

## Gharam (1920)

The locals' disapproval made it all the sweeter. She was nineteen years old, with hair a cascade of black and eyes the richest, warmest shade of brown. She laughed often, and Abdul-Malik discovered to his lasting surprise that so did he when he was with her. They would meet in the groves in the afternoon when they were both supposed to be tending the olive-trees and talk or dance or find more... interesting ways to pass the time. It was the most glorious spring of his life. Thanks to Yael.

Ya'el Aharoni.

Yael the Jew.

He tried to remember the moment when he had realised, and found that he couldn't. By then she was just Yael; race and religion meant nothing to him. Her father was political, she said. A member of a Zionist association in one of the European cities. Her mother just longed to get away from the crowds and buildings and bustle. She was a simple woman, comfortable in old traditions. She watched with disquiet the confusion of changes the war was bringing, the unrooted distemper settling over folk whose familiar world was being torn up around them. She'd filled Yael's head with nostalgia for a homeland neither of them had ever seen, a place their ancestors had left centuries ago.

Zionism was something that had loomed like a stormcloud in Abdul-Malik's life for so long. Ever since that day in the Arabian desert with Najid. He'd never quite seen it with the same fear as Najid had, as most of the villagers did, but as it became a reality and every week it seemed the newspapers were reporting new ships arriving full of Jewish settlers from Europe and America, it was hard not to wonder how Palestine was changing. The nagging fear grew steadily more insistent; he would find himself falling into the habit of talking about what 'the Jews' were doing as if they were a single people with a single plan. He knew it was absurd; they were no more a nation than the Arabs. But in sleepy Deir al-Hamra, up in the hill-country, far away, it seemed, from ports and immigrants and settlers, the imagination was untroubled by reality. Rumours took on a life of their own and the Zionists became, in a few short months, bogeymen and villains feared and hated by all.

'The Jews can afford machinery and workers,' Yusuf would say as he worked despondently in the olive groves. 'Capital's flooding to them from New York. They will make olive oil in bulk, far more cheaply than we can. No-one will buy Arab oil any more.'

'I heard they want to demolish al-Aqsa,' complained Jibril, fussing as ever with his holy Qur'an as he pottered around the village's tiny mosque. 'They will rebuild their temple if the British let them. Drive every Arab out of al-Quds.'

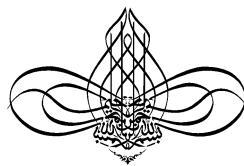
'It's the Ottomans,' Munjid would assure anyone who would listen. He fancied himself an authority on politics. When the old men gathered for coffee in the mornings, he would sit down with his newspaper – newly arrived but already days old – and lecture them on the unsaid secrets behind the stories of the day. Once Abdul-Malik had been passing when Munjid was talking about the British authorities and his discourse had turned towards Lawrence. When Abdul-Malik had tried to correct a few stark misapprehensions Munjid

had glared at him, tutted loudly at the interruption, and plunged straight back into his tales of conspiracy and betrayal. ‘The Jews have been running the Empire for years. Talaat’s rebellion was just a front, as you know, to let them sink their claws deeper into the Sultan. But even before that half the Divan were secret Jews and crypto-Zionists. These European Jews are just unwitting pawns being used as a bridgehead to re-establishing Turkish rule.’

Abdul-Malik didn’t believe a word of it. Munjid was a fantasist, making up for the tedium and frustrations of his own life in a dreamworld of politicking, conspiracy and intrigue. Jibril was a frightened zealot. Yusuf just wanted someone else to blame for the declining income of his groves. But the idea that the Jews were nevertheless a threat gained an ever stronger foothold in his thoughts.

Until, suddenly, they weren’t conspirators and infiltrators. They were just people. People like his dear Yael. It wasn’t a secret, she told him one night on the hillside. Everyone in the village knew; she’d assumed he did too. That was why her family kept themselves to themselves. That was why she didn’t care about the disapproval and muttering behind her back that was the inevitable result of her non-too-subtle dalliance with Abdul-Malik. She told him of her life and why she had come here, and it seemed no more sinister than his own reasons.

As he grew to know and love Yael, Abdul-Malik’s old optimism returned. Perhaps there is hope, he thought to himself as he lay awake beside her and looked at the stars. Perhaps, despite everything, the future isn’t too bad.



Josie was tired. It was hot and they’d been yomping up the hill for what felt like simply ages. Mum and Uncle Frank weren’t speaking. Ever since the row they’d been stewing sulkily, only the relentless pace of the uphill hike taking the edge off the bitter silence. Josie hated it when they shouted at each other. She’d hoped things would be different this time – it was so long since they’d seen each other and they were *on holiday*. Things couldn’t be the same out here in Israel as they were back home. Surely they’d manage to get along?

It had been OK for the first day or two, but then the old arguments started up. Mum hated Uncle Frank being a soldier. Josie always found that a bit odd because Uncle Frank never seemed to be doing anything particularly soldiery at all. He never wore a uniform and she couldn’t remember him ever being stationed anywhere where there was an actual war on. Instead his list of postings was a roll-call of places whose names were resonant from news bulletins but for reasons that seemed to have to do with something other than straightforward soldiering: West Berlin, Warsaw, Cuba and now Israel. It was a murky world and when Josie asked him what it was he actually did, he would smile and give some ready reply which seemed perfectly sensible at the time. When she came to think about it

later, though, she would realise he hadn't actually told her anything at all. She wondered if even Mum knew.

Perhaps it was that uncertainty that Mum found so hard to handle. She certainly didn't approve of Josie's unconcealed excitement and fascination concerning her uncle's career. Amanda Grant could hardly have been more different than her brother. Where he was disciplined, driven and always immaculate in his dark suits and sharp haircuts, she was a willowy woman with an untamed tangle of blonde hair. She got up late, dressed in fashionable dresses intended for younger women, and thought nothing of skiving off her job at the post office to lounge around the house writing poetry, playing the guitar and singing Beatles songs. She used to go on CND marches with Dad; since he'd died, if anything she'd thrown herself into those kinds of things even more whole-heartedly. Mac had once whispered excitedly that he was fairly sure Mum was a Marxist. Josie had no idea whether her brother was right; she didn't really even know what a Marxist was exactly, beyond that it had something to do with the Russians. She didn't think Uncle Frank would approve.

The argument today had unfolded in familiar form. It started with Amanda making casual gibes at Frank for being straitlaced and authoritarian; he riposted in kind by accusing her of being lazy and irresponsible. It escalated into thinly-veiled insinuations about her parenting style and culminated in a blazing exchange in which Amanda accused him of being a 'warmongering capitalist-imperialist tool meddling in the affairs of other peoples to support a morally-bankrupt Western political élite', while he condemned her as 'wallowing in half-baked, wannabe-subversive navel-gazing she barely understood because she was too weak and too self-deluded to get over Robert's death and face up to her responsibilities'.

Mum had slapped him, then gone off to her room in tears.

Some time later, Uncle Frank had come to apologise and told her that he wanted to show her something.

So, with barely a word and the atmosphere still palpably tense, they'd all piled into Frank's government-issue Land Rover and he'd driven them up into the hills outside Jerusalem. A little over an hour from the city, he parked the car up beside a dusty track that led away up the steep hillside.

'We'll need to go on on foot.'

Mum had got out of the car, slammed the door behind her and started off up the hill without even asking what they were going to see. Mac rolled his eyes; he seemed to get a peculiar thrill from seeing adults behave badly. Josie just wished all this would blow over.

Uncle Frank brought them here, to a tumbledown collection of ruins overgrown with cypress and olive trees and long, scratchy grass the colour of old parchment. There were ruins everywhere in Israel; the cities were built on the heaped-up remains of their Turkish and mediaeval and ancient forebears. Josie had already become inured to their attractions. When you'd spent the last few days running along the ramparts of Crusader fortifications or plumbing spooky catacombs from the first days of the Church, a few bare mud-brick building footings held little excitement.

Mum looked similarly unimpressed. 'What is this place?'

'Deir al-Hamra,' Uncle Frank replied. 'It was, anyway. It was a Palestinian village back in the forties.'

Mum got angry again. 'For God's sake, Frank! What the hell are you doing bringing the kids here? Is it safe? There might be land mines or something!'

'It's safe. I've been here dozens of times. There's no mines.'

A long silence.

'So what is it you want me to see?' Mum asked finally, grudgingly.

It was a gravestone. No more, no less. A single slab of sandstone lonely and forgotten in one of the abandoned olive groves on the hillside that overlooked the long-dead village. They had passed other graves along the way, similarly untended. Josie wondered what was so special about this one.

Frank approached it solemnly, his head bowed. Kneeling, he brushed the thick, dry plant growth clear of its face. It was plain, undecorated save for a simple inscription:

יעל אהרונני. אשתו האהובה של עבדול מאליק. אמא יקרה. מת ט' כִּתְּשֵׁרִי תרצ"ח.

يائيل أهاروني. الحبيب زوجة عبد الملك. عزيزي الأم. توفي ١٤ سبتمبر ١٩٣٧

'I can't read it,' Mum said irritably. 'What is it? Hebrew? Arabic?'

'Both. Her name was Ya'el. She was a Jew. Her husband was an Arab. They were very much in love. She died in 1937. Even back then, when there was hysteria and fear everywhere about Jewish settlement, in this sleepy little backwater some people were making it work.'

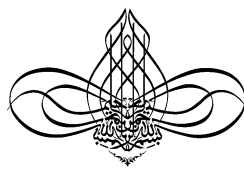
'It's sad she died,' said Josie. It was the first thing she'd said in hours. Both the grown-ups looked surprised, as if they'd forgotten the children's presence.

'Yes, Jo,' said Uncle Frank. 'It is sad.' He turned to Mum. 'But this is why it's important for me to be here. Britain screwed this part of the world up badly back then, Mandy. It's so easy to think there's no hope. Just too much hatred on all sides for there to be peace. But Ya'el and Abdul-Malik here show that's not true. There's hope. Peace is possible between these people. And I mean to do everything I can to make it happen.'

Mum turned away, struggling with some complex grown-up emotion. It took her a while to gather her thoughts. When she eventually spoke, her voice was quiet and it was tight.

'Sometimes, Frank, when you've screwed something up, the best thing you can do is just to leave it be and let other people sort it out.'

He sighed. 'Yes. You could do that. But that brings us back to the question of responsibility, doesn't it?'



There was grass between Jo's fingers as she stirred into wakefulness. A pleasant afternoon sun warmed her face and a gentle breeze played through her hair. *Not again*, she thought. Last time she'd fallen asleep enjoying her lunch break on UNIT HQ's lawn she'd ended up missing a briefing session the Brig was giving about the five tell-tale giveaways that a man from the ministry was secretly a Destolian. Jo had been looking forward to it – she had a soft spot for briefings that sounded like they should be a filler article in Metropolitan magazine. The Brig had put a lot of effort into it and he'd been terribly cross she wasn't there. Not least because some wag among the men had taken the opportunity to draw a Brigadier-style moustache on her upper lip in permanent marker while she was sleeping, which somewhat undermined her efforts to be apologetic. She hadn't even realised it was there until the Doctor casually mentioned it when he was giving her a lift home that evening on Babs, his new sprightly blue 1950s motorbike.

Except, Jo realised as she grew more awake, it wasn't an idyllic summer's afternoon, she wasn't at UNIT HQ, and she hadn't fallen asleep watching John Benton putting in a fine batting performance against Sergeant Osgood's somewhat erratic reverse swing.

She was in Arabia, in the middle of the First World War, and the last thing she remembered she was being attacked by a bunch of very angry elemental creatures. Her foggy head cleared and she knew with certainty that this was the truth.

Which was odd. Because when she opened her eyes, the place she found herself was doing a very good impression of an English village green on a lovely summer's day.

The grass stretched out in every direction, green and lush and trimmed. There were even clovers, daisies and the occasional buttercup poking up among the greenery. She could see the bare red stone of Arabia on the rock outcrops in the distance, but somehow it did little to diminish the homely English feel. The sun was gentle and benign in a blue sky spattered with fluffy white clouds. The temperature was a very pleasant seventy-five degrees or so. She almost fancied she could hear a lark singing somewhere far off out of sight, but that *had* to be her imagination.

Najid was still out cold, sprawled a few feet away from her. His Arabian robes looked bizarrely incongruous on the verdant lawn. She looked around for Abdul-Malik and spotted him a little way off. He was awake but unsettled. He had his legs drawn up into a foetal position and he was rocking slightly.

'Abdul? Abdul, are you all right?'

He looked at her.

'You see this too, right?' she asked when he didn't say anything. 'I'm not going crazy?'

'I saw... him!' Abdul-Malik muttered, his eyes wide and fearful.

'Saw who?' She hurried over to him. 'Abdul, what's the matter? You're scaring me!'

'So old...' He pulled at his face with his fingers. 'So old!'

'Who?'

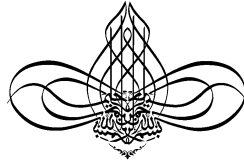
'I'm afraid he means me,' said another voice behind her. She turned. Another Arab stood there, looking down at Abdul-Malik curiously from within a lined and bearded face. He sounded sad. He regarded the younger man almost with pity.

There was something familiar about him. The slope of his eyebrows, the angle of his nose. His quietly peaceful eyes.

And then Jo realised.

This wasn't another Arab at all. It was the *same* Arab.

'Quite right, Miss Grant,' said the Master, stepping out from – well, somewhere – to stand alongside the older man. She'd long-since determined not to allow herself to be put out by his mind-reading act. 'Allow me to introduce Abdul-Malik al-Belawi.' He glanced down at the cringing younger version, his lip curling in amusement. 'I suppose we can hardly blame him. What youth wouldn't be terrified by the sight of their own middle-age?'



# **DOCTOR WHO**

## **LOVED EGYPTIAN NIGHT**

**By  
Philip Boyes**

# **Episode 3**



# Qitaar (1917)

*If, drunk with sight of power, we loose  
Wild tongues that have not Thee in awe—  
Such boastings as the Gentiles use,  
Or lesser breeds without the Law—  
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,  
Lest we forget—lest we forget!*

*For heathen heart that puts her trust  
In reeking tube and iron shard—  
All valiant dust that builds on dust,  
And guarding calls not Thee to guard.  
For frantic boast and foolish word,  
Thy Mercy on Thy People, Lord!*

Rudyard Kipling. Recessional, 1897

The Doctor sat on the footplate of the locomotive with his head resting on his knuckles, one finger tapping the side of his nose as he thought.

‘I’m sure she’s fine,’ Lawrence assured him, trying not to let on as he sneaked a look at the damage to the engine’s boiler. Arabs had a rum relationship with discipline, he reflected. They took an almost fanatical pleasure in the self-denial and abnegation of desert life. Even more than the English, their greatest satisfaction came from making do, in stoically and with subtle ostentation refusing their every desire. And yet for all their immense self-control in surviving the privations of the wilderness, they had not the slightest self-control when it came to taking an order or following a simple instruction. No wonder the Ottoman Empire had been on the ropes for centuries. Worse than the Madrassis when they got over-excited.

Three bullet-holes had perforated the locomotive. Two through the cab and the last through the boiler. That was the one that Lawrence was worried about. He tried to judge the calibre of the weapon from the size of the hole. There was a chance, he supposed, that it had been one of the Turks who had done this. He’s seen the Bedouin waving their rifles around in the heat of battle, though. Even if they weren’t to blame for this, they’d still ignored his instructions.

He’d have to think on that. Everyone could be inspired to loyalty, obedience and even love; he was sure of that. Some by logic, some by charisma, some by simple avarice. He just had to find the trick that would transform this rabble into a true army. And find it he would.

The Doctor glanced over at him. ‘You needn’t be so furtive about it. I’m as keen to see this thing move as you are.’

Lawrence turned away from the bullet scar, embarrassed.

'I *am* worried about Miss Grant,' he insisted sincerely. 'The desert's no place for anyone to be alone, especially not a young lady. She wasn't the most confident astride a camel. If we're fortunate she's just fallen a little behind the rest of us. There's always stragglers. They'll catch up in time.'

'Will there still be anyone here?' the Doctor asked pointedly.

'Auda has orders to keep the main force here as long as he can. He might be a gruff old pirate but he's a man of the desert. He won't abandon a comrade to the sands. He'll stay until all the slowcoaches arrive or until Johnny Turk shows up.'

'And if Jo still hasn't turned up by then?'

Lawrence had no answer for him. They both knew the truth of it. If Miss Grant was lost alone in the wastes, there was next to no chance of finding her. On her own and without water or shelter, she'd be lucky to survive till nightfall.

'Well, I suppose there's nothing to be gained from just sitting here,' the Doctor declared with a sigh. He hauled himself to his feet and began to examine the damage to the locomotive. 'Either way we need to get this thing running again.' He pulled a slender pen-like object from his robes and gripped it between his teeth as he clambered over the engine to get a closer look at the hole in the boiler.

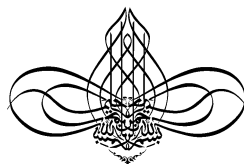
'What's that?' Lawrence asked.

'Rhish?' The Doctor found a secure footing and freed a hand to withdraw the item from his mouth. 'This, my dear Lawrence, is me sonic screwdriver.' He tweaked it and held it next to the bullet-hole. There was a sudden whine on the edge of hearing. It reminded Lawrence of the damned mozzies round the Nile. The noise shut off abruptly a moment later. 'A-ha,' the Doctor said with satisfaction. 'Not to worry. I ought to be able to fix this without too much trouble. If I just reverse the polarity of the steam flow...'

Lawrence realised the Doctor was just muttering to himself at this point. His worry for his friend was suddenly forgotten; his world was the machine and how to make it go. Lawrence had seen countless engineers just the same when they were servicing the cars and aeroplanes at HQ. Lawrence began to walk away. No doubt by the time he returned he would find the locomotive had been christened with a young lady's name.

It turned out the Doctor hadn't entirely forgotten his presence.

'See if you can find me a spanner, would you?' he called to the Uncrowned King of Arabia without looking up. 'There's a good chap.'



The air shimmered like a mirage, refracting and scattering the light into crystal-facets of colour. The distortion almost had form, but seemed unable to settle on what that form should be. One moment Jo thought she saw a hint of legs, a twinkling eye; the next an

inchoate mass of squamous tentacles. It danced on the line between beauty and repulsion, seductive and hideous in equal measure.

No wonder the Master seemed so pleased with it. That was him all over – the worst kind of monster hidden behind a façade of suave sophistication. The sharp suits, the Cuban cigars, the voice like steel wrapped in silk. He was beguiling even when he wasn't deliberately trying to hypnotise you; there was a time when she'd even had to admit he found him kind of sexy – if she'd gone for older men. She was well past all that now. She'd seen too many of his casual atrocities to be fooled by the act.

He wore a charcoal-grey suit and a white *keffiyeh* today. It gave him something of the look of one of those Oxbridge-educated Arab princes. Or, she reflected wryly, more likely a character in a Hollywood film where, rather than cast any actual Arabs, they'd cast around for a few British character actors who had a vaguely swarthy look about them. He held out a black-gloved hand to the slowly-whirling elemental; let it play for a moment around his fingertips.

'Fascinating creatures,' he purred.

Najid stirred. Wide-eyed, he murmured, 'Sheikh of the djinn here, protect us from your people!'

The Master smirked. 'Djinn? Well I suppose if the cap fits...'

'Is it alive?' asked Jo.

'Do you know, Miss Grant, I'm really not sure. I fear that would involve a philosophical discussion on the nature of life which I suspect would be beyond your intellect and my patience. They respond, they obey, they help me achieve my goals. But are they intelligent? I'm afraid the jury's out.' He smiled cruelly. 'Not unlike some humans I could mention.'

Jo glanced at the older Abdul-Malik. His eyes were hooded; he didn't look like he was under hypnosis, but he was certainly preoccupied. For the most part he stood by silent and distracted, as if lost in a desert of his own thoughts. When he did show any interest in what was happening, it was the occasional glance at his younger self. He seemed to care little for either what the Master was saying of for the djinni. Jo wished she could talk to him alone. What could have happened to make him work for the Master?

The Master flicked his hand and the djinni folded itself away out of existence. 'So tell me, Miss Grant,' he said, gesturing at the English landscape they stood in, 'how do you like my little experiment?'

'Very impressive,' she admitted. 'But what's the point? Are you thinking of taking up cricket? Doing a spot of gardening?'

'Nothing so banal. This was just a test of my... djinn's capabilities. They're a kind of semi-organic nanoscopic terraforming gestalt. I found them on Alestipol while I was... avoiding the Daleks.'

'While you were on the run after the Doctor mucked up your plans, you mean.'

His genteel façade cracked just a little. 'The Doctor caused me considerable inconvenience with that bit of meddling, I admit,' he growled, jabbing a finger at her. 'It's fitting that the djinn will provide me with the means to get my revenge.'

'Why do I feel like I've heard that before?'

‘Scoff all you like, Miss Grant. My plans are proceeding perfectly; I wonder if the Doctor can say the same?’

‘Your assassin didn’t kill Lawrence, you know. He missed; only wounded him.’

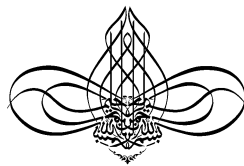
The Master waved the remark away as casually as he’d dismissed the djinni. ‘Captain Quinn? An overture, nothing more. You think I care about Lawrence? A jumped-up fop who wants to run around this godforsaken corner of the world playing at being a hero? Let him. Do you really think I’d set my sights so low? Quinn was merely a friendly shot across the Doctor’s bows.’

‘Well it backfired then! Because now we know where your hideout is and where you’re keeping the TARDIS!’

He chuckled. ‘But of course! And I’m sure at this very moment the Doctor and Lawrence are preparing their heroic assault on Mada’in Saleh. You must remember, Miss Grant, that hypnosis can result in quite severe short-term amnesia. Do you really think Captain Quinn would have told you anything if I hadn’t intended it? Make no mistake: when they reach Mada’in Saleh they’ll find the Turkish garrison more than ready for them.’

Jo’s blood ran cold.

The Master smiled, relishing the moment as he pressed home his advantage. ‘In fact, why don’t we see how they’re getting along?’



How should one behave around the man who tried to kill you? Lawrence doubted even Quinn’s no-doubt extremely well-heeled school had provided tuition on the etiquette of such a situation.

‘Why did you bring him?’ Sharif Ali asked quietly. If he was concerned about being overheard, he needn’t have been. Quinn was on the other side of the carriage, on his own. No-one would go near him. The Arabs between him and them were rowdy and excited, thrilled at what for most of them was their first time riding one of the trains they had devoted so much effort to blowing up.

‘It seemed sensible at the time,’ Lawrence replied. ‘He’s the only fellow here who’s actually been to Mada’in Saleh.’

‘Nonsense! Asaf’s been! So’s Ferran ibn Walid.’ He nodded at each of the old warhorses in turn, picking them out expertly from the crowd.

Lawrence smiled wryly. ‘He’s the only one who’s been this century. It’s defences, patrol routes I want to know about. The railway wasn’t even built last time those two old rogues passed this way.’

Ali glanced sceptically at Quinn. ‘He’s told us nothing so far. Says he doesn’t remember.’

‘He’s frightened.’

'He should be.'

'I'll talk to him myself later, when I have a minute. It may be he'll respond better to a fellow Englishman.'

'He tried to shoot you, Aurens! He'll be more frightened of you than of any of us!'

'I shall be extra-specially charming,' Lawrence assured him with a grin.

Ali laughed. 'Like as not. Just be careful. I don't trust him.'

'Don't worry, my friend. I don't trust him either. I've got this to remind me, after all.' He fingered his wound, swallowing the pain, refusing to let it show on his face. 'Besides,' he added in a scandalised tone, 'the man's a Tab!'

He chuckled at Ali's bewilderment and patted the Arab on the shoulder. 'I'm not a complete fool,' Lawrence told him seriously. 'If he doesn't talk off his own bat, I'll have the Doctor do his mesmerism trick again. Speaking of which...'

He left Ali to shepherd his raucous countrymen and passed through the door at the front of the boxcar, out into the dazzling light of the day. At least the wind rushing past the train made for a blessed relief after the ripe and humid fug of the carriage. He negotiated the coupling on to the tender with some trepidation – the train really was travelling at a fair old lick. They never looked so fast when one was waiting for them to run over a mine. One of the firemen helped him down across the second coupling and into the locomotive's cab.

'Ah, Lawrence old chap,' said the Doctor cheerfully. Driving the train was doing wonders for his mood, it seemed. 'How are the men?'

'Like boys on a trip to the seaside.'

'Splendid, splendid.' He paused to make an adjustment to one of the valves in the complex tangle of pipes and controls that covered the front wall. He gave every appearance of knowing what he was doing. He'd even swapped his *niqab* for the overalls of a Turkish engine driver. He seemed to derive a certain boyish glee from dressing up, Lawrence observed in amusement; he recalled his own Arab attire a moment later and felt duly repentant. The train's own crew had been retained on the strict understanding that their life expectancy would be dramatically harmed should they do anything at all foolhardy. They were little men, conscript engineers from some backwater of the empire; and pathetically grateful not to be joining the Ottoman soldiers in Auda's custody. Lawrence expected no trouble from them. 'A little more coal, I think,' the Doctor mused, as if pondering cake ingredients. One of the firemen obediently hefted a shovel-load from the tender into the blazing furnace of the locomotive's fire-box.

'Don't enjoy yourself too much,' Lawrence warned. 'We're supposed to be slouching through after a six-hundred mile journey down from Damascus. And we've got another two hundred miles though hostile territory to Medina. We should try to at least pretend to be tired and miserable for the sake of any Turks who might be watching.'

'We're slowing down for the towns and crossings,' the Doctor reassured him.

'Do we have far to go?'

'We passed al-Muadhmem five minutes ago,' piped up one of the firemen. 'It'll be about an hour or two from here.'

'Good. Let me know when we're half an hour out.'

'I'll call you when we pass Mutali, *effendi*.'

Lawrence turned back to the Doctor. 'Any sign of the Turks yet?'

He shook his head. 'A couple of miffed-looking people on platforms when we didn't stop at the stations, but I don't think they suspected anything.'

It had been their good fortune that it hadn't been a passenger train they had captured. There weren't many of those still plying the dangerous route down through the Hejaz but one or two continued to run. It would undoubtedly have raised suspicions if one had consistently run through stations without stopping. This train was mostly goods cars. A brief inspection had revealed them to be largely filled with grain, but there was one truck containing spare parts for howitzers and anti-aircraft artillery. Lawrence had had the men wire it up with explosives – when they were done with the train they'd destroy it. At the rear was a single passenger carriage which had been empty when they'd captured the train. Evidently the Turks didn't consider their soldiers worthy of such comforts. Lawrence had stationed a couple of dozen of his own forces in there, but he and Ali preferred to ride in the boxcar up at the front, uncomfortable though it was.

'Let's keep it that way. Slow down if you see soldiers but don't stop unless there's no choice. If you do, make yourself scarce and let these two do the talking.' He nodded at the Turkish firemen.

'Don't fret, old chap. I know what I'm doing.'

'Sorry. Used to having to think of every little thing with the Arabs. You know how it is.'

'Hmm.'

They stood together for a while without speaking, watching the rusty landscape roll by and listening to the music of the clattering pistons and chugging steam. If he closed his eyes Lawrence could almost imagine he was back in England, making the run down from Oxford to London.

The Doctor broke the silence. 'What is it you're hoping to find in Mada'in Saleh, Major Lawrence?'

'Find?' The question had wrongfooted him but he wasn't about to show it. 'What makes you think I'm out to find anything?'

'You hardly expect me to believe you'd drop everything and risk your men just to help me, do you?'

'Why not? We English have to stick together, you know.'

The Doctor wasn't taken in by the glib remark. His withering expression said all it needed to.

'There's a British subject working for the Turks who tried to have me killed. Is it so unusual that I'd want to know why and to put a stop to whatever he's scheming?'

The Doctor raise an eyebrow. 'I never said the Master was British.'

'Isn't he?'

'As much as I am.'

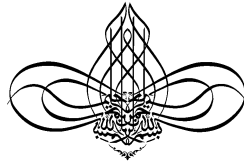
The remark was accompanied by an enigmatic half-smile. Lawrence waited for the Doctor to expand on it, but he did not.

Fine. Let him have his secrets. Everything would come out in the wash.

'I'm going to have a chat with Captain Quinn. I might need your help with him later, if you can tear yourself away from the locomotive for a few minutes.'

'Mm?' The Doctor had already stopped listening.

'Keep an eye on him,' Lawrence muttered to one of the firemen, and made his way back to the boxcar.



Considering he was standing on a grassy lawn in the middle of the desert, his own middle-aged self keeping a wary watch on him, Abdul-Malik wondered how he could find it in himself to be amazed at anything, but what the Master had done was simply unfathomable. With a lazy flick of his wrist he'd summoned a djinni out of thin air – or whatever it was; it didn't look much like the image he'd had of them from his grandfather's stories, and besides, he didn't believe in primitive superstitions like that. The thing had blurred and shifted and suddenly it was as if a window had opened in the air. They were looking at the image of Aurens' train rattling along the tracks, utterly three-dimensional, in colours as vivid as life and so real he half expected to choke on the plume of smoke that rose from its funnel. Was this what cine-film was like? No, surely not: Jo looked almost as astonished as he felt and she would surely have seen motion pictures before.

The djinni even relayed sound – relayed, because Abdul-Malik had no doubt they were spying on scenes taking place at that very moment elsewhere. The Master seemed amused and unconcerned as he eavesdropped on Lawrence and the Doctor making their plans to attack Mada'in Saleh. He chuckled out loud at the sight of the Doctor in his train-driver outfit.

'He always did want to be an engine-driver,' he remarked, almost nostalgically.

'And what did you want to be?' Jo retorted.

For that brief moment, the Master tore his eyes away from the unfolding images. He had a strange look in his eyes, and Abdul-Malik waited for his answer.

The moment passed. The Master gave a wry half-smile, a minute shake of his head, and returned to his spying.

There had been something there, though. A hint of vulnerability.

Abdul-Malik glanced at his older counterpart, wondering if he'd noticed, but the old man was impassive. His fingers were brushing absently against the handle of the pistol that was stuffed through his waistband.

*Why are you doing it?* he wanted to shout. *Why have you thrown in your lot with this ally of the Turks?*

*Why have you thrown in yours with this ally of the British?* he imagined the reply coming back.

He was worried about Najid too. He had been uncharacteristically quiet since he'd come round. At first it had evidently been shock and confusion – Abdul-Malik was hardly in a position to cast stones on that front – but he was evidently well in control of his senses now. And yet still he said nothing. While everyone else was watching the images the djinni

showed them, Najid was watching them. He was assessing, weighing up options and biding his time to make some move. *Ya allah, don't let him do anything rash.*

'Did you come all the way out here just to spy on the Doctor?' Jo asked the Master. 'You're not telling me you couldn't have done this at home?'

'Believe it or believe it not, Miss Grant, I came here to save your life. Riding out into the desert with strange men and no supplies... really! I know logistical planning is hardly your speciality but I thought the Doctor had trained you better than that!'

'The Doctor hasn't "trained" me.'

He just smiled indulgently.

'You can drop the charm act. You don't care one bit for anyone except yourself! The only reason you'd save our lives is if you need us alive for something.'

'Miss Grant, you wound me. After all our little encounters... all those times our paths just *happened* to cross. Do you really believe I haven't grown the least bit fond of you?'

She didn't; that much was obvious from her face.

The Master feigned hurt. 'No matter.' His voice suddenly grew serious. 'As it happens, you're right. I do have a use for you and your friends here. Or one of them, anyway.'

He sneered at Najid and pulled a Luger from inside his suit.

'No!' Jo threw herself at him, grabbing for the gun. Abdul-Malik's older doppelgänger moved too, lunging for her, but Najid sprang at him.

The Master flung Jo aside; she sprawled on the grass. Najid was wrestling with the older Abdul-Malik, the two middle-aged men scrapping like a pair of mangy old cats. The Master hauled them roughly apart. Najid overbalanced and went down. The Master pointed his gun at him.

Abdul-Malik swung a punch and the shot went wide. One of the camels snorted and groaned with fright.

'You little fool!' the Master hissed. The silken suaveness was gone from his voice; only contemptuous rage remained. He wiped a bead of blood from a split lip and lashed out, knocking Abdul-Malik to his knees with an effortless chop of his arm. Abdul-Malik expected the shot any second. Would he hear it before it blew apart his brain?

It didn't come.

Instead his older self reached in to drag him away from the Master. This, more than anything seemed to frighten the Englishman.

'Don't touch him!' he all but shrieked.

The old Abdul-Malik recoiled. The young recovered from his daze enough to scabble a few feet back away from them.

'I warned you,' the Master shouted at his henchman. 'Under no circumstances can you two touch!'

'But he tried to...'

'The matter's in hand. Your meddling could have spoiled everything.'

With visible effort the Master calmed himself, straightening his jacket and adjusting his cuffs. A moment later he was the calm, assured gentleman he had seemed before. But for a moment the mask had slipped. No wonder Jo was so untrusting of him.



Abdul-Malik looked to his older self for any sign that the glimpse of his master's temper had affected him. His face was impossible to read. Unsurprisingly, he supposed, since it was the one he should never have had to.

The Master cocked his Luger and drew it up to point at Najid a second time. There was nothing he could do this time. He was too far away from the Master to hit him before he could fire. Jo and Abdul-Malik were both still sprawled on the grass.

'If you hurt him, we won't help you!' Jo shouted in desperation.

'Will you help me if I don't? I've listened to your noble protestations too many times, Miss Grant. Unfortunately for your friend here, I've come to believe them. You have no intention of helping me, whether I let your friend live or put him down like the flea-bitten dog he is. You'd rather die.'

'I...'

Jo's shoulders sagged. The Master chuckled appreciatively. To Abdul-Malik's surprise, he slipped on the safety-catch and returned the weapon to his pocket. 'It is, however, academic, since your co-operation is entirely unnecessary. In fact, Miss Grant, you are a side-show to my plans at best. It's your young colleague here who interests me.'

'Me?' Abdul-Malik stammered. *Who am I? I'm just a kid from Wejh. My father's a poor man, my grandfather talks too much and my mother is a terrible cook. I'm nobody special!*

'You. And I suggest you do as you are told. As I say, I don't require you to take part in what I have planned willingly. But it will be a damned sight less hassle for everyone involved if you do. Believe me, I will shoot your friend without compunction at the first sign of obstruction from you. Tell him, Miss Grant.'

She sighed and nodded. 'He'll do it. He's killed hundreds of people.'

'Indeed,' the Master said appreciatively. 'At the second sign of trouble I'll shoot Jo.'

Abdul-Malik nodded meekly. 'I'll do what you say.'

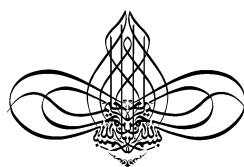
'Splendid.'

'Whatever you've got planned,' Jo protested, 'the Doctor will stop it! You know he will.'

'I'm sure he'll give it his very best try. Thank you for reminding me.' The Master turned back to the floating djinni and the moving image of the train. He closed his eyes for a moment and two more djinn coalesced out of the air before him. He stared at them, those dark, commanding eyes of his almost burning. Not a word passed his lips, but Abdul-Malik clearly sensed that he was imparting instructions to them in some way. This was a person, after all, who could possess a man's mind – and not just any man, but an English officer. Who could say what he was capable of?

The djinn shimmered, then whirled and shot away through the air.

'A little welcoming gift for the Doctor,' the Master told Jo. 'On yer feet. It's time we were getting back.'



They had just passed the small Ottoman fort at Khism Sana'a without incident when the Doctor summoned Lawrence back out to the locomotive.

'Are you ready to speak to Quinn?' Lawrence asked. 'I've tried but the man's bloody useless. Says he doesn't remember a blasted thing. I'm sure if you put the 'fluence on him...'

The Doctor pointed skywards. 'Do you see that?'

Lawrence shielded his eyes and squinted into the glare. 'I don't see anything. What am I looking for? Aeroplanes?'

'Not quite. More a small mobile visual anomaly caused by some sort of entity slightly out of phase with local space-time.'

'Right. And that looks like...'

'Like a mirage, Major Lawrence. A living mirage.'

Now that his eyes were adjusting to the brightness, perhaps he could see something. A pair of shimmering trails high up but keeping pace with the train. Uncanny. Quite uncanny.

'Djinn,' opined one of the Turkish firemen.

'There's no such thing.'

The Doctor grimaced. He asked in English, 'What do you know about djinn, Lawrence?'

'Arab spirits and lesser angels. Pre-Islamic but the Qur'an incorporated them into Mohammedan belief. Creatures of magic and smokeless fire. There's hundreds of superstitions and myths about them – the *Thousand and One Nights* are full of them. The Bedu blame them for every mishap that ever befalls us. They're bogeymen; spooks. Primitive legends to frighten the kids. Ibn Tamiyyah called them "ignorant, untruthful, oppressive and treacherous".'

'Not your common-or-garden wish-granting panto stars.'

'They're like faeries or goblins, Doctor. They don't exist.'

'Yes, well if you'd met as many faeries and goblins as I have you might be inclined to reconsider that position.'

'It's some sort of freak meteorological phenomenon,' Lawrence insisted. 'The heat...'

'It's the Master. He knows we're coming.'

'But how?'

'It doesn't matter how!' the Doctor snapped. 'But you'd best make sure your men are ready for a fight. Somehow I doubt we're going to have the element of surprise when we arrive in Mada'in Saleh.'

'I'll make sure they're prepared.'

'Thank you.' The Doctor glanced skywards once more. 'They're getting closer, wouldn't you say?'

Lawrence watched them for a moment before venturing a reply. 'Hard to be sure – they're like water or smoke, changing shape all the time. I'm not certain if they're getting closer or growing larger.'

'Oh, both, I should think.'

He adjusted some settings on his 'sonic screwdriver' and aimed it at the phenomena. That piercing, high-pitched shriek rang out. It made Lawrence's ears ache.

The effect on the djinn – or whatever they were – was instantaneous. They seemed to pause in mid-air, their protean shifts suddenly becoming a violent thrashing. The Doctor shifted a slider on the screwdriver and the pitch changed. There was an audible hiss from the djinn, as if with fury and pain. They gathered themselves into narrow javelin-forms and hurled themselves down towards the locomotive.

‘I’m not sure that was the effect I was hoping for!’ Lawrence shouted as one of the entities streaked past his face. He felt a surge of dry, scorching heat, as if his trailing robes, whipped and tugged by the being’s slipstream, should be scorched and smouldering.

‘*Ifritler!*’ shrieked one of the firemen. ‘*Bunlar yangın ifritler sensin!*’

‘Certainly elementals of some kind.’ The Doctor sounded more fascinated than alarmed. ‘Probably at least partly artificial in origin. I wonder where they come from.’

‘I’m rather more concerned with what they’re doing, right now,’ Lawrence retorted. The two djinn spiralled along the locomotive’s boiler, blistering the paintwork where they passed, and vanishing into the steam plume.

‘They’re making for the funnel!’

It was too late. There was a flash of unearthly light from the mouth of the funnel. The locomotive gave a violent shudder, then nothing.

‘Is it over?’

The Doctor held up a finger. *Patience.*

One of the firemen noticed something, began tapping at a dial. The second picked up on his anxiety. The pair started chattering fearfully between themselves in Turkish, faster than Lawrence’s ability to follow.

‘We’re picking up speed,’ the Doctor observed. He sounded singularly unsurprised.

One of the Turks reached to open the firebox door to look inside.

‘I wouldn’t do that if I were – ’

The Doctor got no further. The instant it was unlatched the door flew violently open. A blast of energy rushed from within. Not just heat; nor flame, but something unworldly that was beyond Lawrence’s ability to put into words. The unfortunate Turk seemed rooted to the spot, his eyes wide with terror. He let out the kind of scream that haunts nightmares.

His skin was changing.

Not burning, not charring, but reconstructing itself into something new. Something dry, papery and dead.

It was over in a second. The Doctor slammed the door shut and jammed it in place with the coal shovel. The fireman toppled back on to the footplate, a desiccated and lifeless husk.

‘Jesus Christ!’ Lawrence breathed. The remaining Turk was whispering desperate pleas to his own god.

Still the train was gathering pace. The desert scenery was going past in a blur. They were in the highlands now, cutting through lofty defiles in the rust-coloured sandstone. Mada’in Saleh was near at hand.

Sharif Ali appeared at the doorway of the boxcar, having evidently noticed that something was wrong. He shouted something across the tender at Lawrence, but the words were lost beneath the insane rattling of the pistons and wheels.

‘Get the men ready!’ Lawrence yelled back. ‘We need to be ready to fight!’

The Doctor shoved the useless Turk out of the way and began working the train's controls like a man possessed. Lawrence stood by, helpless. Whoever would have guessed these locomotives could be so complicated? Valves were opened and shut. Levers yanked. He even reached up and blew a long, loud blast on the engine's whistle, for all the good it would do.

'Can you stop it?' asked Lawrence.

The Doctor gave no reply.

The locomotive's speed only increased.

