

Through the Valley of the Shadow of Death by **B Nickerson** {Rated PG-13}

Synopsis: A simple reconnaissance trip turns sour when Jean and Scott are arrested and find themselves suddenly thrown into Turkish prison.

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Note: Story is rated PG-13 for prison theme intensity. "Ahbap" is pronounced "ah-bee" thru out.

It was the Turkish news media that first caught wind of Tau Omega's activities in Cappadocia, bringing it to international attention. Cappadocia was a region famous for its limestone cliffs pocked with cave dwellings that, over its long history, had housed many reclusive communities and was now, apparently, home to a colony of young mutants. Exactly how many mutants or how long they'd been there was unknown, but what was known was it was a place they'd been living peacefully and perfectly unseen by multitudes of tourists until eighteen months ago, when they suddenly began assaulting and frightening visitors. Turkish officials tried catching them, even resorting to tear-gas that was merely blown back over their own men, but to no avail. So, since the Turkish government feared more aggressive military action might damage the tourist value of the caves, they simply ordered the valley closed to tourists and evacuated the region for public safety. Then, as soon as Tau Omega announced its specialized service, they immediately appealed for help. All this according to Tau's spokesman, Marti Rhyne, who, in a filmed interview, stated his company was accepting Turkey's case. "These particular mutants have made themselves a hazard to the general public good," Rhyne announced, "but they will not be harmed, just removed." He then ended the interview without explaining either how it would be done or where the mutants would be taken.

Disturbed, Xavier turned off the TV and prepared for bed. He'd been aware of that smattering of mutant minds for quite some time, but had always considered them generally all right in their secluded location. He wondered what had occurred to stir them into violence? Worse, what was Tau Omega going to do with them and what did "remove" really mean? He met his own eyes in the bathroom mirror. "We will have to watch this very carefully," he told his reflection.

The next afternoon, as Jean was on her way to the hidden elevator to retrieve Rogue's lunch tray, she observed a sudden flash of motion outside and paused at a window to see what it was. The lawn was a snowy wonderland, every shrub and tree frosted thickly with snow and out there, pummeling each other with snowballs, was Logan and Andi. Jean smiled as she drew closer to the tall window, faintly able to hear their laughter. She watched Logan catch Andi by the waist, swing her around and fall joyously with her into the snow, where they rolled around, tussling playfully. Jean smiled even more, leaning there against the glass, watching those two free-spirit's playing in the snow. Forgotten memories of Logan kissing her hand and confessing his romantic interest suddenly drifted into her thoughts. He'd cut her off as soon as she tried to tell him why it wouldn't work out. Now she idly wondered about what might've been, what if she'd given in to his magnetism? Would she be the one there with Logan now, instead of Andi? She laughed as Andi suddenly smashed snow into Logan's face, then tried to run, only to be caught and dragged back squealing and giggling to have snow rubbed in her face in return. Jean chided herself for even considering such a thing, then held her breath as she watched Logan gently brush snow from Andi's face and kiss her tenderly. She watched, engrossed in this passion play, her breath forming a misty circle on the window pane. Suddenly, Andi bashed Logan with a handful of snow and, escaping, dashed around the corner out of sight with him tearing after her in hot pursuit. Disappointed it was over, Jean drew back and turned to resume her course downstairs only to find Scott standing directly behind her, his hands clasped behind him. She gasped in surprise, then lightly slapped his arm, both angry and guilty to realize he'd been behind her the entire time she was reminiscing about Logan. "Don't sneak up on me like that!" she snapped, conscious she'd never told him about that little flirtation in the lab after the Statue of Liberty incident, though she didn't know to this day whether that had been for his protection or her own.

Scott smirked even as his hand flew to rub the sting. "Ow. I *wasn't* sneaking."

"Then what were you doing?"

He indicated the window. "Spying---just like you."

"I *wasn't spying!*" She could tell by the curl of his smile he was just giving her a hard time. "I was just watching. It was cute." She resumed her course to the elevator, high-heels clicking rhythmically on the wood floor as he fell in beside her.

"I'd would tell him that to his face," he quipped, making a rapid slashing motion across the neck. She laughed.

At the elevator, Scott flipped open the panel, tapped in the code, and when the elevator door opened, Jean turned a coy look on him. "Well, were you planning on coming or just sneaking around up here?"

"Ohhh, I thought I'd just sneak around awhile."

She offered her lips for a peck, but Scott impulsively blocked the door from closing for a better kiss before letting her go on her way, leaving her alone in the elevator to think pleasantly of all she liked about her handsome husband, satisfied she had, indeed, made the right choice.

Down in the lab, she paused first to check her guinea pigs. Most were curled in fat, sleeping balls amongst the fragrant cedar chips, their food and water ample. Satisfied, she walked through Rogue's open door. Her room was functionally furnished now, with a lamp on an end-table, a three-drawer dresser for clothes, a CD player, TV and DVD player, and a card table with four chairs for company, though, right now, no one visited but herself, the Professor, Andi or Storm. Jack, Logan and Scott, aside from helping decorate the place, still kept themselves scarce. "*Cowards*," she thought, then sympathetically studied Rogue's sleeping form, curled up under a blanket, facing the wall. It was tough on her and, though cooperative, Rogue still wasn't speaking at all. Jean quietly collected her dinner tray, haunted by her trips into the girl's mind. Some might imagine reading minds as fun, but it wasn't. Human minds were as cluttered as junk shops full of memorabilia, littered with memories, wishes, dreams, hurts, sexual fantasies and imaginings of all sorts floating about in disarray making it very difficult to discern fact from fiction. Thus, the primary danger to a telepath was either becoming lost or losing identity, which she still struggled with. While probing Rogue's mind with the Professor, sorting out Elsie's memories, she had often felt Charles protecting her as they worked, steering her away from clutter and sensitively trying to protect some of Rogue's privacy as well. She didn't know how he managed so well, but Charles Xavier was an amazing man, a man who'd been like a father to her since she'd been eleven. Now she was twenty-nine. "*Has it been so long?*" she wondered as she returned upstairs.

By the end of the week, she and Charles had finished isolating and removing Elsie's memories, but Rogue wasn't out of the woods yet. She still had many issues about herself and her part in Elsie's death to resolve as well as Elsie's superior strength to cope with. Charles never erased anyone's troubles entirely. He believed everyone's life experiences made them who they were. "It's how we grow," he often said, which was a philosophy she agreed with, though how much was yet to be tested.

Early Wednesday morning, several days later, Xavier's personal phone rang. He picked it up and wasn't surprised to hear Fred Duncan's voice. "Good grief, Charles," Fred exclaimed. "There were two bodies!"

Xavier feigned surprise. "Oh?"

"Yeah. A teenage girl the police ID'ed at the crime scene and Dr. Pierian resting quietly in her back yard wrapped in garbage bags."

"How long has she been dead?"

"The M.E. says six months---give or take a couple weeks."

That told Xavier Mystique hadn't been Dr. Pierian very long before Rogue arrived.

"Too bad about Lehnsherr," Fred said, changing the subject.

Xavier was both at a loss and concerned for his old friend. "What about him? What's happened?"

"Don't you watch the news?"

Xavier searched his mind. He'd watched elections. Bob Gilman had won the presidency and he'd been closely

watching events in Turkey. Cappadocia was, of course, crawling with news people from all over the world, but Turkish soldier's maintained a strict perimeter and no helicopters were allowed over the camp. He gave up. "I guess you'll have to tell me, Fred."

"You mean I know something you don't for a change?"

Xavier detected gloating in Duncan's voice. "Apparently. What's happened?"

"Lehnscherr's in the Caribbean on St. Maurice. Got in cahoots somehow with the guy who just took over the government and took over as dictator. He's some kind of Minister of State or some such thing now."

Xavier was speechless with surprise.

"I can't believe I knew something you didn't," Fred repeated. "Sorry, old man."

Xavier finally recovered. "He's out of your jurisdiction then?"

"Technically not, but I've been ordered to leave well enough alone. Call it being out of our hair."

"Hmmm," was all Xavier replied.

"He's on an island, for Pete's sake, Charles. What can he do? Maybe you should leave well enough alone, too. Let him have the dang island!"

"Well, thanks for the information, Fred," Xavier replied, "and the advice."

"Sure, sure." When there was no reply, Fred finally drawled, "Okay, Charles, you keep in touch, hear, and don't do anything stupid." He hung up.

Xavier meditatively returned the phone to its charger, certain Magneto's primary goal of making the world safe for homo-superior hadn't changed. "*What can he do, indeed?*" he muttered, then checked his watch. It was six-thirty. He decided to hum down to the cafeteria to eat breakfast with his staff and inform them of Magneto's new whereabouts.

Meanwhile, in the Caribbean, Hypno peeked into Mystique's office, just outside Legrono's, where she was obviously busy re-organizing cabinet files. Still posing as the elegant Madame Ferre, though now in military drab, with her long dark hair tucked up under a military cap. She was acting as President Legrono's "*secretary.*"

Magneto and Hypno had Legrono programmed to work in his office, standing periodically to look out the window so people outside might see their leader and had given him certain set responses to reply to phone calls or visitors such as, "Give it to my secretary." Magneto's spacious office as Minister of State Affairs, as he was now know, was just down the hall.

Hypno watched Mystique admiringly several moments, sighing in unrequited love. Always eyes and ears, he had already recognized Magneto as a demanding and impatient man with a furious temper. He had already blamed Mystique for giving him this island full of difficulties and so had banished her from his bed since the coup. Hypno hated how Magneto treated her and couldn't understand why she put up with it. Entering her office, the sound of his footsteps made her turn. She spared him only the briefest glance before looking back at her files.

"What do you want?" she snapped ill-humoredly.

From behind his back, Hypno drew out an old coke bottle filled with water into which he'd stuck a purple-throated orchid he'd picked and set it on her desk. He wanted nothing more than to treat her more kindly than Magneto. "I thought the place could use brightening up," he said, then smiled, turned on his heel and left.

Only after he was gone did Mystique close the file-folder she was pretending so much interest in and go to her desk. She touched the delicate, waxy petals of the orchid, unable to resist a faint smile of pleasure. Hypno was surprised the next day to glimpse the flower still on her desk, having expected it to be flung out a window and, delighted, made sure a fresh orchid was in it everyday. She never said a word to him about it nor he to her, but the fact she kept it was encouragement enough.

After Fred Duncan's notification of Magneto's whereabouts, Xavier, of course, made himself and his staff expert's on St. Maurice. The island population, once four-hundred thousand, had dropped to less than two-hundred thousand since its independence and resulting governmental instability. Certainly the tourist trade had disappeared,

cruise lines shunned it and its exports had been reduced to a poor grade of sugar and rum. They developed a full profile on General Legrono, a notably ambitious and egotistical man, and because it seemed contradictory that he granted Magneto such a powerful office, Xavier ordered Airwolf on a general recon mission.

At four a.m. Logan groaned out of bed and came in with Andi, since he needed to fire up the tractor and plow the thick layer of snow off basketball court above the hanger, while she prepped Airwolf. Since Kitty Pryde was in training for the engineering position, she rode in the jump-seat beside Andi as a student-observer and, when Logan arrived with a thumbs-up, Jack tapped the hanger open, then whispered into the snowy night. When they neared St. Maurice, Jack ordered silent-mode, then swung down over the sleeping capitol city. Andi ran a full surveillance treatment, paying special attention to the presidential residence, its environs and the islands single military air base.

"Look's like about twenty-five Mirage fighters," Andi reported about the base, "and two or three old Huey choppers--thermals are all cold."

"Roger," Jack replied. "We'll give the rest of the island a fast swept, then we're outta here."

"Roger," Andi answered.

They were back just before sunrise. Kitty immediately went upstairs and threw herself on her bed, while Jack headed for the dining hall and Andi looked for Logan. She followed her sense of him to the small TV room, where he was sound asleep on the sofa. "Logan?" she called. He didn't stir. She peeled off her bomber-jacket and tossed it on his chest, making him jerk awake. "Logan!" she repeated.

He squinted first at her then at the jacket on his chest. "Subtle," he grumbled.

Resting her palms on the sofa back, she leaned ever so slightly forward, peering down on him. "What do you want to do? Go home or stay around for breakfast?"

Logan stretched full length, arms over head, making joints crack and pop. "What time is it?"

"Just after six."

He made a partial motion to sit up, then grabbed her, pulling her playfully over the sofa and down on top of him. "What's the rush?"

"You have a one-track mind," Andi laughed.

"So, shoot me! I'm still a newlywed."

She let his kisses woo her. "The kids... will... be down...soon," she managed to warn.

"Well, if we go upstairs right now, no one will even notice." He arched a brow at her and, laughing, Andi rolled to her feet and offered him a hand-up, then they quietly dashed upstairs, choosing an isolated room at the far end of the hall.

That night, the news was full of exterior pictures of the mutant internment camp that clever and persistent reporters had finally located on the northern shore of Turkey, where Tau Omega was placing the mutants they were clearing out of Cappadocia. Xavier, in the Rec room along with Scott, Jean and Storm, watched with apprehension. Apparently it was a facility rapidly put-up by Turkish military civil engineers, east of Samsun and north of Carsamba. Its back was like a fort set against the cold Black sea with ten-foot wooden plank walls topped with coils of concertina wire, more coils around its outer circumference and a ring of armed soldiers. A few distance camera shots, shadows really, of alleged mutants being carried in were produced, along with lots of speculation about how they were being controlled or contained and estimates of numbers ranging between a hundred to two hundred. Then, in a statement from Zurich, Marti Ryhne said, "The mutants are only being detained with our assistance until Turkish officials can decide where best to re-locate them," followed by a video of Turkish anti-mutant protesters surrounding Parliament in Ankara demanding the mutants be entirely removed from Turkey.

"They never pay much attention to the other side," Storm observed.

"No ratings in that," Scott snorted.

By the weekend, though, news leaked out that an illness was sweeping the mutant internment camp, and by late Sunday afternoon an entourage of World Health Organization personnel was shown arriving, confirming it. Cameras and questions followed the medical team as they set up their portable headquarters just inside the military

perimeter leaving the frustrated reporters outside it speculating all sorts of theories.

It gave Xavier a bad gut feeling, bad enough to make him decide he had to get someone inside that camp in order to really find out what was going on. With that in mind, he quietly left the small TV room, where he'd been with Jean, Scott and Storm, hummed down to his office and determinedly dialed Ben Weir's home phone. Regardless of his own reluctance to rely on Weir, he didn't have the means to give Jean and Scott the kind of cover they'd need to get in as authorized medical personal and Lei had promised his full availability. Unfortunately, only Weir's answering machine answered, forcing Xavier to have ask Weir to return his call as soon as possible and wait. So, he busied himself with lesson plans and grading papers. Twenty minutes later his phone rang and he heard Ben Weir's cool, professional voice on the other end. "Good evening, Professor. What can I do for you?"

"Have you been watching Tau Omega's actions in Turkey?" Xavier asked.

"I have."

"I want to put two of my people inside that camp with medical cover to investigate. Can you help me?"

"Hmmm, I believe so. Who did you have in mind?"

"Jean and Scott Summers."

"I should have guessed. Have they current passports and shots?"

Xavier had taken them to Germany about three years ago. "Yes."

"Give me their full names." Xavier did so. "Okay," Weir said, "I'll send my jet for them sometime tomorrow. I'll call you early with precise time and location. You just have them ready with passports and research gear in hand and I'll take care of everything else. Will that be satisfactory?"

"Quite," Xavier replied, somewhat taken-aback. It was far more than he'd expected. He'd only thought as far as the ID's and expected sending them by commercial jet, *not* Weir's personal one. "Thank you," he added.

"Right. I'll call you in the morning." Weir hung up.

Xavier returned to the sitting room, where he found Scott alone now, watching sports.

"Scott," he said. Scott muted the TV and gave him his attention. "I just spoke with Mr. Weir." Scott's brows popped above his glasses. "I'm sending you and Jean to Turkey, undercover, to look into that internment camp and he's providing both the cover and his jet."

Scott's lips twisted into an ironic smile. "How'd you get him to do that?"

"He's at our beck and call, remember?"

"So, when do we leave?"

"Sometime tomorrow. Weir will let me know in the morning. You better have Jean get what she needs ready."

Scott hopped up eagerly, passed Xavier the remote and hurried off to find his wife to tell her they were going on a trip. Xavier just smiled after him. Scott and Jean, having been with him the longest, were most like son and daughter to him.

Monday afternoon Jack drove Scott and Jean to Middleburg's small airport where he waited with them until Weir's jet arrived, about four p.m. As soon as it taxied to a stop, Scott and Jean crunched through melting snow out to meet it. Scott carried both their travel bags and Jean carried the medical sample kit. The jets outer door opened and two sharply uniformed pilots hopped down the stairs to greet them, one a short, attractive woman and the other a tall black man, his hair and beard peppered with gray. The woman immediately extended her hand to Scott, "I'm Sam Hamblin, your co-pilot and this," she indicated her companion, "is Max Kendricks, your pilot."

"Scott Summers," he replied, "and my wife, Jean." He shook her hand, thinking nothing of it until she held on a fractional heartbeat longer than normal for a hand shake, her gaze boring brazenly into red-onyx lens a split second before she politely moved on to Jean. Scott observed her while Sam was shaking Jean's hand. Though, too short to be model, she was pretty enough to be one. Nice figure, too. She wore her espresso hair hair bobbed in short layers up the back, but long on either side of her face to her jaw line. Her eyes were the color of milk chocolate with long, thick lashes and her lips were full and glossy with soft pink lipstick.

"I'll stow those bags for you," Max announced, startling his attention back to matters at hand.

"Right," Scott quickly agreed, passing him their three bags, which Max promptly carried around to the jets baggage hold.

Sam indicated the doorway. "After you."

Scott offered his hand to Jean and escorted her inside. Neither had been inside a private jet before and glanced around at the homey layout. The seating area directly in front of them looked something like a living room with a build-in sofa along left wall and two easy-chair like seats facing it across a round coffee table. On the right was a bar and straight ahead, thru an entry way was the galley. They could see a booth like table.

"There are bathrooms fore and aft," Sam said, indicating direction on either side of the galley. From behind them, Max hopped up the steps, closed and sealed the door, then breezed into the galley, turning immediately toward the cockpit.

"Take a seat, please," Sam instructed, pointing at the easy-chairs, "and fasten your seat-belts."

Scott could hear the whine of the turbines starting up as he and Jean settled the lazy-boys seats.

"Everything's pretty standard," Sam explained briefly. "Seat-belts for taking off and landing, flotation devices under your seats, emergency exits side and rear. Once we reach cruising altitude you can walk around and, if you're hungry or thirsty, the galley is self-serve." Sam then picked up a fat manila envelope from the coffee table and passed it to Scott. "Here's your itinerary and identification. You have plenty of time to study it, since we won't put down in Samsun until noon tomorrow. There's a phone number in there. Commit it to memory." Then, smiling, added, "Enjoy the flight," and left them for the cockpit.

Scott didn't let himself take a second gander at Ms. Hamblin's departing figure; *not* in front of Jean, who was already busy dumping the contents of the manila envelope into her lap. He made himself focus on the mission and helped her shift eagerly through their travel itinerary. Weir had been thorough. A rental car was waiting for them at the Carsamba Airport in Samsun, Turkey. From there, they would drive east to the town of Carsamba, check into a hotel room reserved for them, check out the internment camp, have time to enjoy a meal at a local restaurant, maybe sight-see a bit, then in the morning return to Samsun and fly back to New York.

It seemed simple enough.

Day One

When they landed in Samsun, it was noon, Tuesday afternoon. As he and Jean dis-embarked from the jet, Sam said, "You shouldn't have any problems, but if you do, call. And remember---only drink bottled water."

Scott nodded, then looked back over his shoulder for a last glimpse of Sam, who was standing outside the plane watching them and raised her hand in farewell at his look. Turning back, he rebuked his wandering eyes and repentantly took Jean's hand. She smiled happily at him, giving him another pang of guilt as they headed into the terminal. They got through customs quicker than he expected, picked up their small Audi rental car and hit the road for Carsamba, Jean acting as navigator beside him. Driving to Carsamba had the same high speed feel as the autobahn in Germany, except this time, instead of riding, Scott was driving and Jean stayed alert, ready to use her telepathy in an instant to protect them. In town they drove round and round various side streets until they located their hotel, which their brochure described as "*comfortably modern with old world charm.*" Feeling grumpy with jet-lag, Jean stared at the "old world charm" of their room as soon as Scott opened the door. "Twin beds!" she exclaimed. Scott looked, too. There they were, two slender beds in matching spreads with an end table, lamp and phone between them. Jean plunked her medical case on the floor and checked the bathroom. It had a white ceramic toilet, a tub-shower and stacks of fluffy, white towels. When she came back out, Scott was sitting on a bed, the phone to his ear, listening intently. Then he said, "Thank-you" and hung up. "This is all they have," he informed her. "It's the same in every room."

She folded her arms stubbornly on her chest.

He went to her and wrapped his arms around her. "It's just for one night," he murmured. "Where's your spirit of adventure?"

"It's been wearing the same clothes for more than twelve hours!" she answered tartly. Even so, a small smile

came to her lips and Scott saw it.

"Let's get the internment camp over," he said, "and grab a bite on the way. Then we can come back and relax."

Her good humor returned and she nodded. Collecting the World Health Organization identification tags Weir had provided and Jean's med-case, they went back downstairs to the car, then randomly picked a restaurant. There they enjoyed stacks of fresh, sliced bread, lamb shishkabobs over rice, tomato and onion salad and strong black tea, called "chi," served in small glasses with two sugar cubes they could add to taste. Then, full and re-energized, they drove out to the internment camp, where they showed their ID's to a Turkish guard, who called his superior. Waiting patiently outside the perimeter entry while the Turkish officer examined their papers, Scott eyed the grim young faces of the lines of Turkish soldiers, still as statues in the chill breezes coming off the Black Sea, M-16's ready in their hands. Then the officer gave them back their papers and let them enter the perimeter, where they went directly to the World Health Organizations mobile station, which looked something like a short mobile home. Inside, their papers were inspected again by a young woman, who gave them badges, then directed them to the changing area, where they slipped on disposable protective body-suits and were allowed to enter the internment camp itself.

Inside, they paused to get their bearings. The camp consisted of numerous, large canvas covered structures and was bustling with activity. The W.H.O. personnel were obvious, being in exactly the same white, disposable gear they wore, but there were people in dark uniforms patrolling about with weapons, their faces concealed behind gas-masks and the coat-of-arms insignia of Tau Omega evident on their upper sleeves.

Jean indicated the canvas tent W.H.O. personnel seemed to be coming and going from most. "Let's check in," she said.

The tent was full of lab equipment and W.H.O. staff. Scott tried to look attentive while Jean talked with a small clutter of doctors, using medical jargon that was over his head. She was posing as a U.S. geneticist and a blood-disorder specialist and he, as her medical assistant. He overheard them mention "cholera" as a possibility along with the suggestion that it might be an entirely new strain. Whatever it was, it was proving resistant to *every* antibiotic available.

After that, he and Jean proceeded to one of the first of four long tents designated as "barracks" for the sick. Scott noted the double rows of cots, about twenty on each side, arranged on a crude wood floor. Most were occupied by young people ranging from ten to eighteen. W.H.O. nursing staff wearing masked, disposable garb were hovering from child to child, monitoring IV's and vital signs. They spared them only the briefest glance before continuing with their duties. He watched Jean inspect I.V. tags, since the kids were supposed to be arranged based on various antibiotics being tried. She selected a young male teen. Pale and clammy, his eyes barely flickered open when she sat on his cot to examine him. Scott opened the med case and passed her the stethoscope. On opening the boy's hospital shirt, Jean suddenly stopped. "Look at this," she said.

Scott peered at a ring of dried blood, about an inch in diameter in the soft flesh of the boy's shoulder, just below the clavicle. "It's one of those marks Mr. Lei talked about," he whispered.

She nodded and held out an open hand. "Vacuum tube, please."

He passed her one, along with a needle and watched her carefully fill it with blood, then she handed it back to him to store in the special coolant case that'd preserve it until that got back. They moved on to the next victim in the next group of test antibiotics and so on until they'd been through all four barracks, finding the same circular mark on every young person they examined.

On their way out of the last canvas barrack, Jean approached one of the W.H.O. staff working there. "Excuse me." The white garbed male nurse paused to look at her. "Where did those little circular marks come from?" she asked.

"We don't know," he replied, his accent French. "They all had them when we arrived."

Jean smiled. "Thank you."

After that, they left the confines of the internment camp, passed through the de-contam area, removed and disposed of their protective suits, then exited the perimeter, got back in their car and drove back to Carsamba. At

the hotel, they left the med-kit locked in their room and, while there was still light, enjoyed a stroll that ended in another quaint restaurant full of servers falling over themselves to bring them anything they wished. They enjoyed more fresh bread, an assortment of a salads selected from an a-la-cart tray, cheese-filled borek, baked whole fish, rice and wine. It was a great meal topping an eventful day and Scott and Jean strolled hand-in-hand back to the hotel. As soon as they returned to their room, she went into the bathroom, while he secured the door, then flopped on the nearest bed. When Jean came out, she found him laying on his side, his head propped up on his hand, smiling. He patted the bed beside him.

She gave him her best, hands on hip, incredulous look. "Scott Summers, we're not *both* going to fit on that bed!"

"Where's your sense of adventure?" he responded and patted the bed again, still smiling invitingly.

She gave in and settled in beside him, giggling as he pulled her close. "This *is not* going to work!" she laughed.

"Let's find out."

Their lips had barely touched when someone pounded on the door. They both looked at it. "Forget it," he murmured, "if it's important, they'll come back," then turned her face toward him, their lips just meeting when there was louder pounding and someone shouted, "Open up!"

Scott swore softly as he got up and opened it. Two policeman and two soldiers shoved past him, pushing him aside. Jean sprang off the bed and ran to him and they held on to each other while watching the soldiers rummaging through their things as if searching for something.

"What a minute!" Scott challenged. "What's going on?" He stepped forward, but the nearest police officer threw an arm across his chest, blocking his path and gave him a warning look.

Suddenly, one of the soldiers jabbered excitedly as he drew a clear bag, full of something white out of his travel bag, a item neither of them knew anything about. They watched like deer caught in headlights as the soldiers and police officers traded spirited conversation, all in Turkish.

Jean pulled out her rusty French. "You speak French? What is happening?" she asked.

The officer who'd barred Scott's way a moment ago, now turned to them and, with a strong Turkish accent, announced in English, "You are arrested for the smuggling of drugs."

"Now wait one dang minute!" Scott protested, stepping forward. "We're Americans..." The words had barely left his mouth before he was jabbed in the gut with a billy-club, crumpling him to the floor.

"Scott!" Jean shrieked, dropping to her knees beside him.

He seized her hand and pulled her close. "No matter what, no powers," he wheezed into her ear. "Promise?"

"I promise," she breathed. At that point, a soldier grabbed her by the arm, jerked her to her, pulled her wrists behind her and snapped on handcuffs. The two police officers roughly shoved Scott over onto this stomach, cuffed him as well, hauled him to his feet, then directed them both out the door as they were, no coats or anything.

Outside the hotel, were two waiting unmarked cars and the were shoved into the back seat of the first one. They sat silently side-by-side, Jean was thinking how lucky they were they hadn't gotten further than just a kiss, while Scott was busy calculating how long it would take for them to be rescued. He figured, since they weren't due back to the plane until ten a.m., and allowing for flight time and communications, Xavier could get them out in forty-eight hours max.

Jean, ever so slowly, leaned against him, tilting her lips close to his ear, "Why no powers?"

He bent close, his breath brushing her cheek. "Because, right now we've been set-up, but we're *still* innocent, so we have a chance. If we do anything that makes us guilty of any *real* crime, we'll never get out of here. We might even be killed."

She looked into his glasses, her heart beating with fear and nodded. He smiled reassuringly.

At the Carsamba police station, they were separated. Scott was taken into a detention room alone. It contained only a bare table and two chairs. His hands were un-cuffed, then shoved roughly up against the wall in a search position, where they ran hands over him a tad more intimately than he would've liked. After that, an officer shoved him into a chair and interrogated him relentlessly, throwing question after question at him about where he got the

drugs, who was he working for and who his buyer was. All the while, behind him, was another unseen officer pacing back and forth, slapping a billy-stick into his palm: slap, slap, slap. It was unnerving.

"I don't know how it got in my room," Scott insisted for the umpteenth time. It was getting pretty hot and stuffy and his watch said he'd been insisting on his innocence for over an hour now. His tongue felt like parchment and the officer in front of him was already on his twentieth nasty smelling Turkish cigarette. The smoke was giving Scott a headache.

A new police officer suddenly entered and handed the interrogator a paper and pen, which he promptly shoved in front of Scott. Scott looked at it, but it was in Turkish. "What's this?"

"Ah, it says that you have the charge of smuggling drugs. Sign."

Scott shoved it back. "No, I'm not signing anything."

The officer who'd been pacing behind him suddenly struck the table near where his hand was with the billy-club. The sound made Scott jump and he snatched both hands into his lap. "Not without a lawyer," he replied.

The interrogator in front of him smugly blew cigarette smoke in his face yet again, then spoke to his buddy behind him in Turkish and they both laughed. "You are not in America, ahbap," the interrogator taunted.

Scott held both his tongue and anger in check. He wondered how Jean was faring.

Jean, in the other interrogation room, had gotten a similar rough, groping search by three male police officers, who seemed to think she might have hidden weapons particularly in the chest area. She took it, though, resisting all urges to defend herself with her telekinesis. She knew Scott was right. If she injured a *single* police officer, it would be over; not to mention the panic and violence having a "berserk mutant" in the middle of a police station would cause. After the search, they grilled her endlessly with the same sorts of questions and offered her a similar paper to sign.

"Your wife is pretty," the interrogating officer said to Scott. "It would be better for her if you signed."

Scott swallowed, but wouldn't relent. "I want *either* a local lawyer *or* a representative from an American consulate."

The officer translated to his buddy and they both laughed. Without warning, Scott felt the sharp whack as a billy-club struck him right between the shoulder blades, forcing a cry of pain from his throat and his forehead to hit the table. Gasping in pain and anger, he just stayed hunched over, his teeth clenched and eyes watering. The paper was shoved under his nose.

"*Sign!*" the officer hissed.

"No," Scott croaked. "A lawyer or consulate representative first."

"You want your pretty wife to be treated in this way?"

Scott turned scarlet with a fury that made his skin burn, but still he said nothing, despite his desire to make dire threats about the consequences of treating Americans in such a manner. Then he defiantly straightened and said boldly, "She won't sign either."

The police officer in front of him smiled smugly and stood-up. "As you wish." Then jerked his head toward the door and the officer behind Scott now grabbed his arm, jerked him to his feet, then guided him down the hall for processing as prisoner.

"Don't I get a phone call?" Scott said, trying to be glib about it. His escort didn't bother to answer. He just prodded him through the finger printing, then the photos and finally into disgorging all his personal effects, including his wedding band, onto a tray belonging to a drab-looking clerk behind a barred-security window. The clerk pointed at his glasses, then at the tray, but Scott bulked. "I have an extreme sensitivity to light," he explained. "I'll be completely blind without them." The clerk still insistently pointed at his glasses. "Don't you understand," Scott said more loudly, pointing at his glasses. "Blind?" The clerk responded with a tirade of Turkish, that resulted in the sharp whack of a billy-club between his shoulder blades again, crumpling Scott once more to the floor. He felt someone touch his glasses and closed his eyes as they were suddenly snatched off his face leaving the glare of fluorescent lights to strike his eyelids.

Above him the officer handed them to the clerk, who slid everything neatly into a manila envelope and sealed it. Then Scott felt his arm seized and he was hauled up, then shoved forward. Instinctively, he thrust his arms out to feel his way, but his slowness and constant bumbling into things must've displeased the deputy behind him, because he finally seized his elbow and hurried him along to his destination, where he jerked him to stop. Scott heard a door open. A hand shoved him forward then the jail door clanged shut behind him.

Scott just stood there, certain he was in some kind of cell and equally certain he wasn't alone. Conversation stopped as soon as he was shoved in and odors of dirty bodies, vomit and booze assaulted his nose. He swallowed nervously and said, "Pardon, English?" Silence greeted him. Humiliated, he tried pointing at his tightly closed eyes. "Blind. Can't see." Then raised his arms to feel where he was going and took a couple tentative steps forward.

"Over here, ahbap," a slurred voice replied.

Scott hesitated. To say he wasn't scared would've been a lie, since there was no way for him to tell if he were really being helped or just misled. "Is there somewhere to sit over there?" he asked, but no one replied. He heard a rustling sound and approaching footsteps, then a hand unexpectedly touched his elbow making him nearly jump out of his skin.

"No worry, ahbap," the slurred voice said. "Come. I help you," and gave his arm a little tug.

Scott nervously allowed himself to be guided several paces across the room. "Sit," the voice said and Scott sat on a bench. He felt his helper sit next to him, but not closely. Scott sighed with relief and felt the bench. It was wood.

"You American?" his helper asked.

"Yes." He didn't want to give out too much information.

"Why are you arrested?"

"For nothing."

His helper chuckled. "Me, too. I am arrested for nothing."

Judging by his Jack Daniel smell, Scott doubted that.

At the same time, Jean was in a cell as well, eyeing the two other women who shared it. One was a middle-aged woman in assorted mis-matched clothing stretched out on the bench opposite her, snoring, while the other sat huddled in the far corner on her bench, a tooth-less hag, rocking and muttering to herself. That's all there was. Two occupants, two long benches and a rather grungy toilet and sink protruding from the end wall of the narrow cell.

She looked down at her naked ring finger, missing the weight of her wedding rings and worried how Scott was faring. She wondered if they'd taken his glasses. If so, it would make everything that much worse.

She had no idea how much worse it would soon get.

Continued in Through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, Part 2