The One from the Other

A Bernie Gunther Mystery

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I remember how good the weather was that September. Hitler weather, they used to call it. As if the elements themselves were disposed to be kind to Adolf Hitler, of all people. I remember him making a ranting speech demanding foreign colonies for Germany. It was, perhaps, the first time any of us had heard him use the phrase "living space." No one thought for a moment that our living space could only be created if someone else died first.

I was living and working in the space we called Berlin. There was plenty of business there for a private detective. It was all missing persons, of course. And most of them were Jewish. Most of them murdered in back alleys, or sent off to a KZ, a concentration camp, without the authorities bothering to notify their families. The Nazis thought it was quite funny, the way they did that. The Jews were, of course, officially encouraged to emigrate, but because they were forbidden to take their property with them, few did so. Still, some people devised several neat tricks to get their money out of Germany.

One such trick was for a Jew to deposit a large sealed parcel containing various valuables, and labeled the "last will and testament" of so and so, with a German court of law before going abroad for "a holiday." The Jew would then "die" in a foreign country and have the local French or English court request the German court to

forward the parcel containing his "last will and testament." German courts being run by German lawyers were usually only too happy to comply with the requests of other lawyers, even French and English ones. And in this way quite a few lucky Jews managed to be reunited with enough cash or valuables to start a new life in a new country.

It might seem hard to believe, but another neat scheme was actually devised by the Jewish Department of the Security Police—the SD. This scheme was seen as a good way of helping Jews leave Germany and, in the process, of enriching certain officers of the SD into the bargain. It was what we called the *tocher*, or Jewish peddler, scheme, and I first had experience of it as a result of the strangest pair of clients that ever came my way.

Paul Begelmann was a rich German Jewish businessman who owned several garages and car dealerships throughout Germany. And SS Sturmbannführer Dr. Franz Six was the head of the SD's Jewish Department. I was summoned to meet them both in the department's modest, three-room suite of offices at the Hohenzollern Palais, on Wilhelmstrasse. Behind Six's desk was a picture of the Führer, as well as a host of legal degrees from the universities of Heidelberg, Königsberg, and Leipzig. Six might have been a Nazi crook, but he was an extremely well-qualified Nazi crook. He was hardly Himmler's ideal-looking Aryan. Aged about thirty, he was dark-haired, a little self-satisfied around the mouth, and no more Jewish-looking than Paul Begelmann. He smelled faintly of cologne and hypocrisy. On his desk was a little bust of Wilhelm von Humboldt, who had founded the University of Berlin and who, famously, had defined the limits beyond which the activities of the State should not go. I guessed it was unlikely that Sturmbannführer Six would have agreed with him there.

Begelmann was older and taller, with dark, curly hair and lips that were as thick and pink as two slices of luncheon meat. He

was smiling but his eyes told a very different story. The pupils were narrow, like a cat's, as if he was anxious to be out of the SD's spotlight. In that building, and surrounded by all those black uniforms, he looked like a choirboy trying to make friends with a pack of hyenas. He didn't say much. It was Six who did all the talking. I'd heard Six was from Mannheim. Mannheim has a famous Jesuit church. In his smart black uniform, that was the way Franz Six struck me. Not your typical SD thug. More like a Jesuit.

"Herr Begelmann has expressed a wish to emigrate from Germany to Palestine," he said smoothly. "Naturally he is concerned about his business in Germany and the impact that its sale might have on the local economy. So, in order to help Herr Begelmann, this department has proposed a solution to his problem. A solution you might be able to help us with, Herr Gunther. We have proposed that he should not emigrate 'pro forma,' but rather that he should continue to be a German citizen working abroad. In effect, that he should work in Palestine as the sales representative of his own company. In this manner he will be able to earn a salary and to share in the profits of the company while at the same time fulfilling this department's policy of encouraging Jewish emigration."

I didn't doubt that poor Begelmann had agreed to share his company's profits not with the Reich but with Franz Six. I lit a cigarette and fixed the SD man with a cynical smile. "Gentlemen, it sounds to me like you'll both be very happy together. But I fail to see what you need me for. I don't do marriages. I investigate them."

Six colored a little and glanced awkwardly at Begelmann. He had power, but it wasn't the kind of power that could threaten someone like me. He was used to bullying students and Jews, and the task of bullying an adult Aryan male looked like it was beyond him.

"We require someone . . . someone Herr Begelmann can trust . . . to deliver a letter from the Wassermann Bank, here in Berlin, to the Anglo-Palestine Bank in Jaffa. We require that person to open lines

of credit with that bank and to take a lease on a property in Jaffa that can be the premises for a new car showroom. The lease will help to validate Herr Begelmann's important new business venture. We also require our agent to transport certain items of property to the Anglo-Palestine Bank in Jaffa. Naturally, Herr Begelmann is prepared to pay a substantial fee for these services. The sum of one thousand English pounds, payable in Jaffa. Naturally, the SD will arrange all the necessary documentation and paperwork. You would be going there as the official representative of Begelmann's Automotive. Unofficially, you will be acting as the SD's confidential agent."

"A thousand pounds. That's a lot of money," I said. "But what happens if the Gestapo ask me questions about all this. They might not like some of the answers. Have you thought of that?"

"Of course," said Six. "Do you take me for an idiot?"

"No, but they might."

"It so happens that I'm sending two other agents to Palestine on a fact-finding mission that has been authorized at the highest level," he said. "As part of its ongoing remit, this department has been asked to investigate the feasibility of forced emigration to Palestine. As far as SIPO is concerned, you would be part of that mission. If the Gestapo were to ask you questions about your mission you would be entirely within your rights to answer, as these two others will answer: that it is an intelligence matter. That you are carrying out the orders of General Heydrich. And that for reasons of operational security, you cannot discuss the matter." He paused and lit a small, pungent cigar. "You have done some work for the general before, have you not?"

"I'm still trying to forget it." I shook my head. "With all due respect, Herr Sturmbannführer. If two of your own men are already going to Palestine, then what do you need me for?"

Begelmann cleared his throat. "If I might say something, please,

Herr Sturmbannführer?" he said, cautiously, and in a strong Hamburg accent. Six shrugged and shook his head, indifferently. Begelmann looked at me with quiet desperation. There was sweat on his forehead and I didn't think it was only as a result of the unusually warm September weather. "Because, Herr Gunther, your reputation for honesty goes before you."

"Not to mention your dedication to making an easy mark," said Six.

I looked at Six and nodded. I was through being polite to this legal crook. "What you're saying, Herr Begelmann, is that you don't trust this department or the people who work for it."

Poor Begelmann looked pained. "No, no, no, no, no," he said. "That's not it at all."

But I was enjoying myself too much to let go of this bone. "And I can't say as I blame you. It's one thing to get robbed. It's quite another when the robber asks you to help carry the loot to the getaway car."

Six bit his lip. I could see he was wishing it was the vein on the side of my neck. The only reason he wasn't saying anything was because I hadn't yet said no. Probably he guessed that I wasn't going to. A thousand pounds is a thousand pounds.

"Please, Herr Gunther."

Six looked quite happy to leave the begging to Begelmann.

"My whole family would be extremely grateful for your help."

"A thousand pounds," I said. "I already heard that part."

"Is there something wrong with the remuneration?" Begelmann was looking at Six for guidance. He wasn't getting any. Six was a lawyer, not a horse dealer.

"Hell no, Herr Begelmann," I said. "It's generous. No, it's me, I guess. I start to itch when a certain kind of dog cozies up to me."

But Six was refusing to be insulted. So far in this, he was just a typical lawyer. Prepared to put aside all human feelings for the

greater good of making money. “I hope you’re not being rude to an official of the German government, Herr Gunther,” he said, chiding me. “Anyone would think you were against National Socialism, the way you talk. Hardly a very healthy attitude these days.”

I shook my head. “You mistake me,” I said. “I had a client last year. His name was Hermann Six. The industrialist? He was less than honest with me. You’re no relation to him, I trust.”

“Sadly not,” he said. “I come from a very poor family in Mannheim.”

I looked at Begelmann. I felt sorry for him. I should have said no. Instead I said yes. “All right, I’ll do it. But you people had better be on the level about all this. I’m not the type who forgives and forgets. And I’ve never turned the other cheek.”

It wasn’t long before I regretted becoming involved in Six and Begelmann’s Jewish peddler scheme. I was alone in my office the next day. It was raining outside. My partner, Bruno Stahlecker, was out on a case, so he said, which probably meant he was propping up a bar in Wedding. There was a knock at the door and a man came in. He was wearing a leather coat and a wide-brimmed hat. Call it a keen sense of smell, but I knew he was Gestapo even before he showed me the little warrant disk in the palm of his hand. He was in his mid-twenties, balding, with a small, lopsided mouth and a sharp, delicate-looking jaw that made me suspect he was more used to hitting than being hit. Without saying a word he tossed his wet hat onto my desk blotter, unbuttoned his coat to reveal a neat, navy-blue suit, sat in the chair on the other side of my desk, took out his cigarettes, and lit one—all the while staring at me like an eagle watching a fish.

“Nice little hat,” I said, after a moment. “Where’d you steal it?” I

picked it off my blotter and tossed it onto his lap. "Or did you just want me and my roses to know that it's raining outside?"

"They told me you were a tough guy at the Alex," he said, and flicked his ash on my carpet.

"I was a tough guy when I was at the Alex," I said. The Alex was police headquarters, on Berlin's Alexanderplatz. "They gave me one of those little disks. Anyone can pretend he's tough when he's got KRIPO's beer token in his pocket." I shrugged. "But if that's what they say, then it must be true. Real cops, like the cops at the Alex, don't lie."

The little mouth tightened into a smile that was all lips and no teeth, like a newly stitched scar. He put the cigarette back in his mouth as if sucking a length of thread to poke in the eye of a needle. Or even my eye. I don't think he would have cared which. "So you're the bull who caught Gormann, the strangler."

"That was a very long time ago," I said. "Murderers were a lot easier to catch before Hitler came to power."

"Oh? How's that?"

"For one thing, they weren't nearly as thick on the ground as they are now. And for another, it seemed to matter more. I used to take a real satisfaction in protecting society. Nowadays I wouldn't know where to start."

"Sounds suspiciously like you disapprove of what the Party's done for Germany," he said.

"Not at all," I said, careful with my insolence now. "I don't disapprove of anything that's done for Germany." I lit one of my own and let him fill in the double meaning and entertained myself with a mental picture of my fist connecting with the kid's pointy jaw. "Have you got a name, or is that just for your friends? You remember those, don't you? All the people who used to send you a birthday card? Always supposing you can remember when that is."

"Maybe you can be my friend," he said, smiling. I hated that smile. It was a smile that said he knew he had something on me. There was a sort of twinkle in his iris that came off his eyeball like the point of a sword. "Maybe we can help each other. That's what friends are for, eh? Maybe I'll do you a favor, Gunther, and you'll be so damned grateful you'll send me one of those birthday cards you were talking about." He nodded. "I'd like that. That would be nice. With a little message inside."

I sighed some smoke his way. I was growing weary of his hard act. "I doubt you'd like my sense of humor," I said. "But I'm willing to be proved wrong. It might make a nice change to be proved wrong by the Gestapo."

"I am Inspector Gerhard Flesch," he said.

"Pleased to meet you, Gerhard."

"I head up the Jewish Department in SIPO," he added.

"You know something? I've been thinking of opening one of those in here," I said. "Suddenly everyone seems to have a Jewish Department. Must be good for business. The SD, the Foreign Office, and now the Gestapo."

"The operational spheres of the SD and the Gestapo are demarcated by a functions order signed by the Reichsführer-SS," said Flesch. "Operationally, the SD is to subject the Jews to intense surveillance and then report to us. But in practice the Gestapo is locked in a power struggle with the SD, and in no area is this conflict more hotly contested than in the area of Jewish affairs."

"That all sounds very interesting, Gerhard. But I don't see how I can help. Hell, I'm not even Jewish."

"No?" Flesch smiled. "Then let me explain. We have heard a rumor that Franz Six and his men are in the pay of the Jews. Taking bribes in return for facilitating Jewish emigration. What we don't yet have is proof. That's where you come in, Gunther. You're going to get it."

"You overestimate my resourcefulness, Gerhard. I'm not that good at shoveling shit."

"This SD fact-finding mission to Palestine. Exactly why are you going?"

"I need a holiday, Gerhard. I need to get away and eat some oranges. Apparently sunlight and oranges are very good for the skin." I shrugged. "Then again, I'm thinking of converting. I'm told they give a pretty good circumcision in Jaffa, if you get them before lunchtime." I shook my head. "Come on, Gerhard. It's an intelligence matter. You know I can't talk about it with anyone outside of the department. If you don't like that, then take it up with Heydrich. He makes the rules, not me."

"The two men you're traveling with," he said, hardly batting an eye. "We would like you to keep an eye on them. To see that they don't abuse the position of trust in which they find themselves. I'm even authorized to offer you some expenses. A thousand marks."

Everyone was throwing money at me. A thousand pounds here. A thousand marks there. I felt like an official in the Reich Ministry of Justice.

"That's very handsome of you, Gerhard," I said. "A thousand marks is quite a slice of sugarloaf. Of course, you wouldn't be the Gestapo if you didn't also have a taste of the whip you're offering me in the event I don't have the sweet tooth you were counting on."

Flesch smiled his toothless smile. "It would be unfortunate if your racial origins were made the subject of an inquiry," he said, stubbing out his cigarette in my ashtray. As he leaned forward and then back again in the chair, his leather coat creaked loudly, like the sound of heavy raindrops, as if he had just bought it from the Gestapo gift shop.

"Both my parents were churchgoing folk," I said. "I don't see that you've got anything like that to throw at me."

"Your maternal great-grandmother," he said. "There's a possibility she might have been Jewish."

"Read your Bible, Gerhard," I said. "We're all Jewish if you want to go back far enough. But as it happens, you're wrong. She was a Roman Catholic. Quite a devout one, I believe."

"And yet her name was Adler, was it not? Anna Adler?"

"It was Adler, yes, I believe that's correct. What of it?"

"Adler is a Jewish name. If she were alive today she would probably have to add Sarah to her name, so that we could recognize her for what she was. A Jewess."

"Even if it was true, Gerhard. That Adler is a Jewish name? And, to be honest, I have no idea if it is or not. That would only make me one-eighth Jewish. And under section two, article five of the Nuremberg Laws, I am not, therefore, a Jew." I grinned. "Your whip lacks a proper sting, Gerhard."

"An investigation often proves to be an expensive inconvenience," said Flesch. "Even for a truly German business. And mistakes are sometimes made. It might be months before things returned to normal."

I nodded, recognizing the truth in what he had said. No one turned the Gestapo down. Not without some serious consequences. My only choice was between the disastrous and the unpalatable. A very German choice. We both knew I had little alternative but to agree to what they wanted. At the same time, it left me in an awkward position, to put it mildly. After all, I already had a very strong suspicion that Franz Six was lining his pockets with Paul Begelmann's shekels. But I had no wish to be caught up in the middle of a power struggle between the SD and the Gestapo. On the other hand, there was nothing to say that the two SD men I was accompanying to Palestine were dishonest. As a matter of course, they would surely suspect that I was a spy, and, accordingly, treat me with caution. The chances were strong that I would discover

absolutely nothing. But would nothing satisfy the Gestapo? There was only one way to find out.

"All right," I said. "But I won't be a mouth for you people and say a lot of stuff that isn't true. I can't. I won't even try. If they're bent then I'll tell you they're bent and I'll tell myself that that's just what detectives do. Maybe I'll lose some sleep about it and maybe I won't. But if they are straight, that's an end of it, see? I won't frame someone just to give you and the other hammerheads at Prinz-Albrecht-Strasse an edge. I won't do it, not even if you and your best brass knuckles tell me I have to. You can keep your sugarloaf, too. I wouldn't like to get a taste for it. I'll do your dirty little job, Gerhard. But we let the cards fall where they fall. No stacked decks. Clear?"

"Clear." Flesch stood up, buttoned his coat, and put on his hat. "Enjoy your trip, Gunther. I've never been to Palestine. But I'm told it's very beautiful."

"Maybe you should go yourself," I said brightly. "I bet you'd love it down there. Fit right in, in no time. Everyone in Palestine has a Jewish Department."

I left Berlin sometime during the last week of September and traveled by train through Poland to the port of Constanţa, in Romania. It was there, boarding the steamer *Romania*, that I finally met the two SD men who were also traveling to Palestine. Both were noncommissioned officers—sergeants in the SD—and both were posing as journalists working for the *Berliner Tageblatt*, a newspaper that had been Jewish-owned until 1933, when the Nazis had confiscated it.

The sergeant in charge was Herbert Hagen. The other man was called Adolf Eichmann. Hagen was in his early twenties and a fresh-faced intellectual, a university graduate from an upper-class

background. Eichmann was several years older and aspired to be something more than the Austrian petroleum salesman he had been before joining the Party and the SS. Both men were curious anti-Semites, being strangely fascinated with Judaism. Eichmann had the greater experience in the Jewish Department, spoke Yiddish, and spent most of the voyage reading Theodor Herzl's book about the Jewish State, which was called *The Jewish State*. The trip had been Eichmann's own idea and he seemed both surprised and excited that his superiors had agreed to it, having never been out of Germany and Austria before. Hagen was a more ideological Nazi who was an enthusiastic Zionist, believing, as he did, that there was "no greater enemy for the Party than the Jew"—or some such nonsense—and that "the solution of the Jewish question" could lie only in the "total de-Jewing" of Germany. I hated listening to him talk. It all sounded mad to me. Like something found in the pages of some malignant Alice in Wonderland.

Both men regarded me with suspicion, as I had imagined they would, and not just because I had come from outside the SD and their peculiar department, but also because I was older than them—by almost twenty years in the case of Hagen. And jokingly they were soon referring to me as "Papi," which I bore with good grace—at least with a better grace than Hagen, who in retaliation, and much to Eichmann's amusement, I quickly dubbed Hiram Schwartz, after the juvenile diarist of the same name. Consequently, by the time we reached Jaffa on or about October 2, Eichmann had a greater liking for me than his younger, less experienced colleague.

Eichmann was not, however, an impressive man, and at the time, I thought he was probably the type who looked better in uniform. Indeed, I soon came to suspect that wearing a uniform had been the principal reason he had joined the SA and then the SS, for I rather doubted he would have been fit enough to have joined the regular army, if army there had been at that time. Of less than medium

height, he was bow-legged and extremely thin. In his upper jaw he had two gold bridges, as well as many fillings in his long, widow's teeth. His head was like a skull, almost exactly like the death's head on an SS man's cap-badge, being extremely bony with particularly hollow temples. One thing that struck me was how Jewish he looked. And it occurred to me that his antipathy for the Jews might have had something to do with this.

From the moment the *Romania* docked at Jaffa, things did not go well for the two SD men. The British must have suspected that Hagen and Eichmann were from German intelligence and, after a great deal of argument, gave them leave to come ashore for just twenty-four hours. I myself encountered no such problems, and I was quickly issued a visa allowing me to remain in Palestine for thirty days. This was ironic as I had only intended staying for four or five days at most, and caused much chagrin to Eichmann, whose plans were now in complete disarray. He railed on about this change of plan in the horse-drawn carriage that carried the three of us and our luggage from the port to the Jerusalem Hotel, on the edge of the city's famous "German colony."

"Now what are we going to do?" he complained loudly. "All of our most important meetings are the day after tomorrow. By which time we'll be back on the boat."

I smiled to myself, enjoying his consternation. Any setback for the SD was fine by me. I was pleased if only because it relieved me of the burden of inventing some story for the Gestapo. I could hardly spy on men who had been refused visas. I even thought the Gestapo might find that amusing enough to forgive the lack of any more concrete information.

"Perhaps Papi could meet them," said Hagen.

"Me?" I said. "Forget it, Hiram."

"I still don't understand how you got a visa and we didn't," said Eichmann.

"Because he's helping that yid for Dr. Six, of course," said Hagen. "The Jew probably fixed it for him."

"Could be," I said. "Or it could be that you boys just aren't very good at this line of work. If you were good at it then perhaps you wouldn't have chosen a cover story that involves you both working for a Nazi newspaper. Moreover, a Nazi newspaper that was stolen from its Jewish owners. You might have picked something a little less high profile than that, I think." I smiled at Eichmann. "Like being a petroleum salesman, perhaps."

Hagen got it. But Eichmann was still too upset to realize he was being teased.

"Franz Reichert," he said. "From the German News Agency. I can telephone him in Jerusalem. I expect he will know how to get hold of Fievel Polkes. But I haven't a clue how we're going to get in touch with Haj Amin." He sighed. "What are we going to do?"

I shrugged. "What would you have done now?" I asked. "Today. If you'd got your thirty-day visa after all."

Eichmann shrugged. "I suppose we would have visited the German Freemason colony at Sarona. Gone up Mount Carmel. Looked at some Jewish farming settlements in the Jezreel Valley."

"Then my advice is to go ahead and do exactly that," I said. "Call Reichert. Explain the situation and then get back on the boat, tomorrow. It sails for Egypt tomorrow, right? Well, when you get there, go to the British embassy in Cairo and apply for another visa."

"He's right," said Hagen. "That's exactly what we should do."

"We can apply again," cried Eichmann. "Of course. We can get a visa in Cairo and then travel back here overland."

"Just like the children of Israel," I added.

The carriage left the narrow, dirty streets of the old town and picked up speed as we headed along a wider road, to the new town of Tel Aviv. Opposite a clock tower and several Arabian coffee-

houses was the Anglo-Palestine Bank, where I was supposed to meet the manager and give him the letters of introduction from Begelmann, and from the Wassermann Bank, not to mention the camelback trunk Begelmann had given me to take out of Germany. I had no idea what was in it, but from the weight I didn't think it was his stamp collection. I could see no advantage in delaying my going into the bank. Not in a place like Jaffa, which seemed full of hostile-looking Arabs. (Possibly they thought we were Jews, of course. There was little liking for Jews among the local Palestinian population.) So I told the driver to stop and, with the trunk under my arm, and the letters in my pocket, I got out, leaving Eichmann and Hagen to carry on to the hotel with the rest of my luggage.

The bank manager was an Englishman named Quinton. His arms were too short for his jacket and his fair hair was so fine it was hardly there at all. He had a snub nose that was surrounded by freckles and a smile like a young bulldog. Meeting him I couldn't help but picture Quinton's father, paying close attention to his son's German teacher. I suspected he would have been a good one because young Mr. Quinton spoke excellent German, with many enthusiastic inflections, as if he had been reciting Goethe's "The Destruction of Magdeburg."

Quinton took me into his office. There was a cricket bat on the wall and several photographs of cricket teams. A fan turned slowly on the ceiling. It was hot. Outside the office window was a fine view of the Mohammedan Cemetery and, beyond, the Mediterranean Sea. The clock on the nearby tower struck the hour, and the muezzin at the mosque on the other side of Howard Street called the faithful to prayer. I was a long way from Berlin.

He opened the envelopes with which I had been entrusted with a paper knife shaped like a little scimitar. "Is it true that Jews in Germany are not allowed to play Beethoven or Mozart?" he asked.

"They are forbidden to play music by those composers at Jewish

cultural events," I said. "But don't ask me to justify it, Mr. Quinton. I can't. If you ask me, the whole country has gone insane."

"You should try living here," he said. "Here, Jew and Arab are at each other's throats. With us in the middle. It's an impossible situation. The Jews hate the British for not allowing more of them to come and live in Palestine. And the Arabs hate us for allowing any Jews here at all. Right now, it's lucky for us they hate each other more than they hate us. But one day this whole country is going to blow up in our faces, and we'll leave and it'll be worse than ever before. You mark my words, Herr Gunther."

While he had been speaking, he'd been reading the letters and sorting out various sheets of paper, some of them blank but for a signature. And now he explained what he was doing:

"These are letters of accreditation," he said. "And signature samples for some new bank accounts. One of these accounts is to be a joint account for you and Dr. Six. Is that right?"

I frowned, hardly liking the idea of sharing anything with the head of the SD's Jewish Department. "I don't know," I said.

"Well, it's from this account that you are to take the money to buy the lease on a property here in Jaffa," he explained. "As well as your own fee and expenses. The balance will be payable to Dr. Six on presentation of a passbook that I will give to you to give to him. And his passport. Please make sure he understands that. The bank insists on the passbook holder identifying himself with a passport, if money is to be handed over. Clear?"

I nodded.

"May I see your own passport, Herr Gunther?"

I handed it over.

"The best person to help you find commercial property in Jaffa is Solomon Rabinowicz," he said, glancing over my passport and writing down the number. "He's a Polish Jew, but he's quite the

most resourceful fellow I think I've met in this infuriating country. He has an office in Montefiore Street. In Tel Aviv. That's about half a mile from here. I'll give you his address. Always assuming that your client won't want premises in the Arab quarter. That would be asking for trouble."

He handed back my passport and nodded at Mr. Begelmann's trunk. "I take it those are your client's valuables?" he said. "The ones he wishes to store in our vault, pending his arrival in this country."

I nodded again.

"One of these letters contains an inventory of the property contained in that trunk," he said. "Do you wish to check the inventory before handing it over?"

"No," I said.

Quinton came around the desk and collected the trunk. "Christ, it's heavy," he said. "If you would wait here, I'll have your own passbook prepared. May I offer you some tea? Or some lemonade, perhaps?"

"Tea," I said. "Tea would be nice."

My business at the bank concluded, I walked on to the hotel and found Hagen and Eichmann had already gone out. So, I had a cool bath, went to Tel Aviv, met Mr. Rabinowicz, and instructed him to find a suitable property for Paul Begelmann.

I did not see the two SD men until breakfast the next morning when, slightly the worse for wear, they came down to look for some black coffee. They had made a night of it at a club in the old town. "Too much arak," whispered Eichmann. "It's the local drink. A sort of aniseed-flavored grape spirit. Avoid it if you can."

I smiled and lit a cigarette but waved the smoke away when it seemed to nauseate him. "Did you get hold of Reichert?" I asked.

"Yes. As a matter of fact he was with us last night. But not Polkes. So he's liable to turn up here looking for us. Would you mind seeing him, just for five or ten minutes and explaining the situation?"

"What is the situation?"

"Our plans are changing by the minute, I'm afraid. We may not be coming back here after all. For one thing, Reichert seems to think we won't have any better luck getting a visa in Cairo than we've had here."

"I'm sorry to hear that," I said. I was not sorry at all.

"Tell him we've gone to Cairo," said Eichmann. "And that we'll be staying at the National Hotel. Tell him to come and meet us there."

"I don't know," I said. "I really don't want to get involved in any of this."

"You're a German," he said. "You're involved whether you like it or not."

"Yes, but you're the Nazi, not me."

Eichmann looked shocked. "How can you be working for the SD and not be a Nazi?" he asked.

"It's a funny old world," I said. "But don't tell anyone."

"Look, please see him," said Eichmann. "If only for courtesy's sake. I could leave a letter for him, but it would look so much better if you told him in person."

"Who is this Fievel Polkes, anyway?" I asked.

"A Palestinian Jew who works for the Haganah."

"And who are they?"

Eichmann smiled wearily. He was pale and sweating profusely. I almost felt sorry for him. "You really don't know very much about this country, do you?"

"I know enough to get a thirty-day visa," I said, pointedly.

"Haganah is a Jewish militia group and intelligence service."

"You mean, they're a terrorist organization."

"If you like," agreed Eichmann.

"All right," I said. "I'll see him. For courtesy's sake. But I'll need to know everything. I'm not meeting any of these murdering bastards with only half the story."

Eichmann hesitated. I knew he didn't trust me. But either he was too hung over to care, or he now realized he had no choice but to level with me.

"The Haganah want us to supply them with guns to use against the British here in Palestine," he said. "If the SD continues to promote Jewish emigration from Germany, they're also proposing to supply us with information on British troop and naval movements in the eastern Mediterranean."

"The Jews helping their own persecutors?" I laughed. "But that's preposterous." Eichmann wasn't laughing. "Isn't it?"

"On the contrary," said Eichmann. "The SD has already financed several Zionist training camps in Germany. Places where young Jews can learn the agricultural skills they will need to farm this land. Palestinian land. A National Socialist–financed Haganah is just one possible extension of that same policy. And that's one of the reasons I came here. To get the measure of the people in command of Haganah, the Irgun, and other Jewish militia groups. Look, I know it's hard to believe, but they dislike the British even more than they seem to dislike us."

"And where does Haj Amin fit into these plans?" I asked. "He's an Arab, isn't he?"

"Haj Amin is the other side of the coin," said Eichmann. "In case our pro-Zionist policy doesn't work out. We had planned to meet the Arab High Committee and some of its members—principally, Haj Amin—here, in Palestine. But it seems that the British have ordered the dissolution of the committee and the arrest of its members. Apparently the assistant district commissioner of Galilee was murdered in Nazareth a few days ago. Haj Amin is now in hiding,

in Jerusalem's old city, but he's going to try to slip out and meet us in Cairo. So, as you can see, there's just Polkes to worry about here in Jaffa."

"Remind me never to play cards with you, Eichmann," I said. "Or, if I do, to make sure you take off your coat and roll up your sleeves."

"Just tell Fievel Polkes to come to Cairo. He'll understand. But don't, for Christ's sake, mention the Grand Mufti."

"The Grand Mufti?"

"Haj Amin," said Eichmann. "He's the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem. He's the highest official of religious law in Palestine. The British appointed him in 1921. Which makes him the most powerful Arab in the country. He's also a rabid anti-Semite who makes the Führer seem like a Jew lover. Haj Amin has declared jihad on the Jews. Which is why the Haganah and the Irgun would like to see him dead. And which is why it's best Fievel Polkes doesn't know we're planning to see him. He'll suspect it's happening, of course. But that's his problem."

"I just hope it doesn't become mine," I said.

The day after Eichmann and Hagen left on the boat for Alexandria, Fievel Polkes turned up at the Jerusalem Hotel looking for them. Polkes was a chain-smoking Polish Jew in his mid-thirties. He wore a crumpled, tropical-weight suit and a straw hat. He needed a shave, but not as badly as the chain-smoking Russian Jew accompanying him. He was in his mid-forties, with a couple of boulders for shoulders and a weathered sort of face like something carved on a flying buttress. His name was Eliahu Golomb. Their jackets were buttoned, although it was, as usual, a baking-hot day. When a man keeps his jacket buttoned on a hot day, it usually means one thing. After I had explained the situation, Golomb swore in Russian, and