

## CHAPTER ONE

**T**HE PUBLIC-ADDRESS system at Cairo airport made a noise like a doorbell, and then the arrival of the Alitalia flight from Milan was announced in Arabic, Italian, French and English. Towfik el-Masiri left his table in the buffet and made his way out to the observation deck. He put on his sunglasses to look over the shimmering concrete apron. The Caravelle was already down and taxiing.

Towfik was there because of a cable. It had come that morning from his 'uncle' in Rome, and it had been in code. Any business could use a code for international telegrams, provided it first lodged the key to the code with the post office. Such codes were used more and more to save money – by reducing common phrases to single words – than to keep secrets. Towfik's uncle's cable, transcribed according to the registered code book, gave details of his late aunt's will. However, Towfik had another key, and the message he read was:

OBSERVE AND FOLLOW PROFESSOR FRIEDRICH  
SCHULZ ARRIVING CAIRO FROM MILAN  
WEDNESDAY 28 FEBRUARY 1968 FOR SEVERAL  
DAYS. AGE 51 HEIGHT 180 CM WEIGHT 150

KEN FOLLETT

POUNDS HAIR WHITE EYES BLUE NATIONALITY  
AUSTRIAN COMPANIONS WIFE ONLY.

The passengers began to file out of the aircraft, and Towfik spotted his man almost immediately. There was only one tall, lean white-haired man on the flight. He was wearing a light blue suit, a white shirt and a tie, and carrying a plastic shopping bag from a duty-free store and a camera. His wife was much shorter, and wore a fashionable mini-dress and a blonde wig. As they crossed the airfield they looked about them and sniffed the warm, dry desert air the way most people did the first time they landed in North Africa.

The passengers disappeared into the arrivals hall. Towfik waited on the observation deck until the baggage came off the plane, then he went inside and mingled with the small crowd of people waiting just beyond the customs barrier.

He did a lot of waiting. That was something they did not teach you – how to wait. You learned to handle guns, memorize maps, break open safes and kill people with your bare hands, all in the first six months of the training course; but there were no lectures in patience, no exercises for sore feet, no seminars on tedium. And it was beginning to seem like *There is something wrong here* beginning to seem *Lookout lookout* beginning to—

There was another agent in the crowd.

Towfik's subconscious hit the fire alarm while he was thinking about patience. The people in the little crowd, waiting for relatives and friends and business acquaint-

ances off the Milan plane, were impatient. They smoked, shifted their weight from one foot to the other, craned their necks and fidgeted. There was a middle-class family with four children, two men in the traditional striped cotton *galabiya* robes, a businessman in a dark suit, a young white woman, a chauffeur with a sign saying FORD MOTOR COMPANY, and—

And a patient man.

Like Towfik, he had dark skin and short hair and wore a European-style suit. At first glance he seemed to be with the middle-class family – just as Towfik would seem, to a casual observer, to be with the businessman in the dark suit. The other agent stood nonchalantly, with his hands behind his back, facing the exit from the baggage hall, looking unobtrusive. There was a streak of paler skin alongside his nose, like an old scar. He touched it, once, in what might have been a nervous gesture, then put his hand behind his back again.

The question was, had he spotted Towfik?

Towfik turned to the businessman beside him and said, ‘I never understand why this has to take so long.’ He smiled, and spoke quietly, so that the businessman leaned closer to hear him and smiled back; and the pair of them looked like acquaintances having a casual conversation.

The businessman said, ‘The formalities take longer than the flight.’

Towfik stole another glance at the other agent. The man stood in the same position, watching the exit. He had not attempted any camouflage. Did that mean that

he had not spotted Towfik? Or was it just that he had second-guessed Towfik, by deciding that a piece of camouflage would give him away?

The passengers began to emerge, and Towfik realized there was nothing he could do, either way. He hoped the people the agent was meeting would come out before Professor Schulz.

It was not to be. Schulz and his wife were among the first little knot of passengers to come through.

The other agent approached them and shook hands. Of course, of course.

The agent was there to meet Schulz.

Towfik watched while the agent summoned porters and ushered the Schulzes away; then he went out by a different exit to his car. Before getting in he took off his jacket and tie and put on sunglasses and a white cotton cap. Now he would not be easily recognizable as the man who had been waiting at the meeting point.

He figured the agent would have parked in a no-waiting zone right outside the main entrance, so he drove that way. He was right. He saw the porters loading the Schulz baggage into the boot of a five-year-old grey Mercedes. He drove on.

He steered his dirty Renault on to the main highway which ran from Heliopolis, where the airport was, to Cairo. He drove at 60 kph and kept to the slow lane. The grey Mercedes passed him two or three minutes later, and he accelerated to keep it within sight. He memorized its number, as it was always useful to be able to recognize the opposition's cars.

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The sky began to cloud over. As he sped down the straight, palm-lined highway, Towfik considered what he had found out so far. The cable had told him nothing about Schulz except what the man looked like and the fact that he was an Austrian professor. The meeting at the airport meant a great deal, though. It had been a kind of clandestine VIP treatment. Towfik had the agent figured for a local: everything pointed to that – his clothes, his car, his style of waiting. That meant Schulz was probably here by invitation of the government, but either he or the people he had come to see wanted the visit kept secret.

It was not much. What was Schulz professor *of*? He could be a banker, arms manufacturer, rocketry expert or cotton buyer. He might even be with Al Fatah, but Towfik could not quite see the man as a resurrected Nazi. Still, anything was possible.

Certainly Tel Aviv did not think Schulz was important: if they had, they would not have used Towfik, who was young and inexperienced, for this surveillance. It was even possible that the whole thing was yet another training exercise.

They entered Cairo on the Shari Ramses, and Towfik closed the gap between his car and the Mercedes until there was only one vehicle between them. The grey car turned right on to the Corniche al-Nil, then crossed the river by the 26 July Bridge and entered the Zamalek district of Gezira island.

There was less traffic in the wealthy, dull suburb, and Towfik became edgy about being spotted by the agent at the wheel of the Mercedes. However, two

minutes later the other car turned into a residential street near the Officers' Club and stopped outside an apartment block with a jacaranda tree in the garden. Towfik immediately took a right turn and was out of sight before the doors of the other car could open. He parked, jumped out, and walked back to the corner. He was in time to see the agent and the Schulzes disappear into the building followed by a caretaker in *galabiyas* struggling with their luggage.

Towfik looked up and down the street. There was nowhere a man could convincingly idle. He returned to his car, backed it around the corner and parked between two other cars on the same side of the road as the Mercedes.

Half an hour later the agent came out alone, got into his car, and drove off.

Towfik settled down to wait.

It went on for two days, then it broke.

Until then the Schulzes behaved like tourists, and seemed to enjoy it. On the first evening they had dinner in a nightclub and watched a troupe of belly-dancers. Next day they did the Pyramids and the Sphinx, with lunch at Groppi's and dinner at the Nile Hilton. In the morning on the third day they got up early and took a taxi to the mosque of Ibn Tulun.

Towfik left his car near the Gayer-Anderson Museum and followed them. They took a perfunctory look around the mosque and headed east on the Shari al-Salibah. They were dawdling, looking at fountains and

buildings, peering into dark tiny shops, watching *baladi* women buy onions and peppers and camel's feet at street stalls.

They stopped at a crossroads and went into a tea-shop. Towfik crossed the street to the *sebeel*, a domed fountain behind windows of iron lace, and studied the baroque relief around its walls. He moved on up the street, still within sight of the tea-shop, and spent some time buying four misshapen giant tomatoes from a white-capped stallholder whose feet were bare.

The Schulzes came out of the tea-shop and turned north, following Towfik, into the street market. Here it was easier for Towfik to idle, sometimes ahead of them and sometimes behind. Frau Schulz bought slippers and a gold bangle, and paid too much for a sprig of mint from a half-naked child. Towfik got far enough in front of them to drink a small cup of strong, unsweetened Turkish coffee under the awning of a café called Nasif's.

They left the street market and entered a covered *souq* specializing in saddlery. Schulz glanced at his wristwatch and spoke to his wife – giving Towfik the first faint tremor of anxiety – and then they walked a little faster until they emerged at Bab Zuweyla, the gateway to the original walled city.

For a few moments the Schulzes were obscured from Towfik's view by a donkey pulling a cart loaded with Ali-Baba jars, their mouths stoppered with crumpled paper. When the cart passed, Towfik saw that Schulz was saying goodbye to his wife and getting into an oldish grey Mercedes.

Towfik cursed under his breath.

The car door slammed and it pulled away. Frau Schulz waved. Towfik read the licence plate – it was the car he had followed from Heliopolis – and saw it go west, then turn left into the Shari Port Said.

Forgetting Frau Schulz, he turned around and broke into a run.

They had been walking for about an hour, but they had covered only a mile. Towfik sprinted through the saddlery *souq* and the street market, dodging around the stalls and bumping into robed men and women in black, dropping his bag of tomatoes in a collision with a Nubian sweeper, until he reached the museum and his car.

He dropped into the driver's seat, breathing hard and grimacing at the pain in his side. He started the engine and pulled away on an interception course for the Shari Port Said.

The traffic was light, so when he hit the main road he guessed he must be behind the Mercedes. He continued southwest, over the island of Roda and the Giza Bridge onto the Giza Road.

Schulz had not been deliberately trying to shake a tail, Towfik decided. Had the professor been a pro he would have lost Towfik decisively and finally. No, he had simply been taking a morning walk through the market before meeting someone at a landmark. But Towfik was sure that the meeting place, and the walk beforehand, had been suggested by the agent.

They might have gone anywhere, but it seemed likely they were leaving the city – otherwise Schulz could

simply have taken a taxi at Bab Zuweyla – and this was the major road westward. Towfik drove very fast. Soon there was nothing in front of him but the arrow-straight grey road, and nothing either side but yellow sand and blue sky.

He reached the Pyramids without catching the Mercedes. Here the road forked, leading north to Alexandria or south to Faiyum. From where the Mercedes had picked up Schulz, this would have been an unlikely, roundabout route to Alexandria; so Towfik plumped for Faiyum.

When at last he saw the other car it was behind him, coming up very fast. Before it reached him it turned right off the main road. Towfik braked to a halt and reversed the Renault to the turnoff. The other car was already a mile ahead on the side road. He followed.

This was dangerous, now. The road probably went deep into the Western Desert, perhaps all the way to the oil field at Qattara. It seemed little used, and a strong wind might obscure it under a layer of sand. The agent in the Mercedes was sure to realize he was being followed. If he were a good agent, the sight of the Renault might even trigger memories of the journey from Heliopolis.

This was where the training broke down, and all the careful camouflage and tricks of the trade became useless; and you had to simply get on someone's tail and stick with him whether he saw you or not, because the whole point was to find out where he was going, and if you could not manage that you were no use at all.

So he threw caution to the desert wind and followed; and still he lost them.

The Mercedes was a faster car, and better designed for the narrow, bumpy road, and within a few minutes it was out of sight. Towfik followed the road, hoping he might catch them when they stopped or at least come across something that might be their destination.

Sixty kilometres on, deep in the desert and beginning to worry about getting petrol, he reached a tiny oasis village at a crossroads. A few scrawny animals grazed in sparse vegetation around a muddy pool. A jar of fava beans and three Fanta cans on a makeshift table outside a hut signified the local café. Towfik got out of the car and spoke to an old man watering a bony buffalo.

‘Have you seen a grey Mercedes?’

The peasant stared at him blankly, as if he were speaking a foreign language.

‘Have you seen a grey car?’

The old man brushed a large black fly off his forehead and nodded, once.

‘When?’

‘Today.’

That was probably as precise an answer as he could hope for. ‘Which way did it go?’

The old man pointed west, into the desert.

Towfik said, ‘Where can I get petrol?’

The man pointed east, toward Cairo.

Towfik gave him a coin and returned to the car. He started the engine and looked again at the petrol gauge. He had enough fuel to get back to Cairo, just; if

he went farther west he would run out on the return journey.

He had done all he could, he decided. Wearily, he turned the Renault around and headed back toward the city.

Towfik did not like his work. When it was dull he was bored, and when it was exciting he was frightened. But they had told him that there was important, dangerous work to be done in Cairo, and that he had the qualities necessary to be a good spy, and that there were not enough Egyptian Jews in Israel for them to be able just to go out and find another one with all the qualities if he said no; so, of course, he had agreed. It was not out of idealism that he risked his life for his country. It was more like self-interest: the destruction of Israel would mean his own destruction; in fighting for Israel he was fighting for himself; he risked his life to save his life. It was the logical thing to do. Still, he looked forward to the time – in five years? Ten? Twenty? – when he would be too old for field work, and they would bring him home and sit him behind a desk, and he could find a nice Jewish girl and marry her and settle down to enjoy the land he had fought for.

Meanwhile, having lost Professor Schulz, he was following the wife.

She continued to see the sights, escorted now by a young Arab who had presumably been laid on by the Egyptians to take care of her while her husband was away. In the evening the Arab took her to an Egyptian

restaurant for dinner, brought her home, and kissed her cheek under the jacaranda tree in the garden.

The next morning Towfik went to the main post office and sent a coded cable to his uncle in Rome:

SCHULZ MET AT AIRPORT BY SUSPECTED LOCAL AGENT. SPENT TWO DAYS SIGHTSEEING. PICKED UP BY AFORESAID AGENT AND DRIVEN DIRECTION QATTARA. SURVEILLANCE ABORTED. NOW WATCHING WIFE.

He was back in Zamalek at nine A.M. At eleven-thirty he saw Frau Schulz on a balcony, drinking coffee, and was able to figure out which of the apartments was the Schulzes'.

By lunchtime the interior of the Renault had become very hot. Towfik ate an apple and drank tepid beer from a bottle.

Professor Schulz arrived late in the afternoon, in the same grey Mercedes. He looked tired and a little ruffled, like a middle-aged man who had travelled too far. He left the car and went into the building without looking back. After dropping him, the agent drove past the Renault and looked straight at Towfik for an instant. There was nothing Towfik could do about it.

Where had Schulz been? It had taken him most of a day to get there, Towfik speculated; he had spent a night, a full day and a second night there; and it had taken most of today to get back. Qattara was only one of several possibilities: the desert road went all the way to Matruh on the Mediterranean coast; there was a

turnoff to Karkur Tohl in the far south; with a change of car and a desert guide they could even have gone to a rendezvous on the border with Libya.

At nine P.M. the Schulzes came out again. The professor looked refreshed. They were dressed for dinner. They walked a short distance and hailed a taxi.

Towfik made a decision. He did not follow them.

He got out of the car and entered the garden of the building. He stepped on to the dusty lawn and found a vantage point behind a bush from where he could see into the hall through the open front door. The Nubian caretaker was sitting on a low wooden bench, picking his nose.

Towfik waited.

Twenty minutes later the man left his bench and disappeared into the back of the building.

Towfik hurried through the hall and ran, soft-footed, up the staircase.

He had three Yale-type skeleton keys, but none of them fitted the lock of apartment three. In the end he got the door open with a piece of bendy plastic broken off a college set-square.

He entered the apartment and closed the door behind him.

It was now quite dark outside. A little light from a streetlamp came through the unshaded windows. Towfik drew a small flashlight from his trousers pocket, but he did not switch it on yet.

The apartment was large and airy, with white-painted walls and English-colonial furniture. It had the sparse, chilly look of a place where nobody actually lived.

There was a big drawing room, a dining room, three bedrooms and a kitchen. After a quick general survey Towfik started snooping in earnest.

The two smaller bedrooms were bare. In the larger one, Towfik went rapidly through all the drawers and cupboards. A wardrobe held the rather gaudy dresses of a woman past her prime: bright prints, sequinned gowns, turquoise and orange and pink. The labels were American. Schulz was an Austrian national, the cable had said, but perhaps he lived in the USA. Towfik had never heard him speak.

On the bedside table were a guide to Cairo in English, a copy of *Vogue* and a reprinted lecture on isotopes.

So Schulz was a scientist.

Towfik glanced through the lecture. Most of it was over his head. Schulz must be a top chemist or physicist, he thought. If he was here to work on weaponry, Tel Aviv would want to know.

There were no personal papers – Schulz evidently had his passport and wallet in his pocket. The airline labels had been removed from the matching set of tan suitcases.

On a low table in the drawing room, two empty glasses smelled of gin: they had had a cocktail before going out.

In the bathroom Towfik found the clothes Schulz had worn into the desert. There was a lot of sand in the shoes, and on the trouser cuffs he found small dusty grey smears which might have been cement. In the

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breast pocket of the rumpled jacket was a blue plastic container, about one-and-a-half inches square, very slender. It contained a light-tight envelope of the kind used to protect photographic film.

Towfik pocketed the plastic box.

The airline labels from the luggage were in a waste basket in the little hall. The Schulzes' address was in Boston, Massachusetts, which probably meant that the professor taught at Harvard, MIT or one of the many lesser universities in the area. Towfik did some rapid arithmetic. Schulz would have been in his twenties during World War Two: he could easily be one of the German rocketry experts who went to the USA after the war.

Or not. You did not have to be a Nazi to work for the Arabs.

Nazi or not, Schulz was a cheapskate: his soap, toothpaste and after-shave were all taken from airlines and hotels.

On the floor beside a rattan chair, near the table with the empty cocktail glasses, lay a lined foolscap notepad, its top sheet blank. There was a pencil lying on the pad. Perhaps Schulz had been making notes on his trip while he sipped his gin sling. Towfik searched the apartment for sheets torn from the pad.

He found them on the balcony, burned to cinders in a large glass ashtray.

The night was cool. Later in the year the air would be warm and fragrant with the blossom of the jacaranda tree in the garden below. The city traffic snored in the

distance. It reminded Towfik of his father's apartment in Jerusalem. He wondered how long it would be before he saw Jerusalem again.

He had done all he could here. He would look again at that foolscap pad, to see whether Schulz's pencil had pressed hard enough to leave an impression on the next page. He turned away from the parapet and crossed the balcony to the French windows leading back into the drawing room.

He had his hand on the door when he heard the voices.

Towfik froze.

'I'm sorry, honey, I just couldn't face another over-done steak.'

'We could have eaten something, for God's sake.'

The Schulzes were back.

Towfik rapidly reviewed his progress through the rooms: bedrooms, bathroom, drawing room, kitchen . . . he had replaced everything he had touched, except the little plastic box. He had to keep that anyway. Schulz would have to assume he had lost it.

If Towfik could get away unseen now, they might never know he had been there.

He bellied over the parapet and hung at full length by his fingertips. It was too dark for him to see the ground. He dropped, landed lightly and strolled away.

It had been his first burglary, and he felt pleased. It had gone as smoothly as a training exercise, even to the early return of the occupant and sudden exit of spy by prearranged emergency route. He grinned in the dark. He might yet live to see that desk job.

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He got into his car, started the engine and switched on the lights.

Two men emerged from the shadows and stood on either side of the Renault.

*Who . . . ?*

He did not pause to figure out what was going on. He rammed the gearshift into first and pulled away. The two men hastily stepped aside.

They had made no attempt to stop him. So why had they been there? To make sure he stayed in the car . . . ?

He jammed on the brakes and looked into the back seat, and then he knew, with unbearable sadness, that he would never see Jerusalem again.

A tall Arab in a dark suit was smiling at him over the snout of a small handgun.

'Drive on,' the man said in Arabic, 'but not quite so fast, please.'

Q: What is your name?

A: Towfik el-Masiri.

Q: Describe yourself.

A: Age twenty-six, five-foot-nine, one hundred and eighty pounds, brown eyes, black hair, Semitic features, light brown skin.

Q: Who do you work for?

A: I am a student.

Q: What day is today?

A: Saturday.

Q: What is your nationality?

A: Egyptian.

Q: What is twenty minus seven?

A: Thirteen.

*The above questions are designed to facilitate fine calibration of the lie detector.*

Q: You work for the CIA.

A: No. (TRUE)

Q: The Germans?

A: No. (TRUE)

Q: Israel, then.

A: No. (FALSE)

Q: You really are a student?

A: Yes. (FALSE)

Q: Tell me about your studies.

A: I'm doing chemistry at Cairo University. (TRUE)

I'm interested in polymers. (TRUE) I want to be a petrochemical engineer. (FALSE)

Q: What are polymers?

A: Complex organic compounds with long-chain molecules – the commonest is polythene. (TRUE)

Q: What is your name?

A: I told you, Towfik el-Masiri. (FALSE)

Q: The pads attached to your head and chest measure your pulse, heartbeat, breathing and perspiration.

When you tell untruths, your metabolism betrays you – you breathe faster, sweat more, and so on.

This machine, which was given to us by our Russian friends, tells me when you are lying. Besides, I happen to know that Towfik el-Masiri is dead. Who are you?

A: (no reply)

Q: The wire taped to the tip of your penis is part of a

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different machine. It is connected to this button here. When I press the button—

A: (scream)

Q: —an electric current passes through the wire and gives you a shock. We have put your feet in a bucket of water to improve the efficiency of the apparatus. What is your name?

A: Avram Ambache.

*The electrical apparatus interferes with the functioning of the lie detector.*

Q: Have a cigarette.

A: Thank you.

Q: Believe it or not, I hate this work. The trouble is, people who like it are never any good at it – you need sensitivity, you know. I'm a sensitive person . . . I hate to see people suffer. Don't you?

A: (no reply)

Q: You're now trying to think of ways to resist me. Please don't bother. There is no defence against modern techniques of . . . interviewing. What is your name?

A: Avram Ambache. (TRUE)

Q: Who is your control?

A: I don't know what you mean. (FALSE)

Q: Is it Bosch?

A: No, Friedman. (READING INDETERMINATE)

Q: It is Bosch.

A: Yes. (FALSE)

Q: No, it's not Bosch. It's Krantz.

A: Okay, it's Krantz – whatever you say. (TRUE)

Q: How do you make contact?

A: I have a radio. (FALSE)

Q: You're not telling me the truth.

A: (scream)

Q: How do you make contact?

A: A dead-letter box in the *faubourg*.

Q: You are thinking that when you are in pain, the lie detector will not function properly, and that there is therefore safety in torture. You are only partly right. This is a very sophisticated machine, and I spent many months learning to use it properly. After I have given you a shock, it takes only a few moments to readjust the machine to your faster metabolism; and then I can once more tell when you are lying. How do you make contact?

A: A dead-letter – (scream)

Q: Ali! He's kicked his feet free – these convulsions are very strong. Tie him again, before he comes round. Pick up that bucket and put more water in it.

(pause)

Right, he's waking, get out. Can you hear me, Towfik?

A: (indistinct)

Q: What is your name?

A: (no reply)

Q: A little jab to help you—

A: (scream)

Q: —to think.

A: Avram Ambache.

Q: What day is today?

A: Saturday.

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Q: What did we give you for breakfast?

A: Fava beans.

Q: What is twenty minus seven?

A: Thirteen.

Q: What is your profession?

A: I'm a student. No don't please and a spy yes I'm a spy don't touch the button please oh god oh god—

Q: How do you make contact?

A: Coded cables.

Q: Have a cigarette. Here . . . oh, you don't seem to be able to hold it between your lips – let me help . . . there.

A: Thank you.

Q: Just try to be calm. Remember, as long as you're telling the truth, there will be no pain.

(pause)

Are you feeling better?

A: Yes.

Q: So am I. Now then, tell me about Professor Schulz. Why were you following him?

A: I was ordered to. (TRUE)

Q: By Tel Aviv?

A: Yes. (TRUE)

Q: Who in Tel Aviv?

A: I don't know. (READING INDETERMINATE)

Q: But you can guess.

A: Bosch. (READING INDETERMINATE)

Q: Or Krantz?

A: Perhaps. (TRUE)

Q: Krantz is a good man. Dependable. How's his wife?

A: Very well, I—(scream)

Q: His wife died in 1958. Why do you make me hurt you? What did Schulz do?

A: Went sightseeing for two days, then disappeared into the desert in a grey Mercedes.

Q: And you burglarized his apartment.

A: Yes. (TRUE)

Q: What did you learn?

A: He is a scientist. (TRUE)

Q: Anything else?

A: American. (TRUE) That's all. (TRUE)

Q: Who was your instructor in training?

A: Ertl. (READING INDETERMINATE)

Q: That wasn't his real name, though.

A: I don't know. (FALSE) No! Not the button let me think it was just a minute I think somebody said his real name was Manner. (TRUE)

Q: Oh, Manner. Shame. He's the old-fashioned type. He still believes you can train agents to resist interrogation. It's his fault you're suffering so much, you know. What about your colleagues? Who trained with you?

A: I never knew their real names. (FALSE)

Q: Didn't you?

A: (scream)

Q: Real names.

A: Not all of them—

Q: Tell me the ones you did know.

A: (no reply)

(scream)

*The prisoner fainted.*

(pause)

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Q: What is your name?

A: Uh . . . Towfik. (scream)

Q: What did you have for breakfast?

A: Don't know.

Q: What is twenty minus seven?

A: Twenty-seven.

Q: What did you tell Krantz about Professor Schulz?

A: Sightseeing . . . Western Desert . . . surveillance aborted . . .

Q: Who did you train with?

A: (no reply)

Q: Who did you train with?

A: (scream)

Q: Who did you train with?

A: Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death—

Q: Who did you train with?

A: (scream)

*The prisoner died.*

When Kawash asked for a meeting, Pierre Borg went. There was no discussion about times and places: Kawash sent a message giving the rendezvous, and Borg made sure to be there. Kawash was the best double agent Borg had ever had, and that was that.

The head of the Mossad stood at one end of the northbound Bakerloo Line platform in Oxford Circus underground station, reading an advertisement for a course of lectures in Theosophy, waiting for Kawash. He had no idea why the Arab had chosen London for

this meeting; no idea what he told his masters he was doing in the city; no idea, even, why Kawash was a traitor. But this man had helped the Israelis win two wars and avoid a third, and Borg needed him.

Borg glanced along the platform, looking for a high brown head with a large, thin nose. He had an idea he knew what Kawash wanted to talk about. He hoped his idea was right.

Borg was very worried about the Schulz affair. It had started out as a piece of routine surveillance, just the right kind of assignment for his newest, rawest agent in Cairo: a high-powered American physicist on vacation in Europe decides to take a trip to Egypt. The first warning sign came when Towfik lost Schulz. At that point Borg had stepped up activity on the project. A freelance journalist in Milan who occasionally made inquiries for German Intelligence had established that Schulz's air ticket to Cairo had been paid for by the wife of an Egyptian diplomat in Rome. Then the CIA had routinely passed to the Mossad a set of satellite photographs of the area around Qattara which seemed to show signs of construction work – and Borg had remembered that Schulz had been heading in the direction of Qattara when Towfik lost him.

Something was going on, and he did not know what, and that worried him.

He was always worried. If it was not the Egyptians, it was the Syrians; if it was not the Syrians it was the Fedayeen; if it was not his enemies it was his friends and the question of how long they would continue to be his friends. He had a worrying job. His mother had

once said, 'Job, *nothing* – you were *born* worrying, like your poor father – if you were a *gardener* you would worry about your job.' She might have been right, but all the same, paranoia was the only rational frame of mind for a spymaster.

Now Towfik had broken contact, and that was the most worrying sign of all.

Maybe Kawash would have some answers.

A train thundered in. Borg was not waiting for a train. He began to read the credits on a movie poster. Half the names were Jewish. Maybe I should have been a movie producer, he thought.

The train pulled out, and a shadow fell over Borg. He looked up into the calm face of Kawash.

The Arab said, 'Thank you for coming.' He always said that.

Borg ignored it: he never knew how to respond to thanks. He said, 'What's new?'

'I had to pick up one of your youngsters in Cairo on Friday.'

'You *had* to?'

'Military Intelligence were bodyguarding a VIP, and they spotted the kid tailing them. Military don't have operational personnel in the city, so they asked my department to pick him up. It was an official request.'

'God *damn*,' Borg said feelingly. 'What happened to him?'

'I had to do it by the book,' Kawash said. He looked very sad. 'The boy was interrogated and killed. His name was Avram Ambache, but he worked as Towfik el-Masiri.'

Borg frowned. 'He told you his real name?'

'He's dead, Pierre.'

Borg shook his head irritably: Kawash always wanted to linger over personal aspects. 'Why did he tell you his name?'

'We're using the Russian equipment – the electric shock and the lie detector together. You're not training them to cope with it.'

Borg gave a short laugh. 'If we told them about it, we'd never get any fucking recruits. What else did he give away?'

'Nothing we didn't know. He would have, but I killed him first.'

'*You* killed him?'

'I conducted the interrogation, in order to make sure he did not say anything important. All these interviews are taped now, and the transcripts filed. We're learning from the Russians.' The sadness deepened in the brown eyes. 'Why – would you prefer that I should have someone else kill your boys?'

Borg stared at him, then looked away. Once again he had to steer the conversation away from the sentimental. 'What did the boy discover about Schulz?'

'An agent took the professor into the Western Desert.'

'Sure, but what for?'

'I don't know.'

'You must know, you're in Egyptian Intelligence!' Borg controlled his irritation. Let the man do things at his own pace, he told himself; whatever information he's got, he'll tell.

## TRIPLE

‘I don’t know what they’re doing out there, because they’ve set up a special group to handle it,’ Kawash said. ‘My department isn’t informed.’

‘Any idea why?’

The Arab shrugged. ‘I’d say they don’t want the Russians to know about it. These days Moscow gets everything that goes through us.’

Borg let his disappointment show. ‘Is that all Towfik could manage?’

Suddenly there was anger in the soft voice of the Arab. ‘The kid died for you,’ he said.

‘I’ll thank him in heaven. Did he die in vain?’

‘He took this from Schulz’s apartment.’ Kawash drew a hand from inside his coat and showed Borg a small, square box of blue plastic.

Borg took the box. ‘How do you know where he got it?’

‘It has Schulz’s fingerprints on it. And we arrested Towfik right after he broke into the apartment.’

Borg opened the box and fingered the light-proof envelope. It was unsealed. He took out the photographic negative.

The Arab said, ‘We opened the envelope and developed the film. It’s blank.’

With a deep sense of satisfaction, Borg reassembled the box and put it into his pocket. Now it all made sense; now he understood; now he knew what he had to do. A train came in. ‘You want to catch this one?’ he said.

Kawash frowned slightly, nodded assent, and moved to the edge of the platform as the train stopped and

the doors opened. He boarded, and stood just inside. He said, 'I don't know what on earth the box is.'

Borg thought, You don't like me, but I think you're just great. He smiled thinly at the Arab as the doors of the underground train began to slide shut. 'I do,' he said.