THE GADGET

HAD

A GHOST

HIS was Istanbul, and the sounds of the city—motor-cars and clumping donkeys, the nasal cries of peddlers and the distant roar of a jet-plane somewhere over the city—came muted through the windows of Coghian's flat. It was already late dusk, and Coghian had just gotten back from the American College, where he taught physics. He relaxed in his chair and waited. He was to meet Laurie later, at the Hotel Petra on the improbably-named Grande Rue de Petra, and hadn't too much time to spare; but he was intrigued by the unexpected guests he had found waiting for him when he arrived. Duval, the Frenchman, haggard and frantic with impatience; Lieutenant Ghalil, calm and patient and impressive in the uniform of the Istanbul Police Department. Ghalil had introduced himself with perfect courtesy and explained that he had come with M. Duval to ask for information which only Mr. Coghlan, of the American College, could possibly give.

They were now in Coghian's sitting-room. They held the iced drinks which were formal hospitality. Coghian waited.

"I am afraid," said Lieutenant Ghalil, wryly, "that you will think us mad, Mr. Coghian."

Duval drained his glass and said bitterly, "Surely I am mad! It cannot be otherwise!"

Coghian raised sandy eyebrows at them. The Turkish lieutenant of police shrugged. "I think that what we wish to ask, Mr. Coghian, is: Have you, by any chance, been visiting the thirteenth century?"

Coghlan smiled politely. Duval made an impatient gesture. “Pardon, M. Coghian! I apologize for our seeming insanity. But that is truly a serious question!”

This time Coghlan grinned. “Then the answer’s ‘No.’ Not lately. You evidently are aware that I teach physics at the College. My course turns out graduates who can make electrons jump through hoops, you might say, and the better students can snoop into the private lives of neutrons. But fourth-dimension stuff—you refer to time-travel I believe—is out of my line.”

Lieutenant Ghalil sighed. He began to unwrap the bulky parcel that sat on his lap. A book appeared. It was large, more than four inches thick, and its pages were sheepskin. Its cover was heavy, ancient leather—so old that it was friable—and inset in it were deeply-carved ivory medallions. Coghlan recognized the style. They were Byzantine ivory-carvings, somewhat battered, done in the manner of the days before Byzantium became successively Constantinople and Stamboul and Istanbul.

“An early copy,” observed Ghalil, “of a book called the *Alexiad,* by the Princess Anna Commena, from the thirteenth century I mentioned. Will you be so good as to look, Mr. Goghlan?”

He opened the volume very carefully and handed it to Goghlan. The thick, yellowed pages were covered with those graceless Greek characters which—without capitals or divisions between words or any punctuation or paragraphing—were the text of books when they had just ceased to be written on long strips and rolled up on sticks. Coghian regarded it curiously.

“Do you by any chance read Byzantine Greek?” asked the Turk hopefully.

Coghian shook his head. The police lieutenant looked depressed. He began to turn pages, while Coghlan held the book. The very first page stood up stiffly. There was brown, crackled adhesive around its edge, evidence that at some time it had been glued to the cover and lately had been freed. The top half of the formerly hidden sheet was now covered by a blank letterhead of the Istanbul Police Departmenl~ clipped in place by modem

metal paperclips. On the uncovered part of the page, the bottom half, there were five brownish smudges that somehow looked familiar. Four in a row, and a larger one beneath them. Lieutenant Ghalil offered a pocket magnifying-glass.

"Will you examine?" he asked.

Coghian looked. After a moment he raised his head.

"They're fingerprints," he agreed. "What of it?"

Duval stood up and abruptly began to pace up and down the room, as if filled with frantic impatience. Lieutenant Ghalil drew a deep breath.

"I am about to say the absurd," he said ruefully. "M. Duval came upon this book in the Bibliotheque National in Paris. It has been owned by the library for more than a hundred years. Before, it was owned by the Comptes de Huisse, who in the sixteenth century were the patrons of a man known as Nostradamus. But the book itself is of the thirteenth century. Written and bound in Byzantium. In the Bibliotheque National, M. Duval observed that a leaf was glued tightly. He loosened it. He found those fingerprints and—other writing."

Goghlan said, "Most interesting," thinking that he should be leaving for his dinner engagement with Laurie and her father.

"Of course," said the police officer, "M. Duval suspected a hoax. He had the ink examined chemically, then spectroscopically. But there could be no doubt. The fingerprints were placed there when the book was new. I repeat, there can be no doubt!"

Goghlan had no inkling of what was to come. He said, puzziedly:

"Fingerprinting is pretty modem stuff. So I suppose it's remarkable to find prints so old. But—"

Duval, pacing up and down the room, uttered a stifled exclamation. He stopped by Coghlan's desk. He played feverishly with a wooden-handled Kurdish dagger that Goghlan used as a letter-opener, his eyes a little wild.

Lieutenant Ghalil said resignedly:

"The fingerprints are not remarkable, Mr. Coghian. They are impossible. I assure you that, considering their age alone, they

are quite impossible! And that is so small, so trivial an impossibility compared to the rest! You see, Mr. Coghian, those fingerprints are yours!"

While Goghian sat, staring rather intently at nothing at all, the Turkish lieutenant of police brought out a small fingerprint pad, the kind used in up-to-date police departments. No need for ink. One presses one's fingers on the pad and the prints develop of themselves.

"If I may show you—"

Coghlan let him roll the tips of his fingers on the glossy top sheet of the pad. It was a familiar enough process. Goghlan had had his fingerprints taken when he got his passport for Turkey, and again when he registered as a resident-alien with the Istanbul Police Department. The Turk offered the magnifying glass again. Coghlan studied the thumbprint he had just made. After a moment's hesitation, he compared it with the thumbprint on the sheepskin. He jumped visibly. He checked the other prints, one by one, with increasing care and incredulity.

Presently he said in the tone of one who does not believe his own words: "They—they do seem to be alike! Except for—"

"Yes," said Lieutenant Ghalil. "The thumbprint on the sheepskin shows a scar that your thumb does not now have. But still it is your fingerprint—that and all the others. It is both philosophically and mathematically impossible for two sets of fingerprints to match unless they come from the same hand!"

"These do," observed Goghlan.

Duval muttered unhappily to himself. He put down the Kurdish knife and paced again. Ghalil shrugged.

"M. Duval observed the prints," he explained, "quite three months ago—the prints and the writing. It took him some time to be convinced that the matter was not a hoax. He wrote to the Istanbul Police to ask if their records showed a Thomas Coghian residing at **750** Fatima. Two months ago!"

Coghlan jumped again. "Where'd he get that address?"

"You will see," said the Turk. "I repeat that this was two months ago! I replied that you were registered, but not at that

address. He wrote again, forwarding a photograph of part of that sheepskin page and asking agitatedly if those were your fingerprints. I replied that they were, save for the scar on the thumb. And I added, with lively curiosity, that two days previously you had removed to 750 Fatima—the address M. Duval mentioned a month previously."

"Unfortunately," said Coghian, "that just couldn't happen. I didn't know the address myself, until a week before I moved."

"I am aware that it could not happen," said Chalil painedly. "My point is that it did."

"You're saying," objected Goghian, "that somebody had information three weeks before it existed!"

Ghalil made a wry face. "That is a masterpiece of understatement—"

"It is madness!" said Duval hoarsely. "It is lunacy! Ce *n'est pas logique!* Be so kind, M. Coghlan, as to regard the rest of the page!"

Goghian pulled off the clips that held the police-department letterhead over the top of the parchment page, and immediately wondered if his hair was really standing on end. There was writing there. He saw words in faded, unbelievably ancient ink. It was modern English script. The handwriting was as familiar to Coghlan as his own— Which it was. It said!

> *See Thomas Coghian,* **750** *Fatima, Istanbul.*
> *Professor, President, so what?*
> *Gadget at* 8o *Hosain, second floor, back room.*
> *Make sure of Mannard. To be killed.*

Underneath, his fingerprints remained visible.

Coghlan stared at the sheet. He found his glass and gulped at it. On more mature consideration, he drained it. The situation seemed to call for something of the sort.

There was silence in the room, save for the drowsy sounds of the night outside. They were not all drowsy, at that. There were

voices, and somewhere a radio emitted that nasal masculine howling which to the Turkish ear is music. Uninhibited taxicabs, an unidentifiable jingling, an intonation of speech, all made the sound that of Istanbul and no other place on earth. Moreover, they were the sounds of Istanbul at nightfall.

Duval was still. Ghalil looked at Coghian and was silent. **And** Coghlan stared at the sheet of ancient parchment.

He faced the completely inexplicable, and he had to accept it. His name and present address—no puzzle, if Ghalil simply lied. The line about Laurie's father, Mannard, implied that he was in danger of some sort; but it didn't mean much because of its vagueness. The line referring to another address, 8o Hosain, and a "gadget" was wholly without any meaning at all. But the line about "professor, president"—that hit hard.

It was what Coghlan told himself whenever he thought of Laurie. He was a mere instructor in physics. As such, it would not be a good idea for him to ask Laurie to marry him. In time he might become a professor. Even then it would not be a good idea to ask the daughter of an umpty-millionaire to marry him. In more time, with the breaks, he might become a college president—the odds were astronomically against it, but it could happen. Then what? He'd last in that high estate until a college board of trustees decided that somebody else might be better at begging for money. All in all, then, too darned few prospects to justify his ever asking Laurie to marry him—only an instructor, with a professorship the likely peak of his career, and a presidency of a college something almost unimaginable. So, when Coghlan thought of Laurie, he said sourly to himself, "Professor, president, so what?" And was reminded not to yield to any inclination to be romantic.

But he had not said that four-word phrase to anybody on earth. He was the only human being to whom it would mean anything at all. It was absolute proof that he, Thomas Coghlan, had written those words. But he hadn't.

He swallowed.

"That's my handwriting," he said carefully, "and I have to

suppose that I wrote it. But I have no memory of doing so. I'll be much obliged if you'll tell me what this is all about."

Duval burst into frantic speech.

"That is what I have come to demand of you, M. Coghlan! I have been a sane man! I have been a student of the Byzantine empire and its history! I am an authority upon it! But this— modern English, written when there was no modern English? Arabic numerals, when Arabic numerals of that form were unknown? House-numbers when they did not exist, and the city of Istanbul when there was no city of that name on Earth? I could not rest! M. Coghlan, I demand of you—what is the meaning of this?"

Coghlan looked again at the faded brown writing on the parchment. Duval abruptly collapsed, buried his face in his hands. Ghalil carefully crushed out his cigarette. He waited.

Coghlan stood up with a certain deliberation.

"I think we can do with another drink."

He gathered up the glasses and left the room, but he did not find that his mind grew any clearer. He found himself wishing that Duval and Ghalil had never been born, to bring a puzzle like this into his life. He hadn't written that message—but nobody else could have. And it was written.

It suddenly occurred to him that he had no idea what the message referred to, or what he should do about it.

He went back into the living-room with the refilled glasses. Duval still sat with his head in his hands. Ghalil had another cigarette going, was regarding its ash with an expression of acute discomfort. Coghlan put down the drinks.

"I don't see how anyone else could have written that message," he observed, "but I don't remember writing it myself, and I've no idea what it means. Since you brought it, you must have some idea."

"No," said Ghalil. "My first question was the only sane one I can ask. Have you been traveling in the thirteenth century? I gather that you have not. I even feel that you have no plans of the sort."

"At least no plans," agreed Coghian, with irony. "I know of nowhere I am less likely to visit."

Ghalil waved his cigarette, and the ash fell off.

"As a police officer, there is a mention of someone to be killed; possibly murdered. That makes it my affair. As a student of philosophy it is surely my affair! In both police work and in philosophy it is sometimes necessary to assume the absurd, in order to reason toward the sensible. I would like to do so."

"By all means!" said Coghlan dryly.

"At the moment, then," said Ghalil, with a second wave of his cigarette, "you have as yet no anticipation of any attempt to murder Mr. Mannard. You have no scar upon your thumb, nor any expectation of one. And the existence of—let us say—a 'gadget' at 8o Hosain is not in your memory. Right?"

"Quite right," admitted Coghian.

"Now if you are to acquire the scar," observed Ghalil, "you will make—or have made, I must add—those fingerprints at some time in the future, when you will know of danger to Mr. Mannard, and of a gadget at 8o Hosain. This-i---"

"Ce *n'est pas logique!"* protested Duval bitterly.

"But it is logic," said Ghalil calmly. "The only flaw is that it is not common sense. Logically, then, one concludes that at some time in the future, Mr. Goghlan will know these things and will wish to inform himself, in what is now the present, of them. He will wish—perhaps next week—to inform himself today that there is danger to Mr. Mannard and that there is something of significance at 8o Hosain, on the second floor in the back room. So he will do so. And this memorandum on the fly-leaf of this very ancient book will be the method by which he informs himself."

Coghlan said, "But you don't believe that!"

"I do not admit that I believe it," said Ghalil with a smile. "But I think it would be wise to visit 8o Hosain. I cannot think of anything else to do!"

"Why not tell Mannard about all this?" asked Coghian dryly.

"He would think me insane," said the Turk, just as dryly. "And with reason. In fact, I suspect it myself."

"I'll tell him," said Coghlan, "for what it's worth. I'm having dinner with him and with his daughter tonight. It will make small talk at least." He looked at his watch. "I really should be leaving now."

Lieutenant Chalil rose politely. Duval took his head from his hands and stood up also, looking more haggard now than at the beginning of the talk. Something occurred to Coghlan.

"Tell me," he said curiously, "M. Duval, when you first found this book, what made you loosen a glued-down page?"

Duval spread out his hands. Ghalil turned back the cover again, and put the fly-leaf flat. On what had been the visible side there was a note, a gloss, of five or six lines. It was in an informal sort of Greek lettering, and unintelligible to Coghian. But, judging by its placement, it was a memo by some previous owner of the book, rather than any contribution of the copyist.

"My translator and M. Duval agree," observed Ghalil. "They say it says, 'This book has traveled to the frigid Beyond and returned, bearing writing of the adepts who ask news of Appolonius.' I do not know what that means, nor did M. Duval, but he searched for other writings. When he saw a page glued down, he loosened it—and you know what has resulted."

Goghlan said vexedly, "I wouldn't know what an adept is, and I can hardly guess what a frigid beyond is, or a warm one either. But I do know an Appolonius. I think he's a Greek, but he calls himself a Neoplatonist as if that were a nationality, and says he hails from somewhere in Arabia. He's trying to get Mannard to finance some sort of political shenanigan. But he wouldn't be referred to. Not seven centuries ago!"

"You were," said Ghalil. "And Mr. Mannard. And 8o Hosain. I think M. Duval and myself will investigate that address and see if it solves the mystery or deepens it."

Duval suddenly shook his head.

"No," he said with a sort of pathetic violence. "This affair is

not possible! To think of it invites madness! Mr. Coghian, let us thrust all this from our minds! Let us abandon it! I ask your pardon for my intrusion. I had hoped to find an explanation which could be believed. I abandon the hope and the attempt. I shall go back to Paris and deny to myself that any of this has ever taken place!"

Coghlan did not believe him, said nothing.

"I hope," said Ghalil mildly, "that you may reconsider." He moved toward the door with the Frenchman in tow. "To abandon all inquiry at this stage would be suicidal!"

Coghlan said:

"Suicidal?"

"For one," admitted Ghalil, ruefully, "I should die of curiosity!"

He waved his hand and went out, pushing Duval. And Goghlan began to dress for his dinner with Laurie and her father at the Hotel Petra. But as he dressed, his forehead continually creased into a scowl of somehow angry puzzlement.

II

All the taxicabs of Istanbul are driven by escaped maniacs whom the Turkish police inexplicably leave at large. The cab in which Coghlan drove toward the Hotel Petra was driven by a man with very dark skin and very white teeth and a conviction that the fate of every pedestrian was determined by Allah and he did not have to worry about them. His cab was equipped with an unusually full-throated horn, and fortunately he seemed to love the sound of it. So Coghian rode madly through narrow streets in which foot-passengers seemed constantly to be recoiling in horror from the cab-horn, and thereby escaping annihilation by the cab.

The cab passed howling through preposterously narrow lanes. It turned corners on two wheels with less than inches to spare. It rushed roaring upon knots of people who dissolved with incredible agility before its approach, and it plunged into alleys like tunnels, and it emerged into the wider streets of the more mod-

em part of town with pungent Turkish curses hanging upon it like garlands.

Coghlan did not notice. Once he was alone, suspicions sprang up luxuriantly. But he could no more justify them than he could accept the situation his visitors had presented. The two had not asked for money or hinted at it. Coghlan didn't have any money, anyhow, for them to be scheming to get. The only man a swindling scheme could be aimed at was Mannard. Mannard had money. He's made a fortune building dams, docks, railroads and power installations in remote parts of the world. But he was hardly a likely mark for a profitable hoax, even if his name was mentioned in that memorandum so impossibly in Coghlan's handwriting. He was one of the major benefactors of the college in which Coghlan taught. He had at least one other major philanthropy in view right now. He'd be amused. But there was Laurie, of course. She was a point where he could be vulnerable, be hit hard.

Decidedly Mannard had to be told about it.

The cab rushed hooting down the wide expanse of the Grande Rue de Petra. It made a U-turn. It eeled its way between a sedate limousine and a ferocious Turkish Army jeep, swerved precariously around a family group frozen in mid-pavement, barely grazed a parked convertible, and came to a squealing stop precisely before the canopy of the Hotel Petra. Its chauffeur beamed at Coghlan and happily demanded six times the legal fare for the journey.

Coghlan beckoned to the hotel *Commissionaire.* He put twice the legal fare in the man's hand, said, "Pay him and keep the change," and went into the hotel. His action was a form of American efficiency. It saved money and argument. The discussion was already reaching the shouting stage as he entered the hotel's large and impressive lobby.

Laurie and her father were waiting for him. Laurie was a good deal better-looking than he tried to believe, so he muttered, "Professor, president, so what?" as he shook hands. It was very difficult to avoid being in love with Laurie, but he worked at it.

"I'm late," he told them. "Two of the weirdest characters you ever saw turned up with absolutely the weirdest story you ever heard. I had to listen to it. It had me flipped."

A gleaming white shirt-front moved into view. A beaming smile caressed him. The short broad person who called himself Appolonius the Great—he came almost up to Goghlan's shoulder and outweighed him by forty pounds—cordially extended a short and pudgy arm and a round fat hand. Coghlan noticed that Appolonius' expensive wrist-watch noticeably made a dent in the fatness of his wrist.

"Surely," said Appolonius reproachfully, "you found no one stranger than myself!"

Coghlan shook hands as briefly as possible. Appolonius the Great was an illusionist—a theatrical magician—who was taking leave from a season he described as remarkable in the European capitals west of the Iron Curtain. His specialty, Coghlan understood, was sawing a woman in half before his various audiences, and then producing her unharmed afterward. He said proudly that when he had bisected the woman, the two halves of her body were carried off at opposite sides of the stage. This, he allowed it to be understood, was something nobody else could do with any hope of reintegrating her afterward.

"You know Appolonius," grunted Mannard. "Let's go to dinner."

He led the way toward the dining-room. Laurie took Gogh-lan's arm. She looked up at him and smiled.

"I was afraid you'd turned against me, Tommy," she said. "I was practising a look of pretty despair to use if you didn't turn up."

Goghian looked down at her and hardened his heart. On two previous occasions he'd resolutely broken appointments when he'd have seen Laurie, because he liked her too much and didn't want her to find it out. But he was afraid she'd guessed it anyway.

"Good thing I had this date," he told her. "My visitors had

me dizzy. Come to think of it, I'm going to ask Appolonius how they did their stunt. It's in his line, more or less."

The head-waiter bowed the party to a table. There were only the four of them at dinner, and there was the gleam of silver and glass and the sound of voices, with a string orchestra valiantly trying to make a strictly Near-Eastern version of the *Rhapsody in Blue* sound like American swing. They didn't make it, but at least it wasn't loud.

Coghlan waited for the hors d'oeuvres, his face unconsciously growing gloomy. Appolonius the Great was lifting his wine-glass. The deeply-indented wristwatch annoyed Coghlan. Its sweep. second-hand irritated him unreasonably. Appolonius was saying blandly:

"I think it is time for me to reveal my great good fortune! I offer a toast to the Neoplatonist Autonomous Republic-to-be! Some think it a lie, and some a swindle and me the would-be swindler. But drink to its reality!"

He drank. Then he beamed more widely still.

"I have secured financing for the bribes I need to pay," he explained. All his chins radiated cheer. "I may not reveal who has decided to enrich some scoundrelly politicians in order to aid my people, but I am very happy. For myself *and* my people!"

"That's fine!" said Mannard.

"I shall no longer annoy you for a contribution," Appolonius assured him. "Is it not a relief?"

Mannard chuckled. Appolonius the Great was almost openly a fake; certainly he told about his "people" with the air of one who does not expect anybody to take him seriously. The story was that somewhere in Arabia there was a group of small, obscure villages in which the doctrines of Neoplatonism survived as a religion. They were maintained by a caste of philosopher-priests who kept the population bemused by magic, and Appolonius claimed to have been one of the hierarchy and to be astonishing all Europe with the trickery which was the mainstay of the cult. It sounded like the sort of publicity an over-imaginative press-

agent might have contrived. A tradition of centuries of the development and worship of the art of hocus-pocus was not too credible. And now, it seemed, Appolonius was claiming that somebody had put up money to bribe some Arab government and secure safety for the villagers in revealing their existence and at-least-eccentric religion.

"I'd some visitors today," said Coghian, "who may have been using some of your Neoplatonistic magic." He turned to Mannard. "By the way, sir, they told me that I am probably going to murder you."

Mannard looked up amusedly. He was a big man, deeply tanned, and looked capable of looking after himself. He said:

"Knife, bullet, or poison, Tommy? Or will you use a cyclotron? How was that?"

Coghlan explained. The story of his interview with the harassed Duval and the skeptical Ghalil sounded even more absurd than before, as he told it.

Mannard listened. The hors d'oeuvres came. The soup. Coghlan told the story very carefully, and was the more annoyed as he found himself trying to explain how impossible it was that it could be a fake. Yet he didn't mention that one line which had most disturbed him.

Mannard chuckled once or twice as Coghlan's story unfolded. "Clever!" he said when Coghlan finished. "How do you suppose they did it, and what do they want?"

Appolonius the Great wiped his mouth and topmost chin.

"I do not like it," he said seriously. "I do not like it at all. Oh, the book and the fingerprints and the writing ... one can do such things. I remember that once, in Madrid, I—but no matter! They are amateurs, and therefore they may be dangerous folk."

Laurie said, "I think Tommy'd have seen through anything crude. And I don't think he told quite all the story. I've known him a long time. There's something that still bothers him."

Coghlan flushed. Laurie could read his mind uncannily.

"There was," he admitted, "a line that I didn't tell. It men-

tioned something that would mean nothing to anyone but myself—and I've never mentioned it to anyone."

Appolonius sighed. "Ah, how often have I not read someone's inmost thoughts! Everyone believes his own thoughts quite unique! But still, I do not like this!"

Laurie leaned close to Coghlan. She said, under her breath, "Was the thing you didn't tell—about me?"

Coghian looked at her uncomfortably, and nodded. "Nice!" said Laurie, and smiled mischievously at him. Appolonius suddenly made a gesture. He lifted a goblet with water in it. He held it up at the level of their eyes.

"I show you the principle of magic," he said firmly. "Here is a glass, containing water only. You see it contains nothing else!"

Mannard looked at it warily. The water was perfectly clear. Appolonius swept it around the table at eye-level.

"You see! Now, Mr. Coghian, enclose the goblet with your hands. Surround the bowl. You, at least, are not a confederate! Now ..

The fat little man looked tensely at the glass held in Coghian's cupped hands. Coghlan felt like a fool.

"Abracadabra 750 Fatima Miss Mannard is very beautiful!" he said in a theatrical voice. Then he added placidly, "Any other words would have done as well. Put down the glass, Mr. CoghIan, and look at it."

Goghlan put down the goblet and took his hands away. There was a gold-piece in the goblet. It was an antique—a ten-dirhem piece of the Turkish Empire.

"I could not build up the illusion," said Appolonius, "but it was deceptive, was it not?"

"How'd you do it?" asked Mannard interestedly.

"At eye-level," said Appolonius, "you cannot see the bottom of a goblet filled with water. Refraction prevents it. I dropped in the coin and held it at the level of your eyes. So long as it was held high, it seemed empty. That is all."

Mannard grunted.

"It is the principle which counts!" said Appolonius. "I did

something of which you knew nothing. You deceived yourselves, because you thought I was getting ready to do a trick. I had already done it. That is the secret of magic."

He fished out the gold-piece and put it in his vest pocket, and Coghlan thought sourly that this trick was not quite as convincing as his own handwriting, his own fingerprints and most private thoughts, written down over seven centuries ago.

"Hm ...I think I'll mention your visitors to the police," said Mannard. "I'm mentioned. I may be involved. It's too elaborate to be a practical joke, and there's that mention of somebody getting killed. I know some fairly high Turkish officials .you'll talk to anyone they send you?"

"Naturally." Coghlan felt that he should be relieved, but he was not. Then something else occurred to him.

"By the way," he said to Appolonius, "you're in on this, too. There's a memorandum that says the 'adepts' were inquiring for you!"

He quoted, as well as he was able, the memo on the back of the page containing his fingerprints. The fat man listened, frowning.

"This," he said firmly, "I very much do not like! It is not good for my professional reputation to be linked with tricksters. It is very much not good!"

Astonishingly, he looked pale. It could be anger, but he was definitely paler than he had been. Laurie said briskly:

"You said something about a gadget, Tommy. At—8o Ho-sam, you said?"

Coghlan nodded. "Yes. Duval and Lieutenant Ghalil said they were going to make inquiries theme."

"After dinner," suggested Laurie, "we could take the car and go look at the outside, anyhow? I don't think Father has anything planned. It would be interesting—"

"Not a bad thought," said Mannard. "It's a pleasant night. We'll all go."

Laurie smiled ruefully at Coghian. And Coghian resolutely assured himself he was pleased—it was much better for him not to

be anywhere with Laurie, alone. But he was not cheered in the least.

Mannard pushed back his chair.

"It's irritating!" he grunted. "I can't figure out what they're driving at! By all means, let's go look at that infernal house!"

They went up to Mannard's suite on the third floor of the Petra, and he telephoned and ordered the car he'd rented during his stay in Istanbul. Laurie put a scarf over her head. Somehow even that looked good on her, as Goghlan realized depressedly.

Appolonius the Great had blandly assumed an invitation and continued to talk about his political enterprise of bribery. He believed, he said, that there might be some ancient manuscripts turned up when enlightenment swept over the furtive villages of his people. Coghlan gathered that he claimed as many as two or three thousand fellow-countrymen.

The car was reported as ready.

"I shall walk down the stairs!" announced Appolonius, with a wave of his pudgy hand. "I feel somehow grand and dignified, now that someone has given me money for my people. I do not think that anyone can feel dignified in a lift."

Mannard grunted. They moved toward the wide stairs, Appolonius in the lead.

The lights went out, everywhere. Immediately there was a gasp and a crashing sound. Mannard's voice swore furiously, halfway down the flight of curving steps. A moment ago he had been at the top landing.

The lights came on again. Mannard came storming up the steps. He glared about him, breathing hard. He was the very opposite of the typical millionaire just then. He looked hardboiled, athletic, spoiling for a fight.

"My dear friend!" gasped Appolonius. "What happened?"

"Somebody tried to throw me downstairs!" growled Mannard balefully. "They grabbed my foot and heaved! If I'd gone the way I was thrown—if I hadn't handled myself right—I'd have gone over the stair-rail and broken my blasted neck!"

He glared about him. But there were only the four of them in sight. Mannard peered each way along the hotel corridors. He fumed. But there was literally nobody around who could have done it.

"Oh, maybe I slipped," he said irritably, "but it didn't feel like that! Dammit— Oh, there's no harm done!"

He went down the stairs again, scowling. The lights stayed on. The others followed. Laurie said shakily:

"That was odd, wasn't it?"

"Very," said Coghlan. "If you remember, I said I'd been told that I'd probably murder him."

"But you were right by me!" said Laurie quickly.

"Not so close I couldn't have done it," said Coghlan. "I sort of wish it hadn't happened."

They reached the lower floor of the hotel, Mannard still bristling. Appolonius walked with a waddling, swaying grace. To Goghlan he looked somehow like pictures of the Agha Khan. He beamed as he walked. He was very impressive. And he'd been thinking as Coghlan had thought, for in the lobby he turned and said blandly:

"You said something about a prophecy that you might murder Mr. Mannard. Be careful, Mr. Coghlan! Be careful!"

He twinkled at the two who followed him, and resumed his splendid progress toward the car that waited outside.

It was dark in the back of the car. Laurie settled down beside Coghlan. He was distinctly aware of her nearness. But he frowned uneasily as the car rolled away. His own handwriting in the book from ancient days had said, *"Make sure of Mannard. To be killed."* And Mannard had just had a good chance of a serious accident. . . Coghlan felt uncomfortably that something significant had taken place that he should have noticed.

But, he irritably assured himself, it couldn't be anything but coincidence.

m

Coghlan breakfasted on coffee alone, next morning, and he had the dour outlook and depressed spirit that always followed an evening with Laurie these days. The trouble was, of course, that he wanted to marry her, and resolutely wouldn't even consider the possibility.

He drank his coffee and stared glumly out into the courtyard below his windows. His apartment was in one of the older houses of the Galata district, slicked up for modem times. The courtyard had probably once been a harem garden. Now it was flag-stoned, with a few spindling shrubs, and the noises of Istanbul were muted when they reached it.

There came brisk footsteps. Lieutenant Ghalil strode crisply across the courtyard. He vanished. A moment later, Coghlan's doorbell rang. He answered it, scowling.

Ghalil grinned as he said, "Good morning!"

"More mystery?" demanded Coghian suspiciously.

"A part of it has been cleared up in my mind," said Ghalil. "I am much more at ease in my thoughts."

"I'm having coffee," growled Coghlan. "I'll get you some." He got out another cup and poured it. He had an odd feeling that Ghalil was regarding him with a new friendliness.

"I have a letter for you," said the Turk cheerfully.

He passed it over. It was a neatly typed note, in English, on a letterhead that Coghlan could make out as that of the Ministry of Police—which is officially based in Ankara rather than Istanbul, but unofficially has followed the center of gravity of crime to the older city. The signature was clear. It was that of a cabinet minister, no less. The note said that at the request of the American, Mr. Mannard, Lieutenant Ghalil had been appointed to confer with Mr. Coghlan on a matter which Mr. Goghlan considered serious. The Minister of Police assured Mr. Coghlan that Lieutenant Ghalil had the entire confidence of the Ministry, which was sure that he would be both cooperative and competent.

Coghlan looked up, confused.

"And I thought you the suspicious character!" said Ghalil. "But you surely did the one thing a suspicious character would not do—call in the police at the beginning. Because you thought *me* suspicious!" He chuckled. "Now, if you still have doubts, I can report that you wish to confer with a person of higher rank. But it will not be easy to get anyone else to take this matter seriously! Or in quite so amicable a manner, orders or no, in view of the implied threat to Mr. Mannard and my comparative assurance that you are innocent so far—" he smiled slightly— "of any responsibility for that threat."

Goghlan had been thinking about that, too. He growled:

"It's ridiculous! I'd just barely told Mannard about it last night, when he had an accident and almost got himself killed, and a third party who was along had the nerve to warn me—"

Ghalil tensed. He held up his hand.

"What was that?"

Coghlan impatiently told of Mannard's tripping on the stairs. "A coincidence, obviously," he finished. Then, placing the defense before any offense: "What else?"

"What else indeed?" agreed Chalil. He said abruptly, "What do you think of 8o Hosain? You saw it last night."

Coghlan shrugged his shoulders. The carload of them—Man. nard, Laurie, Appolonius the Great and Coghlan—had driven deep into the Galata quarter and found 8o Hosain. It was a grimy, unbelievably ancient building, empty of all life, on a winding, narrow, noisome alleyway. When the car found it, there were shabby figures gathered around, looking curiously at police outside it. Ghalil himself came to ask what the people in the car wanted. Then the whole party went into the echoing deserted building and up to the empty back room on the second floor.

Coghian could see and smell that room now. The house itself had been unoccupied for a long time. It was so old that the stone flooring on the ground level had long since worn out and been replaced by wide, cracked planks now worn out themselves. The stone steps leading to the second story were rounded in their

centers by the footsteps of past generations. There were smells. There was mustiness. There was squalor and evidences of neglect continued for a millennium. There were cobwebs and dirt and every indication of degradation; yet the door-lintels were carved stone from a time when a workn~an was an artisan and did the work of an artist.

The back room was empty of everything but the grime of ages. Plaster had fallen, revealing older plaster behind it, and on the older plaster there were traces of color as if the walls had been painted in figures no longer to be made out. And there was one place, on the western wall, where the plaster was wet. A roughly square spot of a foot-and-a-half by a foot-and-a-half, about a yard above the floor-level, glistening with moisture.

In Coghlan's living-room, with Ghalil looking interestedly at him, Coghlan frowned.

"There was nothing in the room. It was empty. There was no 'Gadget' there as Duval's book declared."

Ghalil said mildly:

"The book was of the thirteenth century. Would you expect to find anything in a room after so long a time, so many lootings, the use of twenty generations?"

"I was guided only by Duval~s book," said Coghlan with some irony.

"You suspect that wet spot on the wall, eh?"

"I didn't understand it," admitted Coghlan, "and it was—peculiar. It was cold."

"Perhaps it is the gadget," said Chalil. He said in mild reproof, "After you left, I felt it as you had done. It was very cold. I thought my hand would be frost-bitten, when I kept it there for some time. In fact, later I covered the spot with a blanket, and frost appeared under it!"

Coghian said impatiently, "Not without refrigerating apparatus, and that's out of the question!"

Ghalil thought that over. "Yet it did appear."

"Would refrigerating apparatus be called a gadget?" Coghian wondered.

The Turk shook his head. “It is peculiar. I learn that it is traditional that a spot on the plaster in that room has always been and will always be wet. It has been considered magical, and has given the place a bad name—which is one reason the house is empty. The legend is verifiable for sixty years. Refrigeration was not known in small units so long ago. Would that coldness be another impossibility of this affair?”

Goghlan said, “We talk nonsense all the time!”

Ghalil thought, again. “Could refrigeration be a lost art of the ancients?” he asked with a faint smile, “and if so, what has it to do with you and Mr. Mannard and this—Appolonius?”

“There aren’t any lost arts,” Coghlan assured him. “In olden times people did things at random, on what they thought were magical principles. Sometimes they got results. On magical reasoning, they used digitalis for the heart. It happened to be right, and they kept on. On magical reasoning, they hammered copper past all sanity. It got hardened, and they thought it was tempered. There are electroplated objects surviving from a thousand years and more ago. The Greeks made a steam turbine in the classic age. It’s more than likely that they made a magic lantern. But there could be no science without scientific thinking. They got results by accident, but they didn’t know what they were doing or what they’d done. They couldn’t think technically . . . so there are no lost arts, only redefinitions. We can do everything the ancients could.”

“Can you make a place that will stay cold for sixty years—let alone seven hundred?”

“It’s an illusion,” said Coghian. “It must be! You’d better ask Appolonius how it’s done. That’s in his line.”

“I would be pleased if you would examine again that cold place on the wall at 8o Hosain,” said Ghalil ruefully. “If it is an illusion, it is singularly impenetrable!”

“I promised,” said Coghlan, “to go on a picnic today with the Mannards. They’re going up along the Sea of Marmora to look at a piece of ground.”

Ghalil raised his eyebrows.

"They plan a home here?"

"A children's camp," Coghian explained with reserve. "Mannard's a millionaire. He's given a lot of money to the American College, and it's been suggested that he do something more. A camp for slum-children is projected. He may finance it to show what can be done for children's health by the sort of thing that's standard in the United States. He's looking over a site. If he puts up the money, the camp will be handled by Turkish personnel and the cost and results worked out. If it's successful, the Turkish Government or private charities will carry it on and extend it."

"Admirable," said Lieutenant Ghalil. "One would not like to see such a man murdered."

Coghian did not comment. Ghalil rose.

"But—come and examine this refrigeration apparatus of ancient days, please! After all, it is undoubtedly mentioned in a memorandum in your handwriting of seven hundred years ago! And—Mr. Coghlan, will you be careful?"

"Of what?"

"For one, Mr. Mannard." Ghalil's expression was wry. "I do not believe in things from the past any more than you do, but as a philosopher and a policeman I have to face facts even when they are impossible, and possibilities even when they are insane. There are two things foretold which disturb me. I hope you will help me to prevent them."

"The murder of Mannard, of course. But what's the other?"

"I should regret that, and I guard against it," Ghalil told him. But I would be intellectually more disturbed if you should cut your thumb. A murder would be explicable."

Coghian grinned. "I won't. That's not likely!"

"That is why I dread it. Please come to 8o Hosain when you can. I am having the room examined microscopically—and cleaned in the process. I even have it garrisoned, to prevent any preparation of illusion."

He waved his hand and went away.

An hour later, Goghlan joined the excursion which was to in-

spect a site for a possible children's camp. An impressive small yacht lay at dock on the shore of the Golden Horn. There was a vast confusion everywhere. From Italian freighters to cabin-cruisers, from clumsy barges to lateen-rigged tubs and grimy small two- and three-passenger rowboats—every conceivable type of floating thing floated or moved or was docked all about. The yacht had been loaned as a grand gesture by its owner, so that Mannard would make a gift of money the yacht's owner preferred to spend otherwise.

Laurie looked relieved when Coghian turned up. She waved to him as he came aboard.

"News, Tommy! Your friend Duval telephoned me this morning!"

"What for?"

"He sounded hysterical and apologetic," Laurie told him, "because he'd been trying to reach Father, and couldn't. He said he could not tell me the details or the source of his information, but he had certain knowledge that you intended to murder my father. He nearly collapsed when I said sweetly, 'Thank you so much, *M'sieur* Duval! So he told us last night!' She grinned. "It wasn't quite the reaction he expected!"

"If he were an honest man," Coghlan mused, "that's just exactly what he'd have done—tried to warn your father. But he couldn't say why he thought a murder was in the wind, because that's unbelievable. Maybe he is honest. I don't know."

Appolonius the Great came waddling down to the dock, in a marvelous yachting costume. He beamed and waved, and the sunlight gleamed on his wristwatch. A beggar thrust up to him and whined, holding out a ragged European cap. The beggar cringed and gabbled shrilly. And Appolonius the Great paused, looked into the extended cap with apparent stupefaction, and pointed; whereupon the beggar also looked into the cap, yelped, and fled at the top of his speed, clutching the cap fast. Appolonius came on, shaking all over with his amusement.

"You say?" he asked amiably as he reached the yacht's deck. "Indeed I cannot resist such jests! He held out his cap, and I

looked, and feigned surprise—and there was a handful of jewels in the cap! True, they were merely paste and trinketry, but I added a silver coin to comfort him when he discovers they are worthless."

He waddled forward to greet Mannard. There was around the yacht that pandemonium which in the Near East accompanies every public activity. Men swarmed everywhere. Even the yacht carried a vastly larger crew than seemed necessary, there being at least a dozen of them on a boat that three American sailors would have navigated handily. Sailors seemed to fall all over each other in getting ready for departure.

The party of guests was not large. There was a professor from the College. A local politico, the owner of the proposed campsite. A lawyer. The Turkish owner of the yacht glowed visibly as last-minute baskets of food came aboard. He was not paying for them.

Goghlan and Laurie sat at the very stern of the yacht when at last it pulled out and went on up the Golden Horn. There was little privacy, because of the swarming number of the crew, and Coghlan did not try for greater privacy. He looked at the panorama of the city which had been the center of civilization for a thousand years—and now was a rabbit-warren of narrow streets and questionable occupations. Laurie, beside him, watched the unfolding view of minarets and domes and the great white palace which had been the Seraglio, and the soaring pile of Hagia Sophia, and all the beauty of this place, notorious for its beauty for almost two thousand years. There was bright sunshine to add to it, and the flickering of sun-reflections on the water. These things seemed to cast a glamor over everything. But Laurie looked away from it at Coghlan.

"Tommy," she said, "will you tell me what was in that mysterious message that you wouldn't tell last night? You said it was about me."

"It was nothing important," said Coghlan. "Shall we go up to the pilot-house and see how the yacht's steered?"

She faced him directly, and smiled.

"Does it occur to you that I've known you a long time, Tommy, and I've practically studied you, and I can almost read your mind—I hope?"

He moved restlessly.

"When you were ten years old," she said, "you told me very generously that you would marry me when you grew up. But you insisted ferociously that I shouldn't tell anybody!"

He muttered something indistinct about kids.

"And you took me to your Senior Prom," she reminded him, "even if I had to make my father leave Bogota two months early so I'd be around when it was time for you to pass out the invitation. And you were the first boy who ever kissed me," she added amiably, "and until—well—lately you used to write me very nice letters. You've paid attention to me all our lives, Tommy!"

He said:

"Cigarette?"

"No," she said firmly. "I'm working up to something."

"No use talking," he said sourly. "Let's join the others."

"Tommy!" she protested. "You're not nice! And here I am trying to spare you embarrassment!" She grinned at him. "You wouldn't want my father to ask what your intentions are!"

"I haven't any," he said grimly. "If I were only a rich woman's husband I'd despise myself. If I didn't, you'd despise me! It wouldn't work out. And I wouldn't want to be just your first husband!"

Her eyes grew softer, but she shook her head reproachfully. "Then—how about being a brother to me? You ought to suggest that, if only to be polite."

Coghlan had known her a long, long time. Her air of comfortable teasing would have fooled people. But Coghlan felt like a heel.

He muttered under his breath. He stood up.

"You know damned well I love you!" he said angrily. "But that's all! I can't turn it off, but I can starve it to death! And there's no use arguing about it! You'll be leaving soon. If you weren't, I wouldn't come near you here! Nobody could be era-

zier about anybody else than I am about you, but you can't wear me down. Understand?"

"I wouldn't want to break your spirit, Tommy," said Laurie reasonably. "But I'm getting desperate!"

Then she smiled. He growled and strode irritably away. When his back was turned, her smile wavered and broke. And when he looked back at her a little later she was staring out over the water, her back to the others on the yacht. Her hands were tightly clenched.

The yacht steamed on up the Bosphorus. There were the hills on either side, speckled with dwellings which looked trim and picturesque from the water, but would be completely squalid at close view. The sky was deepest azure, and this was the scene of many romantic happenings in years gone by. But the owner of the yacht talked expansively to Mannard in the thickest of Turkish accents. The professor from the American College was deep in discussion with the lawyer on the responsibility of the municipal government for the smell of decaying garbage which made his home nearly uninhabitable. The owner of the site to be inspected spoke only Turkish. That left only Appolonius the Great.

Coghlan brought up the subject of the cryptic and quite incredible message in the *Alexiad.*

"Ah, it is a mystification," said Appolonius genially. "It is also, I think, an intended swindle. But Mr. Mannard has spoken to the police. They will inquire into those persons. It would be unprofessional for me to interfere!"

Coghlan said shortly:

"Not if it's a scheme for a swindle."

"That," acknowledged Appolonius, "disturbs me. As you know, I have recently received a large sum from a source that would surprise you, to bribe my people to freedom. I do not like to be associated with downright scoundrels! Therefore I stand aside

—lest it be considered that I am a scoundrel too!" Coghlan turned away, considering.

This was not a cheerful day for him. He doggedly would not

go back to Laurie. It had cost him a great deal to make the decision he'd made. He wouldn't change it. There was no use talking to her. Thinking about her made him miserable. He tried, for a time, to put his mind on the matter of 8o Hosain; to imagine some contrivance, possible to the ancients, which would amount to apparatus to produce cold. In Babylonia the ancients had known that a shallow tray, laid upon blankets, would radiate heat away at night and produce a thin layer of ice by morning on a completely windless and cloudless night. The heat went on out to empty space, and the blanket kept more heat from rising out of the earth. But Istanbul was hardly a place of cloudless-ness. That wouldn't work here. The ancients hadn't understood it, anyhow. He gave it up.

The yacht drew nearer to the shore as the Sea of Marmora expanded from the Bosphorus. It tied up to a rickety wharf, with seemingly innumerable sailors clumsily achieving the landing. Mannard went ashore to inspect the proposed campsite. Sailors carted ashore vast numbers of baskets, folding tables, and the other apparatus for an alfresco luncheon. Goghlan smoked dourly on the yacht's deck.

Laurie went ashore, and he sat still, feeling as ridiculous as a sulking child. Presently he wandered across the wharf and moved about at random while the lunch was spread out. When the exploring party came back, Goghian allowed himself to be seated— next to Laurie. She casually ignored their recent discussion and chatted brightly. He sank into abysmal gloom.

The matter of the proposed children's camp was discussed at length in at least three languages. Luncheon progressed, with sailors acting as waiters and bringing hot dishes from the galley of the yacht. The owner of the land rose and made a florid, perspiring speech in the fond hope of unloading land he could not use, at a fancy price he could. The professor from the American College spoke warmly of Mannard, and threw in a hint or two that his own specialty could use some extra funds. Coghlan saw clearly that everybody in the world was out to get money from Mannard by any possible process, and grimly reiter

ated to himself his own resolution not to take part in the undignified scramble by trying to marry Laurie.

The sailors brought coffee. Goghlan drank his while the speech-making went on. Mannard talked absorbedly to the lawyer, and to the owner of the land. The children's camp seemed to be practically assured. That, to Goghian, was one bright spot in a thumping bleak day.

He saw Mannard start to drink his coffee, then feel the cup with his hands and give it to a sailor to be taken back to the yacht to be replaced with hot coffee. It had gotten cold.

Laurie chatted brightly with Appolonius. He beamed at her. A sailor came back with Mannard's cup. He felt it, as he always did. He lifted it toward his lips.

There was a violent cracking sound. Echoes rang all about. Voices stopped.

Mannard was staring in stupefaction at the coffee-cup in his hand. It was broken. It had been smashed by a bullet. Coffee was spilled everywhere, and Mannard absurdly held the handle of the cup from which he had been about to drink.

Coghlan was in motion even as he saw in his mind's eye the phrase in his own handwriting on a yellowed sheepskin page:

"Make sure of Mannard. To be killed."

iv

It was preposterous. Mannard stood up abruptly, raging, with the smashed handle of the coffee-cup in his hand. He did not seem to realize that by rising he became an even better target. There was an instant's stunned immobility, on the part of everyone but Goghlan. He plunged forward, toppling the flimsy table in a confusion of smashed china and scrambled silverware.

"Get down!" snapped Coghian.

He pushed Laurie's father back into his seat. All about was absolute tranquillity save for the white-faced men who picked themselves up with stiff, frightened movements after Coghian's rush had toppled them. The hillsides were green and silent save

for the minor cries of insects. The water was undisturbed. Some sailors began to run ashore from the yacht.

"Everybody gather round here!" commanded Coghlan angrily. "The shot was at Mannard! Get close!"

Laurie was the only one who seemed to obey. She was white-faced as the rest, but she said:

"I'm here, Tommy. What do we do?"

"Not you, damn it! Somebody shot at your father! If we get around him and get him to the yacht, they can't see him to shoot again. You get in the center here too!"

He commanded the Turkish-speaking sailors with violent gestures, and they obeyed his authoritative manner. He and Laurie and the sailors fairly forced the sputtering, angry Mannard off the wharf and onto the craft moored at its end. The other members of the picnic-party were milling into action. The lawyer scuttled aboard. The owner of the land was even before him. Only Appolonius sat where his chair had toppled, his face gray and filled with an astounded expression of shock. The professor from the American College went on board and disappeared entirely. Coghian went back and dragged at Appolonius. The fat man scrambled to his feet and went stiffly out the wharf and on board.

"Somebody who can talk Turkish," snapped Coghlan, "tell the sailors to help me hunt for whoever fired that shot! He's had a chance to get away, but we can look for him, anyhow!"

A voice, chattering, said unintelligible things. Sailors went ashore, Coghian in the lead. They obeyed Coghlan's gestured commands and tramped about with him in the brushwood, hunting industriously and without visible timidity. But Coghlan fumed. He could not give detailed commands. He couldn't be sure they were watching for footprints or a tiny ejected shell which would tell at least where the would-be murderer had been.

There were shouts from the yacht. Coghlan ignored them, searching angrily but with an increasing sensation of futility. Then Laurie came running ashore.

"Tommy! It's useless! He's gone! The thing to do is to get back to Istanbul and tell the police!"

Coghian nodded angrily, wondering again if the marksman who had missed Mannard might not settle for Laurie. He stood between her and the shore, and shouted and beckoned to the sailors. He led them back to the yacht, in a tight circle around Laurie.

The yacht cast off with unseemly haste. It sped out from the shore and headed back for Istanbul. Mannard sat angrily in a deck-chair, his eyes hard. He nodded to Coghlan.

"I didn't see the point of protecting me," he admitted grimly, "not at the time. But that crazy business you were telling me last night did hint at this." Then he said with explosive irritation: "Dammit, either they meant to kill me without asking for money, or they don't care much whether they kill me or not!"

Coghlan nodded. "They might figure on being reckless with you," he said coldly, "so if you get killed that'll be all the more reason for Laurie to pay up if something happens. Or—they might figure that if they're reckless enough with you, you'll pay up the more quickly if they threaten Laurie."

"What's that?" demanded Mannard sharply.

"I don't know what the scheme is," Coghlan told him. "It looks crazy! But though the threat seems directed against you, the danger may be even greater for Laurie."

Mannard said grimly:

"Yes. That's something to watch out for. Thanks."

The yacht ploughed through the water back toward Istanbul. The sun shone brightly on the narrow blue sea. The hills on either side seemed to shimmer in the heat. But the atmosphere on the yacht was far from relaxed. The sailors bore high interest beneath a mask of discretion, most of them managing to occupy themselves near the Turkish guests, who huddled together and talked excitedly.

Laurie put her arm in Coghlan's.

"There's such a thing as courage, Tommy," she said, "and such

a thing as recklessness. You took chances, searching on shore. I wouldn't like you to be killed."

"It could be," he said harshly, "that the whole idea is to scare one or the other of you so completely—even if one of you had to be killed—that you'll be ready to pay hugely at the first demand for money."

"But how—"

He said fiercely: "If you were kidnapped, for instance! Be careful—hear me? Don't go anywhere in response to a note of any kind."

He went impatiently away and paced up and down, alone, until the yacht docked once more.

Then there was more confusion. Mannard was intent upon an immediate conference with police. Goghlan and Laurie went with him to headquarters, in a cab.

Presently, there was some embarrassment. Mannard could not bring himself to tell so incredible a tale as that a book seven hundred years old had had a seven-hundred-year-old message in it which said he was to be killed, and that the shot which had so narrowly missed him today seemed to be connected with
it.

He doggedly told only the facts of the event itself. No, he had no enemies that he knew of. No, he had not received any message, himself, that he could consider a threat. He could not guess what was behind the attempt on his life.

The police were polite and deeply concerned. They assured him that Lieutenant Ghalil would be notified immediately. He had been assigned to a matter Mr. Mannard had mentioned before. As soon as it was possible to reach him .

That affair, inconclusive as it was, took nearly an hour of time. Mannard fumed, in the cab on the way back to the hotel.

"Ghalil's mixed up in this all the way through!" he said darkly. "It could be on orders, or it could be something else."

"I know he has orders," said Coghlan briefly. "And I think I know where he'll be. I'll hunt him up. Now."

The cab stopped before the Hotel Petra. Mannard and Laurie got out. Coghian stayed in. Laurie said:

"Take care of yourself, Tommy. Please!"

The cab pulled out into traffic and bounded for 8o Hosain with the mad, glad disregard for all safety rules which is the lifeblood of Istanbul taxicabs.

8o Hosain, by daylight, was even less inviting to look upon than it had seemed the night before. The street was narrow and unbelievably tortuous. It was paved with worn cobbles which sloped toward its center in the vain hope that rain would wash street-debris away. Because of its winding, it was never possible to see more than fifty feet ahead. When the building at last appeared, there was a police-car before it and a uniformed policeman on guard at the door. His neatness was in marked contrast to his squalid surroundings—but even so this section might have been a most aristocratic quarter in the times of the Byzantine Empire.

Coghian was admitted without question. There was already an extensive process of cleaning-up under way. It smelled much less offensive than before. He went up the stairs and into the back room which was mentioned in the message he simply must have written, and simply hadn't.

Duval sat on a campstool in one corner, more haggard than before. There were many books on the floor beside him, and one lay open in his hand. Ghalil smoked reflectively on a windowsill. The blank stone wall of the next building showed half-a-dozen feet beyond. Only the grayest and gloomiest of light came in the windows. Ghalil looked up and seemed pleased when Coghian entered.

"I hoped you would come after the boat-trip," he said cordially. "M. Duval and myself are still exchanging mutual assurances of our lunacy."

"Up in the Sea of Marmora," said Coghlan curtly, "somebody tried to kill Mannard. Since that's supposedly a part of this affair, it may be crazy but it's surely serious! Did Headquarters tell you about it?"

"There was no need," said Ghalil mildly. "I was there."

Coghian stared.

"I have believed Mr. Mannard in danger from the beginning," Ghalil explained apologetically. "I underestimated it, to be sure. But after you told me of the affair of last night—when even he believes he tripped—I have taken every possible precaution to guard him. So of course I went on the yacht."

Coghian said incredulously, "I didn't see you!"

"It was stifling below-decks," said Ghalil wryly. "But most of the sailors were my men. You must have noticed that they were not skilled seamen?"

Coghlan found all his ideas churned up again.

"But—"

"He was in no danger from the bullet," Ghalil assured him. "I was concerned about the luncheon. In Istanbul when we think of an impending murder we think not only of knives and guns, but of poison. I took great pains against poison. The cook on the yacht tasted every item served, and he has a talent for detecting the most minute trace of the commoner poisons. An odd talent to have, eh?"

"But Mannard was shot at?" protested Coghlan.

Lieutenant Ghalil nodded. He puffed tranquilly on his cigarette.

"I am an excellent marksman," he said modestly. "I watched. At the last possible instant—and I am ashamed to say only by accident—it was discovered that his coffee was poisoned."

Coghlan found suspicion and bewilderment battling for primacy in his mind.

"You recall," said Ghalil carefully, "that Mr. Mannard talked absorbedly and at length. When he went to drink his coffee, he found it cold. He sent his cup to be refilled. I am disturbed," he interjected vexedly, "because only by accident he is alive! The cook—my talented man—poured aside the cooled coffee and re-filled Mr. Mannard's cup. And he has a fondness for tepid coffee, which I find strange. He went to drink the coffee Mr. Mannard had returned—and something had been added to it. More

might remain in the cup. He told me instantly. There was no time to send a message. Mr. Mannard already had the cup in his hand. There was need for spectacular action. And I was watching the dinner-party, prepared to intervene in case of such need. I am an excellent marksman and there was nothing else to do, so I shot the cup from his hand."

Coghian opened his mouth, managed to close it again. "You —shot the cup ... Who tried to poison him?"

Ghalil pulled a small glass bottle from his pocket. It was unstoppered, but there was a film of tiny crystals in it as if some liquid had dried.

"This," he observed, "fell from your pocket as you hunted in the brushwood for the marksman who actually was on the yacht. One of my men saw it fall and brought it to me. It is poison."

Coghlan looked at the bottle.

"I'm getting a little bit fed up with mystification. Do I get arrested?"

"The fingerprints upon it are smudged," said Ghalil. "But I am familiar with your fingerprints. They are not yours. It was slipped into your pocket—not fully, therefore it fell out. You do not get arrested."

"Thank you," said Coghian with irony.

His foot pushed aside one of the books on the floor beside Duval. They were of all sizes and thickness, and all were modern. Some had the heavy look of German technical books, and one or two were French. The greater number were in modern Greek.

"M. Duval searches history for references which might apply to our problem," said the Turk. "I consider this a very important affair. That, in particular—" he pointed to the wet spot on the wall—"seems to me most significant. I am very glad that you came here, with your special knowledge."

"Why? What do you want me to do?"

"Examine it," said Ghalil. "Explain it. Let me understand what it means. I have a wholly unreasonable suspicion I would not like to name, because it has only a logical basis."

"If you can make even a logical pattern out of this mess,"

said Coghian bitterly, “you’re a better man than I am. It simply doesn’t make sense!”

Ghalil only looked at him expectantly. Coghlan went to the wet spot. It was almost exactly square, and there was no trace of moisture above it or on either side. Some few trickles dripped down from it, but the real wetness was specifically rectangular. Coghlan felt the wall about it. Everywhere except in the wet spot the wall had the normal temperature of a plaster coating. The change of temperature was exactly what would have been apparent if a square-shaped freezing unit had been built into the structure. The plaster was rotten from long soaking. Coghlan took out a pocket-knife and dug carefully into it.

“What rational connection can this have with that stuff in the book, and with somebody trying to kill Mannard?” he demanded as he worked.

“No rational connection,” admitted Ghalil. “A logical one. In police work one uses reason oneself, but does not expect it of events.”

An irregularly shaped patch of wetted plaster cracked and came away. Coghian looked at it and started.

“Ice!” he said sharply. “There must be some machinery here!”

The space from which the plaster had come was white with frost. Coghlan scraped at it. A thin layer of ice, infinitesimally thin. Then more wet plaster, which was not frozen. Coghlan frowned. First ice, then no ice—and nothing to make the ice where the ice was. A freezing coil could not work that way. Coldness does not occur in layers or in thin sheets. It simply does not.

Coghlan dug angrily, stabbing with the point of the knife. The knife grew very cold. He wrapped his handkerchief about it and continued to dig. There was wetness and rotted plaster for another inch. Then the heavy stone wall of the building.

“The devil!” he said angrily. He stood back and stared at the opening.

There was silence. He had made a hole through rotted plaster, bind found nothing but a thin layer of ice, and then more rotted

plaster. He looked at it blankly. Then he saw that though the frost had been cut away, there was a slight mist in the opening he had made. He blew his breath into the hole. He made an astonished noise.

"When I blew my breath there, it turned to fog when it went through the place where the plaster layers joined!" His tone was unbelieving.

"There is refrigeration?" asked Ghalil.

"There's nothing!" protested Coghlan. "There's no possible explanation for a cold space in the middle of air!"

"Ah!" said the Turk in satisfaction. "Then we progress! Things which are associated with the same thing are associated with each other. This associates with the impossibility of your fingerprints and your handwriting and the threat to Mr. Mannard!"

"I'd like to know what does this trick!" said Coghian, staring at the hole. "The heat's absorbed, and there's nothing to absorb it!"

He unwrapped his handkerchief from the knife, and scrubbed the cloth at the wall until a corner was set. He poked the wetted cloth into the hole he'd made. A moment later he pulled it out. There was a narrow, perfectly straight line of ice across the• wetted linen.

"There's never been a trick like this before!" he said in amazement. "It's something really new!"

"Or extremely old," said Ghalil mildly. "Why not?"

"It couldn't be!" snapped Coghlan. "We don't know how to do it! You can bet the ancients didn't! It couldn't be anything but a force-field of some sort, and there's no known force-field that absorbs energy! There just isn't any! Anyhow, how could they generate a force-field that was a plane surface?"

He began to dig again, nervously, at the edge of the wet spot. The plaster was harder here.

Duval said hopelessly, "But what would such a thing have to do with the history of the Byzantine Empire, and fingerprints, and M. Mannard—"

Coghlan jabbed at the plaster.

There was a sudden, brittle sound as the knifeblade snapped. The broken end tinkled on the floor.

Coghlan stood frozen, looking down at his thumb. The breaking blade had cut it. There was dead silence in the room.

"What is the matter?"

"I've cut my thumb," said Coghlan briefly.

Ghalil, eyes blank, got up and started across the room toward him. "I would like to see—"

"It's nothing," said Coghlan.

To himself he said firmly that two and two are four, and things which are equal to the same thing are equal to each other, and—

He pressed the edges of the cut together, closed his fist on it, and put the fist firmly in his pocket.

"This business of the wall," he said casually—too casually— "has me bothered. "I'm going back to my place and get some stuff to make a couple of tests."

Ghalil said quickly:

"There is a police-car outside. I will have the driver take you and bring you back."

"Thanks," said Coghian.

He thought firmly: two and two is always four, without exception. Five and five is ten. Six and six is twelve ... There is no such thing as a fingerprint showing a scar that does not exist, and then that scar being made afterward. .

They went down the stairs together. Ghalil gave instructions to the driver. From time to time he glanced very thoughtfully at Coghlan's face. Coghlan climbed in the car. It started off, headed for his home.

He sat still for minutes as the trim car threaded narrow streets and negotiated sharp corners designed for donkey-traffic alone. The driver was concerned only with the management of his car. Coghian watched him abstractedly. Two and two. ..

He took his hand out of his pocket and looked at the cut on his thumb very carefully. It was probably the most remarkable cut in human history. It was shallow, not a serious matter at

all, in itself; but it would leave—Coghlan could not doubt—a scar exactly like the one on the print on the sheepskin page which chemical and spectroscopic examination said was seven-hundred years old.

Coghian put the impossible hand back in his pocket. “I don’t believe it!” he said grimly. “I don’t believe it!”

v

The driver had evidently been instructed to wait. ‘When Goghlan got out of the car he smiled politely, set his handbrake, and turned off the motor. Coghian nodded and went into the courtyard below his windows. He felt a very peculiar dogged anger, and was not at all certain what he felt it toward.

He headed for the stairway to his apartment. Across the flagstoned courtyard, a plump figure came disconsolately out of that stairway. It was Appolonius the Great. He was not twinkling as usual. He looked desperately worried. But his expression changed at sight of Coghlan.

“Ah, Mr. Coghlan!” he said delightedly. “I thought I had missed you!”

Coghlan said politely:

“I’m glad you didn’t. But I’m only here on an errand—”

“I need only a moment,” said Appolonius, beaming. “I have something to say which may be to your advantage.”

“Come along,” said Coghlan.

He led the way. Appolonius, a few hours back, had looked as deeply concerned as any man could look. Now he appeared more nearly normal. But he was still not his usual unctuous self. He came toiling up the stairs with his customary smile absent as if turned off by a switch. When Coghlan opened the door for him, however, the smile came back as if the same switch had been turned again. Coghlan had a sudden startled feeling that Appolonius might be dangerous.

“Just a moment,” he said.

He went into the bath and washed out the small cut and put antiseptic on it. It was not much deeper than a scratch, but he

wanted to avoid a scar if possible. A scar would mean that the fingerprint on that seven-hundred-year-old page of sheepskin was authentic; was actually his. And he was not willing for that to be true. He came back into the living-room to find Appolonius sitting in a chair on the far side of the room from the open windows.

"Now I'm at your service," said Coghlan. "That was a bad business today—about Mannard."

Appolonius looked at him steadily, with a directness and force that was startlingly unlike his usual manner.

"I have information," he said evenly. "May I show you my information?"

Coghlan waited.

"I am a professional illusionist," said Appolonius, that odd force now in his voice. "Deceptions are my profession. My fame is considerable."

"So I've heard," agreed Coghian.

"Of course," said Appolonius, "I do not use all my knowledge of illusion on the stage. Much of it would be lost upon theatrical audiences." His voice changed, became deliberately sarcastic. "In my native country there is a superstition of evil spirits. The Magi—the priesthood—the holders of the traditions and lore of —ah—Neoplatonism, make use of this belief. They foster it, by driving away numerous evil spirits. The process is visible. Suppose I assured you that there was an evil spirit in this very room, listening to our talk?"

"I'd be a trifle doubtful," said Coghlan gently.

"Allow me," said Appolonius politely, "to demonstrate."

He glanced about the room as if looking for some indication which only he would see. Then he pointed a pudgy finger across the room, toward a table near the open windows. His wrist-watch showed itself, indented in his fat wrist. He uttered a series of cryptic syllables in a round, authoritative voice.

There was a sudden roaring noise. Smoke rushed up from the table. It formed a ghostly, pear-shaped figure inside the room.

It hovered a moment, looking alive and menacing, then darted swiftly out the window. It was singularly convincing.

Coghian considered. After a moment he said thoughtfully:

"Last night you explained the principle of magic. You do something in advance, which I know nothing about. Then, later, you do something else which seems to produce remarkable results. And I am supposed to think that what you do later produced the results which you had arranged earlier."

"That is true. But this particular demonstration?"

"I'd guess," suggested Coghlan, "that you put a little smokesquib on the table there—I hope in an ashtray. It had a fuse, which you lighted from your cigarette. You did this while I was bandaging my finger in the other room. You knew how long the fuse would burn. And you have a sweep-second watch on your wrist. Still, you must have had long practise timing a conversation to lead up to your effect at just the instant the fuse will set off the squib."

Appolonius' eyes grew intent. Coghlan added:

"And the table's by the window and there's a draft going out. It looked like an evil spirit leaping up from my ashtray, and then flowing out the window and away. Effective!"

"A compliment from you, Mr. Coghlan," said Appolonius, unsmiling, "is a compliment indeed. But I penetrate your illusions as readily as you do mine. More readily!"

Coghlan looked at his bandaged thumb, and then up. "Now, what do you mean by that?"

"I think it would be well to consider," said Appolonius, harshly, "that I can unmask you at any instant."

"Oh!" said Coghlan, in lively interest. "You think I'm in a conspiracy with Duval and Lieutenant Ghalil to swindle Mannard out of some money?"

"I do," said Appolonius. "I could explain to Mr. Mannard. Shall I?"

Coghlan found himself amused.

"So you know everything! Tell you what, Appolonius. If you'll

explain the refrigeration business I'll let you in on everything else!" He explained carefully: "I mean the refrigeration at 8o Hosain, where we went last night. Elucidate that, and I'll tell you everything I know!"

Appolonius' eyes wavered. He said contemptuously:

"I am not to be trapped so easily! That is a foolish question!"

"Try to answer it!" Coghian waited with a dry patience. "You can't? My dear Appolonius! You don't even know what I'm talking about! You're a faker, trying to cut in on a swindle by a bluff! Clear out!"

There were sounds out in the courtyard. Footsteps. Appolonius looked more menacing still. Coghlan snapped:

"Clear out! You bother me! Get going!"

He opened the door. There were footsteps at the bottom of the stairs. Appolonius said nastily:

"I have taken precautions! If anything should happen to me— you would be sorry!"

"I'd be heart-broken!" said Coghian impatiently. "Shoo!" He pushed Appolonius out and closed the door. He went to the small room in which he kept his private experimental equipment. As an instructor in physics he worked on a limited budget at the college. He had his classes build much of the apparatus used, both to save money and because they would learn more that way. But some things he had to build himself—again to save money, and for the plain satisfaction of the job. Now he began to pack stray items. A couple of thermometers. Batteries and a couple of coils and a headset that would constitute an induction balance when they were put together. A gold-leaf electroscope. He got out the large alnico magnet that had made a good many delicate measurements possible. He was packing a scintillometer when his doorbell rang.

He answered it, scowling. There stood Mannard and Laurie, studying the scowl. They came in and Mannard said genially:

"Our little friend Appolonius is upset, Tommy. He's not himself. What'd you do to him?"

"He thinks," said Coghlan, "that everything that's happened in the past thirty hours is part of a scheme to extort money from you—the scheme operating from the fourth dimension. He demanded a cut on threat of revealing all. I put him out. Did he expose me as a scoundrel and a blackmailer?"

Mannard shook his head. Then he said:

"I'm taking Laurie home. I wouldn't run away myself, but you may be right—she may be the real target of this scheme when it gets in good working order. So I'm taking her away. How about coming along?" He added bluntly: "You could pick out some real equipment for the physics laboratory at the college. It's needed, and I'll pay for it."

It was transparent. Coghlan looked at Laurie. She protested reproachfully:

"It's not me, Tommy! I wouldn't ply you with cyclotrons!"

"If you want to make a gift to the lab, I'll give you a whopping list," said Coghlan. "But there's a gadget over at 8o Hosain that I've got to work out. It produces a thin layer of cold in air. I think it's a force-field of some sort, but it's a plane surface! I've got to find out what makes it and how it works. It's something new in physics!"

Laurie muttered to herself. Coghlan added:

"Ghalil's there now, waiting for me—he and Duval."

"I want to talk to that Lieutenant Ghalil," said Mannard, grumpily. "The police were going to refer this morning's shooting business to him, but I guess he wasn't too concerned! He hasn't tried to get in touch with me!"

Coghlan opened his mouth and then closed it. It would hardly be tactful to tell Mannard who had shot the cup out of his hand. If he heard that news before he got the full story, it might create a certain indignation. And it was Ghalil's story to tell. So he said:

"I'm headed back with this stuff now. You can pile in the police-car with me and talk to him right away. He'll see you get back to the hotel."

Mannard nodded. "Let's go."

Coghian packed his equipment into a suitcase and headed for the door. As they went out, Laurie caught his arm. She said breathlessly:

"Tommy! You cut your thumb! Was it—will it—"

"Yes," he told her. "It was in the place the scar showed, and I'm afraid it will leave that scar."

She followed him down the stairs, was silent on the way across the courtyard. Her father went to dismiss the car that had brought them here. Laurie said in a queer voice:

"That book came from the thirteenth century, they said. And your fingerprints are in it. And this gadget you're talking about ... could it take you back to the thirteenth century, Tommy?"

"I'm not planning to make the trip," he told her dryly.

"I don't want you to go back to the thirteenth century!" she said fiercely. She was even a little bit pale. "I know it's ridiculous. It's as impossible as anything could be! But I don't want you to go back there! I don't want to have to think of you as—dead for centuries, and buried in some mouldly old crypt—just a skeleton—"

"Stop it!" he said harshly. She gulped. "I mean it!"

"I wish things were different," he said bitterly.

Then she grinned, still pale.

"I'll wear you down," she promised. "Won't that be nice?" Then her father came back from the other car and they got into the police-car. It headed back for 8o Hosain.

In the room on the second floor, Ghalil was painstakingly pulling down plaster. He had not touched the wall on which the wet spot showed. That remained as Coghian had left it. But there had been places on the other walls where bits of plaster had fallen away. Dim colors showed through. It was becoming clear, from Ghalil's work, that the original plaster of the room had been elaborately decorated, with encaustic, most likely—wax colors laid on the wall and melted into the plaster. He had already uncovered a fragment of what must have been a most spirited mural. It

appeared to deal with nymphs and satyrs, from the irregular space so far disclosed. Duval was agitatedly examining each new portion of the scene as the removal of the overlying plaster showed it. But Ghalil stopped his labor when Coghlan and the others arrived. He'd met Mannard the night before, of course.

"Ah, Mr. Mannard!" he said cordially. "We perform archaeological research!"

Mannard bristled at him.

"I've been trying to reach you to tell you about an attempt on my life today! At Police Headquarters they said they'd try to find you. They implied that all my affairs were in your lap!"

Ghalil glanced at Coghlan.

"Your affairs have at least been on my mind," he admitted. "Did not Mr. Coghlan explain the measures I took?"

"No," said Coghlan dryly. "I didn't. I'm going to work on this refrigeration affair. You tell it."

He went over to the incredible patch of moisture on the wall. Laurie went with him. Behind them, Ghalil's voice droned as Coghlan opened the suit-case of apparatus, began to fit together the induction balance. Suddenly Mannard said explosively:

"What? You shot the cup out of my hand?"

Laurie reared up in amazement.

"Go listen," commanded Coghian. "I'm going to work here."

Laurie went away.

Coghlan got busy with the induction balance. There was, he soon discovered, no metal behind the wet spot on the wall. Nor above it. Nor below or on either side. There were no wires run-fling to the place that had stayed cold "since always." There was no metal of any sort in the wall. Coghlan sweated a little. There could not be a refrigeration-apparatus without metal.

He put the induction balance away. He stuck a thermometer into the hole he'd made earlier. He moved it carefully back and forth, watching the mercury shrink. He swallowed when he saw its final reading. He hooked up the thermocouple—infinitely thin wires, of different metals, joined at their tips. He hooked on the microvoltometer. He soon found a particular spot. It was a very

particular spot indeed. The tips of the wires had to be at an exact depth inside the hole. A hundredth of an inch off made the microvoltometer sway wildly. He changed a connection to get a grosser reading—millivolts instead of microvolts—and found that exact depth in the hole again. He went pale.

Laurie said:

"Tommy, I'm back."

He turned and said blankly, "A hundred and ninety millivolts! And it's below the temperature of dry ice!"

Laurie said wistfully, "I can't even raise the temperature of that, can I, Tommy?"

He didn't notice. He put down the thermocouple and brought out the alnico magnet. He wrestled the keeper off its poles.

"This doesn't make sense," he said absorbedly, "but if it is a field of force ..."

He turned again to the wall and the hole he'd made in it. He put the heavy, intensely strong magnet near the opening.

The opening clouded. It acquired a silvery sheen which had the look of metal as the magnet neared it. Coghlan pulled the magnet away. The look of metal vanished. He put the magnet back, and the silvery appearance was there again.

He was staring at it, speechless, when Mannard came over with Ghalil and Duval. Mannard carried the thick, ancient volume with the battered ivory medallions in its cover—and Goghlan's seven-hundred-year-old fingerprints on its first page.

"Tommy," said Mannard uncomfortably, "I don't believe this! But put one of your fingerprints alongside one of these, dammit!"

Ghalil matter-of-factly struck a match and began to make a deposit of soot on the scraping-tool which he'd used to pull down plaster. Coghlan ignored them, staring at the hole in the plaster.

"What's the matter with him?" demanded Mannard.

"Science," said Laurie, "has reared its ugly head. He's thinking."

Coghian turned away, lost in concentrated thought. Ghalil said mildly:

"A finger, please." He took Coghian's hand. He paused, and

then deliberately took the bandage off the thumb. He pressed the thumb against the sooted scraper. Mannard, curious and uneasy, held up the book. Ghalil pressed the thumb down.

It hurt. Coghlan said: “Wait a minute! What’s this?” as if startled awake.

Ghalil took the book to a window. He looked. Mannard crowded close. In silence, Ghalil passed over his pocket magnifying-glass. Mannard looked, exhaustively.

“That’s hard to explain,” he said heavily. “The scar and all...”

Coghlan said:

“All of you, look at this!”

He moved the alnico magnet to and fro. The silvery film appeared and disappeared. Ghalil looked at it, and at Coghlan’s face.

“That silvery appearance,” said Coghlan painfully, “will appear under the plaster wherever it’s cold. I doubt that this magnet alone will silver the whole space at once, though—and it’s twenty times as strong as a steel magnet, at that. Apparently a really powerful magnetic field is needed to show this up.”

The silvery film vanished again when he pulled back the magnet.

“Now,” said Ghalil mildly, “just what would that be? A—what you would call a gadget?”

Coghlan swallowed.

“No,” he said helplessly. “There’s a gadget, all right, but it must be back in the thirteenth century. This is—well—I guess you’d call this the gadget’s ghost.”

VI

It grew dark in the room, and Coghian finished clearing away the plaster from the wet spot by the light of police flashlights. As he removed the last layer of plaster, frost appeared. As it was exposed to view it melted, reluctantly. Then the wall was simply Wet over colorings almost completely obliterated by the centuries

of damp. At the edges of the square space, the wetness vanished. Coghlan dug under its edge. Plaster only. But there were designs when he cleared plaster away back from the edge. The wall had been elaborately painted, innumerable years ago.

Duval looked like a man alternately rapt in enthusiasm at the discovery of artwork which must extend under all the later plaster of this room, and hysterical as he contemplated the absolute illogic of the disclosure.

Mannard sat on a camp-chair and watched. The flashlight beams made an extraordinary picture. One played upon Coghlan as he worked. Laurie held it for him, and he worked with great care.

"I take it," said Mannard after a long silence, and still skeptically, "that you're saying that this is a sort of ghost of a gadget that was made in the thirteenth century."

"When," said Ghalil, from a dark corner, "there were no gadgets."

"No science," corrected Coghlan, busy at the wall. "They achieved some results by accident. Then they repeated all the things that had preceded the unexpected result, and never knew or cared which particular one produced the result they wanted. Tempering swords, for example."

Duval interposed: "The Byzantine Empire imported its finer swords."

"Yes," agreed Coghlan. "Religion wouldn't let them use the best process for tempering steel."

"Religion?" protested Mannard. "What did that have to do with tempering swords?"

"Magic," said Coghlan. "The best temper was achieved by heating a sword white-hot and plunging it into the body of a slave or a prisoner of war. It was probably discovered when somebody wanted to take a particularly fancy revenge. But it worked."

"Nonsense!" snapped Mannard.

"Some few cutlers use essentially the same process now," said Coghlan, absorbed in removing a last bit of plaster. "It's a combination of salt and nitrogenous quenching. Human blood is salt.

Steel tempers better in salt water than in fresh. The ancients found that human blood gave a good temper. They didn't think scientifically and try salt water. And the steel gets a better surface-hardening still, if it's quenched in the presence of nitrogenous matter—like human flesh. Cutlers who use the process now soak scrap leather in salt water and plunge a white-hot blade in that. Technically, it's the same thing as stabbing a slave—and cheaper. But the ancients didn't think through to scrap leather and salt water. They stuck to good old-fashioned magic tempering—which worked."

He stood back. He brushed plaster dust off his fingers.

"That's all we can do without more apparatus. Now—"

He picked up the alnico magnet and moved it across all the cleared space. An oblong pattern of silveriness appeared at the nearest part of the wet place to the magnet. It followed the magnet. It followed the magnet to the edge, and ran abruptly off into nothingness as the magnet passed an invisible boundary.

"At a guess," said Coghlan thoughtfully, "this is the ghost, if you want to call it that, of what the ancients thought was a magic mirror—to look into the future with. Right, Duval?"

Duval said tensely:

"It is true that all through the middle ages alchemists wrote of and labored to make magic mirrors, as you say."

"Maybe this one started the legend," said Coghian.

"The flashlight battery's getting weak—" Ghalil's voice from the darkness.

"We need better light and more apparatus," said Coghlan. "I doubt if we can do any more before morning."

His manner was matter-of-fact, but inside he felt oddly numb. His thumb stung a little. The cut had been irritated by plasterdust and by the soot that got into it when Ghalil took a fresh thumbprint to show Mannard. In the last analysis, he'd cut his thumb investigating the ghost of a gadget because presently he must write a memorandum and have it delivered yesterday, which memo would be the cause of the discovery of the ghost of a—

He felt the stirring about him as the others made ready to leave. He heard Mannard say irritably:

"I don't get this! It's preposterous!"

"Quite so," said Ghalil, "so we shall have to be very careful. My Moslem ancestors had a saying that the fate of every man was writ upon his forehead. I hope, Mr. Mannard, that your fate is not writ upon the sheepskin page I showed you just now."

"But what's it all about?" demanded Mannard. "Who's back of it? What's back of it?"

Ghalil sighed, voicing a shrug.

They descended the stairs. The dark, narrow, twisty street outside looked ominous. Ghalil opened the door of the waiting police-car. He said to Mannard, in a sort of humorous abandonment of reason:

"Unfortunately, Mr. Coghian was—or has not yet been—very specific in the memorandum which began this series of events. He said only—" he repeated the last line of Coghian's handwriting in the sheepskin book—" 'Make sure of Mannard. To be killed.' Mannard said bitterly: "That's specific enough!"

He and Laurie and Coghlan got into the back of the car. Lieutenant Ghalil climbed into the front seat, beside the driver. The car's motor roared as it got the car into motion.

"Your message, when you do write it, Mr. Coghian," he said over his shoulder as the car moved toward a bend in the winding alleyway, "will be purposefully unclear. It is as if you will know that a clear message would prevent what you will wish to have happened. Thus it appears that you will write that message to bring about exactly what has already happened and will continue to happen up to the moment you write it—"

Then he snapped an explosive Turkish word to the driver. The driver jammed on the brakes. The car came to a screaming stop.

"One moment," said Ghalil politely.

He got out of the car. He looked at something in the headlight beams. He touched it very cautiously. He waved the car back, and whistled shrilly. Men came running from the house they had

just left. Ghalil spoke crisply, in Turkish. They bent over the object on the cobbles of the lane. The flashlight beams seemed insufficient and they struck matches. Presently Ghalil and a policeman picked up the thing gingerly and moved it with exquisite care to the side of the alley. They put it down against a wall. There Ghalil knelt and examined it again by the light of other matches.

He got up and brushed off his hands. He came back to the cam, got in. He spoke to the driver in Turkish and the car moved on again, more slowly. At the next curve it barely crawled.

"What was that?" demanded Mannard.

Lieutenant Ghalil hesitated.

"I fear it was another attempt upon your life," he said apologetically. "A bomb. My men did not see it placed because of the many curves in the street."

For a short while there were only breathing sounds in the car. The car came to a slightly wider highway and moved more swiftly. Presently Ghalil went on:

"I was saying, Mr. Mannard, that when Mr. Coghlan writes the memorandum we showed him yesterday, he will wish things to happen exactly as they will have happened. For that reason he will not be explicit in his message. He will not mention rifle-shots or bombs, times or locales. Knowing this, I trust that you will survive until the affair is concluded. I am making every effort to bring it about."

Coghian found his voice. He said savagely:

"But you can't risk lives on crazy reasoning like that!"

"I am taking every sane precaution," Ghalil said tiredly. "Among them, I shall ask you to remain at the Hotel Petra tonight, with my men guarding you as well as Mr. Mannard and Miss Mannard."

"If there's any risk to her, I'm certainly staying!" growled Coghlan.

The car emerged into still wider streets. There were more people about, now. Here, in the modern section, all lights were electric. Here were motion-picture theatres, and motor-cars, and

people in wholly European dress instead of the compromises between Eastern and Western costume to be found in the poorer quarters. The Hotel Petra loomed up, impressively illuminated.

The police-car stopped before it. Ghalil got out and looked casually about him. A lounger, nearby, signalled inconspicuously. Ghalil nodded. The lounger moved away. Ghalil opened the car-door for the others to emerge.

"I impose myself upon you also," he said politely. "I shall stay on watch until affairs mature."

They entered the lobby, went toward the lift, only slightly reassured by bustle and bright lights. Coghian said suddenly:

"Where's Duval? He's in this too!"

"He remains at 8o Hosain," said Ghalil briefly. "Poor man! He is wedded to logic and in love with the past. He is sorely tempted to a crime of passion! But I have left men with him."

They crowded into the lift. It rose. There was a man polishing woodwork in the hall outside Mannard's suite. He looked like an hotel employee, but nodded to Lieutenant Ghalil.

"One of my men," the Turk said. "All is well so far. There are other guards."

They went into the suite. Mannard looked definitely grim. "I'm going to order something to eat," he told Ghalil. "It's nearly ten o'clock, and we all missed dinner. But we're going to get this thing thrashed out! I want some straight talk! If that's the truth about somebody leaving a bomb on the street—and if gadgets have ghosts—"

He was in a state of mind in which consecutive thought was not easy. There were too many inexplicables, too many tag ends of fact. From Coghlan's tale of an impossible book with an impossible message—which Mannard had seen now—to a preposterous shot smashing a coffee-cup to keep him from drinking an incredibly poisoned drink, and to a physical phenomenon of frost without refrigeration and a look of silvery metal which was not matter ..

Mannard was an engineer. He was hard-headed. He was prepared to face anything which was fact, and worry about theory

afterward. But he was not able to adjust to so many facts at once, each of them contradicting any reasonable theory. He looked at once irritable and dogged and a little frightened.

"When I try to think this thing over, I don't believe even what I tell myself!" he said angrily. "Things happen, and I believe 'em while they're happening, but they don't make any damned sense afterward!"

He stamped out of the room. They heard him telephoning an order for dinner for four sent up to the suite at once. Then he snapped: "Yes, that's all. What? Yes, she's in—who wants her? Who? Oh. Send him on up."

He came back. "What the hell does Appolonius want to see you for, Laurie? He was downstairs asking if you'd see him when I phoned. He's coming up." Then he went back to his former subject, still fuming. "I tell you, there's something wrong about the whole approach to this business! It seems that somebody is trying to kill me. I don't know why they should, but if they really want to it ought to be a simple enough job! It shouldn't call for all these trimmings! Nobody would set out to kill somebody and add in a seven-hundred-year-old book and a forgery of Tommy's fingerprints and a gadget's ghost and all the rest! Not if a plain, ordinary murder was back of it—or a swindle either! So what in—"

The buzzer at the door of the suite. Goghlan went to answer it.

Appolonius the Great started visibly when he saw Coghlan. He said with great dignity:

"I had a note from Miss Mannard. She asked me to befriend her in this tragic time—"

Mannard's voice came from behind Coghlan.

"Dammit, we've got to look for a simple scheme! A simple purpose! There's a mix-up here! We're linking things that just don't belong together!"

Appolonius gasped.

"That is—Mr. Mannard!"

"Why not?" said Coghlan.

There was a chattering sound. The teeth of Appolonius the Great seemed to be its source. He leaned against the door.

"Pardon! Let me recover myself! I do not wish to be faint. This is—incredible!"

Coghlan waited. The small fat man's face was in shadow. He took several deep breaths.

"I—think I can act naturally now."

Coghian closed the door behind him. And Appolonius walked into the sitting room of the suite with his usual strutting waddle —but his usual beaming smile simply could not jell. He bowed elaborately to Mannard and to Laurie, with sweat shining on his face. Mannard said:

"Appolonius, this is Lieutenant Ghalil of the police. He thinks I'm in some danger."

Appolonius the Great swallowed. He said to Mannard:

"I came because I thought you were dead."

A rather thoughtful silence followed. Then Lieutenant Ghalil cleared his throat to ask the obvious questions—and paused, looking exceeding alert, as Appolonius' pudgy right hand went into his coat pocket— Only an envelope came out. A Hotel Petra envelope. His fat fingers shaking, Appolonius drew out the single sheet it enclosed and handed it to Mannard. Mannard read. He flushed, speechless with anger. He handed it to Ghalil.

Ghalil read, and said slowly:

"But the letter is dated tomorrow!" He passed it politely to Laurie. "I do not think you wrote this, Miss Mannard."

He returned his gaze to the shaken, uneasy, almost trembling figure of that small magician who called himself Appolonius the Great.

Coghian moved to be beside Laurie as she read. Her shoulder touched his. The note said:

"Dear Mr. Appolonius;
You are the only person I know in Istanbul to ask for help in

the tragic circumstances of my fatheT's death. Will you help me, please?

Laurie Mannard."

"I have heard of post-dated checks," said Ghalil. "I think that is an American custom. But pre-written letters ..

Appolonius seemed to shiver.

"I—did not notice that," he said unsteadily. "But it—would seem to be like the message of which Mr. Coghlan told us—with his fingerprints."

"Not quite," said Ghalil, shaking his head. "No, not quite!"

Mannard said furiously: "Where'd you get this, Appolonius? It's a forgery, of course. I'm not dead yet!"

"I had been—away from my hotel. I returned and that—letter awaited me. I came here at once."

"It is dated tomorrow," Ghalil pointed out. "Which could be an error of timing, or a confusion in time itself. But I do not think so. Certainly it seems to imply, Mr. Mannard, that you are to die tonight, or surely tomorrow morning. But on the other hand, Mr. Coghlan will not write with certainty of your death when he does write in that book. So there is hope—"

"I have no intention of dying tonight," said Mannard angrily. "No intention at all!"

"Nor," said Lieutenant Ghalil, "have I any intention of forwarding such a project. But I can think of no precautions that are not already in force."

Appolonius sat down abruptly, as if his knees had given way beneath him. His sudden movement drew all eyes.

"Has something occurred to you?" asked Ghalil mildly.

Appolonius shivered. "It—occurs to me—" he paused to moisten his lips—"to tell of my visit with Mr. Coghlan today. I—accused him of mystification.

"He admitted that there *was* a conspiracy. He—offered to admit me to it. I—I now accuse Mr. Coghlan of designing to murder Mr. Mannard!"

The lights went out. There was dead blackness in the room. Instantly there was an impact of body against body. Then groaning, gasping breaths in the darkness. Men struggled and strained. There were thumpings. Laurie cried out.

Then Ghalil's voice panted, as if his breathing were much impeded:

"You—happen to be strangling me, Mr. Coghlan! I think that I am—strangling him! If we can only hold him until the lights—he is very strong—"

The struggle went on in the darkness on the floor.

VII

There was a frantic scratching of a pass-key in the door to the suite. Flashlight beams licked in the opening. Men rushed in, their lights concentrating on the squirming heap of bodies on the floor. Mannard stood embattled before Laurie, ready to fight all corners.

The men with flashlights rushed past him, threw themselves upon the struggle.

They had Appolonius the Great on his feet, still fighting like a maniac, when the lights flashed back into brightness as silently and unreasonably as they had gone out.

Coghlan stood back, his coat torn, a deep scratch on his face. Lieutenant Ghalil bent down and began to search the floor. After a moment he found what he looked for. He straightened with a crooked Kurdish knife in his hand. He spoke in Turkish to the uniformed police, against whom fat little Appolonius still struggled in feverish silence. They marched him out. He still jumped and writhed, like a suitful of fleshy balloons.

Ghalil held out the knife to Coghlan.

"Yours?"

Coghlan was panting. "Yes—I use it as a letter-opener on my desk. How'd it get here?"

"I suspect," said Ghalil, "that Appolonius picked it up when he visited you today."

He began to brush off his uniform. He still breathed hard.

Mannard said indignantly, "I don't get this! Did Appolonius try to kill me? In Heaven's name why? What would he get out of it?"

Ghalil finished the brushing process. He said with a sigh:

"When M. Duval first brought me that incredible book, I put routine police inquiries through on everyone who might be involved. You, Mr. Mannard. Mr. Coghlan. Of course M. Duval himself. And even Appolonius the Great. The last information about him came only today. It appears that in Rome, in Madrid, and in Paris he has been the close friend of three rich men of whom one died in an automobile accident, one apparently of a heart attack, and one seemed to have committed suicide. It is no coincidence, I imagine, that each had given Appolonius a large check for his alleged countrymen only a few days before his death. I think that is the answer, Mr. Mannard."

"But I've given him no money!" protested Mannard blankly. "He did say he'd gotten money, of course, but—" and suddenly he stopped short. "Damnation! A forged check going through the clearing-house! It had to be deposited while I was alive! And I had to be dead before it was cleared, or I'd say it was a forgery! If I was dead, it wouldn't be questioned—"

"Just so," said Ghalil. "Unfortunately, the banks have not had time to look through their records. I expect that information tomorrow."

Laurie put her hand on Coghlan's arm. Mannard said abruptly:

"You moved fast, Tommy! You and the lieutenant together. How'd you know to jump him when the lights went out?"

"I didn't know," admitted Coghlan. "But I saw him looking at that wristwatch of his, with the second-hand sweeping around. He showed me a trick today, at my apartment, that depended on his knowing to a split-second when something was going to happen. I was just thinking that if he'd been expecting the lights to go out last night, he could have been triggered to throw you

down-stairs. Then the lights went out here—and I jumped."

"It was desperation," Ghalil interposed. "He has tried four separate times to assassinate you, Mr. Mannard."

"You said something like that—"

"You have been under guard," admitted Ghalil, "since the moment M. Duval showed me that book with the strange record in it. You had rented an automobile. My men found a newly contrived defect in its muffler, so that deadly carbon-monoxide poured into the back of it. It was remedied. A bomb was mailed to you, and reached you day before yesterday—before I first spoke to Mr. Coghlan. It was—" he smiled apologetically—"intercepted. Today he tried to poison you at the Sea of Marmora. That failed by means he did not understand or like. Moreover, he was frightened by the affair of the book. He considered that another conspiracy existed, competing with his. The mystery of it, and the unexplained failure of attempts to assassinate you, drove him almost to madness. When even the bomb failed to blow up my police-car—"

"Suppose," said Mannard grimly, "just suppose you explain that book hocus-pocus you and Duval are trying to put over!"

"I cannot explain it," said Ghalil gently. "I do not understand it. But I think Mr. Coghlan proceeds admirably—"

The door to the suite buzzed. Ghalil admitted a waiter carrying a huge tray. The waiter said something in Turkish and placed the tray on a table. He went out.

"A man was caught in the basement with a sweep-second wrist-watch," said Ghalil. "He had turned off the lights and turned them on again. He is badly frightened. He will talk."

Laurie looked at Coghian. Then, trembling a little, she began to uncover dishes on the tray.

Mannard roared: "But what the hell's that book business, and Tommy's fingerprints, and the stuff on the wall? They're all part of the same thing!"

"No," said the Turk. "You make the mistake I did, Mr. Mannard. You assumed that things which are associated with the same thing are connected with each other. But it is not true.

Sometimes they are merely apparently associated—by chance."

Laurie said, "Tommy, I—think we'd better eat something."

"But do you mean," demanded Mannard, "that it's not hocus-pocus? Do you expect me to believe that there's a gadget that's got a ghost? D'you mean that Tommy Coghlan is going to put his fingerprints under a memorandum that says I'm going to be killed? That he's going to *write* it?"

"No," admitted Ghalil. "Still, that unbelievable message is the reason I set men to guard you three days ago. It is the reason you are now alive." He looked hungrily at the uncovered dishes. "I starve," he confessed. "May I?"

Mannard said, "It's too crazy! It'd be like a miracle! Confusion in time so there'd be all this mix-up to save my life? Nonsense! The laws of nature don't get suspended—"

Coghlan said thoughtfully, "When you think of it, sir, that field of force isn't a plane surface. It's like a tube—the way a bubble can be stretched out. That's what threw me off. When you think what a magnetic field does to polarized light—"

"Consider me thinking of it," growled Mannard. "What of it?"

"I can duplicate that field," said Coghlan thoughtfully. "It'll take a little puttering around, and I can't make a tube of it, but I can make a field that will absorb energy—or heat—and yield it as power. I can make a refrigeration gadget that will absorb heat and yield power. It'll take some research ..."

"Sure of that?" snapped Mannard.

Coghlan nodded. He was sure. He'd seen something happen. He'd figured out part of how it happened. Now he could do things the original makers of the gadget couldn't do. It was not an unprecedented event, of course. A spectacle-maker in Holland once put two lenses together and made a telescope which magnified things but showed them unhappily upside down. And half a continent away, in Italy, one Galileo Galilei heard a rumor of the feat and sat up all night thinking it out—and next morning made a telescope so much better than the rumored one that all field-glasses are made after his design to this day.

"I'll back the research," said Mannard shrewdly. "If you'll make a contract with me. I'll play fair. That's good stuff!"

He looked at his daughter. Her face was blank. Then her eyes brightened. She smiled at her father. He smiled back.

She said, "Tommy—if you can do that—oh, don't you *see?* Come in the other room for a moment. I want to talk to you!"

He blinked at her. Then his shoulders straightened. He took a deep breath, muttered four words, and said, "Hah!" He grabbed her arm and led her through the door.

Mannard said satisfiedly: "That's sense! Refrigeration that yields energy! Power from the tropics! Running factories from the heat of the Gulf Stream!"

"But," said Ghalil, "does not that sound as improbable as that a gadget should have a ghost?"

"No," said Mannard firmly. "That's science! I don't understand it, but it's science! And Laurie wants to marry him, besides. And anyhow, I know the boy! He'll manage it!"

The telephone rang. It rang again. They heard Coghlan answex it. He called:

"Lieutenant! For you!"

Ghalil answered the telephone. He pointedly did not observe the new, masterful, confident air worn by Coghlan, or the distinctly radiant expression on Laurie's face. He talked, in Turkish. He hung up.

"I go back to 8o Hosain," he said briefly. "Something has happened. Poor M. Duval grew hysterical. They had to send for a physician. They do not know what occurred—but there are *changes* in the room."

"I'm coming with you!" said Coghlan instantly.

Laurie would not be left behind. Mannard expansively came too. The four of them piled again into the police-car and headed back for the squalid quarter of the city in which the room with the gadget's ghost was to be found. Laurie sat next to Coghian, and the atmosphere about them was markedly rosy. GhaliI watched streets and buildings rush toward them, the ways grow

narrower and darker and the houses seemed to loom above the racing car. Once he said meditatively:

"That Appolonius thought of everything! It was so desperately necessary to kill you, Mr. Mannard, that he had even an excuse for calling on you to murder you, though he expected a street-bomb to make it unnecessary! It must be time for his forged check to appear at your bank! That letter was a clever excuse, too. It would throw all suspicion upon the engineers of the mystery of the ancient book."

Mannard grunted. "What's happened where we're going? What sort of changes in the room?" Then he said suspiciously:
"No occult stuff?"

"I doubt it very much," said Chalil.

There was another car parked in the narrow lane. The police at the house had gotten a doctor, who was evidently still in the building.

They went up into the room on the second floor. There were three policemen here, with a grave, mustachioed civilian who had the consequential air of the physician in a European—or Asiatic —country. Duval lay on a canvas cot, evidently provided for the police who occupied the building now. He slept heavily. His face was ravaged. His collar was torn open at his throat, as if in a frenzy of agitation when he felt that madness come upon him. His hands were bandaged. The physician explained at length to Ghalil, in Turkish. Ghalil then asked questions of the police. There was a portable electric lantern on the floor, now. It lighted the room acceptably.

Coghlan's eyes swept about the place. Changes? No change except the cot. . . No! There had been books here beside Duval, on the floor. Ghalil had said they were histories in which Duval tried to find some reference to the building itself. There were still a few of those books—half a dozen, perhaps, out of three or four times as many. The rest had vanished.

But in their place were other things.

Coghian was staring at them when Ghalil explained:

"The police heard him making strange sounds. They came in and he was agitated to incoherence. His hands were frost-bitten. He held the magnet against the appearance of silver and thrust books into it, shouting the while. The books he thrust into the silvery film vanished. He does not speak Turkish, but one of them thought he was shouting at the wall in Greek. They subdued him and brought a physician. He was so agitated that the physician gave him an injection to quiet him."

Coghlan said: "Damn!"

He bent over the objects on the floor. There was an ivory stylus and a clumsy reed pen and an ink-pot—the ink was just beginning to thaw from solid ice—and a sheet of parchment with fresh writing upon it. The writing was the same cursive hand as the memo mentioning "frigid Beyond" and "adepts" and "Appolonius" in the old, old book with Coghlan's fingerprints. There was a leather belt with a beautifully worked buckle. There was a dagger with an ivory handle. There were three books. All were quite new, but they were not modern printed books: they were manuscript books, written in graceless Middle Greek with no spaces between words or punctuation or paragraphing. In binding and make-up they were exactly like the *Alexiad* of seven hundred years ago. Only—they were spanking new.

Coghian picked up one of them. It was the *Alexiad.* It was an exact duplicate of the one containing his prints, to the minutest detail of carving in the ivory medallions with which the leather cover was inset. It was the specifically same volume— But it was seven-hundred years younger— And it was bitterly, bitterly cold.

Duval was more than asleep. He was unconscious. In the physician's opinion he had been so near madness that he had had to be quieted. And he was quieted. Definitely.

Coghian picked up the alnico magnet. He moved toward the wall and held the magnet near the wet spot. The silvery appearance sprang into being. He swept the magnet back and forth. He said:

"The doctor couldn't rouse Duval, could he? So he could write something for me in Byzantine Greek?"

He added, with a sort of quiet bitterness. "The thing is shrinking—naturally!"

It was true. The wet spot was no longer square. It had drawn in upon itself so that it was now an irregular oval, a foot across at its longest, perhaps eight inches at its narrowest.

"Give me something solid," commanded Coghlan. "A flashlight will do."

Laurie handed him Lieutenant Ghalil's flashlight. He turned it on—it burned only feebly—and pressed it close to the silvery surface. He pushed the flashlight into contact. Into the silvery sheen. Its end disappeared. He pushed it through the silver film into what should have been solid plaster and stone. But it went. Then he exclaimed suddenly and jerked his hand away. The flashlight fell through—into the plaster. Coghlan rubbed his free hand vigorously on his trouser-leg. His fingers were numb with cold. The flashlight had been metal, and a good conductor of frigidity.

"I need Duval awake!" said Goghian angrily. "He's the only one who can write that Middle Greek—or talk it or understand it! I need him awake!"

The physician shook his head when Ghalil relayed the demand. "He required much sedative to quiet him," said Ghalil. "He cannot be roused. It would take hours, in any case."

"I'd like to ask them," said Coghlan bitterly, "what they did to a mirror that would make its surface produce a ghost of itself. It must have been something utterly silly!"

He paced up and down, clenching and unclenching his hands. "To make a gadget Duval called a 'magic mirror' "—his tone was sarcastic—"they might try diamond-dust or donkey-dung or a whale's eyelashes. And one of them might work! Somebody did get this gadget, by accident we can't hope to repeat!"

"Why not?"

"We can't think, any more, like lunatics or barbarians or By-

zantine alchemists!" snapped Coghlan. "We just can't! It's like a telephone! Useless by itself. You have to have two telephones in two places at the same time. We can see that. To use a thing like this, you have to have two instruments in the same place at different times! With telephones you need a connection of wire, joining them. With this gadget you need a connection of place, joining the times!"

"A singularly convincing fantasy," said Ghalil, his eyes admiring. "And just as you can detect the wire between two telephone instruments—"

"—You can detect the place where gadgets are connected in different times! The connection is cold. It condenses moisture. Heat goes into it and disappears. And I know," said Coghlan defiantly, "that I am talking nonsense! But I also know how to make a connection which will create cold, though I haven't the ghost—hah, damn it!—of an idea how to make the instruments it could connect! And making the connection is as far from making the gadgets as drawing a copper wire is from making a telephone exchange! All I know is that an alnico magnet will act as one instrument, so that the connection can exist!"

Mannard growled: "What the hell is all this? Stick to facts! What happened to Duval?"

"Tomorrow," said Coghlan in angry calm, "he's going to tell us that he heard faint voices through the silvery film when he played with the magnet. He's going to say the voices were talking in Byzantine Greek. He's going to say he tried to rap on the silver stuff—it looked solid—to attract their attention. And whatever he rapped with went through! He'll say he heard them exclaim, and that he got excited and told them who he was—maybe he'll ask them if they were working with Appolonius, because Appolonius was mentioned on the flyleaf of that book—and offer to swap them books and information about modern times for what they could tell and give him! He'll swear he jammed books through—mostly history-books in modern Greek and French— and they shoved things back. His frost-bitten hands are the evidence for that! When something comes out of that film or goes

into it, it gets cold! The 'frigid Beyond'! He'll tell us that the ghost of the gadget began to get smaller as he swapped—the coating or whatever produced the effect would wear terrifically with use!—and he got frantic to learn all he could, and then your policemen came in and grabbed him, and then he went more frantic because he partly believed and partly didn't and couldn't make them understand. Then the doctor came and everything's messed up!"

"You believe that?" demanded Mannard.

"I know damned well," raged Coghlan, "he wouldn't have asked them what they did to the mirror to make it work! And the usable surface is getting smaller every minute, and I can't slip a written note through telling them to run-down the process because Duval's the only one here who could ask a simple question for the crazy answer they'd give!"

He almost wrung his hands. Laurie picked up the huge, five-inch-thick book that had startled him before. Mannard stood four-square, doggedly unbelieving. Ghalil looked at nothing, with bright eyes, as if savoring a thought which explained much that had puzzled him.

"I'll never believe it," said Mannard doggedly. "Never in a million years! Even if it could happen, why should it here and now? What's the purpose—the real purpose in the nature of things? To keep me from getting killed? That's all it's done! I'm not that important, for natural laws to be suspended and the one thing that could never happen again to happen just to keep Appolonius from murdering me!"

Then Ghalil nodded his head. He looked approvingly at Mannard.

"An honest man!" he said. "I can answer it, Mr. Mannard. Duval had his history-books here. Some were modern Greek and some were French. And if the preposterous is true, and Mr. Coghlan has described the fact, then the man who made this— this 'gadget' back in the thirteenth century was an alchemist and a scholar who believed implicitly in magic. When Duval offered to trade books, would he not agree without question because of

He was smudging ink on his fingers when Ghalil said politely:

"May I help? The professional touch—"

Coghlan let him smear the smudgy black ink on his fingertips. Ghalil painstakingly rolled the four finger-prints, the thumb-print below. He said calmly:

"This is unique—to make a fingerprint record I will see again when it is seven centuries old! Now what?"

Coghlan picked up the magnet. It was much brighter than a steel one. It had the shine of aluminum, but it was heavy. He presented it to the dwindling wet spot on the wall. The wet place turned silvery. Coghlan thrust the book at the shining surface. It touched. It went into the silver. It vanished. Coghlan took the magnet away. The wet place looked, somehow, as if it were about to dry permanently. Duval breathed stertorously on the canvas cot.

"And now," said Ghalil blandly, "we do not need to believe it any more. We do not believe it, do we?"

"Of course not!" growled Mannard. "It's all nonsense!"

Ghalil grinned. He brushed off his fingers.

"Undoubtedly," he said sedately, "M. Duval contrived it all. He will never admit it. He will always insist that one of us contrived it. We will all suspect each other, for always. There will be no record anywhere except a very discreet report in the archives of the Istanbul Police Department, which will assign the mystification either to M. Duval or to Appolonius the Great— after he has gone to prison, at least. It is a singular mystery, is it not?"

He laughed.

A week later, Laurie triumphantly pointed out to Coghlan that it was demonstrably all nonsense. The cut on his thumb had healed quite neatly, leaving no scar at all.