

22

Now, as strange as it seems to me, I think I dozed off again. I do not think, to this day, that I passed out.

The pain in my calf was just excruciating, not actually unbearable. And it seemed to diminish to bearable, much as though you'd jerked your hand away from a red-hot element that would, however, leave a nasty burn welt. Cool water had filled my shoes. On the other hand, in spite of my previous adventures, I'd never actually been shot before. So, perhaps I did pass out from some sort of shock. I know only that I went right back into that dream of mountains and Aldeberan. And it could not have been for all that long.

I awakened quite suddenly, and saw Mariko very clearly bending over my legs. She had turned the searchlight on, but we were in the shadows of *Jester's* hull. The light glimmered on her cheek. I noticed that Aldeberan had not moved much. I casually flexed the knee of my good leg up, feeling my right heel gouge a little furrow in the sand as I did. The sand felt more intimate than against the padded heels of the Nikes, so I glanced at my knee and saw, with some surprise, that it was bare. I met Mariko's eyes because she had turned toward me at my abrupt movement.

"Keep still," she said, and smiled. I knew *that* because faint light glittered off very white teeth. I felt tugging on my left calf, and it occurred to me to wonder why there was no pain until my eyes flicked around and saw the white box, also glimmering in the assorted starlight and aided considerably by the glow bouncing off *Jester's* interior white hull. That explained it. She had used an ampoule of Novocaine. Maybe more. The tugging became insistent, and I saw her dextrous hand pull a ribbon of Elastoplast tight while the other hand, just as dextrously, snipped it with a click of scissors. She returned the scissors and tape to the box. She rummaged around.

The Magdalene Mandala

“You have a well-stocked First Aid kit,” she said, brandishing a condom.

“How do you know how to use it?”

“I read labels and instructions.”

“Hmmm.” I put my hands behind my head. I truly felt very good. I watched her tidy up the contents of the box. She looked around on the sand and even added the spent Novocaine ampoule. So, there was no urgency. There was no panic.

“How much of the second banana clip did you... use?” I asked.

“All of it,” she answered, veddy casually.

“I see,” I said. At point blank range, from *Jester*’s lowered ramp? Dear, sweet God. Well, I could think of nothing more productive to do than close my eyes for a moment, trying to forget about that carnage, but, of course imaging it all the more vividly. So, I gave that up and opened my eyes again. It suddenly came to me how cold, diamond-like and distant those Pyrenees stars looked. I must have still been somewhat dozy because it came to me only then that I was more than a little cold, and that I was shivering. The reason for this, and that came to me rather slowly, too, was that I had nothing on except the flannel shirt. I glanced down at myself to verify this, discovering that it was true.

I saw, also, that I had a more than substantial erection, given the rather incongruous circumstances. Or, I thought it was incongruous, because at that moment Mariko snicked the First Aid box closed, and clicked its clamps shut at the same time with deft and definite co-operation of both hands. She turned to find me looking at myself. As she gazed at me, I began to feel my erection, too. Tissue stretched more tightly than many times before, and a heavy throbbing that not only rocked my penis gently above my abdomen, but argued, I noted, no damage to my cardio-vascular system. My brain registered, too, testicles weighing hot and heavy, swollen, in the valley of my uneven thighs.

The Magdalene Mandala

Mariko looked at me, and her eyes crinkled mischievously at my suddenly embarrassed expression. She smiled. Slowly. “A perfectly normal reaction, Mister Rennsalaer”, she said, but not quite clinically. “After excitement and stimulation, particularly after a potentially life-threatening experience, and especially after one combined with painful physical trauma, males nearly always react sexually. And they do so acutely just before the moment of death... even quite aged males... decades older than you,” she finished.

In my still dozy state, now combined with the pleasant embarrassment of her looking at me, I wasn't quite sure whether she was giving me good news or bad news. “El momento de la verdad,” I said. My tongue generally murdered Spanish less brutally than it bludgeoned French.

She giggled, giving me the information that was intriguing me. Part of it. The rest followed clinically. “Not likely, Mister Rennsalaer, in at least *one* sense in which the Spanish use that term.” She paused. Gee, it was great to be involved with a linguist... “No mortidad,” she said. “Just a bit of inside calf muscle torn through and, I suppose, *away*, if you understand.”

“I think I have it.”

“No tib or fib trauma... breaks...”

“Got it. How do you know this stuff?”

“My roomy at Armagh was in medicine. I helped her quiz for exams... No pulsating bleeding indicative of a traumatised femoral artery, although it *does* bifurcate below the knee – I just forget the names of them then.”

“I see,” I said.

“And no loss of pulse, or blood-pressure due to shock,” she said.

“How do you know that?”

She smiled slowly again. She nodded toward my throbbing penis, and cocked an eyebrow. “That seems obvious from that indicator there.”

Rather surprisingly, though, she stood up. But, even more surprisingly, this was only because it was easier for her to

The Magdalene Mandala

peel the horizontally-striped Jersey over her head. Rather full, but not actually *Rubenesque*, upturned and pleasantly peaked breasts jiggled ever so briefly in the light's reflection. I had expected... imagined?... I had not had much time for such speculations, but they somehow had wriggled through on occasion, darker Oriental nipples. Perhaps suffused with pink and red epidermal embers in excitement.

What jiggled as she flung the jersey away were large gilded aureols, squeezed into spun gold whorls by the pressure of arousal, and surmounted with finger-thick cylinders of pure, rich gold. These might have held low and sputtering small candles, for, so far as I could tell, the golden skin glowed from within.

Being naked with any woman for the first time has always caused me much embarrassment.

I have almost no natural male body hair below my neck, a genetic condition called, I believe, localised alopecia. Thank God, the condition did not affect my head hair, although I have always had a light beard. However, many women seemed to like my 'young boy' look and, I suppose I had large testicles suspended in a hairless and pendant scrotum. I don't believe that my penis was overly long for my height, but it was apparently thicker than most penises and women could see it without the usual obscuration of pubic hair. When they got used to the effect, most women liked it. Several with artistic ability had asked me to pose nude.

My throbbing increased, and she could see that. She smiled, and posed in the starlight, for just an instant. "What is seldom mentioned," she continued almost clinically, although the professional rendition was becoming somewhat disrupted by irregular breathing, "is that females after trauma experience analogous reactions. Swollen nipples..." She paused in the starlight.

"I got it," I said.

"... and an... exfoliation... of... of... lubrication from..." The pauses were caused mostly by her shucking of the Jordache jeans. The jeans were followed by blue nylon

The Magdalene Mandala

briefs, showing that she had appreciated the multi-coloured briefs discreetly left for her only two... or three?... days previously. She swayed toward me, hips canting with every step, in the soft sand. “And rhythmic contractions of various internal organs...” Orientals are the most glabrous, to use a scientific term, of all existing human ‘racial’ types. Mariko had no pubic hair, merely a deep... *deep*... cleft in a soft-fuzzed mound, like a particularly juicy peach. The moisture content could not reasonably be doubted because even in the shadows there was enough illumination to show that her thighs glistened.

She stood over me and turned slowly one way and then the other so that I could get a good look. She raised her elbows as she put her hands behind her neck and arched her back so that her ribs stretched under taut flesh and her breasts quivered heavily.

“Damn!” She’d discovered the ponytail. She must have removed the elastic because her hair soon fell past her shoulders. She shook it into place. “Let’s try that again,” she said.

So, she turned and stretched upward again, but this time she looked down demurely with closed eyes, turned her head slightly to hide one downcast eye behind the fringe of hair and bit her lip in a superb exhibition of helpless, apprehensive vulnerability. She reminded me of merchandise I once almost bought at a slave auction in Somalia.

She knelt slowly beside me, holding her hands back as long as she could. Then she shifted next to me and rolled the condom on. She had obviously been undoing more than her ponytail. She straddled me, folding her long legs so that her knees were snuggled against the sides of my chest, and squeezing. I saw just how long those legs were.

“Be gentle with me, Mariko,” I said, “I’m injured...”

She giggled.

With a confident hand, she manipulated the swollen and pulsing head of my penis to the right place. Like an artist, she lowered herself slowly, very slowly, so that I felt all the

The Magdalene Mandala

sensation of her peach-lips parting. Reluctantly, so it seemed to me. And I felt strongly, naughtily and deliciously invasive.

“El momento de la verdad,” she whispered. The moment of truth, as the Spaniards say, when the brave bull is about to be skewered by the stiff and rigid matador. Of course, to do this, the matador must enter the deadly circle of the horns.

I found the entrance closed against me. She applied the pressure of her body and, slowly, reluctantly it seemed to me, the soft and moist gates into her parted to the throbbing and eager invader. She shoved down, a little push, and the distended, swollen fore guard penetrated the outer defences. She sobbed, and wriggled, and she thrust her hips backward, thrusting her breasts forward at the same time, until I could reach up to grasp, and pull them to my mouth, and suck the nipples into swollen pacifiers.

She never surrendered. With muscle discipline within her, the invader fought for every single millimetre of moist conquest. Occasionally, Mariko counter-attacked with determined muscle closure on the way up into her. And she did it superbly. Her interior muscles were so strong, and so responsive to her will, that she might well have actually been able to squeeze me out of her. But of course, she never intended that. It was a see-saw contest scripted for her to lose, but not before her resistance had subjected the invader to the maximum possible stimulation. And herself.

At times, I became so eager to have her, and just to get release from the unbearable sensations, that I grasped her hips with my hands and tried to force her down on me to get it over with. She was by now sweaty, and slippery, and she would twist her hips suddenly so that my fingers slipped from her curves and, instead, gouged smooth furrows in her thighs as she would rise up and away. This started the moist, frantic internal battle all over again. And, in addition, sweetened it with visual stimulus. For, with her knees flexed so that she hovered above me, I saw that her interior struggles undulated her golden abdomen, from her navel to

The Magdalene Mandala

that clefted peach, in waves of helpless response. And, as she clamped her hands over mine, to force my hands from her swollen flesh rising between my fingers, and the furrowed flesh dimpling beneath them, her arm and chest muscles tightened with effort, letting her breasts sway and dance heavily.

By the time the fore guard reached her final citadel, at *exactly* the time that my unbearably throbbing penis snuggled into the dimple of her cervix, I exploded. The searing heat of me caused a sudden capitulation, and it was a shudder that caused Mariko's writhing torso to pull away, her breasts briefly heaving frantically in the glimmer, before she bent back to me and bury her hot molten-gold candlesticks in my chest. And I had thought that those candles had guttered.

I held her until her shuddering stopped, and until I felt my invader contracting and receding from a citadel that had been stormed and conquered, yes, but had somehow absorbed and nullified the invader.

After a while, she sat back and smiled. "Pretty good jig-jig, heya GI Joe...?" she said, and giggled. Linguists. Women.

"Your... er... mentor must have been in pretty good shape, Mariko O'Shaugnessey."

"I never did that with him," she responded. "He wouldn't have liked it." She paused and smiled. "*That* I discovered myself."

"I'm honoured that you decided to share it."

She rolled moistly from me and sucked my now inadequate and much more tentative penis from her. I noticed that Aldeberan was blazing less fiercely. Knowing astronomy, I did not chalk this up to the lesser amounts of helium being transformed into hydrogen in the few minutes we'd been on the sand, but to the advent of dawn. "What time is it, Mariko?" I asked.

She glanced at her watch, which was drowned and useless, but which she had retained. The only thing she had

The Magdalene Mandala

retained. Her memory conjured up continual digital reminders from the Toshiba's screen. "I guess," she said, "about three-thirty." She yawned.

They say that a man's work is from sun to sun, but a woman's work is never done. She had had a full day of domestic chores. Making breakfast for a strange man on a strange boat. Surviving an explosion and thinking she'd been locked down in a sinking boat. Downloading all that stuff from the computer. Finding out that she was most probably being hunted by a neo-Nazi organization for reasons unknown, with the possible assistance of the Vatican and even the Israeli Mossad. Shooting down an attack helicopter with cannons. Blasting two thugs to mincemeat with her AR-15. Playing Florence Nightingale with my leg. Raping me. Well, I could see with my discerning eye that this O'Shaugnessey rose was wilting.

My knowledge of women, little good though it appeared to be most of the time, had at least impressed one absolute datum on my mind: After orgasm, and Mariko had arranged that, women invariably *go to sleep*. Men may be restless, preoccupied with intimations of mortality whispered by 'la petite mort', but women will snore.

She yawned again. And I could see a droop from her eyelids that had no relation to epicanthic characteristics. She was kneeling sidesaddle in the sand, supporting herself with a braced, straight arm. Her chin dropped, and her breasts drooped – one exhausted and dissipated geisha.

She was absolutely gorgeous. I reluctantly stopped looking at her, and rolled over onto my knees. This caused me to remember the injury my left calf had sustained, and I waited for the pain but it didn't come. Great! I bounced to my feet, or at least my genitals did, and Mariko giggled again. She was getting giddy. I felt very, very good except for one small emotional corner of dissatisfaction. An unfulfilled yearning. No, urgent necessity. I wanted to rape her in retaliation.