

WASHINGTON D.C. USA (II)

“Nelson McCabe, please,” Dave asked the telephone operator of the newspaper offices.

“Whom shall I say is calling?” she asked.

“Dave DeMoss.” “Just a minute, please, and I’ll see if he’s available.”

Dave waited. He and Duke had decided to stay over-night in Washington so they could talk with Nelson urgently. Nelson would not be able to answer all their questions, but a quick meeting would get him started researching; and anything he had would help them get a better grasp of the critical situation with which they had been so precipitately confronted. The President’s sombre words, “It could happen tomorrow”, regarding the nuclear destruction of Israel and its consequences, had kept them awake half the night in discussion.

“Hi there, Dave. How are you? What can I do for you?” Nelson McCabe came on the line.

“Hello, Nels. Listen, something important has just come up and I must see you urgently. Duke and I are in Washington. Do you have a couple of hours today for a meeting?”

“Hmmm. Let me think for a moment. OK. With a bit of juggling I could be free for a couple of hours in the early afternoon—a bit more if you want to make it a sandwich lunch of more talk than eats. That suit you?”

“Great. Where d’you suggest? It’s your city. Just so it’s quiet and discreet.”

“I understand. There’s a coffee and sandwich place near here where Joe MacGinnis and I meet to talk, about three blocks from the White House between the Dominion book shop and Scarlatti’s restaurant. You know it? It’s a small place but they won’t bother us if we sit for a couple of hours. Say 12.30?”

“OK. See you.”

Nelson was already there when Dave and Duke arrived, eating a hamburger with fries in a booth with seating for four persons. His tall, lanky figure was jack-knifed into the crowded space, a notebook on which he had been writing beside his plate. With his heavy horn-rimmed spectacles, checked jacket with stitched leather elbow pieces, thick mop of greying hair, slightly jaded sensibility and sardonic insouciance, he appeared more like a college professor than a journalist. They had met during the Adullam and Colombian affair and had been mutually impressed by each other’s expertise.

When Dave and Duke had given their orders Dave asked Nelson about his wife. “How’s Lauren?”

“Well, pregnant, and acerbic as ever,” Nelson said, laughing. Lauren was a top television newscaster, who had also been professionally involved in the dramatic Adullam/Colombian imbroglio. “If you’re going to be around she’ll want to see you.”

“Not on this trip,” Dave said regretfully. “We leave right after we speak with you. But we need to talk with you again in more detail soon, and we can meet up then.”

“So what new adventure have you guys got going?” Nelson asked. “I don’t know that I can take another one so soon after that last caper.”

Dave smiled and said slowly, “First, let me say that what we’re going to tell you is top secret - and I mean top as far as it can go. When you leave here check it out with the President—contact through the First Lady, informally, rather than the White House staff officially—who will ask you personally to keep this confidential until he gives you exclusive permission to publish at an agreed later date. OK?”

“Well, well,” Nelson sat back. “That was some introduction. You got me hooked. OK. No leaks. What’s the story?”

Dave gave him an edited version of what the President had told them, leaving it to the President, and to Nelson’s own acute intelligence, to fill in the gaps.

“And where do I fit into this intriguing scenario?” Nelson asked when Dave had finished.

“First, we need your expertise relating to international criminal groups and political associations,” Dave replied. “The Janus Club appears to be a major player in this new scenario, with new leaders and different ambitions but the same powerful political clout through drug money-laundering and illicit nuclear shenanigans. Then, two, you were in the old Soviet Union, and you were there after the break-up into Russia and the Independent States. Three, you know some of the key figures in the Russian mafiya who were illegally marketing nuclear weapon secrets from Central Asia. That’s just for starters.”

Nelson nodded agreement. “Right. I see that. And that would produce a normal quid pro quo. But I sense a more urgent scenario, with a more serious requirement. Let me hazard a guess just to jog your memory.” He smiled sardonically, and Dave responded with a rueful smile and approving nod at the journalist’s perception. “The reason the President has called you in, instead of the usual CIA or whoever the official spooks are at present, is because of your Vietnam expertise, your Hong Kong China connections, your recent ‘Janus Club’ knowledge, and - somehow last, but by no means least —your religious experience. What have you left out that’s so important?”

“You’re good, Nels,” Dave said admiringly. “The dark secret—which I left to the President to tell you, and which must not get beyond us here - is that there is a Muslim fundamentalist plan, led by a fanatical and mysterious individual, which involves a nuclear strike against Israel from a secret location in north Tibet and north-west China—which could happen anytime. Our mission, as they used to say in ‘Mission Impossible’, is to take out the nuclear facility—and perhaps the fundamentalist fanatic,

although this latter was not clearly specified.”

“Huh,” Nelson said laconically. He snapped his fingers. “Just like that—with one bound, like Superman! Anyone else—and I include the CIA specialists—and I would have laughed outright and dismissed it. But the President asked you two guys—”. He let the sentence end there, thoughtfully. “You got any ideas?”

Dave shrugged, and looked at Duke questioningly. Duke nodded his agreement. “We spent a good part of last night and this morning tossing ideas around,” Dave admitted. “Basically, it boils down to this: one, the invaluable Greek principle of ‘Know your enemy’, and that means we need all the information we can get on this fundamentalist fanatic, Tariq Muhammad Azir, who has spent years of thinking and effort into putting this plan of world conquest together. Two, we need a full China briefing from our former Chinese colleague, Li Chi’en, in Hong Kong, and have his cooperation in obtaining the explosives we’ll need when we blow this secret nuclear facility in Tibet. Three, we will need someone with a good knowledge of Tibet so that we can reach this remote Shambhala place in Tibet, well hidden in a China Muslim region which will be securely policed.”

Dave stopped to think of something. “That’s the easy, physical part, taking us from here to there. If we are to outwit someone like this Tariq Azir, who must be a formidable character from the little the President said about his personal abilities and years of commitment and achievement, then we must find out everything about him— his activities, his religious beliefs, his goals. It seems this is no Muslim Billy Graham only seeking conversions to Islam, but a dedicated and brilliant political visionary—”

“Now I see why the President chose you two,” Nelson interrupted with a grin. “I get the feeling that you, Dave, and this Tariq character, are two of a kind.” Duke laughed with him, and nodded agreement.

“I need to know what he wants,” Dave continued, “how his mind works. Muhammad the Prophet and the early Muslims, as I recall, were not enemies of the Jews at first, and were often their protectors against Christians. So, is Tariq just a modern Islamic opportunist

with a grudge in his commitment to destroy Israel? Is he a Doctor Strangelove megalomaniac using modern technology to pursue personal aggrandizement? Or is he really a passionate Muslim believer working to convert the world from corruption to righteousness under the banner of Islam? When we blow up the nuclear facility in Shambhala, the most difficult part will only just begin, because, unless Tariq Azir is blown up with it, he would simply fulfil his vision by other means. As Oscar Wilde said: 'A man cannot be too careful in his choice of enemies.'"

"I confess I know nothing about the man," Nelson said. "I have the feeling that I've heard the name in some connections but it's too elusive to pin down. If you hadn't told me that it was the President who gave you this I would not have believed it. It's like something out of Marco Polo or Rudyard Kipling. I'll start checking on it right away and see what I can find."

"Before you do that I need to know a couple of things," Dave said. "One, is there any significance in the fact that you never mentioned any Israelis involved with the Janus Club? And, two, do you know anything about another group composed solely of Israelis, who are said to be the financial brains behind Israel, and the major contributors towards its nuclear capability? Something the President said indicated there were some reports or rumours about this."

"The Jewish mafia," Nelson nodded. "This theory has been around for centuries, mostly advocated by the Roman Catholic hierarchy who wanted to confiscate Jewish wealth. In the nineteenth century it surfaced through the Imperial Russian intelligence service in the so-called 'Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion'; and earlier, a medieval secret society called 'The Order of the Illuminati'. A more modern form is the 'Bilderberg Group', and allied one-world advocates 'Tricameral Commission', comprising leading bankers, statesmen—such as the Rothschilds, Rockefellers, Kissinger and Greenspan—who provide expert advice to governments and major corporations. Historically, there has always seemed to be a measure of credibility to the suspicions because of the way in which the Jews so tribally supported each other, but there was never enough solid evidence to be acceptable. Regarding your other question, about

there being no Israelis in the Janus Club; that is interesting; I never noticed it, but it's true. Religion-wise, there were more Catholics and Protestants, Orthodox and Muslims, of various kinds, but no Jews to my knowledge. I'll check on that, too, for what it's worth. Anything else?"

Dave thought for a few moments then said hesitantly: "Y-e-e-s. You could try to find out something about this Shambhala. It intrigues me, because it figures so prominently in Tariq Azir's thinking. Geographically, I can understand why Tariq Azir as a Tibetan educated in Marxist China would locate a secret nuclear facility in north Tibet and north-west China, because of its proximity to China's nuclear facilities there, and the recently formed Central Asian Independent States to the north with their nuclear capabilities and scientists; also, because it is remote from suspicious Western nuclear inspection teams. But why is it called Shambhala? Is it the name of a locality? Or was it a name given by this Tariq Azir, and therefore significant?"

"I think you're reaching, Dave," Nelson said, not convinced. "Why should it be any more significant than say, 'Three Mile Island' here in the States?"

"Yeah, you could be right," Dave said, but reluctantly. "It's just that I feel the need to get inside this Tariq Azir's head in every way possible. What drives a man to destroy a nation and risk a world holocaust in pursuit of what vision? Not money. You can see that with the Janus Club. After acquiring a certain amount of money and available sex they hunger for power. To get "x" amount of power they are prepared to sacrifice "y" amount of personal possessions and desires—and that is the equation we need to know in order to defeat them in a confrontation. In the words of Jesus in another context: 'What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and lose his own soul?'"

"He really fascinates you, this Tariq Azir, doesn't he?" Nelson asked curiously. "I get the feeling if you ever meet up with him you'd rather talk with him than shoot him!"

Dave nodded his head slowly. "Isn't there a Muslim proverb that says, 'The enemy of my enemy is my friend?'" he said thoughtfully.

“Anyway, enough of philosophizing. How soon can you get some of this material together? I don’t want to leave for Hong Kong before I feel comfortable with the knowledge I have. But I am conscious of the President’s words: ‘It could happen tomorrow.’”

“The problem is the need for secrecy,” Nelson pointed out. “The more people I involve the greater the possibility of a leak. I’ve got an idea! I can split it with Lauren. Being pregnant, she’s got more time off work now, and she’ll love being involved with you guys. It will keep her from pestering me for explanations for my silences and absences! Just joking. Between the two of us, give us a couple of days on computers, telephones and libraries. Say we meet at our house three days from now?”

“Great,” Dave agreed. “We better fix time and place now so we don’t have to use telephones. I don’t want to seem paranoid, but it never pays to under-estimate the enemy, whoever it may be.”

“Let’s make it as early as you can in the morning,” Nelson suggested, “and Lauren and I will keep the day free for talk. If Lauren wants to talk rather than cook we will send out for eats. That suit you?”

“OK. Thursday, probably about eleven a.m. Give me your address and any directions. Then we must get back to Adullam.”

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In the intervening days Dave and Duke spent the time, when not discussing plans and options, in preparing for the trip with what material was available in the States and might not be available in China. Most of the time was taken up with reading about Tibet’s geography and China’s nuclear facilities, both of which were in short supply.

Dave’s knowledge of Tibet was sparse, consisting mostly of its location being south of Russia, west of China and east of India; that it was a mysterious country of monks and a Dalai Lama “god-king”, tribesmen on horseback, and, according to the Hollywood film, “Lost Horizon” so often repeated on television, it had ageless beautiful women living in a secret valley known as “Shangri La.”

Now, as he read, he discovered that it was a vast country of almost a million square miles, the average height of which was 15,000 feet. The world's highest mountains and largest rivers were located there, the tribes in the eastern region of the country were fierce warriors, descended from Genghiz Khan who bitterly hated the Chinese. A half-million Chinese soldiers were garrisoned there in an uneasy and explosive occupation, the tribes often erupting into violent confrontation. The history of the country showed that every fifty years or so the Tibetans revolted against the Chinese attempts at domination, the most recent of which was in 1956-9—which meant that there might be another major revolt soon.

The country was hazardous for all foreigners, with only a single unpaved highway across the country from east to west, and only a few strategic off-shoots from this around the borders; the remainder were only horse-trails winding over icy passes exposed to snow blizzards, plunging precipitously down 20,000-foot forested mountains, or disappearing into the endless barren plateaus sparsely populated by wandering nomads. There were no hotels or inns or shelters, and the monasteries were notoriously unfriendly to all foreigners. The temperatures could plunge from a hundred degrees at mid-day to forty degrees below zero at midnight, the savage thermal drop splitting trees and giant boulders and playing havoc with exposed split skins and snow-blinded eyes. Thousands of Chinese Communists had died in their famous Long March from Kiangsi across China and through the eastern region of Tibet on their way to their north-west China goal of Yen-an.

But it was the religion of the country that intrigued Dave more than its geography or politics. The early history was wrapped in myth and legend derived from the spoken language originating from Burma to the south and the written language borrowed from the Indian Sanskrit to the west. From the mists emerged the belief that the Tibetans were descended from a monkey, into whose body had entered the Compassionate Spirit, known as Chen-re-zi in Tibetan. This spirit, with a she-devil, were said to have produced the first Tibetan offspring. Buddhism had been introduced from Nepal to the west, and China to the east, tantric Hinduism from India, and

Islam and shamanism from Mongolia. It was the Mongolian ruler, Kublai Khan, who gave Tibet its geopolitical framework of three provinces - the vast northern Chang Tang tundra, the eastern tribal Kham and Amdo, and the central and western feudal U-Tsang – and its overall dominating tantric Sakya influences which made the Tibetan form of Lamaistic Buddhism so unique. One Tibetan said of his country: “This is a country of the gods, by the gods, for the gods” and the more Dave learned about its religious complexity the truer it seemed. It was not just that religion was predominant in the lives and thinking of its people; its supernatural elements permeated every pore of their beings in ways that were difficult for a secular Westerner to comprehend.

More than the feudal aristocracy the monasteries dominated the normal religious and secular lives of the Tibetan people. Following on the conquest of Tibet by Genghiz Khan in the thirteenth century, and his enforced sovereignty and colonizing of Tibet, predominantly in the tribal south-eastern part of the country, the country became more religious - including the warrior Khambas. All the land in Tibet was divided between the six thousand monasteries and the aristocratic noble families located in and around the capital, Lhasa. The monasteries were exempt from providing taxes and services to the Government, but nevertheless they levied them on the people of their districts. They added to these revenues by trading through monk-stewards, by money-lending, and by collecting money for rites performed inside and outside the monasteries and temples. Rich monks owned property, and had poor monks for servants. There were also “athlete” monks for games, and “warrior” monks for fighting. Then there were the predominant sorcerers in every community and encampment in a secretive national super-structure culminating in the leading sorcerer, the Nechung Oracle in Lhasa, the link between the ruling religious hierarchy and the gods.

It introduced Dave to a world he had never known existed, other than from vague general reading. His knowledge of the occult world, in his reading of the Bible, he had placed in the same category as his reading of Goethe’s or Marlowe’s Doctor Faust, Stevenson’s Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde or Stoker’s Dracula. It was

interesting, even intriguing, as a unique phenomenon of past history or simple people, but it was not of sufficient modern importance to warrant further investigation, spiritual or intellectual. Now, here in Tibet, this knowledge was in the same category as the air people breathed - it was even life and death. One of their leading books was entitled *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*.

There was no exploration into God - for in Buddhism God did not exist. But what Dave found fascinating about the illustrated "Wheel of Life" was that all the inner workings of the Wheel led into that skull-crowned head and gaping mouth of the Lord of Death, the guardian deity of the underworld. It was not possible in a single lifetime to master all the necessary intricacies into initiation of Buddhist "Enlightenment", but a "Short Path" had been devised whereby the committed seeker could obtain from his or her allotted "guardian deity", or demon-figure, what was necessary for their personal "truth" or "enlightenment" in their lifetime.

The Short Path was divided into physical, mental and combined categories, most of them including the peculiarly tantric form of meditation known as "visualization", which involved body, speech and mind simultaneously and reflected in the complex mandala devised by initiates and used in all religious ceremonies. By the use of the acquired techniques, and the manipulation of occult forces, the *nal-jor-pa* (meaning "he who is possessed of perfect serenity"), or adept, could overcome the negative conditions he or she was called on to address—sickness, poverty, climate, famine, death—in supernatural fashion. Those occult powers were recognized by the whole population of Tibet to a remarkable degree. The life of every one of them was dominated by this recognition, from rosaries, prayer-wheels, and god-boxes, to sacrificial offerings of wealth and time and personal commitment, to an extent totally unknown in the West by followers of Christ to their God. Christians were uncomfortable with the supernatural other than their belief in a Biblical God.

It was while Dave was reading about the Tibetan Buddhist Kalachakra, or "Wheel of Life" that he stumbled on the explanation of one of his problems. The Kalachakra was said to have been

written down by a mythical king, “Suchan-dra of Shambhala”. Shambhala! There it was—Tariq Azir’s inspiration. Dave read on with renewed avidity. The Kalachakra was a particularly significant time and astronomy reckoning, it seemed, orchestrating a major role in the Tibetan calendar and history. According to Tibetan tradition the Kalachakra tantra was transmitted through seven kings of Shambhala, and twenty-five “proclaimers” who played similar strategic and revelatory roles as the Hebrew prophets in Judaism. The Kalachakra tantra consisted of three parts: one, the outer, or physical, related to the universe, and its significance; two, the inner, or psychological, related to the function of energy channels, through which prana, or cosmic energy, passed to all parts of the body; and, three, the sadhana, meaning “perfecting the goal”, involving “contact with a deity by visualization”, and then being absorbed by that deity in profound meditation in an essential divine empowerment for a particular task.

Dave felt a surge of excitement as he read and re-read the text of the book. Tariq Azir had been brought up in a Muslim family with a patina of Buddhism during his youth in Tibet, then with an enforced Maoist education in China—and he had a final intermingling of all of them as a reputed brilliant scholar in religion as well as politics. Had he practiced these psycho-spiritual exercises for spirit-empowerment? Did he see himself as one of the twenty-five “proclaimers”? Had he really mastered these centuries-old occult powers of prescience, powers and performance?

Then Dave discovered the definition of savikalpa-samadhi practiced by these adepts: “a state of consciousness in which one knows God or brahman but remains in a subject-object relationship with him; it may be compared to the visio Dei of Christian mysticism.” Got him! Dave thought exultantly. He himself had practiced meditation with a Christian rather than a Buddhist emphasis, and he knew the experience of visio Dei—“seeing God” and communicating with Him at an esoteric level. So he had at least a grasp of one aspect of Tariq Azir’s mystic experience. Now, he thought excitedly, let’s see what it says about Shambhala! He read:

“Shambhala is the name of a mythical kingdom, the geographical

location of which is uncertain, which is considered the place of origin of the Kalachakra, and with all its associations as a 'source of auspiciousness', plays a central role in Tibetan Buddhism. A key part of the myth is that the saviour of humanity will come out of Shambhala at a time when the world is dominated by war and destruction."

Dave read the last sentence again and underlined the words. "Hallelujah!" he breathed, reading them over and over again as he determined to memorize them. "The saviour of humanity will come out of Shambhala": Was that how Tariq Azir saw himself? Was that his rationale for "war and destruction" in the world? He read on:

". . . The various speculations concerning the precise location of Shambhala range from around Central Asia to China and the North Pole. The importance of this kingdom has less to do with the possibility of locating it precisely than with the spiritual quality that is associated with it. The Tibetan tradition includes Shambhala and the 'hidden valleys', certain places that become accessible at times of urgent need."

Again Dave stopped and underlined the words, before moving on to the finish of the description:

"The twenty-five teachers who proclaim the Kalachakra teaching also play a role in the Shambhala myth. At the time of the last of these a golden age will dawn and all negative forces will be overcome. Under the influence of this prophecy, Shambhala has in the course of time become associated with the epic of Gesar and with the coming of Maitreya."

Dave underlined the final two sentences and sat back in his chair with a great sigh of contentment. His target was taking shape! But what a man was this Tariq! He had a sudden thought and he looked up the significance of "Maitreya". It was as he suspected: a Messiah! "Maitreya: meaning 'loving one'; mostly found in the Mahayana, mostly in Tibetan Buddhism; one who is expected to come as the fifth and last of the earthly buddhas." He underlined the words.

Tariq Azir was not just a new Nasser of Egypt, new Khomeini of Iran, or new Saddam Husein of Iraq, who only saw themselves as emperors or mahdis. This man saw himself as nothing less than a Messiah of the ages.

Dave's next study of the mysteries of nuclear fission was much less exciting, and he struggled to comprehend the geopolitical implications in relation to Tariq Azir's Muslim/Buddhist aspirations, the potential threat to Israel, and the consequences for the world. He finally gave up on its scientific significance and concentrated on its strategic potential in the context of the threatened impending confrontation. Within that restricted area of his interest he noted that, with the break-up of the Soviet Union, what were once five nuclear-capable states had become eight—Belorus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine joined Russia. Three other former Soviet republics—Armenia, Estonia and Lithuania—possessed nuclear reactors and research centres. Other countries with nuclear-capability to build or expand nuclear devices in the area were Iran and Iraq, India and Pakistan, plus Algeria, Libya and Syria—all Muslim, and all surrounding Israel!

Israel apparently had its own nuclear capability, probably even more advanced than these surrounding Muslim enemies. Almost from the day of their creating Israel the founders had started creating nuclear power, first for the production of electricity and desalination, then rapidly for producing heavy water and plutonium necessary for a military weapon. When President Carter of the United States provided Israel with the advanced KH-11 satellite, capable of relaying digital signals from outer space to the ground with astonishing clarity of detail, Israel was able to successfully pin-point and bomb Iraq's nuclear reactor at Osirak, twelve miles south of Baghdad, eight hundred miles from Israel. Their nuclear weapons of last resort in any anticipated war were code-named "Temple" weapons. They were readied for use during the crisis of the Sinai War in 1973, and targeted on Cairo and Damascus, when there was a conviction at the highest government level that "the end of the world is near."

As Dave assimilated all this information he puzzled over three

questions: one, was Israel's highly efficient Mossad intelligence not aware of Tariq Azir's Islamic revolutionary and nuclear threat? two, could Tariq Azir effectively destroy Israel so that there was no possibility of a counter-strike? and, three, why didn't the US President not just inform Israel about what the Chinese President had told him, and let the Israelis take out Shambhala by a strike like they had done already in Iraq? After all, they had a KH-11 satellite system that supposedly could count the screws on a missile on earth. A fourth question was a supplementary to the third: why choose Dave and Duke to take on such an awesome responsibility?

From his experience in Vietnam, and the mess the politicians and military had made of the war there, Dave knew the values of limited goals in planning strategy. He could only assume sceptically that, from the US point of view, the decision to send himself and Duke at the request of the China President in his critical predicament was a political bonus in the current US/China relations. Somewhere up there in the rarified geopolitical stratosphere alternative strategies were probably being worked out as game theories for an anticipated nuclear confrontation—in which ten million casualties in the United States were considered acceptable, in addition to the few million in Israel.

Get lost, Kissinger! Dave decided. He wanted a look at this Tariq Azir—and a long talk with him. He fascinated Dave in his religious search and he wondered what Tariq had learned of God—and how he might find out.

WASHINGTON, D.C. USA (III)

On Thursday mid-morning Dave and Duke arrived at the McCabe's house, to be greeted with warm hugs from a delighted Lauren. They had all got to know each other during the Adullam imbroglio, and had developed their friendship since then.

"Marriage agrees with you, Lauren," Duke told her. "You were always beautiful; now you're—ethereal."

"I love you, Duke." Lauren hugged him extravagantly. "Nels, write that down. Ethereal. I want you to remember it. Meaning 'heavenly'. I like it. Romeo-to-Juliet material. What are you doing?"

"I'm going to get a dictionary to show you something," Nelson said from the bookshelves. "Yes, here it is. I thought so. 'Ethereal: 'Light?': 'Airy?'" Nels looked at Lauren's decidedly pregnant figure quizzically. "Not what I'd say is journalistically accurate in your present state."

"Let me see that," Lauren said, taking the book from Nelson. "You devious beast," she declared accusingly. "You didn't read the whole thing. Listen. 'Of unearthly delicacy of substance, character, or appearance.' Now, that's definitely me—as Duke so deliciously observed." She put her right hand behind her head, and her left hand on her rear buttock, and posed with exaggerated coquetry, her six-month pregnancy prominent.

They all laughed, including Nelson. "You should be careful," he

said to her. "Socrates said, 'If you happen to get a good mate, you will be happy; if a bad one, you will become philosophical, which is a fine thing in itself.'"

"Spoilsport. Dave, you're not saying anything. Is that the wisdom that comes from experience?"

"Or age," Duke added.

Dave laughed. "I'm reminded of that well-known philosopher, Ogden Nash:

'To keep the marriage brimming
With love in the marriage cup,
Whenever you're wrong, admit it;
Whenever you're right, shut up.' "

"Amen," said Nelson. "Let's take our coffees through to the other room and get down to business."

When they had found chairs and were comfortable Nelson said, "First, I've spoken with the President and assured him that nothing gets out of here until the situation is resolved and I get the OK from him. Second, having said that, I must add that both Lauren and I noticed what was inevitable: namely, a few people already have expressed some curiosity regarding the nature and possible implications of our enquiries. Good journalists are like good policemen and good doctors; they have a nose for the suspicious. A journalist walking into a library is like a policeman walking into a crime scene, or a doctor walking into a hospital; noses twitch, necks tingle, nerves jangle. I mention this as a warning to you to keep in mind as a journalistic inevitability, and not because I saw anything to cause worry.

"Now, regarding your queries: between us we've dug up information on the Janus Club, on Tariq Azir, on the Israelis, and on Muslim fundamentalism. Do you have any preferences as to order? No? Then here goes in the order we drafted our investigation. "I went back to my notes on the Janus Club and its personnel and activities, and there was no mention of any Jews of note among the top members. When I switched to the Jews' own 'Club', Lauren researched Tariq Azir and she can brief you on that when I finish. I have to emphasize up-front that this Jewish thing is a messy business

buried in hatred, prejudice, paranoia, rumour and innuendo— to mention only a few of the problems of credibility. You have everything from British Israelites claiming to be Jews, to ultra-orthodox rabbis denying that there are no Jews unless you have a document signed by Moses. Seriously, there are those who say that through assassination or assimilation over the centuries the people at present occupying the land of Palestine are not even true Semites at all, but European political Zionists who have ‘crossed over’ in exile.

“Having emphasized that warning caveat, the theory of a sinister Jewish ‘Club’ financial elite manipulating national and international policies rests on developments from the nineteenth century onwards. It began with the emergence of the immense possibilities of wealth in South Africa in gold, diamonds and chromium and other minerals. It was rumoured that Jewish financiers prevailed on Joseph Chamberlain, the British Prime Minister at the time, to replace the imperialist Cecil Rhodes of Rhodesia fame with a Jewish representative more to their liking, named Milner. And it was the same with the escalating importance in the discoveries of coal, oil, shipping, electrical and, later, nuclear, power following on the Industrial Revolution—which were said to be cornered by the Jewish Rothschilds. Then there were the pre-and post-Hitler anti-Semite organizations and pogroms in Germany and France and other countries of Europe.

“The mechanism to acquire all this Jewish wealth and manipulative power in the second half of the twentieth century was said to be the ‘Bilderberg Group’, a high-powered pressure organization brought together by the Rothschilds in 1954, with an elite membership of Jews or pro-Jews. Then there was the ‘Tricameral Commission’, which has been described as a ‘shadow world government’; and, as an example, a recent meeting included such international luminaries as Lord Carrington and Lord Owen, former British Cabinet Ministers, UN and NATO leaders, and publishers and editors of international medias, in addition to financiers, bankers and industrialists. It is claimed that this was the shadowy twin of the ‘Bilderberg Group’ which funded the Zionist

leaders from Europe to organize the post World War Two Exodus and subsequent State of Israel and—to bring it up-to-date—its present nuclear capability. Now, your turn Lauren.”

Lauren picked up her notes, and said: “Tariq Muhammad Azir. I hadn’t even heard of him when Nelson first mentioned him, and now I can’t get the man out of my mind. He was born in Tibet, it is said, of Muslim parents - although nothing of note is known of them —and had a Tibetan name of Lobsang Sherab. He was educated like all Tibetans in the Buddhist monasteries by monks. Most of the early information is suspect because it only emerged in later accounts when he surfaces in prominent positions, and so could be doctored. But it appears he was brilliant enough in Tibet to be noticed by the Chinese and hand-picked for special education in China’s universities, where he continued to distinguish himself as a scholar and Maoist-Marxist. Because he was a Tibetan he was given special access to the Panchen Lama, who was confined to residing in Peking exile from Tibet by the Chinese authorities at the time, and he was given special tuition by the Panchen Lama in Tibetan history and religion. What is it, Dave?” she broke off at an exclamation from him.

“Nothing for now,” he said. “I’ll explain later.” Lauren’s report about the Panchen Lama had caused him to recall suddenly his own research into Buddhism, in which he noticed that the Panchen Lama was said to be in the lineage of the Kalachakra “proclaimers”. Exciting pieces were beginning to fall into place. “Please carry on,” he said to Lauren.

“The next time he surfaces,” Lauren continued, “is among the Tibetan refugees in India, where he was using his Tibetan name of Lobsang Sherab, and he was a radical editor of the Tibet Journal, using the pseudonym of ‘Loshay’ and loved by young Tibetan activists and hated by the old-school Tibetan monks and political leaders for his attacks on their pre-Chinese feudal rule in Tibet. He did not last long in that role, and went off to the United States with the sponsorship of an American professor of Asian studies to take a doctorate in political science at UC Berkeley, of all radical places.

“He seems to have impressed his fellow academics there as much as he did in Beijing, with an interesting switch. In addition to his

major in political science he did a minor in religion, concentrating on the South American 'Liberation Theology', coming to the fore at that time. You may recall there was the Cuban Revolution, Che Guevara, Helder Camarra, Camillo Torres, all heroes of the north American youth and hippy movements of that period. It appears that Tariq/Loshay became infatuated with an American pastor's daughter, who was a vocal enthusiast of the religious South American Liberation Theology leaders. I don't know how long it lasted, or even if it was really serious or just a useful association on Tariq/Loshay's part, but when it eventually broke up he left the US for India suddenly, although he had been offered a very good teaching position in Berkeley. In India he did not attempt to make significant contact with his former academic or journalist friends, but disappeared into a remote Tibetan monastery in the Himalayan border state of Sikkim to 'meditate'.

"Here in the United States there is only undocumented diplomatic and journalistic speculation based on what are essentially bazaar rumours. But it is said that from the onset he has had a personal vision and it is this he is pursuing totally, and he is not committed to any opportunistic manipulation of political organizations. He is said to be powerfully charismatic, formidably intelligent, spiritually devout—and either without personal ambition of any kind or, conversely according to others, with dedicated ambition to convert the whole world to some form of purified Islam, like the Prophet Mohammed—who is said to have established Islam because disillusion with the failures of both Judaism and Christianity."

"Is he married now?" Dave asked, as Lauren referred to her notes.

"Not a whisper about that," she replied. "With Muslims you never can tell whether they are or not because they are permitted three or four wives. But there's no indication anywhere. Oh, and one more important point: one man who knows as much about Tariq as anybody is an Indian journalist called Yosef Ibrahim. Apparently they became close friends while Tariq was a refugee doing Tibetan journalism in India. Ibrahim is with the Indian Express newspaper, and a former editor of that paper was a great supporter of Tibetan

independence from China, and wrote a book about it. He visited China many times. I mention this because Ibrahim is presently in Hong Kong reporting events in China and Asia for the Indian Express, so when you get to Hong Kong you could talk with him."

"Mention my name," Nelson said. "I met him a few times while covering stories in Asia. Also talk with Foxy Reynard in Hong Kong. He's an old friend of mine, and you probably knew him when you were there."

"Yeah, we know Foxy," Dave confirmed. "What I need from him or Li Chi'en is an introduction to somebody with personal knowledge of Tibet. At the moment Li can get us from Hong Kong to West China, but beyond that we appear to have weeks of travel in virtually unexplored and unknown Tibetan territory—most of it possibly hostile."

"And at the end of that journey," Duke said laconically, "a secret and highly-secured nuclear installation on a vast sand—or boulder-covered plateau over fifteen-thousand snow-and-ice feet above sea-level which we have to enter to find Tariq Azir—and, of course, destroy."

"A piece of cake to a man who blew up a warehouse with a reported hundred-and-fifty billion US dollars," Nelson said dismissively.

Dave said, "To quote Robert Browning:

'A man's reach should exceed his grasp,
Or what's a heaven for.'"

"At fifteen-thousand feet or more we're certainly nearer to heaven than before," Duke said sardonically. "How's that for instant poetry?"

"How about a break here for lunch?" Nelson said. "Lauren, do I go out and bring back something, or do we have enough in the fridge for sandwiches and drinks around the kitchen table?"

"We can do ham or turkey or roast beef sandwiches," Lauren said, rising. "Why don't we go through to the kitchen and we can keep talking? I'll lay out the makings on the counter, and everybody can help themselves."

While they made up their sandwiches, and chose their drinks,

Dave told Nelson and Lauren about his researches into Tibetan Buddhism and what he had found about Shambhala and its possible significance, and they discussed the increasingly mysterious and intriguing Tariq Azir in this widened context. They were still deeply involved in speculations when Nelson said, "OK. Let's leave Tariq for now. We can assume from what the President said, and what Lauren and Dave have dug up that, at some point, Tariq and the Janus Club got together to discuss billions of dollars and the illegal acquisition of nuclear devices. The Janus Club would be interested in profits and power and not necessarily in Israel as a prime target, so, again, at some point he made a jump from 'Islam-jihad-as-conversion' to 'Islam-jihad-as-nuclear conquest'. Why—when—and how? I asked myself. And I confess I have no answer. But here's a suggestion.

"The explanation has to lie in the quality of his religious beliefs. Let me give an example from yourselves, Dave and Duke. In the Adullam affair you avoided killing the IRA murderer O'Brady, the five Colombian attackers, and the US guards at the money-warehouse; yet you had no compunction when it came to mowing down the Janus Club members or their bodyguards. Right?"

Dave and Duke nodded, and waited to hear more, Dave with an enigmatic smile.

"So, you had a moral justification for that action rooted in your religious beliefs. What if the same standard is applied to Tariq Azir? Here is a devout Buddhist-Islam revolutionary, with no known record of killings or terrorism in anything that is rumoured or reported—yet he is said to be contemplating the nuclear annihilation of Israel and possible destruction of millions of others by fall-out. What religious theory would justify that? Is there any?" He leaned forward on the table to challenge Dave and Duke.

To his surprise Dave didn't hesitate, but nodded affirmatively. "Yes," he said sombrely. "In a word—Armageddon."

"Armageddon," Nelson repeated incredulously. "But that's a religious myth, not reality."

"Like Hiroshima," Dave answered him sardonically; "only worse next time. Shambhala's supposed to be a myth, too, remember, and

that's where the nuclear missile is currently located."

Nelson was uncharacteristically silent. "Look," Dave said mildly, "now isn't the time for a theological argument, but let me say this. The Bible is categorical in its prophetic assertions that, in the last days of the world, human nature at its worst will create such conditions of evil that God will intervene in judgment. The Apostle Peter described that judgment in nuclear, as well as apocalyptic, terms when he wrote:

'The day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.'

"That is Armageddon. My problem isn't the factual nature of the prophecy, but the fascinating possibility of the human instrument of divine judgment; namely, is Tariq Azir the Antichrist who will be responsible for precipitating the Armageddon holocaust?"

They all sat silent as Dave finished, absorbed in contemplating the enormity of what he had implied. Then Nelson took a deep breath and said, "We must discuss this sometime. Are you saying that Tariq Azir has read, and believes, the New Testament, and sees himself as God's instrument on a corrupt world?"

"Interesting question," Dave conceded. "Or someone like him — I just don't know. He intrigues me: a man with a Messiah complex, or the Antichrist of world annihilation? I do know that Muslims also believe in a mahdi, or Messiah, who will emerge in the last days of the world to convert everyone to Islam. I will add to the mystery and your confusion by pointing out that many Christians and rabbis believe that the present State of Israel is a Zionist political concoction, and not the true Israel of Biblical prophecy. In which case, if the Islamic Tariq Azir believed that, it would explain his moral willingness to destroy it in the cause of divine righteousness. In the past God used Assyria's Senacherib, Babylon's Nebuchadnezzar, Greece's Alexander and Rome's Caesars to destroy a rebellious Israel as a State. If he read enough of the Bible he would know that and could rationalize his mission."

"OK." Nelson spread his hands in token acceptance. "For discussion's sake, let's agree that he has a moral justification of

sufficient strength to go ahead with the plan to destroy Israel, and the financial backing and illicit nuclear capability of the Janus Club to support him. That raises the question: Where does the Israeli Mossad and the Jewish 'Bilderberg Group' stand in relation to all this? Answer: Nowhere. That is, I could find no evidence of any report, discussion, rumour or even concern regarding Tariq Azir and Shambhala. I incline to believe that the lack of evidence of this nature is an indication that the information about him is more likely being suppressed than that it is non-existent. I mean, the Mossad is probably the world's best intelligence service. So, I would assume they know as much about him as we do—and probably a lot more. Where I think we have the jump on them is from China's important involvement in the plot through the Muslim General Ma Wen-huie and his ambitions to be President of China. China is one place where Mossad would have difficulty in penetrating because there are so few significant Jews there. On the other hand China is in the position to have information from Mossad through General Ma about Azir.

"Of course, there is interesting material to be picked up on Israel's nuclear capability, whether for strike or defence. If Tariq has been able to obtain the cooperation of nuclear-capable Muslim countries like Iran, Libya, North Korea and Pakistan—not including recent clandestine expertise and scientists from Russia, etcetera— then the Shambhala facility has, at a minimum, a bomb capacity of at least 200,000 tons of TNT - about the same as the one dropped on Hiroshima. It is known that Iran had all the right dimensions, and the necessary firing circuits accurate to the right billionths of a second, to deliver such a nuclear device to its selected target. With the Janus Club money at Tariq's disposal, and the expertise of the former Soviet Union scientists desperate for work, he could easily destroy Israel at any moment."

"That's what the President said," Dave said grimly. "It gives me nightmares."

"But that raises the question," Nelson continued, "whether the Shambhala launch is just a one-off bomb for the Israel project, or a facility for further nuclear missile production. If you knew that it would give an indication of the size of the Shambhala installation.

Depending on where it is located in Tibet - what size is Tibet anyway?"

"Approximately a million square miles," Dave replied gloomily. "But it's probably somewhere accessible to the north-west region of China where they already had their nuclear installations; what the Tibetans call Chang Tang, probably the world's largest nature reserve."

"Needle-in-the-haystack territory," Nelson commented pessimistically. "I don't envy you. In the vastness of Tibet it could be sufficiently disguised as an extension of China's legitimate nuclear operation, and you could spend weeks trying to find out which is the secret facility. I hate to add to your problems, but it's highly possible Iran now has over a thousand-mile capability to hit Israel easily from a limited-size facility located in northern Tibet."

"It all comes back to the character and ambitions of the man behind the plan—Tariq Azir. Somebody once said that a water-pistol in the hand of Krushchev was more dangerous than an atom bomb in the hand of Gandhi; because Krushchev's water-pistol could have anything deadly in it, while Gandhi's principles would never permit him to activate the atom bomb. My conclusion at this stage is that somehow you have to get to Tariq Azir first, and then, depending on your information, intuition, experience, religious perceptions, whatever, destroy his reported plan and kill him —What's that?" A loud explosion from outside had interrupted him.

Duke was already swiftly out of his chair and on the move out of the door of the kitchen, yelling, "Explosives. Get down." Nelson sat momentarily transfixed as Dave helped the pregnant-clumsy Lauren to lie down on the floor away from the window. He duck-crawled to beside the window to look down on the street, and saw Duke burst out of the door and leap down the steps of the stoop; then, in the rapid, weaving, half-crouch of the highly-skilled jungle soldier he had been, move towards the blazing remains of their parked car.

"Call the police," Dave said quietly to the still stunned Nelson; "somebody just fire-bombed our car."

When Nelson had completed the call from the kitchen telephone he turned to Dave and said, "Does this mean what I'm thinking—that your assignment has leaked and you're already targeted?"

"Seems like it," Dave agreed, shaking his head in puzzlement. "The question is, was it somebody at top level in the White House, State or CIA? Or was it a clever guess by someone alerted from your enquiries? Where is your car?"

"Residential parking around the corner," Nelson replied, frowning. "Why? Oh, I see. It was your car they bombed, not ours. So they were really after you as the prime target."

"Which would indicate that they know of the President's assignment to Duke and me," Dave said slowly, thinking rapidly. "One possibility is that it leaked in Beijing. The triads have high-ranking contacts there, and they would have got it as soon as Li Chi'en - and then alerted the Janus Club. They had people following us here, and in the past few hours they had the people to plant the bomb. Question: Was it just a warning, or was it a miscalculation in bomb-timing? Duke should have some idea. He's an explosives expert."

They waited, discussing possibilities, until Duke re-appeared. "I heard the police sirens and wanted to get a report to you before we get caught up in the official enquiries," he said quickly; "expert job, selective, limiting damage to one or two vehicles, but clearly enough to destroy. I didn't see, but I smelt, burning flesh, so I think it could be mistakenly triggered by a Janus-hired expert who's still inside—or what's left of him. I thought I saw another figure disappearing round the far corner as I was running to the car. Either that or the bomb was accidentally triggered—but that would indicate an amateurism that doesn't fit in with the rest of the preparations. Unlucky planners; lucky us."

Dave nodded slowly in agreement. "First, we have to decide quickly what we are going to say to the police—and probably the media. I suggest we tell the police nothing about possible reasons for the explosion, and say we have to return quickly to Adullam where we have urgent commitments and we are about to go abroad

on leave of absence tomorrow, with all arrangements made. We can't just disappear without warning. Play it cool and cooperative. We try to dodge the media altogether, for they will produce all sorts of scenarios because of our former experiences. That means leaving you and Lauren to take the heat, Nels. How d'you feel about that?"

Nelson and Lauren agreed. "No problem. Unless somebody recognized Duke at the scene we can probably get away with saying we were having a meal with friends when the explosion occurred; and, like good citizens and responsible journalists, we called the police right away to report it. That should keep you out of it until you're out of the country."

"Great," said Dave. "Thank you both for everything. We'll get on our way before the police get here. We won't see you again before we leave for Hong Kong tomorrow, but I'll give you a call before we take off. 'Bye, Lauren." He gave her a quick hug and kiss on the cheek. "Sorry to rush off like this. Take care of yourself. 'Bye, Nels." They shook hands.

"Bye, guys. You take care, too. Good luck."

Chapter 4

will be available on this site on the 1st August 2010