down, and groaned again.

He stared at the sheet of glowing white paper. What was the old gag about the writer who went snow blind from staring at a sheet of white paper in his typewriter? He was trying to get into the swing of his morning stint. He had to turn out three columns a week, running between five hundred and a thousand words per column. It didn't sound like much. It was.

For one thing, he'd got beyond the point where he could just dash off any old crud with a twist of humor in it. A gag article. When he'd started this column deal, up in Paris, on one of the American papers with a special European edition, he could get by with a few cute bits of business about the tourists, about some newly opened nightclub, or some visiting celebrity. But the thing had mushroomed, and now he was being carried in hundreds of papers throughout the world. With several hundred fishy eyed editors—he could see them clearly, just by staring up into the corner of the room—to please, each column had to be a veritable masterpiece of wit and wisdom, the so-called Quentin Jones touch, the Mort Sahl-cum-Jules Fiffer of the newspaper columnists.

He groaned again, got up from his chair and stared dismally out of the window. His apartment was on the eighth floor of a building one block off Avenida del Gen-eralísimo Franco, about a mile south of Plaza de Castilla and in a section considered on the absolute outskirts of town by most of the expatriate set. He'd chosen the place deliberately. Traffic moved fast enough on Generalísimo that he could have his little Renault down to Avenida Jose Antonio smack in the middle of the city, in ten minutes. On the other hand, drunken friends weren't inclined to think of his apartment as an oasis for a final drink after being thrown out of the last bar, two or three o'clock in the morning. Too far to go. They dropped in on somebody



nearer.

Down below was Paco's bodega. At this time of the morning, espresso coffee, now all the thing in Madrid as it was in Italy, was the rush item, but if there was anything Quint didn't need, it was more coffee. Come to think of it, though, maybe the thing to do would be to go on down to Paco's and have an anis, or possibly a cana, the Spanish word meaning short beer. He had already turned to reach for his beret, before getting hold of himself. That way lay disaster. One beer, and the morning's work was over before it even got under way. They'd turn up some excuse to have another. There was always an excuse in Madrid to have another.

He went back to the table where'd he'd set up his portable and groaned as he sat down before it.

How about knocking out a few pieces on One World Government? He'd never dealt with the subject to any extent. He could use some of the things Nicolas Ferencsik had said the night before.

He jabbed absently at a couple of the typewriter keys. In fact, he could make a column out of the argument between Ferencsik, that Russian defector and the ex-Nazi, Stroehlein. Report it more or less verbatim, and try to get in a few bits of business and possibly some snide remarks.

Why snide? What was wrong with the idea of a world-wide government? The United Nations taken to the extreme. Surely, if man lasted long enough, and failed to blow himself up, sooner or later the human race would get around to a World Government. Probably not in Quint Jones' lifetime... but someday.

He jabbed at a couple of more keys, unthinking. He might make it a short series of columns on the subject.

Whatever had happened to that guy up in Paris who had renounced his American citizenship and proclaimed himself the first Citizen of the World? What was his name? Gary something or other. For a while he got a lot of publicity. Made up a passport of his own, which nobody would recognize, of course. His instincts had possibly been right. He had decided that only a One World Government could solve the problem of peace, and had done his little best to start the ball rolling.

Quint chuckled, sourly. The trouble was that the first Citizen of the

World was also the last. Nobody else, so far as Quint had heard, bothered to follow along the path he'd blazed. Nobody else had got around to renouncing their citizenship in an individual country and becoming the second Citizen of the World.

With his jabbing at the typewriter keys, Quint had fouled up the sheet of paper in the machine. He absently cranked it out, and reached for a clean sheet.

Let's see, he could make the first column about the argument at the party, and the second column about Gary, what's-his-name. And for the third column he might do a summing up of the whole question, making it as dryly witty as he could squeeze out.

That's what really sold his stuff. Mature, satirical, even cynical humor directed at the world's current problems.

He licked his lip absently. He needed a good, sharp title.

The bell rang and he looked up, for a moment as though he hadn't heard it. It rang again.

"Oh, for crissake," he snarled.

Theoretically, all his friends knew he worked in the mornings. That he wasn't to be bothered unless the emergency was extreme. He kicked the chair back and shuffled toward the door, muttering.

It was Mike Woolman, Madrid correspondent for World Wide Press. Lean, dark, nervous, he habitually toted a rolled up newspaper which he banged against his leg. And he was Quint's favorite drinking companion.

"Working?" he said.

"What do you think?" Quint snarled. "How can I be working when I'm standing here beating my gums with some twitch who doesn't know enough to..."

Mike brushed past him and into the living room. He looked at the typewriter, sitting on the table, and grunted. "Why the hell don't you set up one of your spare bedrooms as an office?" he demanded.

"None of your damn business. Why don't you go away? Listen, remember that guy up in Paris a few years ago who renounced his U.S. Citizenship and said he was the first citizen of the world?"

"Uh huh. What about him?"

"What was his name?"

"Gary something or other." Mike slumped down on the couch and banged his knee fretfully with his newspaper.

Quint said, "You're a great help. Why don't you beat it? I'm trying to get into my column. Listen, what do you know about the movement toward World Government?" He sat back down in the chair before his typewriter.

"Nothing," Mike Woolman said.

"You're a great help. I thought newspapermen were supposed to know everything."

"We do know everything. There isn't anything to know about World Government. It's just a couple of words. There's no movement, no organization. It's not even in its infancy, unless you're thinking the United Nations is a step in that direction—which it isn't."

Quint grunted. "I've got news for you. Now there's a beginning. A first step. Its name is Nicolas Ferencsik."

"So you were at that party last night. I thought maybe you were. That's why I came up."

Quint scowled at him. "What about it?"

"Ronald Brett-Home was supposed to be there."

"So Marty said. He didn't make it. Probably drunk."

"Dead," Mike said.

"I beg your pardon?"

Mike repeated it. "Dead. Not drunk. Murdered."

Quint stared at him.

Mike said, "Uh huh."

Quint said, "Who'd want to kill that easy going playboy? Somebody's husband?"

Mike Woolman banged his newspaper against his knee in irritation. He said, "I was hoping I'd get some information out of you, instead of giving it. Didn't you know Brett-Home was Great Britain's top MI6 field man?"

Wheels were beginning to turn, but Quint said, "MI6?"

"The British equivalent of our C.I.A. International espionage, counter-espionage."

Some of the things Marty Dempsey had said last night came back to Quint Jones. He hadn't believed her at the time. He said, frowning, "What's that got to do with it?"

Mike squirmed, uncomfortably, "Damned if I know. You didn't meet a guy named Bartholomew Digby there, did you?"

"You mean Bart Digby? Come to think of it, he told me that Brett-Home was to have brought him up. What about Bart?"

"How'd he impress you?"

Quint was becoming irritated by the other's grasshoppering conversation. "He impressed me as some bright crewcut college man, in Europe representing I.B.M. or RCA or one of the other big business outfits currently trying to suck up to the Common Market."

"That's what he's supposed to look like. Digby was kicked out of the C.I.A. a month or so ago—or so he says."

Quint looked at him.

Mike Woolman dropped his banged up newspaper long enough to start counting off his fingers, one by one. "Brett-Home was connected with MI6. Albrecht Stroehlein was formerly of the Gestapo. One of the other guests at that party was Vladimir Nuriyev, who defected from the KGB, the *Komissarait Gosudarstvennoi Bezopastnotsi*, or so he says."

Quint murmured, "Joe Garcia told me Nuriyev had been a hatchetman for the *Chrezvychainaya Komissiya*."

Woolman cocked his head to one side, and rubbed the bottom of his chin nervously. "He did, eh? How would he know? I sometimes have a sneaky suspicion that our Senor Garcia does chores for the Spanish secret police."

"At any rate, what are you getting at? You've got spies running up and down the walls."

Mike picked up his newspaper again and gave himself an absent minded bang on the leg. "I don't know. I thought you might have something you noticed at the party. Something funny is going on here in Madrid. Not just this Brett-Home killing. That, at least, will come out into the open. The local cops can hardly suppress the news of the death of a foreigner. But I've been getting a distinct feeling..."

"Feminine intuition, like?" Quint twisted his mouth.

"Shut up. Something screwy is going on. The police and other authorities are holding the lid down on something."

Quint stood up and an expression of mock concern spread over his face. He said, "Mike, you need a long rest. Now why don't you get the hell out of here and let me work? Go chase some spies, or something. I didn't see anything mysterious, or even sinister going on at the Dempsey's last night. If you ask me, some thief knocked Ronald Brett-Home over the head and..."

"He wasn't robbed," Mike said disgustedly, coming to his own feet. "You're lucky you're a damned columnist instead of a reporter. You wouldn't see a story if you stubbed your toe on it. Not only wasn't he robbed, but he was all torn up as though he'd been finished off by a Bengal tiger." He gave his leg a double bang with his paper club.

Quint scowled. "Well... some kind of a nut got to him. A psycho..."

Mike grunted his disgust at the other's lack of perception. "I should've known better than to talk to you while you're working. You obviously turn off your thinking machine when you work. Didn't it get through to you? Ronald Brett-Home was a top MI6 man. Where was it you first met him?"

"At Hideka's karate classes over on Calle San Bernardo," Quint said thoughtfully. "We used to work out together, from time to time."

"And was he any good?"

"He held a third Dan Black Belt, now that you mention it." Quint was scowling again.

Mike Woolman headed for the door. "Then how the hell could some psycho take him?" he growled. "Drunk or sober, a third Dan Black Belt could take on any two or three crooks or fugitives from a nut factory, that ever lived. Shall I see you for lunch at the *Hoger Gallego*?"

Quint's scowl had deepened. He said absently, "I don't know. I'm getting tired of sea food. Besides, I'm getting a slow start on the column. Maybe I'll just open a can of soup here at the apartment."

Mike opened the door to leave. "Damn Americans," he said. "Do all their cooking out of cans. Barbarians."

"You've been over here too long," Quint snarled after him, but the other was gone. He looked at the door for a long moment, digesting some of the things the newspaperman had said.

Foul it, Mike was right. Ronald Brett-Home, no matter what his air of easy goingness might be, was a top judo and karate man. Quint had thought the other followed the sport simply for exercise and fun—as Quint did himself. He hadn't known the man was connected with British espionage. But whatever his connections, he was superbly capable of protecting himself.

The columnist shrugged in irritation and resumed his chair before the typewriter. Confound Mike. Now he'd lost his thread of inspiration. He'd had some idea for a series of three columns. What in the devil was it?

He stared at the paper for a moment, unseeingly.

Then, as though not of his own volition got up again and crossed the room to his combination bar and telephone stand. It was a heavy piece of converted pseudo-Castilian furniture, its wood half a foot thick, its wrought ironwork deliberately rusted as though with centuries of age.

He dialed absently, waited while the phone rang over and over again. He looked at his watch. It was nearly noon.

Finally the voice came. "Good heavens, *dahling*, whoever you are, what possibly could you want this time of night?"

Quint said, "Pet, it's Quint Jones. Listen, remember last evening?"

Her voice went wary. "Just a minute, while I take a sip of this to clear the cobwebs. Last evening, *dahling*? Of course—at least the early part." She hesitated. "I think I do."

He made a face, but turned on oral charm. "Listen, Pet. You told me that Ronald Brett-Home had suggested the party to you. That he, more or less, set it up. Said there'd be a lot of fun. Just what kind of fun?"

Marty Dempsey had evidently bolted back a quick one. Her voice came through more clearly. "Did I say that, *dahling*? Well, the wretch never even turned up." She giggled in remembrance. "You must have left early with that nice Marylyn girl. You missed the climax of the party."

"Oh? What happened?" Quint grew tense.

"Well, my dear, you know that swivel hipped Joanne Cotton girl—the one who came up from Torremolinos with the Conte..."

Quint didn't know who she was talking about, but he said, "Yeah, yeah, of course."

"Well, *dahling*. She was evidently looking for the little girl's room, and walked in on Dave Shepherd and this new boy friend of..."

Quint said wearily, "Listen, Marty, about Ronald Brett-Home and his idea for a controversial party. It was his idea that you invite Nicolas Ferencsik, wasn't it? Why did he think that would start fireworks?"

Even over the phone, he could detect the fact that she was pouting. But Marty wasn't the stuffy type, especially with one of what she called her *special boy friends* and Quentin Jones was one of her *special boy friends*, usually to his dismay.

But her voice went vague. "I... I don't exactly know. I suppose I could

ask Ferd. Ronald was awfully mysterious about it. Merely told me to throw a party with Nicolas Ferencsik as guest of honor, and then spread it around that the party was to be open house. I even had that pretty Jean Allen girl put it in the *Guidepost*."

The *Guidepost* was the little English language weekly magazine read by all Americans and British in Madrid. Jean Allen was its society editor. Quint pursed his lips. Obviously, the Englishman had been trying to lure someone to the party. Someone who ordinarily wouldn't have come to an expatriate drunken party—hadn't it been for the fact that the controversial Hungarian was going to be there.

He said thoughtfully, "That German, Stroehlein. Was he invited?"

"Who?"

In the background, even over the phone, Quint could hear a bottle gurgle. He shook his head, wondering how the woman ever got all the way through the day. He repeated his question.

"Never heard of him, dahling."

"How about Vladimir Nuriyev?"

"Was he at the party too? Oh dear, I'm afraid I didn't know *half* the people who wandered in. You know our soirees, dahling..."

*Soiree* was a good word. But alcoholic blowout was more like it.

He said softly, "Then not only Bart Digby, but Stroehlein and Nuriyev were party crashers as well, eh?"

"I beg your pardon, dahling?"

"Nothing," he said. He had half a mind to ask her if any Frenchmen had been present—someone who might have been connected with the Surete. What was the French term? A *mouchard*. The whole thing sounded like a convention of secret agents. Mike Woolman was right, something funny had been expected to happen there at the Dempsey party. Not so funny at that The British representative of international espionage had wound up very dead.



Marty Dempsey was giggling something into the phone that he didn't catch, and suddenly he was weary of her meaningless voice. He said, rather abruptly, "Look Marty, the reason I called. You might read the morning papers. I suppose it's in the papers..."

"What's in the papers? You mean about the party? But, dahling, they never report our..."

"Ronald Brett-Home didn't make it to your party, pet, because somebody killed him."

She gasped, and he hung up the phone. It wasn't a matter of being either nasty, or impolite. He simply didn't want to spend the next half hour chattering with Martha Dempsey. He stood and looked down at the instrument for a moment, then turned and looked at the bottle of Fundador which stood a foot or so to the right. He shook his head. The hell with it. He had to get to work. One drink and he'd be off. Any excuse to get out of actually sitting down to that typewriter and trying to be cynically witty for the sake of yea many millions of readers.

When the phone started ringing, he let it ring and returned to chair and typewriter. He stared at the single line he had typed. It was obviously meant to be a title, since it was in caps. It read: *It's a Small World and I Want Off*.

He looked at it blankly. Obviously, when he had written it, he'd had something in mind. What? He couldn't remember what he'd been doodling with when Mike Woolman's ring at the door had come. He stared at it for a while, but nothing would evolve. He couldn't keep his mind from Ronald Brett-Home and from the strange party at the Dempsey's.

Nicolas Ferencsik. The Hungarian scientist and his dream of World Government. It came back to Quentin Jones then. He had thought of doing a short series of columns on World Government. He shook his head. He wouldn't be able to do them now. Not until this matter was cleared up. If it was cleared up.

He'd have to get onto something else. He picked up his notebook and thumbed through it. Here was a couple of lines dealing with American dependence on the PX stores abroad. Quint Jones twisted his lips thoughtfully. And the bell rang.

He closed his eyes in pain. "What in the hell is this, Old Home Week?" He threw his notebook to the table and made his way to the door.

Two of them stood there. He had seen them before. Or at least their identical twins. Somehow they manage to look the same, anywhere in the world. One of them brought forth a wallet and nicked it open.

Quint sighed. "You didn't have to show me the buzzer," he said. Involuntarily, he looked down at their feet. The slightly older of the two flushed angrily.

Quint sighed. "Pardon me for a moment." Leaving the door open he went back to the table, took up his notebook and a ball bearing pen and scribbled quickly, *Humor bit: Evidently the gag about a cop having big feet is international, and cops everywhere conscious of the fact, and irritated by it.*

They had entered behind him, without invitation, and the younger closed the door behind them. They wouldn't have done that in England or any of the Scandinavian countries, nor in Canada or the States. No, come to think of it, Quint decided, there was many a city in the States where they might. Police were known to get delusions of grandeur in the supposedly super-free America, on occasion.

He said, motioning with his hand, "A seat, gentlemen?" He made another gesture in the direction of the bar. "Could I offer you a drink? A cognac? Beer? Scotch?"

They shook their heads. With regret, Quint decided, when he mentioned the whisky. Scotch whisky was currently the status drink in Spain. To impress the girl friend, in a bar, you ordered Scotch, in spite of the fact that it cost a dollar a throw while good Spanish brandy cost possibly five cents, and while the Scotch was almost certainly cut to ribbons and blended with cheap alcohol to stretch it out.

The one Quint had decided was the older said, "*Senor Jones, Hablar espanol?*"

Still in English, Quint said, "Well enough for every day purposes. To ask for a second round of beers in a bodega. To order in a restaurant, or buy things in the market. To pick up a girl and argue her into my way of thinking. But not to talk to police officers about any subject more

important than a parking ticket. And you gentlemen don't look as though you're connected with the traffic department. I'll stick to English. If it's important, we can go on over to the American consulate for an interpreter."

The older one grunted, and said in quite passable English, "You are a friend of Mr. Ronald Brett-Home." It wasn't exactly a question.

"An acquaintance," Quint told him, resuming his own chair, and shooting his typewriter a look of disgust. He might as well give up, today. It wasn't in the cards.

The detective's eyebrows were raised. "We have information that you were a friend. Do you deny it?"

"It's according to what you mean by friend. I've known him for maybe as long as a year. I average seeing him once or twice a month, at a party, or some such. I've never been to his home, he's never been to mine."

"When did you see him last?"

"I don't know."

The detective looked at him. Both of them looked at him.

Quint shrugged angrily. "We see each other from time to time at parties. I don't know which one I saw him at last. We were never important to each other. We might both be at a party, or at the swimming pool at the British-American Club, or at some bar and never even speak."

"Perhaps you did not like Mr. Brett-Home. Perhaps you were enemies."

"No," Quint sighed. A cop is a cop is a cop. "No, we weren't enemies. I just told you. We hardly knew each other."

"But you fought against each other."

Quint looked at him blankly, then caught it. "Oh, you mean at the karate club? We both belonged to it, but usually I'd work out in the afternoon, and he'd come in later in the evening. When we occasionally were there at the same time, Hideka, the instructor, would usually pair us off. We had about the same build."

The detective leaned forward a bit. "He was your superior at this Japanese fighting, perhaps?"

"We were about evenly matched."

"But one understands that he had won awards."

"He had a third Dan Black Belt which I understood he had taken the examinations for in Singapore. I've never had occasion to take examinations." Quint shrugged. "I don't know if I would if I had the opportunity. I mess around with karate for the exercise. I don't take it seriously."

The detective who spoke English looked at him sceptically. So, okay, let him think that it was a matter of sour grapes.

The younger detective came to his feet and strolled over to the window and stared down, as though bored at the conversation, at the traffic on Calle General Peron. There wasn't much to see. Quint had picked the street partly because of its comparative quiet.

The other was saying, "From your attitude I assume you have learned of Mr. Brett-Home's, ah, tragedy."

"Yes." What use was there in denying it?

"How did you know? It has not as yet been released to the press."

"A friend told me."

"What friend?" The Spanish cop's air was cold.

He had just said that the news had not been released to the press. Where *had* Mike picked it up, then? Quint's mind raced. Would it be a betrayal if he gave them the American reporter's name?

The younger cop, who had been staring gloomily out the window, had left it and strolled over to stand for a moment before a reproduction of Velazquez' *Las Meninas*. He grunted and sauntered about the room as though looking for more paintings, and thus killing time. The American columnist brought his attention back to the question.

He said, slowly, "I'm afraid I can't reveal my source of information. I am

a journalist, you know." Calling himself a journalist was stretching a point, of course. He was a columnist, true enough, but not a newspaper man in the sense of being a reporter.

His questioner said dangerously, "Senor Jones, we do not deal with pleasant newspaper stories about parties, and marriage and divorce, and movie stars and other celebrities. We do not even deal with politics. We are dealing with murder. Now, one would like to know who told you of Mr. Brett-Home's death."

The younger cop had got to the side board and was shuffling through Quint's morning mail.

"Hey!" Quint was on his feet. "*Quieta!*"

He came angrily up on the other, who did no more than raise a contemptuous, supercilious eyebrow at the American, continuing his inspection.

"Drop those letters!" Quint demanded angrily.

"My colleague doesn't have English," the other detective said, an undertone of both contempt and amusement in his voice.

Quint reached out to grab the letters. The detective held him off with his right arm, still scanning the mail, looking for God only knew what. As Quint could remember, there certainly wasn't anything in it pertaining to Brett-Home, or even Madrid. But that wasn't the point.

The detective's fling of arm had caught Quint off balance. He recovered now and, without conscious thought, went into the karate Kokutsu-dachi layout position. One foot was placed forward with the toes pointed straight ahead and the knee's slightly bent, the rear leg knee bent considerably with the toes pointed outward and forward.

The cop was startled and began to throw a right punch. Quint, under his breath breathed, "Zut!" the traditional Kiai yell, and grabbed the other's wrist even as it came toward him. Grabbed it with his left hand. He walked in and seized the cop's right shoulder with his right hand, striking the other's chin with an elbow punch. Simultaneously, he moved in quickly with his right foot coming around to his opponent's right side rear legs. He shot his own right foot forward and then quickly backwards

against the detective's rear leg, forcing him to the floor.

A voice from the door said sharply, "*Senores! Que pasa?*"

## ***Chapter Three***

Quint Jones, automatically, had gone into the *Kokutsu-dachi* layout position, in half squat, his hands forward from his body, palms forward. He straightened now, his expression wry.

It was Jose Garcia Mendez, or Joe Garcia, as he would have it. All five feet eight inches of him, and on this occasion his tight little Spanish mustache was twitching, as he took in the fallen detective, the stance of the American, the second detective clawing for his gun.

He spoke in Spanish so rapidly that Quint Jones could follow hardly a quarter of it. The English speaking representative of Madrid law let his weapon slide back into its shoulder holster and snapped back an answer so staccato fast that the columnist gave up even the attempt to understand.

He watched his opponent of a moment ago who had come to his feet and was straightening his clothes, meanwhile massacring Quint with his eyes, though obviously Garcia's entry had changed his mind about continuing the fray—if he had any desire to continue it. The karate form of hand to hand combat takes the truculence quickly out of any but the most ardent foe.

Quint looked back at Joe Garcia and interrupted that worthy's diatribe with a sour, "Look, has it got to the point today where the mobs that go drifting through this apartment while I'm trying to work don't even bother to knock?"

Garcia left the cop he'd been orally belaboring and turned a surprised face to the American. "But, Quint, old chum, I've just been reading this square the riot act. The old rescue in the nick of time routine. I made the scene right..."

"Rescued who?" Quint growled sacastically. "Another minute and I would have finished these two burlesque cops off."

Garcia's face lost some of its good humor. "And then what would have happened, pal? These guys are just doing their duty. Their superiors might take a dim view of you practicing your jujitsu, or whatever you call it, on them." His mouth smiled. "Aren't you getting tired of being ordered out of countries? What was the last one, Portugal?"

"*Touche*" Quint growled. "I get the message." He turned back to the older of the two police. "I'm sorry. In my country, even the police aren't allowed to search a man's personal effects without a warrant. I got carried away."

The detective's eyes went from the American to Jose Garcia, and then back again. His face worked in irritation. He said, finally, in English, "Senor Jones refuses to divulge the source of his information on the death of the Englishman Brett-Home."

Joe Garcia turned back to Quint. "What information? Did you know Ronald, Quint?"

"Barely. A friend told me about his being found dead. That's all I know about it."

Garcia turned back to the plainclothesman. "Mr. Jones is a friend of Michael Woolman, of World Wide Press, who discovered the body. Undoubtedly that was the source of his information. Am I correct, pal?"

Quint shrugged. There was obviously no point in shielding Mike, if that was the situation. He wondered why Mike hadn't mentioned the fact. And wondered further about the circumstance which led to his discovering the Englishman's corpse.

Garcia said to the detective, "*I am sure Mr. Jones has given you whatever information he possesses. If there are other questions, you can call upon him again later.*"

Of a sudden, all was good temper again.

Quint held out a hand to the younger cop, twisted his face ruefully, turned on his charm. "Sorry," he said, as though he meant it.

The other shrugged and shook. The two said their goodbyes and left dutifully.

Quint went over to the sideboard and poured himself a double Fundador. "Drink?" he said, without turning. Now that the excitement was over, he felt shaken, as always when physical action had terminated. When in emergency, he acted cool enough, he found, but when the danger point was over reaction hit him hard.

Garcia didn't answer the question. Instead, he said, "You know, pal, you'd make a top politician, especially in one of your democratic countries. You can turn it on and off like a tap."

The American tossed the drink back, stiff wristed, and turned to the other. Garcia had made himself at home on the couch, one neatly trousered leg crossed over the other.

Quint said, "What the devil are you talking about?"

"The old magnetic personality. If that young sap had stuck around another few minutes, you would have had him kissing you."

"Oh, great," Quint growled. Something Mike Woolman had said about Garcia came back to him. He said, "I didn't have to turn on the magnetic personality. All you had to do was tell them to run along, and they ran."

Joe Garcia flicked his thumbnail along his neat mustache. "Anything for a pal. As a matter of fact, my old man is a personal friend of some of the big Falange mucky-mucks. I wouldn't want to throw too *much* weight around, but I can fix a traffic ticket, that sort of thing."

"Yeah," Quint said. He resumed his chair behind the typewriter, and looked at it gloomily. "My agent's been riding my tail to keep him supplied further in advance with columns. Three'll get you five, I don't finish even my regular quota this week."

Garcia said easily, "I read that piece you did on *El Caudillo*. Really, chum, do you think it's good policy to give Franco a working over while living here in Spain?"

Quint looked at him flatly. "The authorities can always kick me out if they don't like my version of what I see. Like you said, Portugal was the last place. However, if old lard-assed Franco, as Papa Hemingway used to call him, wants to continue this present we're-all-good-democrats-together skit, and suck up to such outfits as



NATO and the Common Market, he'd better take it easy on expelling newspaper columnists syndicated in a few hundred papers throughout the free world."

Garcia flushed, for once the bonhomie gone from his expression. "Just a suggestion, chum," he said unhappily. "I wouldn't want to interfere with your business."

"You couldn't," Quint said. "Listen, Garcia, what did you come up here for? These are supposed to be my working hours."

"I was just passing," the Spaniard said. He shifted in his chair. "To tell you the truth, I was thinking about the shindig at Ferd and Marty's last night. And about poor Ronald." He shifted again. Recrossed his legs. "It wasn't exactly the sort of blowout you usually turn up for."

Quint held up a hand. "Please, let's not try to be subtle. Come right out and say what you want to know is do I have any inside dope on Brett-Home. Everybody else in town has been in here this morning asking me. I'll give you the same answer. I don't know a damn thing about him. I didn't even know he was a British agent..."

Garcia's eyebrows went up.

"... until Mike Woolman told me this morning."

The Spaniard came to his feet. "None of my business anyway," he said. "But from what I've heard it was sure a screwy killing."

Quint said, "Mike mentioned that the guy was all torn up as though a tiger had worked him over."

"Man, you said it. But that ain't the worst, chum. The autopsy revealed that the kidneys are missing."

The American stared at him. "Missing?"

"That's right, pal. Our homicide people figure they've got a real fruitcake on their hands. Maybe a psychopathic cannibal." Garcia turned to go.

Quint didn't follow him to the door. When the other got there, and with

knob in hand, he turned back as though he'd forgotten something.

"Oh, by the way, old Ronald left a note scribbled on his desk. The flatfeet don't know if it's got anything to do with his death or not. What does this mean to you? *Why was it necessary to burn H's body?*"

Quint looked at him blankly. "It doesn't mean anything to me. Why should it?"

"Search me," Garcia shrugged. "Just thought I'd ask."

*The ragged young man drifted slowly, slowly back into consciousness, almost as though dreading the return to reality. The warm wave of reasoning ebbed and flowed, touched and then retreated.*

*Even before his eyes opened, he was dimly, dimly aware of a flickering of light. A glaringly bright flickering of light where largely there was gloom.*

*His lids slitted infinitesimally, so that an observer would have had to bend close to realize that they were parted at all. But though now he could see, it was as though through a dark veil. And then the flickering of light again. Realization came from far and far. The beams of light were coming through a slatted window. Slatted Spanish style to exclude the dazzle and suffocation of the mid-day sun of Iberia, but free to admit whatever faintest breeze.*

*From seemingly far, far away in both space and time, memory sidled back. Spending his last peseta in a bar for a copa of wine, and the nibble of tapa that came with it, in his case, a bit of cheese on a bit of bread. The despair of knowing it to be the last. The despair of clothes that could no longer be kept neat, and hence an advertisement of his worthiness to be employed. The despair of knowing that this night there was to be no bed, no alternative to roaming the streets, other than a hiding place, away from the Guardia Civil, in some dark doorway.*

*And then the stranger. The well dressed stranger. The foreigner who still spoke such excellent Castilian. The generous patron. And the food! And the drink!*

*And then, somewhere, where? the falling away into bottomless sleep.*

*And now this. The languor. The weakness of body and will, even as he returned to reality. To the consciousness that he lay stretched on some hard, though not uncomfortable, surface. In a darkened room. In a room so lit through the flickering of sun through slatted windows that it could scarce be made out.*

*He seemed to be coming from a sleep that had lasted eons but left him limp and resistless. Weak and not caring. Doubtful of the necessity for tomorrow. Doubtful of all necessity.*

*And then from the far distances across the room there was a new gleaming, a new reflection, pin points of gleam flickering but occasionally, but nearing, nearing ...*

*... nearing, nearing. Two pin points of gleam, reflecting the sun through the shutters, depending on their gleam for the sun through the slats of the shutters. Nearing, nearing, now descending toward. Toward where?*

*Deep, deep, impossibly, uselessly deep within his feeble consciousness came up the cry of terror. The cry to resist, to survive, to live, to live, to live. Nothing could matter but life. To live, to live. But so faint, so far.*

*Barely he could feel the prick of the dual points of gleam upon his throat. No pain. Only the knowledge of penetration of his life.*

*And then the feel of drain. Of slow gentle drain of the juice of existence. The red warm juice of existence.*

*Away, away. And far away the realization that there was no more poverty to be. No more a last desperate peseta. No more the employment that would never come. No more the nights without the warmth of bed. No more. For the warm juice of life was draining away ...*

*... away, away...*

Quentin Jones parked his Renault 4L on Calle de Alcalá, one block up from the Plaza de la Cibeles, and hoofed it from there in the direction of

the Puerta del Sol. It was pushing two o'clock and the streets were pedestrian packed as streets can be packed only in a modern city where the institution of the automobile is unknown to nine persons out of ten. In a matter of minutes the stores were going to close, and the present bustle would melt astonishingly, and remain melted until the siesta period ended and business resumed, somewhere between four and five o'clock—all according to how the individual businessman was reacting to the government's attempt to cut short the three or four hour lunch period.

He cut across Alcala and up the side street Calle Marques de Cubas for one block, turned right for another block to emerge on Calle Jovellanos. The Edelweiss was up at the end of the street. Inwardly, Quint shrugged. The man had been in Madrid for only a couple of weeks, no more. And here he was eating in a German restaurant two meals out of three.

Quint had a sneaking suspicion that if the other were to move to Germany for a time, he'd seek out a Spanish type establishment for his meals. Maybe it was travel snobbery, he decided wryly, but Quentin Jones ate Italian food in Italy, French in France, Spanish in Spain. And in the States, steaks, hamburgers, hot dogs and other American specialties, which if ordered abroad meant disaster. He had never had an edible hamburger outside the borders of the United States and had long since given up the project.

The Edelweiss even managed a Teutonic air. A breath of Germany exported to Castile. There was a heavy richness in the decor; a feeling that the businessmen bellied up to the bar, drinking their dark *dunkles* beer, averaged a good twenty or thirty pounds more than would the clients of a more typical Madrid establishment; an absence of the ever present odor of olive oil without which a Spanish restaurant is just not Spanish.

Quentin Jones let his eyes drift around the room, as though looking for a table. Tables were scarce this time of day.

Somebody waved to him, "Hey, Quint."

He waved back. Twisted his mouth as though in consideration, then made his way through the tables to the other, who had one all to himself.

Quint said, "Hi, Bart. Mind if I join you? Privacy, you might prefer, but if I know the Edelweiss, in about yea many minutes the waiter is going to unload a couple of tourists on you. Tables are shared here."

Bart Digby had half come to his feet. "Sure, sure," he said. "Have a seat. Glad to have somebody to talk to." He grinned his boyish grin. "Wow, was that a party last night. You wouldn't happen to know a guy named Dave Shepherd, would you? Well, there was this girl Joanne something-or-other, and she went looking for the bathroom and opened the wrong door and..."

Quint grimaced. "I heard about it," he said. "By this time, evidently all Madrid has heard about it."

"Oh," Digby said.

The waiter came around. Digby was already into his liver dumpling soup, but Quint ordered *Hose im Topf*, a rabbit pate that was good in the German restaurant, and Weisswurst, a white sausage made of veal, calves' brains and spleen which he considered the best single dish ever dreamed up by the herrenvolk. To wash it down he asked for a half bottle of Niersteiner.

There was a watchful something in Digby's manner. Knowing the man's background, Quint Jones wondered how he could have ever been taken in by the other's camouflage as a more average than average young American businessman on the make. Crew cut and overly aggressive voice to the contrary, Bart Digby had obviously, now that Quint really looked at him, got more of his education from Hard Knocks University than he had from such as Harvard Business School.

Quint said idly, "I suppose you heard the other news too. About your friend."

Digby looked at him for a long moment. "I'd heard about it," he said evenly, "but I'm surprised that you have."

"Newspaper folk have special sources," Quint said. The wine had arrived, and he watched as the cork was pulled and a small amount poured for his approval. He sipped it and nodded, and the waiter half filled the wineglass.

Quint looked up at his companion. "But, so have folk connected with the U.S. Embassy. So I suppose that's how you found out about Brett-Home's being killed. The police are evidently trying to hush the whole thing up. Bad for the tourist trade."

Digby said, "I have no connections with the American Embassy. Not any longer."

Quint said nothing, very politely.

Bart Digby scowled at him, but dropped the point. He said, "What's your interest?"

But the waiter was approaching with Quint's food, and for the moment, both of them held silence.

When he had gone, Quint shrugged. "You know the business I'm in. I get paid for being curious about things and then commenting on them if they're interesting enough." He took a bite of his sausage. "This has all the earmarks of being very interesting indeed."

Bart Digby thought about it for awhile. "I wouldn't rush into print on this thing, Quint."

"So who's rushing? All morning my work's been interrupted by characters digging into my relationship with Brett-Home."

"Oh?" The other's eyes narrowed again. "Just what *was* your relationship? You told me last night you knew him."

"I knew him *vaguely*. Which brings to mind, what was your own relationship?"

Digby pursed his lips. His answer came too pat. "We ran into each other once, in a while on various assignments when I was still with the C.I.A. So when I got here to Madrid and ran into him, we got together to have a few drinks. That sort of thing."

"Yeah," Quint said.

"What does that supposed to mean?"

"It means that something big was supposed to happen at the Dempsey party. And you probably knew what it was. Ronald Brett-Home getting himself killed evidently threw a wrench into the works." Quint finished off his sausage. "You know, the next time the Spanish police start pestering me about it, I might drop them a few hints about you just to get them off

my own back."

"You wouldn't do that."

"Why not?"

"You're an American. Damn it, Jones, you've got some responsibilities to your country."

The columnist hid his satisfaction. He was getting near to pay dirt. "How do I know that going along with you is to my country's advantage? For all I know, you've sold out to the Russians. Remember? You're supposed to be an ex-C.I.A. man. Who are you to tell me what my responsibilities are?" He let his voice go slightly heated.

Digby's face worked angrily for a moment, then he suddenly changed attitude. "Look here, Quentin Jones, I mentioned last night, I admired your articles. I'm going to tell you some things off the record."

Quint leaned back in his chair. They were in a corner where eavesdropping would have been impractical. "All right."

The former operative squirmed in his chair. Finally he said, "What do you know about Martin Bormann? Or, for that matter, Heinrich Mueller, or Doktor Stahlecker?"

"Bormann? Hitler's right hand man, in the final days. Hitler's secretary for years, and the executor of his final will and testament. Toward the last they made him the Party Minister, the head of the Nazi Party. There was supposed to be some kind of mystery about his death, after Hitler committed suicide and the Red Army stormed Berlin. They never found his body but Arthus Axman, the Hitler Youth leader, claimed he saw it lying under the bridge where the Invalidenstrasse crosses the railroad tracks." Quint thought. "Heinrich Mueller? He was the head of the Gestapo. There was some stuff about him in the papers not so long ago. When they investigated his grave, it was found to contain the bones of parts of three skeletons—none of which could have been his. I don't think I've ever heard of Doktor whoever-you-said."

"You've got a good memory," Bart Digby grudged. "The fact of the matter is, it's never been proven that Bormann, Mueller and Doktor Stahlecker ever died. They were three of the Fuhrer's most rabid

adherents. Had they been tried at Nuremberg, all three would have gotten the noose. It couldn't have happened to nicer people. All three were with Hitler and Goebbels right to the very end. And after Adolf Hitler killed himself they tried to escape. Okay. Stick a pin there."

The self-professed former C.I.A. man took a deep gulp of his dark beer. "Have you heard of General Reinhard Gehlen?"

The columnist was scowling, wondering where all this historic grubbing was getting them. But he said, "One of Hitler's former intelligence chiefs. Now head of west German intelligence."

"That's right. Look, the usual story is that the Americans and Russians were all buddy-buddy after they defeated the Nazis. And that it came as a great shock to Truman and other American leaders when the commies started pulling tricks. The fact is that *both* sides began pulling tricks before the war really ended. Tricks against each other. Preparing for the Cold War to come. Our people dashed in like a shot to corral Von Braun and other rocket experts, before the Soviets could get them. We also dashed in and cornered General Gehlen and his organization and put them to work for us—at the same work they had been doing for Hitler, spying on the Russians. After West Germany became a sovereign state in 1955, Gehlen stopped working for Uncle Sam and became head of the German Federal Intelligence Service."

"What in the devil is all this building up to?" Quint said in irritation.

Bart Digby leaned forward, as though coming to his point. "Quint, world politics are in a delicate balance. One day a new country drops into the Soviet orbit, lines up with the Russkies. Cuba is an example. Another day, one of the other formerly neutral countries lines up with the west. Say, Iran, or Morocco, or wherever. But one hell of a lot of them remain still on the fence. Listening to our propaganda but perhaps not buying it; listening to their propaganda, and not quite buying that either. It's nip and tuck, Quint."

Quint Jones said dryly, "This isn't exactly news to me. I make my living commenting on such things as world affairs."

The other nodded and his voice was bitter. "I know," he said. "That's why you worry me. One of your typical snide columns, dropped into the mess that's brewing now, could cause all sorts of stink."



Quint poured the balance of his wine into his glass and sipped it, waiting for the other to finish.

"All right," Digby said. "One of the current commie propaganda blasts is that the West is encouraging the reemergence of Hitlerism. That West Germany's government is full of former Nazis such as General Gehlen. That more and more of the old Hitler team are out from cover and slipping into prominent positions. If they could sell the world on this, they'd have made a strong point with liberals and progressives everywhere, and one hell of a lot of liberals are coming to power in these new Asian and African countries, not to speak of Latin America."

"Okay," Quint said. "Drop the other shoe."

Digby looked into his eyes. "Quint, if the commies found Martin Bormann, Hitler's former right hand man, and put over the story that Bormann was trying to set up a new neo-Nazi group, and that the West Germans—and behind them the United States—were supporting him, the fat would be in the fire."

Quint chuckled. "That's quite an *if*."

Bart Digby dropped his bomb. "The evidence is that Martin Bormann, and probably Doktor Stahlecker, are somewhere here in Spain."

Quint stared at him.

The other said emptily, "If so, we've got to get to him first. We've got to get him and either retry him, or, better still, execute the sentence he was given *in absentia*. It's the only way to prove we hate the Nazi dream just as much as anyone else."

After Bart Digby had left, Quint sat for awhile over Fundador and a cup of black coffee. The other had painted an interesting picture, and the American columnist wondered just how much of it was to be completely believed. He couldn't quite swallow Digby's contention that he had resigned from the C.I.A. On the face of it, the man was vitally interested in this possibility of Martin Bormann being in hiding in Spain. And a man without a job doesn't usually involve himself in such poorly remunerative

matters.

Of course, there was also the possibility that Bart Digby had resigned—or been fired, as Mike Woolman had it—from the C.I.A. and was not peddling his services elsewhere. Nobody as yet had mentioned *why* the Central Intelligence Agency and Bartholomew Digby had parted ways. Was it because his superiors had caught him delving into matters of which they didn't approve?

If the story he had told about Martin Bormann was correct, there was still another angle. It wasn't exactly a new idea. In fact, it was sometimes told about Hitler himself. That Hitler had lived, that he had been smuggled out of collapsing Berlin, and by submarine been taken to the Argentine, or some such, where he remained in hiding waiting his chance to regain power. The trouble with that particular bit of fantasy was that immediately before his suicide, Hitler, a badly wounded, mentally shaken man who dragged one foot as he walked, had celebrated his fifty-sixth birthday. Persons who had been present described him as senile, his head and hands shaking continually. Had he escaped, even in this condition, how old would he be in 1968? Seventy-nine years of age. Not exactly the time of life to start regaining an empire. The same applied to Bormann who had probably been somewhere in his forties at the time of his disappearance. He wouldn't be exactly a young man twenty-five years after.

Quint grimaced and finished his double shot of cognac. He considered another. No, foul it! If he was ever going to get any work done, he'd have to get back to the apartment. He hated to work in the afternoon, particularly after he'd had a few drinks, but he had to get cracking.

He paid his bill, and started back to the car. Traffic was lighter, but already beginning to resume volume. He darted a look at his watch. He'd been in the German restaurant talking to Bart Digby for longer than he had thought. He'd have to get a move on, or the whole day would be shot.

It wasn't in the cards. When he got back to the parked Renault, it was to find Mike Woolman leaning against it, obviously waiting for him.

Quint said, "Gangway, Buster. I haven't any time for the likes of you. This downtrodden proletarian has to get back to the sweatshop and get exploited by the bloodsucking capitalists."

"Put a good title on that," Mike said, "and think up a snappy ending, and you could sell it. What'd you find out?"

Quint looked at him warily. "What'd I find out about what?"

Mike sighed. He pulled the morning edition of the Madrid *Pueblo* from his jacket pocket and slapped it smartly against his knee. "Look," he said, "come on up to Chicote's, and I'll buy you a drink."

"Never touch the stuff," Quint told him. "I've got to get back and do some work."

"I'll tell you what I know, if you tell me what you know," Mike said.

Quint looked at him sourly. "If my poor sainted mother knew I hung around with bad influences like you... okay, let's go."

Chicote's, one of the half dozen most famed bars in the world, is located at No. 12, Jose Antonio, about a hundred yards up the street from where Quint had parked. They made their way in that direction.

Something there is about a score or so saloons throughout the world that gives them a soul, the very soul of the city in which they dispense the beverage that soothes. Sloppy Joe's in Havana, Pat O'Brien's in New Orleans, Harry's in Venice, the Raffles Bar in Singapore, the Crystal in Tombstone, McSorley's in New York. Each of these *are* the cities in which they exist. Pat O'Brien's is New Orleans; Harry's New York Bar, in Paris, *is* the Paris of the expatriate American. Just as Dean's in Tangier, *was* Tangier, and the city and Dean's died together, it was never the same after the old bartender passed away.

So it is that Chicote's is Madrid's bar. Internationally famed, wherever the drinking set bend elbows. And what made it so? The endless publicity given gratis by such as Papa Hemingway in his stories? The personality of the original Chicote himself? The fact that the place is the hangout of the most beautiful whores in Spain? The fabulous liquor museum in the basement—the largest collection of alcoholic drinks in the world? Perhaps all of these things.

Be that as it may, when Quint Jones and Mike Woolman pushed their way through the door, emerging from the white glare of the afternoon sun of Spain into the dim cool of the large bar, it wasn't in search of any of the

establishment's claims to fame other than its liquor. Spanish laws are lax, if not non-existent, when it comes to beverages, but there is no record of a customer ever complaining of cut whisky, or a phoned up vintage date on his wine bottle in Chicote's.

Mike darted a nervous glance around the Spanish equivalent of a cocktail lounge, which made up the first large room as you entered from the street. The long bar was beyond. Aside from half a dozen lackadaisical tarts, sitting alone at their tables, empty coffee cups before them and awaiting a trade that seldom developed this time of day, the lounge was empty.

Mike banged himself with his paper and said, "Let's get in a corner here. Some of the bartenders speak English."

They found a table, Quint ordered Fundador and Mike, Veterano cognac.

Quint grunted at the other's choice of brandy. "That stuff's too sweet," he said, as the waiter poured the double shot.

"Thank God you don't have to drink it," Mike said.

When the waiter was gone, Quint sipped his drink and said, "Okay. You tell yours first."

The newsman said, "Nothing startling but it backs some of the possibilities I brought up this morning. You know Albrecht Stroehlein, the plump, weepy eyed ex-Gestapo lad who claims he used to be buddy-buddy with Hitler back in the old beerhall days."

"So?"

"So, I've been checking on him. Up until a couple of months ago he was on his uppers. Worked for a while as a waiter on the Costa del Sol, begged handouts from more prosperous Nazi refugees, that sort of thing. But then he went up to Berlin."

"Berlin!" Quint said. "I thought he was wanted for war crimes."

"Evidently, somebody's had a change of mind. When he returned, he got himself nicely outfitted, rented a swank apartment, started eating in

Horcher's. That sort of thing."

Quint said, "West Berlin, or East Berlin?"

Mike thought about that, rubbing the bottom of his chin nervously. "I wouldn't know. Maybe I can find out. Actually, Berlin is the big clearing house for European espionage these days."

Quint said, "Listen, is it possible that Stroehlein knew personally such bigwigs as Martin Bormann, Heinrich Mueller, Doktor Stahlecker? Knew them well enough so that if he saw one of them today, he'd recognize him?"

Mike Woolman's eyes went empty. He picked up his drink and tossed it back. "Uh huh," he said. "It's most likely. Start talking, friend."

"I can't. I promised it was off the record. But I can tell you this. Ronald Brett-Home talked Marty and Ferd Dempsey into throwing that party with Ferencsik as guest of honor. He also got them to spread the word that it was open house—everybody welcome. But none of those secret agents you mentioned this morning were invited. They all crashed. They all took advantage of the open house deal."

Quint finished his own drink and made circular motions over his glass to the waiter, in the way of ordering a couple more of the same. He went on, "Another thing. You're possibly right about our sneaky friend Joe Garcia. He came up to the place not long after you left, and hinted around that it would be best if I watched myself. That if I didn't keep my nose clean I might be bounced out of Spain."

"Uh huh," Mike said. "But back to this Martin Bormann and the other missing Nazis."

"Can't. Off the record."

"Look here, Quint, damn it, what did Bartholomew Digby tell you at lunch?"

"How'd you know I had lunch with Digby?"

Mike Woolman grinned nastily at him, while the waiter filled up their glasses. When that worthy was gone, he said, "I located your leak at the

Embassy."

"What are you talking about?" Quint growled.

"You know what I'm talking about: Ester. You bewitched the poor girl with your cheap gigolo charm and whenever you want some inside information, like where does C.I.A. man Bartholomew Digby usually eat his lunch, she finds out for you." Mike Woolman shook his finger. "Very sneaky, my friend. And very un-American."

Quint grunted. "Evidently, Ester *is* springing leaks in all directions these days, if you've got to her too. Anyway, Digby made me promise to keep our discussion under the hat."

"And you agreed," Mike said disgustedly. "You bastard, I think you did it on purpose. You're in no hurry for your material. You can let it accumulate for months before you use it. But I've got to be in a continual hurry, trying to get a beat before one of the other agencies gets it first."

Quint grinned at him. "I gave you all I have that I'm not honor bound to keep secret. What else have you got?"

Mike came to his feet, disgusted. "I ought to tell you to get lost, but there's one other item. Remember I said the local police seemed to be holding the lid on something? Something the Brett-Home murder seemed to be connected with?"

"Yeah."

"Well, it seems the tourist bureau is on their necks. Tourism is currently Spam's biggest source of hard currency. If anything happened to keep the hordes of visitors out of the country, Franco's new economic plans would fall flat as the Big Leap Forward in China. They simply can't let anything get into the news that would scare tourists away."

"Come on, come on. Drop the other shoe."

Mike said, "There's been a wave of Jack the Ripper type murders in Madrid for the past six months and more. Probably quite a bit more. Some monster is loose."

## *Chapter Four*

After Mike had gone, Quint sat for a time, finishing his drink. He'd tried to get the newsman to stay on and bat the breeze some more, but Mike had some sort of deadline to meet.

Ordinarily Quint wasn't much of one to drink alone, and he liked the other's companionship and knew that Mike liked his. As a matter of fact, Mike was envious of what must of looked to him like an easy way of making a living, and a good living at that, but it wasn't a spiteful envy. They were as good friends as Quint ever became friends with anyone.

He thought about that. There were friends and friends. There was probably no one in the foreign colony of Madrid with more surface friends than Quentin Jones. People like Martha Dempsey, who called him one of her special boy friends. People like Joe Garcia, who could be called upon to do the minor favors. People like Dave Shepherd, the expatriate American homosexual who lived in Spain because they were more tolerant of his breed than at home.

But how many friends did he have who'd be there in the clutch?

He waved to the waiter for a refill.

How many? Probably Mike was the nearest thing to it. All his alleged charm didn't buy him loyalty in the clutch, loyalty when all the chips were down.

He took up his new drink. Hell, face it, he wasn't going to get any work done today. It was already well past five o'clock, and he'd had too many drinks. He should have known better than to start before lunch. Ordinarily, he never drank until afternoon. How'd he get started?

Oh, yeah. That scuffle with the damned Spanish detective. It had unnerved him, and he'd taken a shot of cognac. Foul it, he'd never get back to work today.

He grunted in self-deprecation. Today? If he didn't look out, he'd wind up on one of his three day binges and louse up the whole week. Steve Black, his agent, would hit the roof. He had his work cut out, keeping Quint on the mark.

Quint grunted, remembering the last time. Afterward Steve had insisted that he do up about a dozen columns, timeless columns that could be slipped in upon emergency. Bits that had nothing to do with current events but dwelt on the American Civil War, changing fashion, eating habits throughout the world, or some such.

So now Steve had the dozen columns on hand, just in case. So if Quint went on a bender, the cash customers wouldn't complain as they had in the past. Quint's column always came through, be he drunk or sober.

The waiter filled his glass without needing to be asked.

Quint sent his eyes around the room. One of the tarts across from him was trying to catch his eye. She must have been a newcomer. All the old hands knew Quint wasn't a John. He grunted cynically. They probably all figured he was queer. In actuality, the very thought of bought love turned his stomach. He wasn't morally opposed to prostitution. It was just not for him.

So far as the morality of it was concerned, he was of the opinion that the world we live in was such that there was a need for women who sold that which ideally should only be given. Given such a requirement, and if professional weren't provided, then amateurs or, even worse, rape victims, would fill the need.

Foul It! He ought to get back to the apartment and try to concentrate on work. This thing developing might put him in a position to do some really revealing columns. He was in on what might turn into a world scandal, and in on the very bottom floor. Didn't he have any newspaperman's instinct?

He grunted sarcastically. As a matter of fact, he didn't. He didn't give a damn about newswork. It was just a job, writing this column of his. A job that he had *needed*, but didn't particularly *want*. He had wanted to do something significant. Write a novel or collection of essays that mattered.

He dragged his mind back to Mike Woolman and the case. Let's think about that for awhile, damn it. Let's think about that.

Only parts of it made sense. It tied in with the Cold War. An after-effect of the Second World War. Some of the old Nazi team had died in action, some had committed suicide like Hitler, Goebbels, and Himmler, some



had been hung, like Jodl and Ribbentrop, some had been imprisoned, like Hess. Some had been turned scott free like Von Papen, Schacht, and, after a token prison term, Krupp. Others had skipped the country and remained in safety—for a time—like Eichmann. And some had disappeared, like Bormann, Mueller and this Doktor Stahlecker, the last of whom he had never heard of before, but who was evidently one of Hitler's closest.

There was something cynically amusing about these Nazi greats of yesteryear, coming up now to haunt their conquerors. Martin Bormann, who had always been more hated by his fellow associates of Hitler, than he had been known to the West, was now in a position to wreak more evil upon the world than he had in his role as Nazi power behind the throne.

So East and West had their agents in Madrid, looking for the elusive Martin Bormann. And something had been expected to happen there at the Dempsey party. What? Quint grunted. While he hadn't noticed, the knowledgeable waiter had brought the Fundador bottle and left it at the American's elbow.

Quint didn't like that. What did the sonofabitch think he was, some drunk? Hell, he'd just had enough to get his mind working clearly. Let's get back to the problem. With luck, he might figure it all out. He chuckled to himself, even as he poured another quick one. Foul it, but that'd be something. He'd wrap it all up and present the whole thing to good old Mike. Best pal he had in Madrid. Only pal.

He'd wrap it all up and give it to Mike and Mike would have a scoop. Ooops. That wasn't the word. Those in the know never called it a scoop. They called it a beat. They said scoop only in the movies. If you knew what it was all about, you called it a beat.

He poured another slug. Most people couldn't drink this much without getting stoned. They didn't have the practice. Back in the States you had to be a millionaire to be able to afford to get the practice. In Spain where you could buy top liquor for less than a dollar a bottle, any American could afford to get plenty of practice.

Not that that was why Quint Jones was in Spain. Hell no. Back in the old days, maybe, he'd live in places like Spain and Mexico and Tangier, and Greece, because living was cheap and drinking was cheap, and making a living was hard if you were in the writing game—or wanted to be. But that wasn't the way it was now. Hell, Quentin Jones could walk

right into the Club 21, or wherever, and order until dawn and it wouldn't make a dent in his bank account.

In fact, he didn't know what the hell he wanted with all the money. He sure as hell didn't spend it. Especially since over here he didn't even have to pay income taxes. Hell, he saved more on income taxes than he used to have as income.

That was the trouble. Well, one of the troubles. Now he had all the scratch in the world and what did he do with it? He sat on it. That's what he did. Kept it in the bank. He didn't need a lot of money. His tastes didn't run to big cars, or estates in Florida, or a yacht, or whatever it was you were supposed to spend your money on when you finally had it made. All he wanted was to kind of take it easy and not have to worry about where the next meal was coming from, and be able to observe the world and what was going on, and all.

But, he'd be damned if he liked this deal he'd got himself into. Being a wise guy on a three times a week assembly line basis. He hadn't been able to make the grade doing the sort of stuff he wanted to do, so he wound up being bitch-clever in a column. Quentin Jones, the poor man's Will Rogers, the hip generation's Mark Twain—or something like that.

Damn it, he had to think about this big deal so he could wrap it all up and hand it over to good old Mike so he'd have a scoop. Ooops, a beat.

There was only one thing that didn't ring true. So great Brett-Home set it all up so that something was going to happen at that party. What was going to happen? What the hell, probably Martin Bormann was going to turn up, and somebody there would recognize him from the old days.

But why was that feisty Hungarian Ferencsik necessary to the scheme? Answer me that, foul it. He poured another hooker of Fundador. The bottle was getting low, and he considered the fact owlshly. That lousy waiter must have left him a half full bottle.

Somewhere here the tide ebbed out.

*The creature followed him. Stalked him, might be the better word.*

*Through the narrow streets of old Madrid. To wait in a doorway, inconspicuously, while the quarry stumbled into still another tasca or bodega. To wait, although not with patience. Its eyes were empty, as usually only the eyes of the dead can be empty, the pupils, once perhaps gray or green, were now hardly distinguishable from the white.*

*When there were no other pedestrians near enough to hear, it allowed itself to mewl its discomfort. The creature didn't like to be out on the streets amongst so many. Deep within, as all its feelings were deep within, it was afraid of humanity in the mass.*

*It couldn't understand why the master had sent him to follow after this lurching, stumbling one, who kept himself in the most crowded streets of the city.*

When the tide flooded in again, Quint vaguely became aware of a voice across from him. He shook his head, and automatically reached for a glass. But it was tomato juice, and he put it down in disgust.

The voice was saying, "Quentin, you simply must eat more. You must get something into your stomach."

He looked up at the impossibly blonde hair, shook his head again and stared into the improbably blue eyes. He said accusingly, "Marylyn, what in hell is a nice girl like you doing in Chicote's?"

"Please don't swear, Quentin. I'm... I'm not used to it. This isn't Chicote's. Don't you remember? I saw you on the street, from my taxi. You were... distressed."

"Distressed!" He leered at her. "I'm drunk."

He looked about the room in which they were seated. It was a cellar converted into a restaurant. An age old cellar, vaulted and with red walls of small flat bricks, the bricks of a construction period of long ago. He tried to bring his mind to focus. It must be one of the establishments beloved of tourists, which had been built into the old walls of Madrid. Once these cellars had held supplies, spare arms, forage for the horses. Now they were tourist drops.

He finally recognized the place. He'd been here many a time before. If a visiting fireman hit town and was to be in Madrid only a day or two, you brought him here.

"Botin's" he chuckled.

She said anxiously, "You told me that if I insisted you must eat, then what you wanted was roast suckling pig and Valdepenas wine. You said if it was good enough for Papa, it was good enough for you."

It came back to him now. Papa Hemingway's favorite restaurant in Madrid. The last scene in Papa's first best seller was laid here in Botin's. Quint seemed to be on a Hemingway kick, tonight. Get drunk in Chicote's and then eat at Botin's, both Hemingway favorites.

Before him was a quarter of a roast suckling pig. He had the full left ham. Enough meat for three people. He never had been able to figure out why the management served such large portions. Right now food looked horrible to him.

Marylyn Worth was saying, a scolding in her voice, "You said the best thing to sober up on was roast fat pork."

His mind was clearing by the minutes, but he could use a drink. He growled, "Where's the Valdepenas?"

She said defiantly, "I ordered tomatoe juice instead."

"Oh, great. Listen, why did you bother to take charge at all? I'm all right."

She said, in a gush, "Oh, Quentin. You're such a potentially *wonderful* person. And... and all you're doing is throwing yourself away."

He grunted self deprecation, and poked at the meat before him as though with sour fascination, and as though he didn't quite understand what it was for. Certainly he couldn't be expected to *eat* it.

"Potentially wonderful, eh? Why potentially? I thought you loved me just the way I am, pet. How do you mean, throwing myself away? I haven't any responsibilities, no dependents. What difference is it if I hang one on every once in awhile?" He felt like a fool, hearing his own words.

She leaned forward and put a hand on his arm, and squeezed, as though in attempt to force her opinions upon him. Her hand was startlingly strong. "Quentin. You don't know yourself. You refuse to see yourself. Admit yourself. You're one of the great ones. You have dynamic. You are one of those born to lead. A few minutes of your talk, and just anyone at all is anxious to follow. But you waste it all. You throw it away. You spend your time with nothing people like the Dempseys, like that hard drinking newspaper friend of yours, like misfits such as Dave Shepherd. Like all of the Madrid expatriate set..."

"For a teacher, your syntax is lousy," Quint grumbled. He picked at the tiny ham. The crisp skin was excellent, in spite of his present aversion to food. He motioned to a nearby waiter and when that worthy approached, said, "*Vino Unto*."

Marylyn Worth set her lips.

He looked at her. "Don't let it get you. I'm over the hump. A glass of wine now will help me sober up. What's wrong with my life? I don't hurt anybody. My columns are popular, people like to read them. I entertain. What the hell do you want me to do, become active in the S.P.C.A. or something?"

Her voice was urgent. "Quentin, I don't think you realize your own capabilities. Why, you're rapidly becoming the most popular political columnist in the English language."

"I'm not a political columnist," he growled, uncomfortably. "I'm not any kind of specialist. I comment on political matters from time to time, but the next day it might be Hollywood, or French food, or the population explosion."

"That's what I mean," she pled. "You're a genius of wit and satire, of tongue-in-cheek cynicism. Why, back in the States people can hardly wait for their paper to come out. They turn to you instead..."

"Instead of the comics and sports page?" Quint grunted. "Don't be silly."

"Oh, I don't mean the idiot level reader. I mean anybody who thinks at all. You're everything that Will Rogers was and more. He was too frothy, too on the surface. But, Quentin, don't you see? Most of the time you throw away the real you. Why do you ever stoop to write about Sophia

Lollabrigida, or whatever the name of that Italian actress with the big..." She stopped and flushed.

"Mammary glands," Quint laughed. He took a bite of the pork and a chunk of the heavy Spanish bread. It tasted good. He took a gulp of the Valdepenas, and appreciated its tart flavor. He thought for a moment before saying. "She's a nice girl. A darn good egg. Everybody in the industry likes her. Most people in films are twitches at best, bastards on an average. She's folks and I said so. Met her at a party once in Torremolinos."

"Yes," she said, still crusader-like. "But it isn't *you*. You wouldn't expect, well, Thomas Jefferson, or Benjamin Franklin, or, well, Thomas Paine, to spend their efforts on such piddling matters."

"All right, pet," Quint sighed. "Let's turn it off for awhile. I'm not particularly interested in setting the world afire."

"What *are* you interested in?" she said, heatedly. He scowled at her, and took another bite of the pig. He chewed and thought about it. "I don't know," he said finally.

She sat back, as though disgusted with him. Quint shrugged. His stomach was taking the food better than he had expected. Given luck, there wouldn't be much of a hangover in the morning and possibly he'd be able to get back to his work. That thought brought things back to him.

He said, out of a clear sky, "Pet, what were you doing at the party last night?"

"Why... I..."

It occurred to him only then, that perhaps the girl had been there because she thought that possibly he was going to attend. It was the one thing about Marylyn Worth that irritated him. She lacked sophistication beyond belief. She simply couldn't dissimulate even to the point demanded by every day social intercourse. The first time he had met her, possibly six months or so ago, she had asked him for his autograph. For a gag, he had written a long flowery passage working in her name and his appreciation of her understanding, and then had signed it with a great flourish. Weeks later, somebody who had been in her apartment mentioned that she had framed the thing and had it hanging on the wall. And from then on,

Marylyn Worth, schoolteacher from Border, Nebraska, now teaching science at the local American school for dependents of U.S. Air Force personnel assigned to Spain, made herself as available as a teenage highschool sophomore might have for the school football hero of the senior class. Quint liked to do his own pursuing.

He said now, hurriedly, "What I meant was, the Dempseys went out of their way to let it be known the party was open house. I just wondered if you drifted in, under those circumstances, or if they had actually invited you."

She flushed red.

He thought inwardly, "*For crissake, didn't anybody come to that party because they were invited, except Ferencsik and me?*"

She said, in embarrassment, "I read about it in the *Guidepost*, about everyone in the foreign colony being welcome. And, well, Nicolas Ferencsik has always been rather a hero to me."

"Oh?" Evidently, he had been taking on airs, thinking the girl had come in hopes of seeing Quint there. "As a scientist or as an advocate of One World government?"

"Both," she said.

"Well, so our Hungarian's got a follower. All he needs is two billion more people, and that World Government of his will become reality. But what I want to know is, why should every cloak and dagger man in this part of Europe be interested in Ferencsik?"

She stared at him.

He explained to her the presence of the various operatives, and the fact that Ronald Brett-Home had evidently set up the whole situation. He didn't mention the theory that Bormann or any of the other missing Nazis might be hiding out in Spain. It wasn't that he didn't trust her with the information. It was just that he realized that the fewer persons in on a secret the better chance it had of not becoming open rumor. It wouldn't be fair to Mike Woolman to let his potential story get picked up by some rival newsman, by way of gossip that Quint started.

"You knew Ronald, didn't you?"

"Why, yes. He wasn't very much of a gentleman."

"Ronald? Good grief, pet, you can't be any more of a gentleman than Ronald Brett-Home. Old school tie, all that claptrap. Eton, Oxford, the King's service, a good regiment, what else do you want?"

He thought he was being obviously sarcastic, but she answered in all honesty, her voice stilted. "I was alone with him at a party once, and he tried to... to spoon with me."

He looked at her in wonder. "*Spoon* with you?"

"He... he kissed me and tried to . . ." She broke it off, flushed still deeper and said, "He wanted to spoon, and I had to slap his face."

Quint took another sip of his wine, even as he stared at her over the glass rim. Remembering the strength of her hand when she had squeezed his arm a few minutes earlier, he muttered, "I'll bet you nearly broke the poor guy's neck."

She remained in embarrassed silence.

He had a last bite of the roast pork and pushed the plate away, feeling considerably better. There's nothing like fat pork and bread to kill an edge. Aside from being a little wobbly, it was as though he had never been tight.

He said, "But I kissed you last night. Was it only last night? It seems like a week ago, so much has happened."

She looked down at her hands, which were clasped and sitting on the table now. "That was different," she said lowly.

He knew better than to ask her to develop on that question, and looked about for something to which to switch the subject. He said, "You're more up on the science bit than I am. What's Ferencsik's special claim to fame?"

"Oh, everybody knows of Nicolas Ferencsik. He's absolutely most prominent in his field."

"Yeah, but I'm ignorant All I know about him I read in *Time* or *Newsweek* in the Science or Medicine sections. He wins the Nobel prize,



he lectures at Johns Hopkins, he's lauded by the Mayo Clinic people."

"Well, he transplants organs. His successes have been startling."

Quint was impatient. "But everybody's been getting into that act lately. I even read about a Philadelphia dentist whose been transplanting teeth ever since 1959."

"Doctor Mezrow?" she nodded.

"He takes a healthy tooth from someone whose mouth is too small to hold the usual quota and needs an extraction, and transplants it into the mouth of someone who's had an extraction."

Marylyn nodded. "But teeth are simple, compared with organs. Nicolas Ferencsik has been successful in transplanting, first in animals, and now in human beings, just about every organ in the body. Oh, others have done it too. American doctors have been successful in taking a diseased kidney from one person, and replacing it with a healthy kidney from another person. It works quite often between identical twins, but only in a few instances otherwise. You see, Quentin, the body has an... well, instinctive tendency to reject any foreign tissue that's been grafted into it, unless it's from an identical twin. But Ferencsik has startled the world by combating this body instinct. He utilizes azathioprine, a new immunity suppressor, actinomycin C, an antibiotic which is sometimes used against cancer, a cortisone-type hormone, heart stimulants, diuretics, and so forth. And he's been successful in practically rebuilding people hurt in accidents. Of course, in the Iron Curtain countries, especially Russia where he did a lot of his work, they've gone further than we have in establishing banks of not just blood but hearts, kidneys, livers and other organs as well."

"You're getting beyond my depth," Quint said. "At least beyond my depth with my head feeling the way it does now. However, I picked up the idea recently that he's been able to even transplant brains. At least on an anthropoid ape level."

She frowned, as though that went beyond either her belief, or at least her approval, but she said, "Yes, you mentioned that the other night."

A new party was descending the brick steps which led down to the cellars from the restaurant proper on the ground level. There were four of them, all men, and one of the four was Bart Digby. Quint hoped the other

wouldn't recognize him, and then realized there was fat chance of that. The alleged former C.I.A. man's eyes swept the ten or fifteen tables of the cellar dining rooms with a professional glance, landing on Quint immediately.

When the party had been seated by the captain, Digby evidently excused himself and came toward Quint and Marylyn Worth.

Quint came to his feet, without over-much trouble, and made introductions, which were routinely responded to, including an appreciative laying-on-of-eyes by Bart of Marylyn.

Without invitation, Digby took an empty chair and said to Quint, "Look, I wanted to talk to you some more." His eyes went back to Marylyn.

Quint said, wearily, "Miss Worth is a teacher out at the Air Force school. She comes from Nebraska and is very sincere and probably very patriotic and believes in true values and things like that which I don't understand. What her security rating is with the F.B.I., I don't know, but I suspect you can talk in front of her at least as freely as you can in front of me. And besides, I've got a hangover, confound it. I would have said damn it, instead of confound it, but Miss Worth forbids me to swear."

Digby looked at him. "Are you swacked?"

"Miss Worth calls it *under the influence*," Quint said. "The answer is, yes. Mildly. I'm almost over it."

"You must have kept going since I saw you at lunch," Bart Digby growled unhappily. "Look, I want to talk to you some more. But it'll keep until tomorrow."

"About what?" Quint said.

Bart shot another look at Marylyn.

Quint said, "Oh, for crissake..."

Digby said, "Remember my mentioning Bormann, Mueller and Doktor Stahlecker this morning?"

"Yeah."

"Well, I've done some backchecking on this Doktor Stahlecker who was evidently one of Hitler's most fervent from way back when the Nazi party was first getting organized. Remember when the German generals tried to knock him off, planted a bomb in his bunker when he was having a staff meeting?"

"Yeah, Along in 1944. Half the general staff was in on it, even Rommel."

"That's right. Well, it was our friend Doktor Stahlecker who kept Hitler alive at that point. He was blown half to pieces, but the good doctor patched him up."

Quint was irritated. He wasn't up to much in the way of thinking right at this point. "So," he said.

"So, it seems that Doktor Stahlecker was the top authority in Germany at that time on such items as organ transplants, grafting of limbs, and such like. There evidently is some evidence that one of Hitler's arms was blown completely off, but Doktor Stahlecker was able to sew it back on. It's only been in the past year or so that American doctors have been up to that sort of work."

Quint Jones looked at him blankly. "Organ transplants? That's Nicolas Ferencsik's line."

Digby grunted exasperation. "You begin to get the message, eh? Well, chew on this for awhile. Doktor Stahlecker was also one of the famed German doctors who butchered thousands of Jews, gypsies, Poles and Russian prisoners in the name of scientific research. The good doctor seemed interested in such supposed scientific items as how long could a woman live when her time for delivery was upon her and you tied her legs together, and how long could a Jew live with his skin completely flayed from his body? Or, how long could a man live in below zero water?"

Quint shot a look at Marylyn who seemed to have frozen in horror. He said, "Take it easy, Bart."

Bart Digby said, "Well, at any rate, of all the Nazis still at large, Doktor Stahlecker is one of those most wanted. There's a rope waiting for the good doctor in just about any country that participated in World War Two."

"What's the connection with Professor Ferencsik?" Quint said.

The former C.I.A. man came to his feet. "That's what I'd like to know," he said. "I'll talk to you about it in the morning." He looked at Marylyn. "Where've I seen you before?" he asked in puzzlement.

"At a police line-up in Chicago, probably," Quint growled at him. "Good grief, get lost, Bart. Miss Worth was at the party last night. That's where you saw her."

## *Chapter Five*

Quint Jones was awakened from no deep dream of peace by the brutal ringing of the phone next to his bed. He tried manfully to ignore it. It wasn't to be ignored.

He grabbed it and snarled, "Yes?"

Mike Woolman said cheerfully, "Come on, come on. I can tell from your voice, you're not out of bed. It's eleven o'clock."

Quint grumbled, "It got very drunk out last night."

"Where's all that *gung ho* energy you had yesterday? All that impressive column writing ambition?"

"Shut up," Quint said. "What'd you want?"

"Look Quint, this case is pyramiding. Rumors are beginning to get around amongst the boys. I got a call from Paris headquarters of World Wide Press. They're thinking of sending a special man down here to handle the story."

That wasn't so good from Mike's viewpoint. He ought to be able to wrap a story up on his own, not depend on outsiders to come in and do his work for him when it got important.

Quint said, "So?"

"So, what's the dope that you have that you wouldn't tell me yesterday?"

Maybe you can reword it a little so you won't be betraying any confidence."

Quint was silent, scowling to himself. He shook his head in an attempt to achieve complete clarity.

Mike said urgently, "Especially, what's the jazz about Martin Bormann and Doktor Stahlecker?"

The columnist shifted in his bed, uncomfortably. "Well, I was told a bit more about this Doc Stahlecker last night. It seems as if this is the doctor who patched Hitler up when he was blown to smithereens by the German generals in 1944. Sewed an arm on him and that sort of thing."

Mike said nothing. Obviously digesting.

Quint said impatiently. "Evidently Doktor Stahlecker is almost as big an authority on organ transplants and such as Professor Ferencsik. What do I have to do, draw you a blueprint?"

Mike said, "Jesus."

Quint said sarcastically, "May I suggest you get your fanny over to wherever it is Nicolas Ferencsik is staying and interview him on the question of just why he's come to Spain, of all places?"

Mike grunted, "Uh huh. Swell."

"Well, what's more obvious?"

"Nothing, except Ferencsik absolutely refuses to see all reporters."

"Pull some wires. Get hold of Joe Garcia or somebody and make some hints. Put some pressure to bear on the guy. Lean on him. He obviously knows plenty."

The reporter said, "I'll let you in on a secret, chum. Nobody, but nobody, twists the arm of a guy with as big a name as Nobel Prize winning Professor Ferencsik. This is a nasty world we live in, but not even here in Spain would the public allow the authorities to give Nicolas Ferencsik a hard time. It'd be like lowering the boom on Einstein, or Albert Schweitzer. Any more bright ideas?"

Quint Jones scratched himself unhappily through his pajamas. His mouth tasted like last week's crop of maggots. He said, "Listen, where is Ferencsik staying?"

"What do you mean, where is he staying? He's staying at the Dempsey's, of course."

"The *Dempsey's*. You mean Marty and Ferd's? A man with an international name like that!"

"Friend, you must have come in late. How'd you think Marty and Ferd ever got him to come to a party at their place? He's living with them. He's old family friends of Marty's people. Her old man, way back before the war, before Hungary went commie, financed some deal of Nicolas Ferencsik before he got famous. Staked him to a lot of dough for research materials and all. He's got a soft spot for Marty, or something. Knew her when she was a girl."

Quint pursed his lips, as though to whistle. He said, "Okay, Mike, I'll see what I can do. Call you back later."

Mike Woolman sneered. "Oh, you think you can get in to see him, where I can't, hey? Let me tell you friend, when Ferencsik says he won't see reporters, believe me, he won't see reporters."

"That's because you reporters don't bathe, don't gargle your throats in the morning and are illiterate clods." Quint told him earnestly. "Now a columnist is something else again."

"Go marry your mother," Mike told him and hung up.

Quint grinned at the phone for a minute before returning it to its place. He grunted and swung his legs over the side of bed and fumbled his feet around for his slippers. They weren't in their usual place. He grunted again and made his way to the kitchen barefooted. At least he didn't have a blockbuster hangover this time. Marylyn Worth must have spotted him right at the crucial time and got him there to Botin's and some food into him.

Nice girl, if she wasn't so square, he told himself as he fished a bitterly cold bottle of coke from his refrigerator. Coffee for others, but the morning after he'd been drinking, it was coke for him. As a matter of fact, he had

read somewhere, in a consumer's union report, or something, that there was three and half times as much caffeine in a bottle of coke as there was in a cup of coffee. Be that as it may, it settled his stomach and gave him a lift.

He finished the coke and started breakfast proper a-going. That was another bit of wisdom he'd accumulated over the years. To get over a binge, get hot food into your stomach as soon as possible. Once you've been able to hold two hot meals down, the hangover is through.

When he'd forced down two eggs and some Spanish bacon—which he despised—along with some toast, he felt moderately better. Bacon, he remembered all over again, was the one thing he wished he could get into the American PX for. Except for the Danes and British, the Europeans didn't have the word on bacon.

Breakfast safely down, he went into the bathroom to shower, shave and brush his teeth. He wished the hell he knew more about Nicolas Ferencsik's subject, organ transplants. He wondered if it would be possible—if he was able to get an interview with him at all—to bring Marylyn in on it. As a science teacher, she evidently kept up on all fields, including recent medical developments. He had her phone number out at the base, but, as he recalled, this was first day at school, and he doubted there was any way to get her away before evening.

Thinking of Marylyn brought back her conversation of the evening before. As he dressed, he thought about her. Who was he to call the girl a square?

Now that he thought of it, the very term irritated him. When he was a boy, the word square meant honest, a person of integrity. Now it had come to mean somebody who was stupid, not with it, old fashioned. What had happened to our civilization when a honest man was sneered at?

And maybe she was right about him. By modern criteria, he was a celebrity. He had it made. He earned more money than he knew what to do with. Could travel anywhere he wanted, or live anywhere he wished. He had made it.

Yeah?

He went back to the phone and rang the Dempsey phone number.

A maid answered. "*Digame?*"

"*For favor, senorita, deseo hablar con Senor Dempsey,*" Quint told her.

"*Un momento, por favor.*"

Ferd Dempsey, his voice slurring, was on the line. "Hello, hello, hello. You must be selling something. Nobody I know'd be up this early."

"Ferd," Quint said. "This is Quint Jones."

"Oh yeah, hi Quint. What's the deal? Brother, it was rugged last night. A bunch of us were over the Hilton and guess who turned up? Remember that queer muscle man movie star, was here doing the lead in that show about Cortes and the Aztecs and all? Well, he's back in town. Talmadge. Clark Talmadge. He's going to do another movie with Clara Lucciola that wop star, with old Manny King directing. They were all there, and Bert Fix, the flack and Lonny Bait the photographer. Anyway, we started at the Hilton and then Manny said how about coming up to his place. He had some real Swiss absinthe. The real old stuff. So we took along a couple of bottles to last us till we got there. He's got a hell of a big estate in Mirasierra. Big swimming pool and all. Christ did we laugh. We threw Clark in the pool and then we all stood around the edge and when he tried to get out, we'd give him a drink, but we wouldn't let him out until he could prove he was too swacked to swim. It was a riot. Then about two o'clock in the morning, Marty decided what we needed was a weiner roast, but nobody had any weiners, so we all got back in the cars and..."

Quint listened for awhile, his face expressionless. He could have heard substantially the same report from Ferd Dempsey five days out of seven. Or from Marty, for that matter. Or from four out of five of his Madrid acquaintances.

He said, finally, when the other stopped for breath, "Listen, Ferd. What I wanted to ask you about. Professor Ferencsik is staying with you, right?"

The other's voice went suddenly cautious. "The Professor? Oh, sure. Kind of keeps to himself, but the place is big enough, Lord knows."

"Well, listen, I'd like to talk to him."

There was a silence, then, "Damn it, Quint. He's not giving out any



interviews. He kind of wants to rest, or something. I don't know what he came to Madrid for. Why'd'nt he go to some resort along the sea, or something? You can't rest in Madrid. It's always hopping."

It's not Madrid that's always hopping, Quint protested inwardly, it's the expatriate set, led by the Dempseys.

Quint said, "I'm not just a newspaperman, Ferd. This is a bit above the usual level." He hated himself for trying to pull rank. In fact, he felt like a fool.

Ferd said, unhappily, "Gosh, Quint. There was a *New York Times* man around yesterday. The Professor wouldn't even see him."

Quint said, "I think you've got the wrong idea. I don't want an interview. Tell him I was fascinated by what he said about World Government the other night, and wanted to talk to him about it."

"Oh," Ferd said dubiously.

"At least tell him, and call me back if he wouldn't mind seeing me." Quint hung up.

The return call, and invitation, came within fifteen minutes.

It was Marty who met him at the door of the penthouse. Marty looking distressed as Marty Dempsey always looked in the morning. Marty wearing a housecoat, bearing an enormous highball glass in her hand, and looking every year of her fifty odd years.

"Dahling," she shrilled at him in her whisky tenor. "Whatever are you doing up and around at this time of day, you poor boy?"

"It's practically noon." He gave her a peck on the cheek. "I wanted to see Professor Ferencsik."

"Oh, Uncle Nick. He's an ogre. He won't talk to anyone, dahling. It was all we could do to have him make an appearance at the party. And then he retired to his rooms and sulked before things hardly got going."

"Ferd fixed it up for me," Quint said easily. "What in the world's Professor Ferencsik doing in Madrid, anyway? I'd expect him to wind up at UCLA, teaching. Or in Vienna, or Paris or someplace. Now that he's left Hungary."

Marty took a pull at her glass. "Oh, he came to see Ferd and me," she said archly. "We're old, *old* friends you know." She frowned slightly, as though trying to remember something not especially important. "There was something else he wanted to do here, I don't think I was listening very well. Have a quick one, Quint?"

He shook his head, "Recovering from last night," he told her. "A hair of the dog doesn't do me any good. I either have to take the whole dog, or nothing. And then I've started all over again."

"Poor dahling," she said vaguely, patting the side of his cheek. "I'll take you to Uncle Nick. But don't blame me if he throws you out."

Ferd and Marty had done the Professor well. He had a small suite of his own. Room, bath and a sitting-room study. Possibly a bit on the garish side for a noted medical scientist whose clothes were a touch seedy and worn as though he couldn't care less.

He shook hands hesitantly. "I recall you from the other night, young man," he said. "You didn't seem to have much to say at the time."

Quint Jones liked the quality of the man's handshake and also the quick penetrating manner he had of looking full into your face. It would be difficult to steer too far from the edge of truth with Professor Nicolas Ferencsik. Quint said, "I was listening rather than expressing my own ideas."

"And you found my opinions of interest?"

"I found them all of interest," Quint told him, guardedly. "But one of Marty's cocktail parties was hardly the place to form views of my own."

"Oh, you," Marty giggled. "It *was* quite a soiree, wasn't it?"

The Professor said to her, "Martha, my dear, why don't you leave Mr. Jones and me and let us get to serious discussion? Perhaps we'll join you later."

She fluttered archly, as she went, "Now don't you boys say anything my ears shouldn't hear."

They both looked after her, Quint thinking, *what could it possibly be that Marty's ears haven't heard by this time in life?*

The professor said absently, "When I first met Martha, I thought of her as a child, though I can be only a few years her senior. I am afraid even then that it was difficult for her to take the world seriously."

Quint wanted an opening. He said, making his own voice go musing, "I wonder if she and Ferd aren't doing what a good many of the world's population seems to be. That is, avoiding thinking of the problems that confront us all."

The feisty little Hungarian scientist shot him a quick piercing look. "I have long since come to that conclusion, sir. Won't you have a chair? Take that one there, I can speak for it's comfort. It is so also in my own country. In Budapest, even in intellectual circles, it is all but bad manners to discuss the dangers of nuclear war and the almost certainty of complete destruction of the race if such conflict ever develops."

They both took chairs, and Quint listened to the other as though with fascinated attention.

Ferencsik went on, in his voice an element of passion. "But when I left Hungary and traveled to the West, I was more shocked still. If one is invited to dinner in London and brings up such subjects as the continuing development of international missiles and ever larger H-bombs, it is considered such a *faux pas* as almost to have your hostess order you from her home. I am gratified, Mr. Jones, to have a man of your capabilities express interest in my beliefs in this field."

So the old boy knew of Quint's work as a columnist. He was going to have to make this good, to get past the Hungarian's defenses. If the man was leery of newspapermen, he'd be guarded against Quint. A bit of preliminary discussion was in order.

Quint said, "Frankly, some of the rebuttal at the party also interested me. The fellow named Bart Digby who pointed out the difficulties in ever uniting the world's more than one hundred sovereign governments. Take my own country, the United States. Our earliest tradition was to remain

aloof from foreign affairs. More recently, of course, modern developments have forced our government into world leadership of the West." He twisted his mouth wryly. "What we like to call the free-world, although it includes everything from the absolute monarchy of Saudi-Arabia, to a half dozen South American military dictatorships." He shrugged in deprecation. "But the point is, trying to unite the United States with—well, eventually Russia, would be a hard nut to crack. Offhand, I can't think of a single Senator or Congressman who would vote for such a merger, no matter what the terms."

But Ferencsik was shaking a finger at him negatively and already in some heat. "Your background in the history of your own country is faulty, sir. It was Benjamin Franklin, in the early days of the founding of your republic, who stated that one day he hoped to see every nation of the world represented with a star in the flag of the United States. It was his desire to work into the Constitution a method whereby all nations were free to admission."

That was new to Quint, but it was the sort of thing that Old Ben would have advocated, he had to admit.

Ferencsik went on. "And I quite agree that today few Americans would vote to join a world state, and the same applies to most nations. However, this is a thing that shall come about only when and if the development of affairs *forces* the world into it. If we all, every living member of the race, came to see that it was the only alternative to destruction of us all, then perhaps the steps would be taken."

Quint didn't want to antagonize the man, at least not at this stage of the game, so he pulled in his horns somewhat. He said, turning on the charm gently, knowing better than to arouse the suspicions of the other by being too agreeable, "You were discussing with the Russian, Nuriyev, the need of developing a leader to point out the way, a super-man who..."

But at the mention of the former Soviet hachetman, Professor Ferencsik had made a grimace of distaste. Quint broke off his sentence in the middle and took advantage of the opening. He said, "I noticed the other night that you seemed to take particular exception to his opinions."

The Hungarian flicked a hand in quick disgust. "A butcher. I have met him before. At the war's end, I worked for a time with Russian scientists. We were attempting to rescue from the debacle some of the work of

German researchers and, for that matter, some of the better German scientists themselves."

Quint nodded, trying to look perceptive. "I understand the Americans, of course, did the same thing, in the areas we captured. In view of your own interests in surgery, you must have been particularly anxious to find if Doktor Stahlecker was still alive."

Nicolas Ferencsik began to say, "Yes. One of the reasons..." But then he stopped. His eyes pierced the expression of the American columnist, finding that below the surface which had been meant to be hidden. He came to his feet.

His voice was cold. "I'm afraid, Mr. Jones, that my time is limited."

Quint stood too. He made a gamble, knowing he was doing this wrong even as he spoke. "You don't deny, do you Professor, that you have come to Madrid in an attempt to find the Nazi refugee, Doktor Stahlecker?"

The other was coming to a quick boil, but he snapped, "You are, so I understand, a friend of my host and hostess. I can hardly order you from the house. But I can request that you save me your presence, sir."

Quint flushed, but made one last attempt. "There are some deaths involved in this, Professor, and some mystery that you might help clear up. For instance, does this mean anything to you? It was a note left near Ronald Brett-Home's body. It read: *Why was it necessary to burn H's body?*"

The other hadn't even heard him. Nicolas Ferencsik had spun on his heel and entered his bedroom, closing the door behind him.

At least he hadn't slammed it.

Quint let himself out of the sitting room of the suite, and looked up Marty Dempsey, who was sitting in a sun chair on the terrace and looking vaguely out over the rooftops of Madrid. She was seldom quite completely alive this time of day.

Quint looked at his wristwatch, through force of habit. It was slightly past twelve. "I'll take that drink now," he said. I've just had brought home to me a defect or so in my character."

"There's the makin's, dahling," Marty waved in the general direction of a pushcart bar, on the top of which were several bottles, several glasses and a vacuum bottle of ice cubes. "You didn't talk very long with Uncle Nick."

"Uncle Nick threw me out," Quint said sourly. He poured some bourbon into the bottom of a glass and added an ice cube. There was gingerale and soda available, but one of the few opportunities Quint had these days to drink American whiskey was at the Dempseys, and he considered it a treat to be taken straight. In actuality, he could have afforded it himself, easily enough, but he rebelled against the price in Spain.

Ferd came wandering out, evidently to replenish his glass. He was a square-set man going to pot. In his youth, when he had played college football, he must have been a beautiful specimen. Now he seldom played with anything but bottles and fast cars. The combination had turned out so incompatible that his series of accidents had recently terminated in the revoking of his license by the Spanish authorities.

He said, "Hello, hello, hi, Quint. Come to see the Professor eh? Hey, Marty, where's Uncle Nick?"

"I've already seen him," Quint said. He found a chair and took down half the bourbon. It burned pleasantly. He remembered unhappily that he was lousing up his formula of two hot meals on the stomach after a drinking binge, before you started again.

Marty was looking at Quint. "What do you mean he threw you out, Quint dahling? He seemed perfectly happy about talking to you."

Quint shrugged. "I suppose he was right. I got in to see him under false pretenses. Told him I was interested in his World Government ideas, where actually I wanted to get a line on what it was that Ronald Brett-Home had set up for your party."

Ferd, who had just finished making himself a stiff one at the little bar, turned and grumbled, "Let's don't get into that, damn it. There's been cops all over the place. Asking lousy questions, bothering the maids. Everything. You'd think the guy was killed here."

Marty said, "I'll never forgive Ronald for causing us so much trouble. Oh, yes, I know, dahling, speak only well of the dead. But really, he and his

Gestapo friend might have picked some *other* . . . "

"Who?" Quint snapped.

Marty blinked at him. "What did I say?"

"You said something about Ronald and his Gestapo friend. *What* Gestapo friend?"

She giggled. "Oh, dear, I'd forgotten all about that." She put a finger to her mouth, as though in thought. "I didn't listen very well when Ronald was telling us how it was that the party would be a great success, very controversial, if we'd have Uncle Nick as guest of honor and spread the word it was open house. He said he had cooked something with a friend of his, a former Gestapo man." She looked at Quint archly. "Didn't I tell you it was all cloak and dagger and all that."

Ferd had dropped heavily into one of the deck chairs. "Stroehlein, or something, his name was. Some squarehead name."

Quint's eyes went from Ferd to Marty. "Over the phone you said you'd never heard of Albrecht Stroehlein."

"Oh, did I, dahling? Well, I suppose I'd forgotten his name. I can't remember foreign names. Why don't they all have simple names like Smith and Dempsey and Jones? Do be a dahling and fill my glass. Scotch, with just a teeny weeny soda."

Quint got up and got her drink, his mind racing. So the weepy eyed ex-Nazi, Stroehlein, had been in on Brett-Home's scheme. That would suggest that Stroehlein was working for West Germany, rather than East—always assuming that he was working at his old game of espionage-counter-espionage at all.

He pulled himself to a halt suddenly. The hell with it. A few minutes ago he'd decided the whole thing was out of his realm. It wasn't his business. Let Bart Digby handle it on the international politics level, or Mike Woolman on the news level, but let Quentin Jones leave it lay.

He gave Marty her new drink and said, "I think I'll get on home and see if I can knock out a column."

"See you later, dahling," Marty told him vaguely. Her mind, such as it was, already off on some other tangent.

Ferd waved his glass in Quint's general direction, and honored him with a quatrain from the Rubaiyat:

"Some for the Glories of This World, and some  
Yearn for the Prophet's Paradise to come.  
Ah, take the Cash, and let the Credit go,  
Nor heed the rumble of a distant Drum!"

"Man, you have said it," Quint told him dryly. "So long Marty, thanks for the drink."

## *Chapter Six*

It has been decided by the best authorities that ESP is impossible. That Extra Sensory Perception just doesn't fit into scientific knowledge. That telepathy, clairvoyance, clairaudience, not to speak of telekinesis, psychokinesis and precognition, are beyond the realm of intelligence. However, some of them, at least, work.

Thus it was that when Quint reached for the doorknob of his apartment, he suddenly *knew* there was somebody inside. Somebody who shouldn't be inside. Not a maid, nor some other building employee. Someone who was there doing something inimical to the interests of Quentin Jones.

He froze for a moment, hand on the knob. The other might be armed and Quint Jones didn't think of himself as a hero, dashing in where angels feared to tread.

But in the past two days he'd had enough in the way of frustration that a pressure had built up within. It was as though he welcomed this opportunity to let it out.



He flung the door open and blurred into movement, dashing into his living room, keeping in motion. There was a figure there, bent over the mess of papers, notes and files that he had strewn over the table whilst working.

The figure whirled, caught in the act, and a hand streaked for what was obviously a weapon.

Quint Jones automatically flung into the *Neko achidachin*, cat leg position, both fists clenched, knuckles facing down and held slightly by the side at his waist. Without pause, he screamed, "Zut!" exhaling the entire contents of his lungs, and sprung at the other.

Bart Digby—it was Bart Digby—was startled by the yell, but his hand was still emerging with the gun, even as he attempted to step back to avoid Quint's charge.

Quint banged the edge of his left hand against the former C.I.A. man's right wrist, sending the gun a-spinning. He grabbed the outside of the wrist with his left hand, forcing the arm up high. He pulled the other's arm upward as he brought his left foot directly in front of Digby's right, then pivoted on his left foot to the left, slightly turning his body backward to his left. With the edge of his right hand he slugged the other's left kidney, bringing forth a grunt of agony.

He was now behind Bart Digby. With his right foot he stamped the other's left knee pit, then released his left hand grip and allowed the man to drop to the floor.

Quint leaped back, and went into the *Shi kodachi*, squat position, waiting for the other's action.

Bart Digby looked up at him. "You son of a bitch," he said, "What're you trying to do, kill me?"

Quint relaxed, the heat of the fight leaving him. He twisted his face ruefully. "You shouldn't have grabbed for that gun."

Digby began pushing himself to his feet. "You came in so fast, I didn't know who it was." He felt his kidney, and groaned again. "I took a little karate and kenpo when I was doing my training, but you must've spent years at it, damn it."

Quint said sourly, "Hobby."

"Some hobby," Digby grumbled at him. "Remind me never to go through this routine with you again."

Quint said, "Want a drink?"

"No," Digby growled. He sat himself on the couch, put his two hands into his crew cut hair, and breathed deeply.

Quint went to the bar and poured himself a stiff Fundador brandy. He knocked it back and returned to the other.

"Listen," he said. "What in the hell did you think you were looking for?"

Bart Digby looked up at him defiantly. "I don't know. Evidence."

"Evidence of what, foul it! What could you expect to find?"

Bart said flatly, "We're not getting anywhere fast, with this case. I got an order this morning to check on whether there was any possibility of you having connections with the enemy."

"The enemy?" Quint honestly had no idea what the other man was talking about.

Bart Digby's mouth twitched, not in humor. He said, an element of embarrassment there, "I made a full report on everything I picked up at the party at Dempsey's, including what you said about the commies not being radical enough for you."

Quint rolled his eyes upward. "Oh, Lord, how long."

The C.I.A. man flushed. "A full report is a full report. I made it. This morning they wanted me to check to see if you were working with Nuriyev, or whoever."

"On trying to locate Bormann, eh?"

"Yes."

Quint went back and got himself another drink. "Listen," he said, "And make the fullest report on it you can, to whoever you report to. I've

decided I haven't any interest in this. For a while I was silly enough to get romantic pictures of myself as a star reporter, or something, getting a scoop, I mean a beat. But now I'm over it. Maybe I've dug up an item or two you don't know about. So I'll tell you everything I know, and then, believe me, I'm through with it. I'll find out the finish of the story by reading the newspapers. Assuming it ever gets into the newspapers."

He poured some water into his drink, to stretch it out further, and returned to his chair.

"From all I can see, and I got most of this dope from you, there seems to be a lot of rumors tracing Martin Bormann and Hitler's favorite doctor here to Madrid. If Bormann's here, he's obviously in hiding, his presence known only to fellow Nazi refugees and their friends. Doktor Stahlecker would be such a one. Great. Nicolas Ferencsik comes to Madrid looking for Doktor Stahlecker..."

Digby leaned forward, "You're sure of that, or just guessing?"

"Just guessing, just as Brett-Home and you and Albrecht Stroehlein were just guessing. However, all the evidence supports it. Ferencsik has two great interests in life, World Government and organ transplanting and related surgery. Doktor Stahlecker was tops in that field in Germany. Professor Ferencsik let drop this morning that he had once searched for Stahlecker immediately after the collapse of Berlin to the Red Army."

Quint took another swallow of the drink. The nervousness which usually followed his being in physical combat was rapidly disappearing. "All right. There it is. That's all I know. And I don't want to know any more. I haven't any contacts with anybody. Nuriyev or anyone else. Above all, I don't work for the communists. I don't think I even know any communists here in Madrid. So will you get out of my hair now?"

Bartholomew Digby came to his feet. He ran a hand back through his crew cut. "I don't know whether to believe you or not," he grumbled. "Maybe I owe you an apology."

"Just beat it," Quint sighed. "And take your cloaks and daggers and all along. If anybody else mentions Martin Bormann to me, I'm going to slug him. And for the next month or two my column is going to consist of pieces on such problems as the Tootsie Roll isn't as large as it used to be, which is a threat to the American way of Life."

"Okay, so long," Digby said, heading for the door.

"So long," Quint said.

When the other was gone, Quint picked up one of his pipes from the floor. Evidently in the tussle one of them had jarred the table and sent the briar a rolling. He absently stuffed it full of Edgeworth even while he stared down at his typewriter. He simply had to get to work.

His eyes fell on the notes about the American dependence on the PX in Europe. Toynbee had written something to the effect that it was one of the strongest items of anti-Americanism abroad. The fact that everywhere American government employees went, it was assumed that the local products were so inferior that a PX was established to allow American personnel to buy State-side products at tax-free prices. Our supposed allies didn't like it. The commies held it up as an example of Yankee arrogance.

Quint grunted and looked down at his can of Edgeworth. Frankly, it had come from the PX. An Air Force friend had bought it for him, which was strictly illegal, both from the Spanish and American viewpoint. The fact was, Quint hated Spanish pipe tobacco.

How could he bitch about the American dependence on the PX, when he was tarred with the same brush?

In irritation he went over to the window and stared down on Calle General Peron. He considered going down to the bodega and having a beer and a few tapas. Some boiled shrimp, for instance, would go good at this...

Something was wrong on the street below. He scowled, and then it came to him. His little Renault wasn't parked in its customary place. He hadn't even looked this morning, when he had gone to the Dempsey's. Their building was near enough his own that he had walked, in hopes that the exercise would kill the remaining of his hangover. Then it came to him. He had left the car downtown, parked near Chicote's, when he and Mike Woolman had gone into the famed bar for a drink. He'd got swacked in Chicote's and had evidently walked from there until Marylyn had picked him up.

So the car was still parked on the main drag. That settled it. He picked up his beret, pulled it over his head and made for the door. He'd better

pick up the vehicle soon or he'd have at least a traffic ticket.

Besides, any excuse would do, to get away from that typewriter.

He took the streetcar down Generalissimo Franco to Plaza Cibeles, and walked up Alcala from there. He could see the small Renault from a distance. Somebody had the gall to be leaning on it. When he got closer, he saw who it was. Mike Woolman, absently banging away at his leg with a newspaper.

Quint said to him, "Oh, no."

"Oh, yes." Mike grinned.

Quint said, "This was exactly the way I found you twenty-four hours ago. You been here all night?"

Mike grinned "As a matter of fact, I was just having a quick one in the British American club. I looked out the window and saw you beating your way up the street, so I came on out."

Quint was fishing his keys from his pocket. "Well, you might as well go back up to the club, I'm heading home."

"I wanted to talk to you."

"I know. But I've had it. Like I just told Bart Digby; from now on, count me out of this."

Mike Woolman wasn't listening to him. He said, "They found another one yesterday. They only found it yesterday, but it must have been done at least a week ago. Found it out north of town, in, of all places, a former pillbox left over from the Civil War."

"What in the devil are you talking about?"

"I mentioned it to you before," Mike said impatiently. "The monster killings the police have been trying to keep the lid on. Sort of Jack the Ripper deal."

Quint twisted his face into a grimace. "Why should I be especially interested?"

"They've been finding these corpses, usually some poor down and out Spaniard, with the blood drained completely from the body."

Quint had unlocked the door of the Renault and was beginning to slide inside.

Mike went on, "And occasionally there's some part of the body missing. Kidneys, liver, heart."

"You, or somebody, said something about the police suspecting psychopathic cannibalism. Some real nut at work."

Mike said gently, "The organs have been surgically removed. Perfect jobs of surgery."

Quint froze.

Mike said, "Come on up the club and lets have a drink."

The other sighed, climbed back out of the car and re-locked it. Together, without speaking, they went up the street a few doors and mounted to the second floor which housed the British American club.

At this time of day, the club was largely empty. They got drinks at the bar and carried them, themselves, to a table near the window.

Quint sighed and said, "All right, drop the other shoe."

Mike Woolman looked at him questioningly, "You saw Ferencsik?"

"Yes. Briefly, he mentioned the fact that following the war he had tried to locate Doktor Stahlecker. When I got around to suggesting that he was currently in Madrid for the same purpose, he clammed up and called the interview quits. He thought I'd come to talk World Government."

Mike sat for a long moment, thinking. From time to time he'd give his knee a bang with his paper. He said finally, "Do you know the Frankenstein story?"

"Sure. Frankenstein was this man-made monster. Boris Karloff played

the part The first one made a good horror film. So, Hollywood style, they had to have a *Frankenstein Returns*, or some such. Then *Frankenstein Meets Dracula*, then *Frankenstein Meets the Wolf Man* and so on down the ladder until finally it degenerated into *Abbot and Costello Meet Frankenstein*."

Mike Woolman was shaking his head disgustedly. "No, no. I mean the original Frankenstein story, the novel. Lord Byron and Shelly and Mary Shelly were all together in Switzerland and challenged each other to see who could write the most outstanding piece of literature. Byron, of course, wrote a poem, and so did Shelly, but Mary Shelly wrote a book. The story involved a doctor named Frankenstein, who built a man in his laboratory. He had thought to build a superman, but it turned out to be a monster which eventually destroyed him. It made quite a novel and is still a classic in the horror field."

"What's this supposed to be a build-up to?" Quint growled.

Mike ignored him. "And what do you know about the ancient alchemists?" Before his companion could answer him, he went on. "Basically they sought two things, the elixir of life and the philosopher's stone. With the elixir of life they would have immortality, and with the philosopher's stone they would change base metals into gold."

Quint chuckled wryly.

But Mike looked at him. "They worked on these problems for generations, for several centuries, until eventually alchemy became science, and the search ended." He gave himself a double bang on the leg with his paper which was beginning to show signs of wear and tear. He leaned forward, over the table, and tapped it a few times with a nervous forefinger. "The thing is, that today science has got to the point where both of these dreams are now possible."

Quint began to scoff in humor.

But the newspaperman shook his head. "Already it is possible to make gold, in the laboratory, from other metals. The only trouble is, the process costs more than the smidgeon of gold is worth. And the elixer of life—that is, immortality? We're getting nearer to it. Any day now, the breakthrough will come. What it is that makes tissue age, and how to stop that aging? Haven't you heard about Doctor Ann Asian and her clinic for the cure of

old age, in Rumania? She evidently injects a substance she calls Vitamin H<sub>3</sub>, and brings senile old men back to middle age health."

"What in the devil are you building up to?" Quint got up and went over to the bar for refills. When he returned, Mike went on.

"In the same way as the alchemists' dreams are now becoming possible under modern science, so is Mary Shelly's Frankenstein story."

"Whoa, now! You didn't drop out a few sentences there somewhere, did you?"

"No, look," Mike said impatiently. "Doctor Frankenstein *built* a monster out of the parts of many men—largely corpses that he had stolen from graveyards. Well, that part we know now would be impossible. But this is the day of bloodbanks, and organ banks. To transplant organs, they have to be perfectly fresh." He saw disbelief in Quint Jones' face and hurried on before his friend could interrupt. "Can you name one part of the human body that it is now impossible to transplant? One organ that hasn't been transplanted?"

"There's more to a human body than organs, damn it."

"Sure there is, but the organs are the toughest, not the easiest to transfer from one body to another. You've read about the lad, a year or so ago, who had both of his arms severed in an accident. The doctors simply sewed them back on. I tell you, Quint, today science is at the point where it could, literally, create the manufactured man that was impossible in Mary Shelley's times. The Frankenstein story could now become an actuality."

Quint finished his second drink, feeling it not at all. He said, "You forget one big thing. Why? Who would want to go to the trouble, particularly if it involved getting entangled with the law? All aside from the fact that it would cost one devil of a lot of money."

"That's what held me up at first." Mike admitted, "But possibly I've got the answer to that too. Just possibly. Let's grant the creating of such a creature; a super-man, because if it wasn't superior to other men, why go to the bother? Such a super-man might be free of ordinary man's short-comings, such as growing tired, or such as growing old. That's always been one of man's prime difficulties. When he's finally got the



education and knowhow to really bring his fondest dreams to fruition, he's too old to pull the job off. Look at Philip of Macedonia. He spent a life time developing the Macedonian phalanx and perfecting his army. By the time he was ready to invade Persia, he was an old, crippled man. His son Alexander the Great had to take over and reaped all the glory. The same with Gengis Khan and later, Tamerlane, the Mongols. By the time they were ready to conquer the world, they were too old to do it, and none of their sons were up to the job."

Quint decided to let him rave on, and get it off his chest. He leaned back to listen.

Mike said urgently, "Possibly the creator of such a superman would expect to instill it with his own beliefs and ideals. And superman or not, don't think that would be too impossible to do. The things that you learn when in your earliest years are almost impossible to unlearn. Our minds, which are supposedly so capable of reason, are actually largely swayed by the prejudices picked up while we're still babes or children. Take religion, for an example. You start getting it before you're out of your mother's arms. By the time you're an adult, supposedly educated and a rational person, religion is so engrained in you that a negligible number of people ever change from that which they learned as a child. Otherwise, you're intelligent, but there is no use trying to argue with you logically about religion. You *know* you're right and the other guy can argue with you till hell freezes over without success. It makes no difference if you've been raised a Moslem, a Christian of whatever sect, a Jew or a Buddhist, or whatever; the same thing applies.

"And it's not just religion. I covered one of these international peace conferences once. It was held in Stockholm and there were lads from all over the world represented. One night I sat in on an argument between a sharp American college boy, and a Russian lad about the same age. One, of course, was for communism, and the other for capitalism. But they weren't really having a discussion. Because neither even *heard* the other's points. Each *knew* he was correct and didn't bother considering the other's argument."

Quint said interestedly, "And you think this creator of the superman would instill his modern day Frankenstein monster with his own ideals, eh?"

"Right."

Quint leaned back in his chair, stuck his hands into his pockets and said, wryly, "Okay. Let's hear the pitch. There must be some pitch. Where do I come in?"

Mike said earnestly, leaning forward again. "Now look, Quint, hear me out before you say no. The problem is to smoke this guy out."

"Guy? You're thinking of Ferencsik, aren't you? Why not say so? Only there's one big fly in the ointment, Mike. Nicolas Ferencsik wasn't even in Madrid until less than a week ago. He was in Budapest. These murders you've been talking about with the drained blood, and the surgically removed organs, have been going on for months from what you've said."

Mike said impatiently, "I didn't say it was Ferencsik. I don't know who it is, though I've got my suspicions. But we've got to smoke him out. And this is how we do it. The guy obviously hasn't any conscience. His dream is big enough so that nothing else counts. Nothing can be allowed to stand in his way. So, okay. What you do is write a column. It's written tongue in cheek style, as though you're kidding. Most of your columns are that way, anyway. But in this you give the whole story. Everybody else that reads it thinks you're kidding, but this guy knows you aren't. He realizes you're hip to him. So what does he do?"

"I know what he does," Quint said, coming to his feet, in disgust. "He bumps me off."

"Now, wait," Mike said urgently, looking up at him. "No he doesn't, Quint. Because we're expecting him. It's a trap. And you're the bait. We'll have him."

"Not that way, we won't." Quint growled, picking up his beret and adjusting it onto his head. "You're not going to tie me up like a baby goat waiting for the tiger to show up."

"What's the matter, damn it? Are you yellow?"

"Of course," Quint said dryly. "But that's pronounced, are you too intelligent to get suckered into something like this?" He bent down over the table, leaning on it with both hands. "Listen. In the first place I don't think I buy your story. It's too complicated, and you've got too little to back it up. But even if I did buy it, I'm not going to play bait for some Jack the Ripper type. Find another patsy."

And with that he started for the door.

"Hey," Mike yelled. "Who's paying for these drinks?"

Quint looked hurt. "I was your guest," he called, closing the door behind him.

*Bartholomew Digby, Central Intelligence Agency field man in Madrid, had dinner with his immediate superior, who had come down from Paris, at the roof garden of the Plaza Hotel, off the Plaza de Espana. It hadn't been a particularly successful meeting, and the disgruntled operative decided to walk off both his heavy Spanish type dinner and some of his miffed feelings.*

*He lived in an apartment hotel on Calle de Quintana, less than half a mile from the Plaza, had he taken the route direct. However, he had been making a practice of strolling through the Jardines Publicos of an evening, and he repeated the usual itinerary. Hands in pockets he strolled down Jose Canizares to Ferraz and turned right.*

*He circled the Cuartel de la Montans, still in ruins from the war days, and entered the park proper, nodding grumpily to the Guardia Civil whom he had passed a dozen times in his hikes about the park of a nighttime. Not far from the point where Calle del Rey Francisco touches the extensive grounds of the Jardines, he came in the dullest of shadows to a bench upon which were seated two figures.*

*He supposed sourly that they were lovers. In his present mood, the conception of love and the desirability of sitting upon park benches with the object of one's affections until dawn was beyond him. However, he opened his mouth to begin a mild greeting and an apology for intruding on their privacy.*

*It was cut short when the larger of the two figures stood erect and came toward him.*

*The shadow that remained upon the bench said, in a voice that could only be described as womanish. "But we have been waiting for you, Herr Digby."*

*And suddenly he knew, even as the bulk of the other was upon him. His teeth thinned back in a fighting snarl as he went into a gunman's crouch and his hand snaked for his quickdraw holster. Too late. Too late, he remembered. That damned columnist, Quentin Jones, had wrested his gun away from him and tossed it into a corner of his apartment. Digby hadn't as yet had the occasion to acquire a new one here in Spain.*

*The other was upon him, mewling and snarling in its throat, as with incredible, unbelievable strength, it tore into his life.*

*Bartholomew Digby went down fighting. His left hand fought its way to trouser pocket and emerged with a switch blade fighting knife. Already, under the banging, rending, tearing, he was feeling the blackness ebbing up. The brutal, unresistable strength of the hulking creature, its nauseous breath, the guttural snarls, not even animal-like. Not of this world.*

*The blade flashed in the dimness of starlight, and he plunged it with his last ebbing strength, and again and again into the grunting, growling figure that loomed above him, grinding him into the gravel of the walk.*

*And as the fighting knife plunged deep, it affected his foe not at all, and the blows and rending tears showered with increase of intensity. So the last, very last thought that burned itself neon bright into Bartholomew Digby's mind was, in horror, Zombi!*

There was a banging on the door, rather than the bell ringing. Quentin Jones rolled over and stared in that direction in exasperation. He looked at the bed clock.

"Nine o'clock, for crissake! I'm going to move from this address. Everybody's cousin knows I'm here and zeros in on me."

He pulled himself, groaning, from the sheets, shuffled around for his slippers, didn't find them, and started for the door barefooted. "All right, all *right*. Don't break it down," he snarled.

He flung the door open, tried to back peddle, but was seized

immediately by both arms, and hustled backward to his living room. There were three of them. No four. The two who held him by the arms thrust him heavily onto the couch. The third was the English speaking Spanish policeman of the other morning. He took the chair opposite Quint and stared at him levelly, the 9mm Asta automatic he held in his hand, trained negligently on the American's belly.

"One would not suggest you move," he said softly.

The fourth of them, and the last to enter through the door, was Jose Garcia Mendez. He leaned now in the doorway which led from the small entrada into the living room, and stroked his small mustache with a thumbnail, as though wondering how to begin the conversation.

To this point, Quint hadn't bothered to say anything. The roughhouse had brought him fully awake, but they had the cards, and he waited for the play. The two detectives who had seized him upon their entry were now beginning to go through the apartment.

Quint snarled, "If you tell me what those gorillas are looking for, maybe I can tell you where it is and save time. I assume you have a proper warrant for this."

Jose Garcia said, "Spanish law is being abided by, Mr. Jones."

"Oh, it's Mr. Jones, not Quint, eh? What am I charged with, attempted assassination of old lard ass?"

Garcia winced, and his dark eyes went narrow. "Where were you last night, Mr. Jones when Bartholomew Digby was murdered?"

Quentin Jones felte thea cold go through him. "When... Digby... was... murdered..."

"Let us not play the innocent, Jones. Mr. Digby was seen to leave your apartment here, his face bruised and his clothes showing obvious signs of a struggle. The two of you had fought. Last night, he was killed, very brutally. You are knowledgeable about fighting brutally, are you not, Mr. Jones? Where were you at the time?"

Quint snapped, "Don't try to stampede me. How do I know where I was at the time, if you haven't told me the time. When was he killed?"

Garcia looked at the detective who was keeping Quint covered. The other said, "It was estimated to have been at about midnight." Jose Garcia's eyes went back to Quint.

Quint said, "I was here, in bed."

"Perhaps you have proof?" Garcia's smile was nasty "Perhaps a young lady..."

"I was alone. I came in early. Francisco, the portero, saw me. In fact, we talked for a minute or two. I didn't leave again. If I had, he would have seen me." Inwardly, Quentin Jones gave a prayer of thanksgiving for the Spanish institution of the portero. No apartment house was without one.

"Perhaps by another entry," Garcia said gently.

"The only other way out is the stairs. His desk is in full view of both elevator and stairs."

The detective with the gun said to one of the two who were searching the room, "Paco!" and when the other turned, gave him a rapid string of Spanish, too fast for Quint to follow. The meaning, however, was clear enough. Paco left the apartment obviously to question the portero.

Without invitation, Garcia took a chair. He said, "These past few days you have been seeing quite a bit of Mr. Digby. You are undoubtedly aware of the fact that he was an American Central Intelligence Agency operative."

"He said he was a former C.I.A. man," Quint said.

Garcia didn't bother to answer that beyond sneering his contempt. "You will now please tell me what Mr. Digby's assignment was."

Quint said, "I suppose I could deny knowing it, but I see no point in not telling you. He was trying to get hold of Martin Bormann."

To Quint Jones' surprise, the other stared at him in disbelief. "You mean the Nazi?" he blurted.

"Who else? Not only Digby, but Brett-Home, probably that Russian, Vladimir Nuriyev, and lord knows who else. The theory seems to be that

the side who gets him first, will have a propaganda advantage. I don't quite see it myself."

"But..." the Spaniard was obviously bewildered "... why Madrid? Why look for him in Madrid?"

Quint's face reflected his disgust. "Who are you trying to kid? When the war ended, those Nazis who managed to get out from under made a beeline for the surviving fascist countries, Spain, Portugal, at that time Argentina. Spain was the nearest."

"Spain is not a fascist country," Garcia said stiffly. "It is a Corporate State."

"It says here," Quint said dryly. "Listen, Garcia. During the war, Spain never really completely joined up with Germany and Italy, however, you did everything short of it. The U-boats used to refuel in Spanish ports, your industry and agriculture sold everything they could squeeze out to Hitler, you even sent a division of troops, the Blue Division, to the Russian front, where the Russians by the way, chopped them to pieces after the Stalingrad debacle. When the war ended, one hell of a flock of the lads who were wanted for Nuremberg trial escaped down here. A lot of them are still here. Evidently, Bart Digby had evidence that Bormann is one of them. Now Digby's dead, the way Brett-Home is dead. You're a cop, put two and two together."

"I am not a cop," Garcia said stiffly.

Quint didn't bother to answer him.

Garcia said, "I have connections with various governmental departments and came this morning due to the fact that I am acquainted with you, and my English is excellent."

"I'll explain that fact to all our mutual friends," Quint told him dryly. "I'm sure that in the future, there will be no difference in your relationship with the foreign colony."

Garcia glared.

The detective who had gone to check Quint's alibi with the portero returned and spoke to Jose Garcia in a low voice.

Garcia said to Quint, "You are not being restrained. However, we must demand that you hand over your passport. You are forbidden to leave Spain until further notice."

Quint said, "My passport is in my jacket pocket, there in the closet. I'm going to protest this, by the way, to the American Embassy."

Garcia nodded in mock politeness. "I'm sure you will, Mr. Jones."

Quint couldn't help adding, "I'm also going to protest it in my column. We'll see if it has any effect on the number of American tourists coming to Spain."

That was the second time this morning that Quint had managed to extract a wince from the other. It gave him a childish satisfaction.

A feminine voice from the door said, "Am I interrupting something?"

## ***Chapter Seven***

It was Marylyn Worth, and behind her two others.

The detective with the gun slid it unobtrusively under his left arm pit.

Quint said, "Just a minute," and disappeared into his bedroom for a robe. He located his slippers in the closet. When he returned, he found Marylyn talking with Jose Garcia, who had slipped back into his custom of murdering American slang.

Quint said, "Joe and the boys were just leaving, Marylyn."

Garcia began to say something, then gave his head a slight twitch, as though to cut himself short. He gestured to his three fellows, said to Marylyn, "So long, see you around." And left.

Marylyn looked after him, frowning. "What's wrong with Joe?"

Quint grunted, and took in Marylyn's two feminine companions, schoolteachers if he ever saw two schoolteachers. "Joe, just stopped being Joe," he said sourly. "He just became a member of the Spanish secret



police, assigned to snooping around the foreign colony."

"Good heavens," Marylyn said.

Marylyn turned to her companions. "Quint, this is Audrey Zaugbaum and Barbara Roos. They're new out at the base this year. I mentioned last night to them that you were a friend, and they insisted I bring them around."

The one named Audrey came up with a book, and said breathlessly, "Oh, Mr. Jones, I wonder if you'd autograph this for me."

He looked at it. It was a collection of his columns that his agent Steve Black had put together and sold to one of the publishing houses. Quint wasn't particularly happy about it. Steve had stressed his heavier diatribes. A reader would conclude that the author was more nearly like Walter Lippman than Art Buchwald.

However. He picked up a ballbearing pen from the table and flicked open the book to the title page.

Barbara Roos, who looked too young to be a teacher, even a grammar school teacher, also had a copy. They'd obviously picked them up at the bookshop at the PX especially for the occasion. She blinked at him coyly. "I didn't even know you lived in Madrid. I thought, from your columns, you sort of drifted around the whole world, just, like, seeing everything, and all."

"I used to get around quite a bit," Quint said, signing his name on the title page. "I got tired."

The one named Audrey laughed at him knowingly. "*You* get tired? Heavens to Betsy, anybody who reads you, Mr. Jones, knows that you're burning with mental energy. Why, your interests are universal. There's just not anything that you aren't an authority on."

Quint said, "After that, just call me Quint."

Barbara gushed, "But Madrid. Imagine you being right here in Madrid. And we'll be seeing you around and all. What do you do for recreation in Madrid?"

Marylyn said brightly, "That will be enough of that, dear."

Audrey Zaugbaum said, "Mr. Jones, haven't you ever thought of going into politics...'

Quentin said, "No."

"... into public life? You know, we Americans are changing. The old type William Jennings Bryan politician, the spellbinder, the rabblrouser, the city bosses, are disappearing. We demand something better than flowery speeches on the Fourth of July. We want brains, and insight. We need men like Quentin Jones to..."

"Hey, hey, hold it," Quint said. "You're finding more in my articles than I write into them. I'm just..."

Marylyn Worth said, "That's what I've been telling him. He's throwing himself away. Quentin is a man of destiny, who just hasn't awakened to the fact."

Quint started shooing them toward the door. "Okay, girls, break it up. Off to school with you. Let's get in there and pitch and teach Johnny how to read so he can grow up and peruse my columns and make me rich."

The two newcomers laughed inordinarily. It wasn't *that* funny a sally.

Marylyn said, "We do have to scurry along, or we'll be tardy."

"Twenty-three skidoo," Quint said, winking at her. She was the last out the door, and he gave her a light pat on the fanny.

As he walked back toward the bathroom he was chuckling. The last he had seen of Marylyn's face, as he closed the door, it was pale, and her eyes were bugged to the point where you'd have thought she had been raped. And all for an affectionate pat on the bottom. Quint shook his head. What a woman.

He thought about the situation over breakfast. Not hurrying. One thing was clear. If and when this was cleared up, he was going to have to leave Spain, or at very least, Madrid. He wasn't going to be welcome. The

powers that he could make it uncomfortable enough, without being overt, that he'd want to leave. He shrugged mentally. It was time he moved on anyway. He'd been getting stale recently. He needed a fresh viewpoint. Life was seeming meaningless, existence without flavor.

He finished his coffee and went into the living room to the phone. He dialed Mike Woolman's office, and, somewhat to his surprise, got him.

He said, "Mike? Quint Jones talking. You've heard about Bart Digby? Yeah. Assuming that your brain is working at all, I suppose you see your own position, as well as mine."

Mike said cautiously, "Meaning what?"

"Meaning that Brett-Home and Bart Digby were both working on the Martin Bormann deal. And both of them are dead. Anybody on the inside of this case knows that you and I have also been up to our ears in the developments. Do you need a blueprint? As they used to say in Chicago, Buster, we're on the spot. We're not going to have to bait that trap you were talking about. You and I both are already in it."

"You mean you think the monster has us next on his list?"

"I don't know if I buy that monster story of yours or not, but somebody with a nasty habit of killing people, has, undoubtedly, got us on a list. And I want off."

Mike said, "That's easy enough for you. You can write those damn columns of yours anywhere. Why don't you head out for Manila, or Rio de Janeiro, or someplace?"

Quint said dryly, "I've got news for you. Old pal, Joe just lifted my passport."

"*Who?* And why?"

"Don't stutter. Jose Garcia Mendez, it turns out, is Spanish police of some sort or other. Your suspicions were right. I had a squabble with Bart the other day, and we trounced each other around a bit. Evidently Bart was being shadowed, at least on a part time basis, and some bright-eyed cop reported to headquarters that he looked all beat up when he left my apartment. So great. So this morning Joe and three of the boys came

popping into my apartment to search it, to get my alibi, and to lift my passport. I'm not allowed to leave Spain."

Mike whistled.

"So," Quint said. "My interest in the case is rejuvenated. I don't see much sign of anybody else clearing it up, so we better before somebody finds us missing, complete to gizzard being removed surgically. I have a deep aversion for having my gizzard transplanted into some monster."

"I'm with you, friend. How do we start?"

"We start by latching onto Uncle Nick. He's the focal point of this whole shooting match."

"Uncle Nick?"

"Nicolas Ferencsik. He's holed up with the Dempseys, as you know. And maybe the Spanish police don't realize it, but just as sure as little green apples, he's up to his ears in this. I'll meet you there. Let's get a move on, Mike."

"Right. See you at Dempsey's," Mike said.

Quint slapped the phone back into its cradle on the bar and turned to go. He pulled up short, and stared. There, sitting to the side of half a dozen bottles, was Bart Digby's .38 caliber revolver. For some reason, after the fight, he had not reclaimed it. Forgotten it, undoubtedly. Quint had picked the gun up later and left it on the bar, figuring on returning the weapon the next time he saw the C.I.A. man. It had been pure luck that the detectives searching the place hadn't found it. Pure luck and the fact that Marilyn Worth and her two friends had entered before the search had been completed. Quint felt a chill go through him. If the Spanish had found Bart's gun here, he would have been in a Spanish jail at this moment.

Quint took the weapon up. He knew guns fairly well, but didn't like them. This was a Smith and Wesson Bodyguard, a .38 Special snubnose build on a .32 frame. A good hideout gun. He shrugged and stuck it into a trouser pocket. The chips were down now.

Although the distance was just a few blocks, Quint took the Renault.

Time was important. It was still morning. So far as he knew, there was no record of the monster striking during the daylight hours. He worked at night—an indication that his physical appearance might be such that he dare not show himself openly in public.

He left the car before the Dempsey apartment house and took the elevator. One of the maids met him at the penthouse entrada.

She recognized him, of course. Quint was one of Marty's "special boy friends" which gave him free run of the house. However, she said, "*La senora y el senor en este momento estan durmiondo.*"

"Sure, sure," Quint said in English. "I know Ferd and Marty are still in bed, but I want to see Professor Ferencsik." He walked on by her, and she did no more than look after him worriedly. Undoubtedly, she knew *El Professor* was not to be disturbed, but on the other hand...

Quint made his way back to Ferencsik's rooms and banged on the door. When it opened, he pushed his way through and closed the door behind him.

Nicolas Ferencsik, in bathrobe and slippers, had evidently been at his breakfast. There was a tray on a small table before the couch with the standard Continental breakfast, coffee, rolls, butter and marmalade. He glared, unbelieving, at the American intruder.

"Just what is..."

Quint Jones rasped, "Hold it. Obviously, I wouldn't break in on you like this unless I had some damn good reason."

The Hungarian scientist closed his mouth tightly for a moment, looking like nothing so much as a small mouth bass, it came to Quint irrelevantly. But then Ferencsik snapped, "I assume you are under no illusions about your welcome."

"None at all," Quint said. Then, "But I'm desperate."

The other stared at him. "Desperate? You do not seem the desperate type of man, Mr. Jones. Please come to the point. My breakfast grows cold."

"It'll grow colder, before we're through," Quint muttered. Without invitation, he took a chair. He stared at the other, wondering where to begin.

He might as well throw it from the shoulder. As it was now, it wouldn't take much to have Ferencsik yelling for the servants to toss him out.

He snapped, "The two world authorities on transplanting of human organs are probably Professor Nicolas Ferencsik and Doktor Stahlecker, both of whom are now in Madrid. It's hardly a coincidence. However, Stahlecker is wanted by the police of a dozen countries."

Ferencsik snorted contempt of that statement. "Science is above the police."

Quint snapped, "Are you familiar with the Frankenstein story, Professor Ferencsik?"

"I am not ignorant of English literature."

"Then I ask you. Is it today possible to manufacture a man in a laboratory?"

Ferencsik snorted again. "Don't be ridiculous. And now, will you spare me your company so that I may return to my breakfast?"

The American columnist was taken aback. Ferencsik's attitude, his tone of voice, did not suggest he was lying. Quint ran a hand over his mouth. "All right. But is it possible that Doktor Stahlecker thinks such a thing practical?"

"Certainly not! Doktor Stahlecker is a competent scientist." However, there must have been something that was arousing the controversial Hungarian's interest in this line of questioning. He said, grudgingly, "It would be possible, of course, to take a healthy human body and *improve* it in the laboratory."

Pay dirt. Quint said, "How do you mean?"

Nicolas Ferencsik reseated himself behind his tray and poured coffee, adding an unbelievable amount of sugar before stirring. He said, not quite so offensively, "Almost any human body can be improved. Take an athlete

in seemingly top physical condition. It is almost sure that one or two organs are less than perfect. In a laboratory, I could possibly replace such an organ. I can also, through minor brain surgery, all but eliminate the need for sleep. I can strengthen the muscles. I can speed up, or slow down, various body functions." He twisted his mouth, sarcastically. "I could make a Casanova out of a eunuch, or vice versa."

"And intelligence?" Quint said softly.

"The mind can be greatly stimulated," Ferencsik said. There was a guarded quality in his words now.

"And immortality?" Quint pressed.

"Immortality," the Professor scoffed, "is obviously an impossibility. All that lives eventually dies. Eventually earth will die, eventually our sun will grow cold and die, even eventually the whole galaxy of which we are an insignificant part, will die."

"But..." Quint prodded.

Ferencsik said guardedly, "Admittedly the life span can be prolonged greatly. There have been accurate statistics on persons known to have lived more than one hundred and fifty years. There are scores of people today living in Soviet Armenia who are well over the hundred mark and in good health. Given such a basically long lived person, in the laboratory, by transplanting weak organs, by stimulating other processes, we might prolong life all but indefinitely." He drank some of the coffee, took up a piece of roll. "And now, Mr. Jones, I have been patient with you. Will you either state your reason for desperation, or leave me to my own resources?"

Quint ignored that last. He said flatly, "The other night, at the party, while you were in the heat of your enthusiasm for World Government, you mentioned that possibly a superman was needed to lead the world along the path toward the One World State. You seemed to be of the opinion that such a superman might make his appearance."

The feisty little Hungarian's eyes gleamed danger.

The American pressed on. "A superman whose ethical code was above reproach. A superman whose intelligence dwarfed that of the rest of us. A

superman who would live so long that he would have ample time to accomplish his goal."

Ferencsik pushed back the little table on which his tray sat and came to his feet. "Well?" he snapped.

"That's why you're in Madrid, isn't it? Pursuing this dream!"

The other was coming to a boil.

Quint stood too. "Remember Bart Digby, the American at the party who asked how you expect to bring this World Government about? He was killed last night. Evidently butchered by some sort of monster. He was a secret American agent. Ronald Brett-Home, a British agent who worked with Digby, was also killed, and some of his organs surgically removed from his body, just before he was to leave to come to the party. Besides them, at least a dozen Spaniards have been killed in Madrid of recent months. Almost always the blood had been drained from their bodies, and often heart, liver, kidneys, or other organs are missing. Surgically removed."

As he went on, Nicolas Ferencsik's eyes went wider and wider still in disbelief.

Quint wound it up, "That's why I'm desperate. Without my exactly wanting to, I've become embroiled in the whole thing. Frankly, I'm afraid. On top of everything else, the police suspect me."

Ferencsik said wonderingly, but the snap out of his voice now, "And you imagine me guilty of all this?"

"No, I didn't say that. But, frankly, I want a showdown, and I'm not leaving until you talk."

"Just a moment," Professor Ferencsik said in obvious sudden decision. He turned and went back into his bedroom, emerging after a couple of minutes with a small black case, similar to a woman's jewel box.

He came up to Quint, holding the box before him. "Look here," he said.

Quint scowled down at it, at a loss.



Nicolas Ferencsik moved with a surgeon's speed of hand. The needle was out of the box and jabbed into Quint's arm so split second fast that even the younger man's karate training gave him no time to resist.

For a moment he stared down at the arm, unbelievably. Ferencsik had stepped back, triumph in his eyes. "You are a meddler, Mr. Jones, I trust this will prove somewhat of a lesson to you."

Quint's hand streaked to his trouser pocket, emerging with the .38 revolver he had taken from Digby. He brought it up... but already hesitating.

The Hungarian glared at him. "Would you dare shoot?" he sneered.

Quint's eyes went in desperation down to his arm again. "What was in that hypodermic?" he demanded.

The Hungarian didn't bother to answer. Instead, he turned and headed back for his bedroom. Quint steadied the gun, his finger tightened on the trigger.

But already the weakness was ebbing through him. Already the strength was not there. He tried to shout for help, and nothing came beyond the merest of squeaks. Slowly the floor came up to meet him, but he failed to feel it when his head banged against the couch.

*Nicolas Ferencsik was incensed. He was finding it impossible to keep the rage from his voice.*

*"I can only accuse you of not keeping faith, Doktor!"*

*"That is not true!" They both spoke in German.*

*"I came to Madrid to collaborate with you. I know your work, I have admired it throughout my adult life. True, there were stories during the war years, stories of experiments with prisoners. But I have heard atrocity stories before. I laid them to war hysterics. A scientist of your prominence would hardly descend to such unspeakableness."*

*"But now ...?" the other said gently.*

*"Between us we represent the ultimate in our field. Between us, the superman is possible. The superman who could lead the world to peace and prosperity. Who could strike the spark which would grow to a flame, a torch to light the way for us all."*

*"In this we agree," the other said.*

*"But this is on the highest of ethical levels, the highest of idealistic levels... or should be."*

*"But do not the ends justify the means, Herr Professor Ferencsik? Is it not of more importance to create our superman, than that a few nonentities end their tiny lives? Did they know the eventual goal, they would possibly choose themselves to so donate to the future!"*

*"I hope that I have not misunderstood your meaning, Doktor. I must know the truth of these killings, these murders."*

*"You realize, of course, that considerable quantities of plasma are necessary to our experiments, both old and the new ones to come ..."*

*"There are sources of blood other than murder!" he all but screamed.*

*"For one in my position, Herr Professor? Come now, you realize that I am in hiding, due to the stupidity of the authorities in Germany itself, as well as the former allies. What would result, in a country such as Spain, were I to depend upon the usual channels for my requirements in both plasma and human organs for transplant experimentation?"*

*Nicolas Ferencsik's face tightened, his hands bunched into tight fists so that the nails cut into his palms, unheeded. "I demand to know two things, Doktor. First, why was it necessary to burn the body, there outside the bunker of the Reich Chancellery? And the second question is: Where is Martin Bormann?"*

*The other looked at him for a long, long calculating time, finally sighed as though in regret, "I shall answer your second question first."*

*There must have been some sort of signal which Professor Nicolas Ferencsik failed to note.*

*A door to the room opened and a figure lumbered in, its face animal*

*dumb, its eyes with the emptiness of death. Its hulking body was clothed in naught save pajama pants of the type issued in military hospitals. Its upper body was bandaged in several places, heavily bandaged.*

*Even as the creature lunged toward him, there came an animal mewling from his throat. A voicing of deep seated pleasure.*

*Ferencsik squealed. "No!" His hand shot into his jacket front to pull the .38 revolver from his belt. The gun came up and blasted its message of death—a message unheard.*

*For the other was upon him.*

Something was stinging his face. It came again. He tried to shake his head. Tried to avoid the pain. Awareness was coming back, flooding back. "Cut that out," he finally muttered. He opened his eyes. Mike Woolman was kneeling to one side of him. Quint Jones shook his head, trying for clarity.

Mike smacked him once more.

"Damn it, stop that," he swore. "I'm awake. You're doing it for kicks, now."

Mike said, "What happened?"

Quint tried to sit up, "That's a good question," he growled. He looked up. Marty Dempsey was standing behind Mike, glass in hand and looking worried.

"Dahling!" she said. "What have you been up to? Where's Uncle Nick?"

"In his grave, I hope," Quint snarled. He struggled to his feet, still dizzy. He looked around the room, then back to Mike accusingly. "Where were you when they lowered the boom? The hell with that, where's Ferencsik?"

Mike came to his feet too, steadying Quint with one hand tightly around his arm. "How would I know? I got here about five minutes ago. Marty wasn't going to let me in. I smelled a rat and insisted. The Professor has evidently flown the coop. He's packed a bag and taken off. The maid saw

him leave, but he didn't say where he was going."

Quint sat down on the couch and held his head. He said to Marty, "Listen, pet, how about getting me a drink? A stiff one."

"Right away, dahling." She left.

Quint said to Mike Woolman, "What time is it? How long have I been out?"

"How would I know? It's nearly eleven."

"Where the hell've you been? You were supposed to meet me here."

"I had to clear up a couple of things, real quick, at the office. Then I had to cross town. You live within a few minutes of here. It takes me a half hour. What happened?"

Quint groaned. "That old fox slipped me a needle with some kind of knockout drops, or something. I don't think there's any doubt. He's in it with this Doktor Stahlecker. He's got this superman dream of his." He looked about the floor. "He took the gun I had, too."

"Didn't I tell you?" Woolman crowed.

The columnist grunted his disgust. "You had the story exaggerated. He doesn't figure on creating a new man from scratch. The idea is to take a basically healthy body and jazz it up. New organs for old, that sort of thing. No sleep necessary, goosed up I.Q., life span of a few centuries or more."

"Holy smokes," Woolman said.

"Yeah."

Marty came back bearing three glasses and a bottle of Scotch. She was still in negligee, her face innocent of make-up and she looked like a harpy. She sloshed whisky into one glass after another, generously dispensing triples.

Quint knocked his back. He said to Marty, "Pet, you're charming, but right now I've got big business with Mike, here." He turned on the Quint Jones personality. "How about getting lost?"

"Oh, *you*," she said archly, as though he'd just handed her a flowering compliment. She turned and left, thoughtfully leaving the bottle.

Mike shook his head. "How the hell do you do it?" He sat down next to the breakfast table Ferencsik had used earlier, idly picked up the newspaper the Hungarian had been reading, and rolled it into a club. "What now?" he said. "Sure as shooting, the old boy's gone to ground. If he can line up with Stahlecker, we'll have our work cut out, finding him. If Digby and Brett-Home couldn't do it, who are we?"

The columnist grunted, "So you've got the G-man syndrome, eh?" He walked over to the side table that held a telephone, picked it up and began dialing.

The reporter said, "What in hell's the G-man syndrome?"

Quint growled cynically, "It must have started back in the 1930s when the federal police and secret police of the world began to hire public relations men. Probably Hoover and his F.B.I, really got it going in our country. Hitler's Gestapo, British MI6, and the Soviet KGB also began spreading the word that secret agents were super-duper brains that saw all, knew all." Quint grunted sourly. "Remember when they caught that Russian Colonel Rudolf Abel in New York? They called him a super spy. If he was so super, why did they catch him? And the reverse of the coin. If the F.B.I, was so hot, why did it take them ten years?"

Before Mike could answer, Quint Jones had his number. He said, "American school? I'd like to talk to Marylyn Worth. Well, when she come in tell her to get in touch with Quentin Jones, eh?" He hung up and turned back to the newsman.

"We've got to be smarter than either Brett-Home or Digby," he growled, "Or we'll end up just as dead as they are."

"So start being smart then," Woolman told him. He banged his leg with his rolled up newspaper in irritation. "What's Marylyn got to do with it? The prissiest woman in Madrid. What she needs..."

Quint interrupted him. "We've got just one more lead, now that Ferencsik's taken off. That party."

*"What party?"*

"The party held here at Dempsey's. Something was scheduled to happen here. Brett-Home, Digby, and maybe Albrecht Stroehlein set it up. You know what I think was going to happen? Doktor Stahlecker and possibly Martin Bormann himself. For all I know, maybe they did show up."

"Oh, come on now. Stroehlein attended, and he knew them both in the old day."

"Yeah, and this is the age of plastic surgery. If Doktor Stahlecker could sew on an arm back on Hitler, why not put a new face on Bormann? No sir, I'm gambling on the possibility that Doktor Stahlecker was at that party. And, on top of that, you and I probably know Stahlecker personally—under a hideaway identity."

Mike Woolman pursed his lips and whistled softly. "But still, what's the idea of phoning goody-two-shoes Marylyn?"

"She's above suspicion. I don't know anybody that doesn't like Marylyn Worth. So great. We're going to have her throw a party. We're going to invite everybody who was at Dempsey's that night. We're going to supposedly secretly spread the word that something involving Brett-Home and Digby's deaths is going to come up."

Mike grunted, banging his leg disgustedly. "If Doc Stahlecker was at the first party, you're sure as hell not going to see Doc Stahlecker at this one."

"To the contrary. Stahlecker would be conspicuous by absence otherwise. Now look, this is what we do. Check with Marty and Ferd on who was here. I'll give you the list so far as I can remember them. I'll ask Marylyn, too. One way or other, we've got to get the message out to everybody who attended."

Woolman shrugged. "I suppose it's worth trying."

"It better be," Quint said grimly.

## ***Chapter Eight***

For the next couple of days, Quentin Jones stuck near his apartment. He stayed away from windows, opened the door only after exhaustive

identification of whoever was on the other side. He had suggested to Mike Woolman that the reporter move in with him, until at least after the party, but that worthy wasn't going to jeopardize his job by remaining in hiding.

Quint was leery about doing much drinking. Things were in the clutch, and he couldn't afford to have his senses dulled. That, of all things, he couldn't afford.

Phone calls he got aplenty. Ferd Dempsey wanting to know what the mysterious party was all about. Quint told him it was just one more expatriate drunken brawl, knowing that wild horses wouldn't keep Ferd away from such.

Marty Dempsey called, wanting to know if Uncle Nick was going to be at the party. She was plaintive about Uncle Nick, worrying that something had happened at her place that had miffed the Hungarian. He was such an old, *old* friend of the family, you know dahling. Quint told her that he didn't know if Ferencsik was going to be at the party or not, but he hoped so.

Albrecht Stroehlein called, guardedly. So guardedly that Quint Jones never did figure out what the man wanted. Even over the phone the former Nazi seemed to be anxious to the point just this side of tears. Quint got the feeling that the German had lost his contact and that his days of affluence were now over. Possibly he thought Quint had C.I.A. connections and might get him put back on the payroll.

A dozen others called, including Dave Shepherd who wanted to know if he could bring his *dear* friend Clark Talmadge, who hadn't been at the original party but would just *love* to come to this one. Quint told him that it was Marylyn's party and to check with her, he was just helping out. He then phoned Marylyn and suggested to her that she put thumbs down on the muscleboy movie star.

Marylyn went along like the good sport she wanted to be—whenever Quint Jones was involved. She only vaguely had a picture of it all. Quint and Mike had decided that the fewer on the inside, the better. You can't let slip a secret you don't know. But she was game. Her budget would have been strained throwing a party of these dimensions, so Quint ponied up the liquor and catering service. Marylyn had an amply large apartment; one of the old Spanish type flats in Old Madrid, built back in the days when a Spanish family consisted not only of man, wife, and half a dozen

kids, but a couple of grandparents, a maiden aunt or so, and three or four servants. It was a standing joke, Marylyn's white elephant of an apartment, called in the expatriate set, Marylyn's folly.

Two of the guests to be, called personally at Quint's. And one had a hard time getting in.

The first was Jose Garcia Mendez, who now made no pretences with the American columnist. He came alone and Quint sat him down, offered him a drink, which was refused, and then sat opposite.

"It's your nickel," he said.

Jose Garcia treasured his illusion of being a student of American idiom. "I thought you said that only when answering the telephone."

"Maybe you're right," Quint said sourly. "We've got another one that involves either doing something or getting off the pot. Both mean it's your turn."

Garcia flushed. He had preferred his earlier role with the successful American columnist. Even beyond his job, he liked associating with Americans, particularly wealthy or successful Americans.

He brought himself to the point, his voice going stiff.

He tapped his coat, indicating an inner pocket. "I have here an order from the proper department of government, declaring you *persona non grata*, Mr. Jones."

"Oh, great. First you lift my passport, so that I can't leave the country, now you kick me out. You boys will have to make up your minds."

Garcia was patient. "The paper will not be served until this current matter is cleared up."

"So I can't win. If you can pin Digby's death on me, I'll of had it. If you can't, then I get booted out of Spain."

Garcia made his play. "Mr. Jones, it is not that many of us here in Spain do not admire your—your talents, in spite of your sometimes, well, typical American manner of stating your opinions. In fact, I am here to



suggest that, always assuming you not guilty of Mr. Digby's murder, we cooperate and end this needless animosity that seems to have developed."

"If I get that correctly, you want me to work with you on this Martin Bormann, Doktor Stahlecker thing."

"Of course, we are not admitting any such far-fetched story. However, consider, Mr. Jones. The Spanish government today is greatly interested in fuller cooperation with the Common Market and other Western institutions, such as NATO. If, I say *if*, such a prominent former Nazi as Martin Bormann was found to be in hiding in Spain, then such nations as France and Great Britain might, ah, to use your inimitable slang, take a dim view of the fact."

"So," Quint said dryly, "where your former pals were welcome, immediately following the war, you're now willing to sell them down the river—always supposing you can find them."

Garcia said stiffly, "I wouldn't put it that way. All I am doing is offering you the friendship of our authorities, in return for your cooperation in this matter. We are as anxious to find Bormann as is your C.I.A., Mr. Jones. It seems obvious that all involved should cooperate.'

"So how could I cooperate, assuming that I decided to?"

The Spanish operative leaned forward. "First of all, what is the purpose of this party to be held at Miss Worth's apartment, tomorrow night?"

For all Quentin Jones knew, in spite of the other's claim to wish to grab Bormann for the purpose of handing him over to the Western powers, Jose Garcia might actually be bosom buddies with the ex-Nazi. He knew nothing at all about the man, beyond the fact that he obviously was connected with the Spanish secret police.

"Why don't you ask Miss Worth?" he said.

Garcia came to his feet, his eyes icy. He ran a thumbnail over his neat mustache. "I see you do not wish to cooperate, Mr. Jones. I suggest you think it over. If you did work with us, reveal what you know, then obviously there would be no need to deliver this *persona non grata* order."

Quint began walking toward the door, to open it. He said over his

shoulder, "Believe me, remaining in Spain isn't that important. I never was happy about countries that ordered writers out the moment they had opinions differing from the government's. We seldom do it in America. A Spanish columnist could move to Washington and sit there beefing about our president's policies until hell froze over, and nobody'd give a damn."

"You'll be sorry about this..." Garcia began.

"Goodbye, Buster," Quint said wearily.

It was the second caller who had a hard time getting in. He had even evidently had a hard time getting past Francisco, the portero, since that worthy had escorted him all the way to Quint's door.

Quint held the door only partly open. He said, *Gracias, Francisco* and to the other, "Mr. Nuriyev, I believe?"

The other was ever suave. He clicked heels and bowed. "Valadimir Nuriyev. I would appreciate the opportunity to talk with you, Quentin Jones."

Quint thought about it. Finally, he said, "Just a moment," and closed the door. When he returned, he opened it more widely, so the other could enter. He tipped Francisco fifty pesetas and let him go.

Quint said to the former Russian hachetman, as he led him back into the living room, "Just for luck, I phoned Mike Woolman of World Wide Press. I told him you were here, and that I'd phone back every five minutes as long as you remained."

The Russian's eyebrows went up and his lips quirked in amusement. "Excellent security precautions, Mr. Jones." His eyes took Quint in. "However, it would seem to me that since I am alone, I am quite as much in danger as you are."

Quint stepped up to him quickly and ran his hands over the other's clothes. Here, there, where a man carries a gun or other weapon. The Russian suffered the invasion of privacy without protest. "Once again, excellent security precautions, Mr. Jones. May I take a seat?"

"Drink?" Quint said, motioning to a chair.

"Not to be ah, corny, but do you have vodka?"

"Corny, yet," Quint winced. "We have another would-be American slang user with us. I've got some Polish Vodka." He went over to the bar.

Vladimir Nuriyev said mildly, "You must be referring to our mutual friend, Joe Garcia."

The American was pouring a stiff shot of the colorless liquor. "What do you want to mix with this liquid dynamite?"

"There is an old Russian saying that nothing mixes with vodka, except vodka," Nuriyev said.

Quint poured a very short Fundador for himself and returned to the other with the drinks.

"To peace!" the Russian said and bolted his back.

"Yeah?" Quint said, following him, "And that seems to be about as close as our countries get to real peace—toasting it at international conferences."

"A deplorable situation," Nuriyev nodded. He still reminded Quint Jones of one of Hollywood's ultra-sleek villains. The man was a stereotype.

The Russian crossed his legs, adjusting his trousers neatly. He said, "I have read a considerable number of your columns, Mr. Jones. Believe me, I have been impressed."

Quint nodded his thanks.

"It is obvious that you do not subscribe to the warmongering philosophy of some of your colleagues."

"Oh?"

"Indeed, over the years I have noted that you are invariably in the ranks of the progressives. You have been opposed to making an armed camp of the world. Opposed to racism, both in your own country and such nations as South Africa..."

"And even Russia when there are signs of it there," Quint said dryly.

Nuriyev went on, although his eyes had shifted slightly at that. "You have opposed your country's support of such despots as King Faisal, and such dictators as Salazar..." he cleared his throat gently here "... and the Chief of State of this land in which we both now find ourselves. You have written against some of the overt actions of your C.I.A. in the smaller countries..."

"And the overt actions of the Russian KGB in the same circumstances," Quint said. "Let's get to the point, Nuriyev." He picked up the phone, dialed, and said into it, "We're still talking, Mike. So far the conversation involves what a great columnist Quentin Jones is." He hung up again.

The Russian's mouth tightened only for a moment. He said, "My point is that you are obviously opposed to many of the positions held by the West."

Quint nodded. "I sure am. Praise Allah, I'm a citizen of a country where you're still allowed to disagree with some of the positions the government takes."

This time Nuriyev hesitated before going on. He found words, at last, and said carefully, "I trust you are opposed to the reintroduction into the government of West Germany of former Nazis?"

"I'm opposed to Nazis, period, anywhere," Quint said in acid.

"And you must, then, be distressed to see judges, army heads, officers, even men of cabinet rank who are former Nazi party members." He twisted his mouth. "Let us even say they might *still* be Nazi party members."

"Seems unlikely," Quint said wearily. "But yes, I'm not particularly happy about the boys getting back into power. Drop the other shoe, Nuriyev."

"Very well. We have evidence that Martin Bormann still lives and that there is a conspiracy to bring not only this foul beast but many of his close collaborators back into power."

"Who's we?"

"Democratic elements opposed to the revival of Hitlerism."

"I doubt it," Quint said. He leaned forward and pointed a finger. "Look here, Nuriyev. It's no use wasting each other's time. You've misread what you found in my columns. You communists like to present yourselves as the only advocates of peace. The only ones against race discrimination, the protectors of small nations, and the foes of colonialism. Great, it makes wonderful propaganda for you. However, you make a mistake in thinking that everyone else who is for peace, minority rights and such, are sympathetic to Russia. Count me out. Even though I'm opposed to former Nazis in government. Just as much, by the way, in East Germany, as West Germany."

"There are no former Nazis in the government of East Germany," the Russian said flatly.

"It says here," Quint chuckled. "Listen, the fact that I hate the guts of such as Martin Bormann—if he's still alive—doesn't make me a supporter of you commies..."

"I am no longer a communist." Nuriyev said easily. "I support democratic elements."

"Yeah, yeah. Frankly, I don't know how you managed it. I've got to give you credit. The Spanish police seem to think you defected to the Americans. The C.I.A. seems to think you defected to the French. For all I know, the French think you defected to the British MI6. Whatever you managed to do, you got yourself here into Spain. However, it's on the obvious side, just where you really still stand, and what a lousy job the different Western intelligence agencies do in the way of coordinating their activities."

The Russian's eyes had gone flat empty. Quint reached out and dialed again. He said into the phone. "This is still Quint, Mike. He doesn't love me quite as much as he did a few minutes ago, but he's still here." He hung up.

Vladimir Nuriyev stood, visibly wrestling with his composure. He wasn't quite as suave as Quint had thought him. "I see I'll get no cooperation here," he said.

"That you won't, Buster," Quint told him. "Could I see you to the door?"

When the other was gone, Quint locked the door and returned to the

living room. He eyed the bottle of Fundador and then shrugged angrily. He was getting to be a full time bottle baby. Why?

In the past he'd always drunk. He'd even hang one on from time to time. He liked to drink, and had ever since his late teens. But before he'd never hit it in the morning, nor even in the afternoon. Nor had it been an everyday thing. He grunted sourly. Next thing you know, he'd be taking periodic cures like Marty Dempsey.

The bell rang again, and he turned back to the door. Through the peephole he could see it was Francisco and opened up. It was the mail. He'd made a deal with the portero to bring it up from his box in the lobby. He tipped the man again, locked the door and returned to the living room. Maybe he was making a jerk of himself with all this hiding out, locked doors and such. But at least he was still alive. Digby and Brett-Home weren't.

He read a letter from Steve Black first, an attempt to wring some columns out of him. A fan letter from some gushy do-gooder in Michigan. An offer from one of the TV panel programs back in the States which supposedly specialized in controversial subjects. He grunted at that. He had caught the program a few times when he was in the States last. Their idea of something controversial was women's new hair styles, or whether or not the latest dirty book should be banned.

He turned the final letter over in his hands, scowling. The return address was the Liberal Party. He'd never heard of the Liberal Party. Aside from the Republicans and Democrats, the only national political parties in the States were the two small old timers, the Socialist Labor Party and Prohibition Party. Others came and went, down through the years; Communist Party, Progressive Party, Dixiecrats, Socialist Party, Farmer Labor Party. Most of them seldom lasted very long, and few got on the ballot in more than a handful of States.

But he had never heard of the Liberal Party. He tore open the envelope, and read. It was from his home state. Evidently, a new political party was in the making. One that would have a nationwide ticket for the first time in this next election. Their big bone of contention seemed to be that there was no longer any difference between the Republicans and Democrats. That the problems that confronted the world called for new solutions. It was the final couple of paragraphs that amused him. They wanted him, Quentin Jones, to run for Senator from his State.

He dropped the letter into the wastebasket along with the fan letter and the TV panel offer.

Quint Jones held to his security measures right to his entry into Marylyn Worth's king-size Old Madrid apartment. He had Mike Woolman come by his place to pick him up. He doubted that the killer would attempt to take on two at once. He didn't seem to use conventional weapons, but, rather, literally tore his victims apart with his hands. Quint figured that he and Mike together could take on any single opponent, monster or no.

They drove up to the 18th century building, that had once been the mansion of a second rate Habsburg and now composed four large flats, of which Marylyn's was the top. They ran their eyes up and down the streets, now darkening.

Mike said, "All clear. Let's go."

Quint asked him, "Any new killings? Any more bloodless victims?"

"Not that I know of," Mike said, even as they headed for the door. "But possibly the cops are playing the cards close to their chests. Newspapermen aren't particularly popular down at headquarters these days."

Marylyn's apartment was a walk-up, in spite of the swank outer appearance of the building. It was another standard gag in the foreign colony. The reason Marylyn was able to keep her excellent figure was running up and down the stairs of Marylyn's Folly.

On the way up, Mike said gloomily, "I've been thinking about this big deal of ours, and the more I think about it, the sillier it sounds. Suppose this Doc Stahlecker does show up, what do we expect to happen? All of a sudden does the good doctor pull off a mask like 'Anyface' in a Fearless Fosdick comic strip and start yelling, 'I'm Stahlecker, I'm Stahlecker!'"

Quint growled, "What else could we do? We're getting desperate, Mike. Everybody we know of that's connected with the matter is going to be here—we hope. Confronting each other might bring something to head."

Mike grunted. In the darkness of the steps, Quint could hear his newspaper bang up against his leg. "Okay, okay, so what's the drill? How do we handle it?"

Quint's shrug couldn't be seen in the dimness. He said, "I suppose we just wander around, looking intelligent and waiting for something to happen. For somebody to make with a clue." Mike grunted again.

They reached Marylyn's floor and knocked. Mike looked around at the steps and the elaborate hall, the heavy door. "There's Spain for you. A two bedroom apartment on Avenida Generalissimo Franco, American style, will set you back a hundred or two a month. But an eight or ten bedroom deal like this goes for about forty—simply because it's old fashioned, no red leather and chrome."

Marylyn came to the door and smiled brightly at Quint, having no eyes for his companion at all. She looked up at him, "Why... Quentin. How nice for you to come."

"How sweetly you say it," Quint said, pseudo-mockery in his voice. He bent down and kissed her swiftly on the cheek. She flushed, drew back, her eyes, wide now, went quickly to Mike.

Mike grunted amusement. "Look," he said, "when your Sunday school teacher, or whoever it was taught you that formal way of greeting guests, did she tell you that you were supposed to greet all of them that way? Not just the way you have maidenly dreams about." He bent quickly in an attempt to repeat Quint's kiss, but she evaded him.

"Now, Michael," she said. "You're joshing me."

They went along the hallway toward a monstrous living room from whence stereotype party sounds were coming.

Marylyn whispered, "They've already drunk ever so much hooch."

"Hooch, yet," Mike muttered.

Quint said, "It sounds as though the Dempseys have already arrived then. Is Albrecht Stroehlein here? And Nuriyev?"

"From the very beginning. And... and Joe Garcia, too. Is it true he's



connected with the Spanish police?" She held her elbows to her sides, as though shivering deliciously.

"Yes," Quint said sourly. "He's connected with the police all right, all right. And possibly others as well."

She frowned at him, her hand on the doorknob. "Just what are you two here for, Quentin? I know there's something very romantically mysterious going on."

"If you find out," Mike grumbled, "let us know. I think we're kidding ourselves. Pardon me, I suspect there's a drink in there." He went through the door into the buffeting noise beyond.

"Anybody missing?" Quint asked her. She was standing close to him and looking up, half anxiously, half as though expecting something. Inwardly, he sighed. Was he being a heel with this girl? And, if so, in what manner? In not giving her what she obviously wanted? Or in not rebuffing her, and letting her get on to someone who would appreciate all the accumulated affection she seemed to have on tap.

He put an arm around her, quickly, tilted her chin up with a finger, and kissed her lips. As before, they were drawn stiffly together, and what he had thought the other night, came back to him. A maiden's kiss, or the loss of an older person, for long years out of practice. Perhaps he'd get around to teaching her. What did either of them have to lose? The girl was attractive, but probably pushing thirty. There comes a time in a woman's life when she stops bragging about her virginity—or should.

She said stiffly, "Quentin... you're not just leading me on?" Her voice was very low.

"That's what I was thinking of doing," he said wryly. "How'd you guess?"

She misinterpreted. "I... I don't know very much about such things."

"I was beginning to suspect that," he said.

Her voice was so low now as hardly to be made out. "I was spoofing when I told you I'd had lots of beaux."

"I kind of guessed that too."

It was then she set him back. She said, "I realize I've been too prim for a man like you, Quentin. If... well, if you wish to stay, after... after the party."

He stared down at her. Marylyn Worth? Was he getting this correctly? Or was it just his naturally evil mind?

"Why Marylyn!"

He could feel her body retracting, growing smaller right there in his arms, and was immediately contrite. It hadn't been easy for the girl to say that.

"Listen, pet," he told her. "You think about it a bit more. You want to be awfully sure about these things."

"I'm... I'm pretty sure." Her body shivered in his hold. He let go of her and turned to lead the way into the other room.

Quint said, "You didn't tell me if everyone was already here."

She had evidently regained composure. "I think they are. It was rather difficult, even with Mike's and Ferd and Marty's help, to decide just who had been at their party. They're so, well, madcap." She looked up at him and smiled brightly, as though to reassure him. "Could I get you a drink?"

"I'll find it," he said. "You've probably got hostess duties."

He made his way to the improvised bar, on a large Castilian type table, and began to pour himself a stiff brandy. He remembered in time and cut it short, and then added ice and water. Let the others get swacked tonight, he and Mike had to be careful.

Jose Garcia's voice said next to him, "Well, chum, any developments?"

He turned to the Spaniard. "I just got here, Senor Garcia."

The other looked at him, his mouth twisted ruefully. He said, finally, "Joe, to you."

Quint hadn't expected that. He scowled at the smaller man. Garcia said, "Look here, Quint. The world is changing, and changing fast, and largely for the better. What new changes take place in the next ten years, who can say? If we don't blow ourselves up, in the meantime, it should be a rather

good world in another decade or two. Fewer people starving, more people feeling secure about the future. All that. Some parts of the world are moving faster than others, but things are developing on both sides of the Iron Curtain and..." he twisted his mouth again "... even in such countries as Spain. Maybe in my country things aren't moving as fast as a lot of us would like—including me. But moving they are, and the speed is accelerating."

It was Quint Jones' turn to be rueful. "Okay, Joe, take that I'm sorry we've been ruffling each other's fur. And good luck to you... and your country. In a way, I'm sorry to be leaving it."

"I'm sorry to see you go," Garcia said. He hesitated. "Actually, its not in my hands. That *persona non grata* thing. Perhaps in another couple of years or so..."

"I'll be back," Quint said.

Without further word, the Spaniard turned and left.

Quint didn't have the time to speculate about the other's words. Joe Garcia wasn't as bad as all that, he supposed. But then, few people are, when you get inside them.

He drifted from one group to another. Most of them were talking about the killings. Rumors were sifting through Madrid, in spite of all police efforts to hold the lid on. An apprehension was obviously growing. The story was leaking through that the bodies of the murdered had been brutally mutilated.

He listened to a group Dave Shepherd was talking to. The expatriate homosexual was breathless. "You'll *never* believe this," he said. "But my dears, I've heard that..." he held his breath dramatically for a moment "... Martin Bormann is suspected of being here in Madrid."

One of the others, already tight, and in a voice that Quint thought he recognized from the party at Dempsey's, slurred, "Who the hell's Mart Bordeom?"

Shepherd squelched him with a look of disdain. "Bormann!" he said. "Hitler's right hand man."

"Oh Hitler, for christssake. Damn shame we killed that guy. We could use him now. Fighting the damn reds."

"Oh, shut up," a feminine voice said.

Quint wandered on. He wasn't going to learn anything from Dave Shepherd's group. They were hardly at the beginning of things.

Mike Woolman had evidently tried to get a controversy going by bringing up Nicolas Ferencsik and the fact that he had disappeared and the further fact that he had been an authority on organ transplanting. He tried to get them talking about the possibility that the mutilated corpses and the controversial Hungarian might be connected, but it didn't seem to get through with only hints. He would have had to club them over the head with a flat out statement.

However, Quint stood there for a time and listened. One of the other guests was a Rumanian refugee and the talk evolved into a discussion of Anna Asian and her Vitamin H3. The Rumanian was quite excited about the experiments in the old age clinics.

Doctor Asian brought this senile vagabond in off the streets. The man must have been at least ninety. They had no records of him at all. His mind was gone beyond the point where he knew about relatives or friends, or even what town he had come from. Doctor Asian began her injections and other treatment. Within a month, his gray hair had begun to turn black. He was able to feed himself and take care of his bodily needs. In two months he was walking without a cane, through the hospital grounds. Eventually, they threw away his glasses. He didn't need them. And, most unbelievable of all, they had found a job for him, in industry, and he was leading a normal life."

Somebody said in great disbelief, "A normal life of a man how old?"

The Rumanian threw up his hands in a gesture more Gallic than Balkan. "Of a man perhaps sixty. He even had a sex life."

Still someone else growled, "But it doesn't seem to work on everyone."

Quint drifted on, his face in scowl. It brought back something to him. Early in this affair he had scoffed at the idea of Hitler—had he still been alive—being a menace any longer. He would have been too old. But if this

Doctor Asian in Rumania had succeeded in retarding age, and even turning it back, why couldn't that have been done to Hitler, or, more likely, Martin Bormann? Why indeed? Professor Ferencsik had hinted that he knew how to keep his projected superman in all but everlasting youth.

He spotted Albrecht Stroehlein standing alone. Somehow, the ex-Gestapo man found it difficult to draw companionship—not to speak of friendship.

Quint came up to him, and the other turned as though happy to have someone to talk to. He held a large glass of punch in his hand.

Quint said, in the way of greeting, "How was Berlin?"

The other's eyes popped. "What! Vot did you say, eh?"

Quint sipped his drink and said easily, "Berlin. Don't get so excited. Your accent gets worse. Mike Woolman was telling me the other day. You weren't so prosperous before you went up there. Obviously, you were given some sort of job."

The German blinked at him, moistly apprehensive.

Quint yawned as though it wasn't important. "We figured that either Digby or Brett-Home had hired you to finger Bormann or Doktor Stahlecker for them. You knew them both, back in the old days, didn't you, Herr Stroehlein?"

"*Ja*. I knew them. From way back I knew them." The German's eyes shifted about the room, evidently not knowing whether to attempt to elude this prying American or not.

The columnist nodded, as though they were in mutual agreement. "We figured that was why the Dempsey party was set up. Brett-Home and Digby thought that with Nicolas Ferencsik attending, Doktor Stahlecker would show up. You'd be present and recognize him."

The German had begun to frown. Quint quickly reviewed his words. Had something come out wrong? He was making a pretense to the other to be knowledgeable about the whole thing. He didn't want to scare the weepy ex-Nazi off.

Stroehlein said cautiously, "Suppose you are right, eh? What are you coming to, eh?"

Quint shifted his shoulders. "I just wondered if you could have been fooled. Perhaps Doktor Stahlecker was there the other night. And possibly here tonight."

The plump German at least had the gumption to be irritated at the suggestion that he was incompetent to play his role. He said, "Nein! If Doktor Stahlecker had been there at the other party, I would have recognized her. If she were here tonight, I would recognize her!"

*The creature that had once been a man, squatted, huddled, in its hiding place. It was cramped, but not overly conscious of being uncomfortable. He—or it—had already lost the capacity for discomfort in such situation as this.*

*It waited. Knowing faintly, distantly, that before long it would be called up. The master would unleash its strength. At the dim thought it mewled pleasure deep in its throat. Tonight it would feel the good feeling again. It had been several days since it had felt the good feeling. It liked the good feeling. To feel its clawed hands sink deep ...*

*It squatted in its hiding place and waited, and through its mind, so far away as to be all but gone, traced memories of yesteryear which it could not quite understand.*

*The packed hordes of brownshirted men in the Konigsplatz, shouting, shouting. And over and over again, that same word, that same cheer. Vaguely he tried to place it, and could not.*

*The birds flying over, endless and endless and endless flights. And something there was about them to fear, though that was hard to know now, and the creature shook its head. It no longer knew fear. Perhaps they were not birds that flew overhead.*

*The ruins of the cities. And through them, the men in dark strange uniforms. Not the field gray of the Wehrmacht—what was the Wehrmacht? it couldn't quite remember—but a darker color. And the*

*helmets too were strange. The men ran, bent almost double, short weapons, with large circular clips, in their hands, as they ran, ran through the ruins. He hated them, but his dim mind did not know why he hated them.*

*The living in the deep cement bunker. And the noise. The always booming noise that went on above. And day in and day out. The noise. He could remember then knowing fear. Though he couldn't remember now how fear was.*

*He stirred. Soon the master would come and tell him what he must do.*

*He mewled deep in his throat again.*

*It was pleasant to do things for the master.*

## ***Chapter Nine***

Quint was staring at the other man. "You've got your genders mixed," he told him. "He, not she." Albrecht Stroehlein mustered sufficient courage to sneer in superiority. "Ah, my American friend, you are not so knowledgeable as you would pretend, eh? You do not even know that Doktor Grete Stahlecker is a woman, eh?" He tapped himself, on the upper part of his belly.

"I have known Grete Stahlecker since 1921, eh? It was I who introduced her to the Führer. I, Albrecht Stroehlein. No one else, *nicht?* Even then she was noted in her field. Even then, a great scientist. If she had been a younger woman, Hitler himself might have taken her to bed, eh? Instead of finally that wishy-washy, as the British say, Eva Braun. I tell you, if Grete Stahlecker was here tonight, I would know Grete Stahlecker." He snapped pudgy fingers. "Like that."

Quint Jones felt dazed. He didn't know why. It had just never occurred to him that the misty doctor was a woman. There was no particular reason. He muttered some excuse to the German, and went seeking Mike Woolman.

Mike was standing, glass in hand, listening to Ferd Dempsey and some American air force officer who were arguing bullfighting. Neither of them

knew what they were talking about. Quint, come to think of it, had never met an American who knew anything about bullfighting with the possible exception of Johnny Short, who was a *novittero*.

The American columnist took Mike aside. "Listen," he said. "This Doktor Stahlecker is a woman."

Mike looked at him as though he had slipped his clutch. "So what?"

Quint stared at him. "I thought she was a man. I mean, that he was."

Mike patted him on the arm. "Look, friend. Why don't you go easy on the sauce? Of course, Doctor Grete Stahlecker was, or is, as the case may be, a woman. She was Adolf's personal surgeon. She saved his life."

"Okay," Quint said. "Forget it. Nobody bothered to tell me."

Mike shrugged hugely and went off for another drink, saying over his shoulder, "This whole idea flopped. The party's beginning to break up. How long should we stick around?" But he was gone before the columnist could answer.

Quint looked down into his own glass, knocked the drink back and decided to get another. The idea had flopped was right. He had half a mind to hang one on.

Marty Dempsey wavered up to him, her glass so full that she was spilling the drink on Marylyn's carpet. Quint winced. The Dempsey's didn't give a damn about spilling drinks on carpets. Either their own, or anyone else's. The difference was they could afford to buy new ones. He doubted if Marylyn could.

Quint said disgustedly, "Pet, you aren't Grete Stahlecker, are you?"

Marty closed one eye carefully. "Dahling, I've never seen you so stoned. Never. Look real close. I'm... don't tell me. I'm Martha. Martha McCarthy. That's who."

"Don't look now," Quint said. "But you're Martha Dempsey. Remember? You married Ferdinand about twenty or thirty years ago."

"Oh, yeah," Marty said vaguely. She took him in suspiciously. "You're



not as stoned as you act." She concentrated for a moment then said, "I gotta go to the little girl's," and wandered off.

Quint looked after her, wondering why he associated with these people. What in the hell could the likes of Ferd and Marty Dempsey possibly do for him?

Some of the guests were leaving. It never had developed into much of a party, in spite of Marylyn's shining-bright efforts. She just wasn't cut out to be hostess for this type of a gang. Besides, they had all evidently come expecting some sort of excitement. That had been the rumor Mike and Quint had spread around. On the face of it, the excitement hadn't developed. The party was melting.

Ferd Dempsey, swaying—his once heroic proportions, now gone to fat, threatening to collapse—held high his glass. "We'll all go *tasca-hopping!*" he proclaimed. "Go bar hopping, pub crawling, saloon slinking. We'll all go on down to Chicote's and stan' in front, out on the street, and I'll give 'em a recitation."

Ferd, Quint decided cynically, was at the stage where he was going to render Omar Khayyam. To render means to tear apart. And sure enough. Here it came.

"And, as the Clock crew, those who stood before  
The tavern shouted—'Open then the Door!'  
You know how little while we have to stay,  
And, once departed, may return no more."

Quint Jones could just see Ferd and the rest standing in front of Chicote's shouting quatrains from the *Rubaiyat*. Come to think of it, though, there was a certain appropriateness about it all. Omar Khayyam, the patron saint of the hedonist. All over again, Quint Jones wondered what he was doing associating with this crowd. How had he ever gotten into this rut?

Ferd's idea grew on the rest A tasca crawl was in order. Carry the party onto the town. The remaining guests sought their things.

Mike Woolman was one of the last to leave. His eyes went from Quint to Marylyn, who was seeing someone out, and then back again. He said, "So, you've finally made it, eh?"

Quint scowled at him. "Come again?"

"Never mind," Mike grunted. "I suppose it's got to happen to her some day. Why not you?"

"Get lost, Buster," Quint growled at him.

"See you around," Mike said without inflection. "Good old Joe Garcia wants to talk to me about something."

"He probably wants to know what, if anything, we found out at this party."

"Well, I'll tell him we found out a nice round zero." Mike muttered. He turned to leave.

Something was churning in Quentin Jones' brain. Something brought to mind by Ferd. The last two lines of his quatrain went over and over through the columnist's head... *how little while we have to stay, and, once departed, may return no more.*

He wandered back to the bar and poured himself another short brandy. Actually, he hadn't drunk much tonight. He had kept himself sober, so that his mind would be keen enough to pick up the slightest hint of a clue. Much good it had done him.

Marylyn said, from behind him, "They're all gone, Quentin."

"Oh? Oh, yeah. I was just thinking."

She sat on the extremely large divan which dominated one side of the room. "Gracious! They drank so much. And were so loud. Thank goodness no one lives below."

He put his glass down, untouched, and sat beside her. Still thoughtful. *How little time we have to stay, and, once departed, may return no more*

"What were you thinking about... Quentin?"

He looked at her. "A lot of things. For once, what a worthless gang this is. Except for Mike, and yourself, who among them works? Do any work at all? Who among them has an iota of ideal? Who has a dream, an ambition—beyond getting over a hangover so he can start hanging a new one on? I think I'm a little disgusted with myself for remaining in this atmosphere as long as I have."

She said, urgently, "That's what I've been telling you, Quentin. You're a man of destiny. I knew it from the first time I met you. Even before, when I read some of your columns. I don't agree with all of them, of course. Perhaps not even most. But you haven't *found* yourself yet. When you do..." She had run out of breath in her earnestness.

Quint looked at her ruefully from the side of his eyes, then stared unseeing into a corner of the room. "I got a letter today from a new political party starting up in the States. They call themselves the Liberal Party."

"Liberal Party." Marylyn made a face.

He looked at her. "What ever happened to the liberals in the States? Back when I was a kid, during the depression, everybody was a liberal. There were darn few brave enough to call themselves conservatives, and to be a reactionary was like being in cahoots with the devil."

He thought about it. "Today, the term is rapidly disappearing in the States. To say you're a liberal now means you're a wide-eyed do-gooder. A woolly-head who signs petitions for peace, and marches in anti-segregation parades. I remember a speech Roosevelt once made..."

Marylyn made a face again, but moved slightly nearer to him, listening.

"... in which he defined reactionary, radical, liberal and conservative. For an example, he took an old bridge crossing a stream. The radical comes along and says the bridge is no longer safe, it should be torn down and a new one built utilizing the most modern methods. The conservative comes along and says, the bridge is fine, just the way it is, don't touch it. The liberal comes along and suggests various repairs to patch it up so that it can continue to be used. And the reactionary comes along and says tear it down, and we'll cross the stream the old way, jumping from rock to rock."

Marylyn laughed hesitantly, after looking into his face and seeing she was expected to.

Quint said, "Actually, there's little meaning to be found in the name of political parties nowadays. There's hardly a country in Europe that doesn't have parties that work the word Christian into their names. The Christian Democrats, the Christian Socialists, the Christian Republicans, and so on and so forth." He chuckled sarcastically. "Have you ever heard of a political party really based on Christian principles?"

Marylyn said, "I see what you mean. In Germany in the early 1920s the people liked the word socialist. They weren't too clear what it meant, but they liked the idea. So when Hitler's movement began to develop he called it National Socialism, although, of course, the Fuhrer had no sympathy with socialism at all."

He put an arm around her, and drew her nearer. She looked up at him suddenly. "Quint! That's it. This is your chance. What difference does it make what the name of the party is? This is your opportunity to get in on the ground floor."

He pursed his lips and chuckled wryly. "They wanted me to run for Senator from my state."

"Quint! It's your chance! Why, in six months you'd be head of the party."

Still chuckling, he drew her closer, and ran a finger down along a slight scar near her temple. He scowled and said, "How did you get this?"

"What? Oh. An auto accident when I was a little girl."

*how ... little ... time ... we... have ... to stay ... and . . . once ... departed  
... may ... return ... no ... more...*

He murmured, astonished by it all, "But that's the whole thing, isn't it? The effort to stay on. The effort to return, though it all should have ended."

She frowned up at him. "I... I don't know what you mean, Quentin."

"Ann Asian and her H3 vitamin," he murmured. "She's probably a comparative amateur."

"Quentin," she said.

He looked at her strangely, "You've obviously had your face lifted, probably more than once. How old are you, really, Grete?"

She drew back from him,

He said, "How long did you really live in Border, Nebraska? Just long enough to establish a phoney identity?"

"Quentin! Don't attempt to judge me... not yet. You don't understand. I lived many years in the United States. For a time I attended school there."

He was nodding. "Back before the first World War, I imagine. How old are you, Grete Stahlecker?"

Her face went strange. She had removed herself from his enveloping arm, but now she seized his hand tightly. "I am seventy-two years old, Quentin!"

Quentin Jones stared at her, unbelieving, even though at long last he knew.

"Quentin, don't you see what that means? You too can be all but immortal. You are a man of destiny, like the Führer was a man of destiny. We... Herr Ferencsik and I... can search out such weaknesses as your present body might have. Seek them out, and eliminate them. Is your heart potentially that organ of your body which will first fail? We will find you a strong heart, Quentin. Any weakness we can change."

He looked into her face, and through it, into her all. Into the deepest recesses of the psyche.

"So," he said softly. "Professor Ferencsik is with you. And together you are to create your superman."

"Yes, yes," she hurried. "He is with me. Here, here in this house."

"And he believes in this same dream you have?"

"Yes, of course," her eyes shifted only slightly. "A superman to lead the world to a single government To make all earth one strong State. It was Führer's dream, and Alfred Rosenberg's. It is only that Herr Ferencsik is

impractical. He doesn't realize that there must be a master race, we Teutons and Anglo-Saxons. The inferior races will serve us."

Her grip on his arm tightened urgently. Her face had a fey quality, a wild quality.

Quint said, almost gently, "So, you would make a superman of me?" His face twisted grimly. "As you did Martin Bormann, Grete?"

"Bormann, he is nothing! A clod. True, at first I thought I could make him the new Fuhrer. But there was still much for me to learn, and now, with my new knowledge, and with the help of Herr Professor Ferencsik..."

Quint said, "Grete, this question keeps coming up. Why was it necessary to burn Hitler's body, there outside the Reich Chancellery, after he had committed suicide?"

Her eyes went strange, shifted strangely, but her voice came, as though reciting. "It was necessary that we burn it so that the Führer's enemies would never know that the body had been mutilated, that the brain had been removed."

The cold went through Quentin Jones as never before in all his life. The next words were hard to keep level. "And whose brain would be in this renovated body of mine? My jazzed up new superman body which would last a few hundred years?"

She shook her head, and again her hand tightened urgently on his arm, and her eyes bore into his in complete earnestness. "Quentin, you need not fear. Do not be silly. It would be your own brain. Your personality. A simple operation or two, a simple grafting..."

"To... what... extent... would... you... replace... my... own... brain... with... that... of... your... once... Fuhrer..."

"But just a little bit. The very seat of his genius. The psyche, the ego..."

A new voice from one of the rear doors said wealdy, "She's mad, of course. Doktor Stahlecker is mad. A genius, perhaps, but mad. She has showed me the portions of the brain she thinks possible to replace in your skull. They are nothing, after all these years, but mush. Organic, meaningless mush. If she is allowed to operate on you, Quentin Jones, you

will become as Martin Bormann has become."

Marylyn Worth—Doktor Grete Stohlecker—was on her feet, glaring at the intruder. She spun back to Quint. "But you can see! Look, I am younger than twenty years ago. Look at my face! My body! Now I am even beautiful, as I was never beautiful before, my Führer! Yes, yes! Now you understand. You will be the new Führer, and I will be your bride. All these years, my Fuhrer, I have kept myself for you.?"

His horror must have reflected in his face.

She looked at him. Shook her head in incomprehension. "But..." she whimpered, "... So long, so very long." She shook her head.

And then as though by horrible miracle, her face began to break up. The blondness of hair seemed to go dull, as though from gold to corroding brass. The fire went from blueness of eye, and they dimmed to aged grey. Her shoulders slumped forward, in an older woman's slump of age. Her mouth went slack, her face pinched, and her seventy years and more of life showed through.

Nicolas Ferencsik had leaned back against the wall, resting from whatever ordeal he had been through these past several days.

And through the door through which he had come only a few minutes before, lurched the creature of Doktor Grete Stahlecker's manufacture.

In first glance it was a man of possibly forty, the body well formed, the face of a certain heavy handsomeness. But second look branded it hulk. A meaningless, nonthinking hulk that walked. Empty of eye. Empty of brain.

Its Zombi-eyes went to its master.

Suddenly she galvanized. She pointed at Quentin Jones, who long since had come to his feet. She shrieked. "Take him. Take him to the laboratory! He doesn't realize what I offer. I will prove everything!"

The thing's dull eyes came back to Quint and there was the dim, faintest gleam of pleasure. It lurched forward, the big strong hands coming up from its sides where until now they had dangled, lifeless.

"Run!" Ferencsik blurted, as though with his last strength.

Without thought, Quent Jones went into the *Zenkutsu-dachi* lunge position. The rear knee straight, the front knee bent so that the knee cap was directly over the arch of the foot. His body weight was evenly distributed between both feet.

The monster's movements were deceptively fast. It came in, soft gurgling sounds emanating from its throat, its hands forward to grasp.

Quint exhaled, with a piercing Kiai shout of "Zut" and darted forward, without conscious thought going into the tenth Kata. He blocked the lunging creature's right hand with a hard blow of his own right, grasped the wrist with the thumb pointed upward, and pivoted on his left foot to the right. His back was to the growling, muttering thing. He kept his hold of the right wrist, raised the other's hand high as he drew the body closer to his back. With his left hand he struck brutally into its groin. He seized the peach, as his Jap instructor had called it, and brought his left arm down, holding the left wrist now, over his right shoulder and across the chest. He pulled down on the thing's right arm as he pulled up on the groin, and threw it over his shoulder.

Automatically, Quint went into the *Hachiji-dachi*, spreadout position, but his face went blank when he saw the thing roll out of the punishing karate kata. It was the first time in his several years of practicing the art, that Quentin Jones had ever seriously performed the tenth kata. It should have resulted in at least complete elimination of the opponent; it could have resulted in death.

But the creature was coming to its feet again, still moving in deceptive speed, considering its appearance of clumsiness. There was spittle at the side of its mouth, but it still mewled as though in pleasure.

"Take him! Take him! The laboratory." Somewhere in the background Doktor Grete Stahlecker was screaming, unheard by either.

It came again, its hands clawing for a grip. Let it get its hands on this shrieking, dancing opponent, and it knew that then all would be over. Then the master would have her wish. Then would come the good feeling, perhaps. Perhaps the master would allow him to do that which brought the good feeling.

Quint, in desperation, decided upon the nineteenth kata, screamed his Kiai yell, and blurred into the motions of chopping the other's kidneys,



stamping his left knee pit, and finally throwing him again clear across the room, crushing a straight chair to splinters in the process.

Quint was breathing deeply now. Nothing living should be able to take this punishment. Nothing living. He assumed the *Kiba-dachi* straddle position in desperation. If the thing ever got its hands on him properly...

He had no illusion now about Grete Stahlecker being able to control it, now that it was in the heat of mortal combat. Nothing could control it. Of that he was sure.

The monster came lumbering in, perhaps more slowly now, or perhaps that was Quentin Jones' wishful thinking. He hit it with the eleventh Kata, Okinawa style, attacking the groin again, chopping its shoulder in a judo chop, then darting away.

The thing was shaking its head and staring at him stupidly.

The Doktor was screaming something else now. Something Quint couldn't make out. He couldn't stand this pace. The thing was heavy to work with. It must have gone well over two hundred pounds. And it was fast. He had to use top energies, razor edge reflexes, to keep way from it and still punish it.

He moved in again, feeling his weariness. He must take the fight to the foe. Must finish it off, or he was sunk. He could feel his strength melting. He tried the twenty-fourth Kata. Something he had seen professional instructors enact, but which he had never tried.

He screamed, "Zut!" throwing a left block against the other's left wrist, grabbing the outside of its wrist and applying a temporary wrist lock. He kicked into its groin again with a left forward kick, and with his right hand came down hard with a judo chop to its neck. Still holding the wrist he pivoted behind the now squealing thing and stamped its left knee pit with his right foot, sending it sprawling.

He resumed his position, seemingly at his ease and awaiting further combat. The thing might not know, but Quint Jones was at the end of his resources. All his training told him that he had done sufficient to have killed two or three men. But the thing seemed still strong.

Grete Stahlecker, her face livid, her full madness upon her, was

screaming at the creature. "Kill, kill! I order you. Kill him, kill him. It is your master who says, *kill, kill!*"

It was on its knees, breathing deep, shuddering breaths. Its eyes went from Quint to the screaming madwoman, and then back again. It had ceased, long since, to mewl its pleasure. It looked into Quint's face, looked into the easy karate stance he had assumed. Far, far down, he knew he had met defeat, that he could never conquer this new master.

"Kill him!" Grete Stahlecker shrilled.

Her voice irritated the thing. Could she not see? He could not obey. It was impossible to obey. This new master prevailed. Her high voice irritated him beyond bearing.

It lurched to his feet and came toward her.

"No," Ferencsik said. The Professor had collapsed into a chair. Now he shook his head. "No. She is one of the world's greatest—"

Quint's eyes suddenly widened, as he caught the significance. He moved forward... too late.

She never knew. Her vision blurred by hate and hysteria, the thing was upon her and had finished with her, before her hate-fuddled brain could have comprehended. Its clawed hands ripped out her throat, beat in her skull, before she knew its purpose, could comprehend its purpose.

It turned away from her, and sunk to its knees, its hand out stretched toward Quentin Jones as though in supplication. As though supplicating a new master.

Quint, sickened, moved forward, his right hand went up and chopped down, in a single judo blow to the back of the neck.

Quint never remembered, later, how he got to the couch. Perhaps Nicolas Ferencsik had helped him there, half carried him there. All he knew was that reaction, a form of shock, set in, and the black ebbed over him.

He felt, eventually, a stinging of the face. Shook his head. Finally managed, "Cut it out, damn it!"

He could hear Mike Woolman's voice. "He's coming out."

He felt another slap on his cheek, and opened his eyes. "Listen," he growled. "You do that once more, and I'll slug you."

He sat up, and shook his head. "What happened?"

"That's a good question," Mike snorted.

Jose Garcia Mendez was there too, and a couple of what were obviously plainclothes men. In fact, Quint vaguely recognized one of them as having been in his apartment several days ago when he was being suspected of Digby's death.

Garcia looked about the shambles of the room. He said, mildly, "We were hoping you'd tell us, Quint old chum. The professor has clammed up."

Quint closed his eyes for a moment, then opened them again. "Somebody get me a brandy, huh?" When it came, he downed it, stiff wristed. "Where'd you all come from?"

Garcia said, "Your American private eye stories to the contrary, the police do sometimes get results. We've been checking out everybody even remotely concerned with this matter. Even our square little schoolteacher, Marylyn Worth. So it turns out that not only does she rent this king-size apartment, supposedly just for herself alone, but the apartment down below as well. So what does an old maid school teacher want with this much space? So we took a look-see, and down below we found one of the most elaborate laboratories in Madrid. With some rather gruesome specimens in the deep freeze. So we thought we might ask Miss Worth a few leading questions."

Mike bit out, "She was really Doktor Stahlecker, wasn't she? And that thing..." he motioned with a thumb.

Jose Garcia said, "What a stink *this* is going to cause. For everybody. Everybody concerned." He looked at Quint. "Believe it or Ripley, chum. We didn't know these two characters were in the country. Obviously, they were both eligible for the nut factory."

Quint rubbed a hand over his mouth. "Let me think."

Mike said happily, "What a story."

Garcia winced.

Quint looked at his newspaperman friend. "Considering all the ramifications, maybe the story isn't quite what you thought. Not quite so complicated. There was a madman..." he looked at Garcia "... we can't avoid that part of it Too many people are involved. Including his last victim, an American school teacher named Marylyn Worth. But the police caught him at that point and killed him when he tried to escape. That's the story."

"Hey, wait a minute!" Mike protested. "You're not going to get away with that. What happened to Martin Bormann?"

Quint looked at the dead thing on the floor, and shuddered inwardly. "Martin Bormann must have died a long time ago," he murmured.

"Oh, yeah? And Doktor Grete Stahlecker? You're not going to louse up the story of the century."

Quint looked at him. "You'd have a hard time proving that poor girl over there was actually a woman of some seventy years, Mike. Especially in view of the fact that not even Albrecht Stroehlein recognized her. Whether it was because her seeming youth threw him off, I don't know. Perhaps it was plastic surgery. Whatever, you'd have a tough time proving to your editors this faatastic yarn of Bormann and Stahlecker."

Mike was plaintive. "What's your point, Quint? Why not back me up on this?"

The columnist looked at Garcia. "Brett-Home, Digby and Nuriyev were all wrong. They weren't dealing with a potential try at getting Nazis back into command of West Germany. They were dealing with a mad woman, and a brainless creature, both of whom we ought to have the decency to pity. Both of them should have—and really did—die in that bunker with Hitler, Goebbels and the dreams of the Third Reich. Why give the world one more propaganda item to jitter over? And why louse up Spain's reputation to the point of sending a few hundred thousand tourists looking for some other bargain paradise? I think you just better make the most of a Jack the Ripper type story, Mike. You'll have a world beat on it."

Garcia looked at him. "Thanks, Quint. I suppose you know we'll be tearing up this *persona non grata* thing?"

Quint Jones shrugged. His mouth twisted cynically. "I'll be leaving anyway. I'm off to some island, or something, where I can just sit and think awhile. I have some planning of my life to do. And I don't think it's going to involve either writing snide columns, or going into politics."

***The End***