Book Press
Galley 0138 Take 0002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3277, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

Okay, this is Ruth Davisson, and she's going . . . north . . . Nineteen, we can take her—

Relax, nineteen. False alarm. It's a secretary who looks like her.

Rostov had commandeered all Petrov's best sidewalk artists and most of his cars. The area around the Israeli Embassy in London was crawling with agents—someone had said, "There are more of us here than in the Kremlin Clinic"—but it was hard to spot them. They were in cars, vans, minicabs, trucks and one vehicle that looked remarkably like an unmarked Metropolitan Police bus. There were more on foot, some in public buildings and others walking the streets and the footpaths of the park. There was even one inside the Embassy, asking in dreadfully broken English what he had to do to emigrate to Israel.

The Embassy was ideally suited for this kind of exercise. It was in a little diplomatic ghetto on the edge of Kensington Gardens. So many of the lovely old houses belonged to fireign legations that it was known as Embassy Row. Indeed, the Soviet Embassy was close by in Kensington Palace Gardens. The little group of streets formed a private estate, and it was necessary to tell a policeman one's business before one could get in.

Nineteen, this time it is Ruth Davisson . . . nineteen, do you hear me?

Nineteen here, yes.

Are you still on the north side?

Yes. And we know what she looks like.

None of the agents was actually in sight of the Israeli Embassy. Only one member of the team could see the door—Rostov, who was a half mile away, on the twentieth floor of a hotel, watching through a powerful Zeiss telescope mounted on a tripod. Several high buildings in the West End of London had clear views across the park to Embassy Row. Indeed, certain suites in certain hotels fetched inordinately high prices because of rumors that from them you could see into Princess Margaret's backyard at the neighboring palace, which gave its name to Palace Green and Kensington Palace Gardens.

Rostov was in one of those suites, and he had a radio transmitter as well as the telescope. Each of his sidewalk squads had a walkie-talkie. Petrov spoke quickly to his men in Russian, using confusing codewords, and the wavelength on which he transmitted and on which the men replied was changed every five minutes according to a computer program built into all the sets. The system was working very well, Tyrin thought—he had invented it—except that somewhere in the cycle everyone was subjected to five minutes of BBC Radio One.

Eight, move up to the north side.

Understood.

If the Israelis had been in Belgravia, the home of the more senior embassies, Rostov's job would have been more difficult. There were almost no shops, cafés or public offices in Belgravia—nowhere for agents to make themselves unobtrusive; and because the whole district was quiet, wealthy and stuffed with ambassadors it was a simple matter for the police to keep an eye open for suspicious activities. Any of the standard surveillance ploys—telephone repair van, radio crew with striped tent—would have drawn a crowd of bobbies in minutes. By contrast the area around the little oasis of Embassy Row was Kensington, a shopping area with several colleges and four museums.

Galley 0140 Take 0002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3277, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

He crossed the road and came back on the opposite side, just in case the mark were to come out again immediately. He looked for the blue Volkswagen beetle and did not see it, though he was reasonably certain it would be close by.

Into his shirt pocket: "This is Twenty. Meier and the green Volvo have staked out the Jacobean Hotel."

Confirmed, Twenty. Five and Thirteen have the Israeli cars covered. Where is Meier?

"In the lobby." Tyrin looked up and down, saw the Austin which was following the green Volvo.

Stay with him.

"Understood." Tyrin now had a difficult decision to make . . . if he went straight into the hotel Meier might spot him, but if he took the time to find the back entrance Meier might be gone in the meanwhile.

He decided to take a chance on the back entrance, feeling that he was supported by two cars that could cover for a few minutes if the worst happened. Alongside the hotel there was a narrow alley for delivery vans. Tyrin walked along it and came to an unlocked fire exit in the blank side wall of the building. He went in, found himself in a concrete stairwell, obviously built to be used only as a fire escape. As he climbed the stairs he collapsed his umbrella, put it in his raincoat pocket and took off the raincoat. He folded it and left it in a little bundle on the first half landing, where he could quickly pick it up if he needed to make a fast exit. He went to the second floor, took the elevator down to the lobby. When he emerged in his sweater and trousers he looked like a guest at the hotel.

The Israeli was still in the phone booth.

Tyrin went up to the glass door at the front of the lobby, looked out, checked his wristwatch and returned to the waiting area to sit down as if he were meeting someone. It did not look to be his lucky day. The object of the whole exercise was to find Nat Dickstein. He was known to be in England, and it was hoped that he would have a meeting with one of the legals. The Russians were following the legals in order to witness that meeting and pick up Dickstein's trail. The Israeli team at this hotel was clearly not involved in a meeting . . . they were staking out someone, presumably with a view to tailing him as soon as he showed, and that someone was, after all, not likely to be one of their own agents. Tyrin could only hope that what they *were* doing would at least turn out to be of some interest . . . He watched the mark come out of the phone booth and walk off in the direction of the bar, and wondered if the lobby could be observed from the bar. Apparently not, because the mark came back a few minutes later with a drink in hand, then sat down across from Tyrin and picked up a newspaper.

The mark did not have time to drink his beer.

The elevator doors sshussed open, and out walked Nat Dickstein.

Tyrin was so surprised that he made the mistake of staring straight at Dickstein for several seconds. Dickstein caught his eye, and nodded politely. Tyrin smiled weakly and looked at his watch. It occurred to him—more in hope than conviction—that staring was such a bold mistake that Dickstein might take it as proof that Tyrin was *not* an agent.

No more time for self-serving reflection. Moving quickly with, Tyrin thought, something of a spring in his step, a man seemingly with his mind more on his destination than his present circumstance, Dickstein crossed to the counter and dropped a room key, then proceeded quickly out into the street. The Israeli tail, Meier, placed by Borg, put his newspaper on the table and followed.

Galley 0141 Take 0002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3277, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

When the plate-glass door closed behind Meier, Tyrin got up, thinking, I'm an agent following an agent following an agent. Well, at least we keep each other in employment.

He went into the elevator, pressed the button for the first floor, spoke into his radio. "This is Twenty. I have Pirate." There was no reply—the walls of the building were blocking his transmission. He got out of the elevator at the first floor and ran down the fire stairs, picking up his raincoat at the half landing. As soon as he was outside he tried the radio again. "This is Twenty, I have the Pirate."

All right, Twenty. Thirteen has him too.

Tyrin saw Meier crossing Cromwell Road. "I'm following Meier," he said into his radio.

Five and Twenty, both of you listen to me. Do not follow. Have you got that—Five?

Yes.

Twenty?

Tyrin said, "Understood," stopped walking and stood on the corner watching Meier and Dickstein disappear in the direction of Chelsea.

Twenty, go back into the hotel. Get his room number. Book a room close to his. Call me on the telephone as soon as it's done.

"Understood." Tyrin turned back, rehearsing his dialogue . . . Excuse me, the fellow that just walked out of here, short man with glasses, I think I know him but he got into a cab before I could catch up with him . . . his name is John but we all used to call him Jack, what room . . . ? As it turned out, none of that was necessary. Dickstein's key was still on the desk. Tyrin memorized the number.

"Can I help you?" the desk clerk asked, coming over to retrieve Dickstein's key.

"I'd like a room" Tyrin said, surprised at the Pirate's apparent absence of mind. He indeed must have been a man with a pressing mission in view.

▼

He kissed her, a man who had built up a powerful thirst all day. He savored the smell of her skin and the soft motions of her lips. He touched her face and said, "This, and this, and this is what I need." They stared into each other's eyes, and the truth of the desire between them was like nakedness, a magic spell. He stood face to face with her in the small blue-and-yellow kitchen, looking directly into her eyes while he touched the secret places of her body. Her mouth opened a fraction and he felt her breath coming faster and warm on his face. He inhaled deeply so as to breathe her into himself. She opened his shirt, and bent to his chest, and took his nipple between her teeth, and sucked. The sudden, astonishing pleasure of it made him gasp aloud. He held her head gently in his hands and rocked to and fro, intensifying the sensation. He reached behind her, lifted her skirt and delighted in the contrast of her white panties with the brown skin of her long legs. His right hand stroked her face and gripped her shoulder and fondled her breasts as his left hand moved over her hips and inside her panties and between her legs, and everything felt so good, so good that he wished he had four hands to feel her with, six. Then, suddenly, he wanted to see her face. He gripped her shoulders and helped her stand upright. "I want to look at you." Her eyes filled with tears, and he knew, was grateful, that these were signs not of sadness but of her own intense pleasure. Once more they looked into each other's eyes, exchanging not only the truth of their love but the now raw emotion. He knelt at her feet like a supplicant. He lay his head on her thighs, feeling the heat of

Book Press
Galley 0142 Take 0002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3277, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

her body through her clothing, then reached beneath her skirt with both hands, drew her panties down slowly. He rose up from the floor, and they were standing where they had kissed when he'd first come into the room. And just there, still standing, they began to make love. He watched her face. She looked peaceful, her eyes were half closed. He wanted to sustain this, moving slowly, but his body would not wait as he felt taken over, thrusting harder, faster. He felt himself losing his balance and put his arms around her, lifted her off the floor and without withdrawing moved two paces so that her back was against the wall. And now she pulled his shirt loose and reached and dug her fingers into the hard muscles of his back as he linked his hands beneath her buttocks and took her weight. She lifted her legs high, her thighs gripping his hips, her ankles crossed behind his back, and, beyond belief, he seemed to penetrate even deeper inside her. He felt himself being wound up tight like a spring. He watched her, saw in her eyes an expression of something like panic, a wild, wide-eyed animal emotion, and it pushed him over the edge so that he knew that it was coming, was going to happen now, and he wanted to tell her but there was no need as she dug her nails into the skin of his back and drew them down his spine and he felt the quake in her body just as his own erupted, and he was still looking at her, saw her mouth open . . . wide, wider as she drew breath just as the peak of delight overtook them both, and in her release, she screamed its completion.

▼

"We follow the Israelis and the Israelis follow Dickstein. All it needs is for Dickstein to start following us and we can all go around in a circle for the rest of the day," Rostov was saying as he strode down the hotel corridor with Tyrin hurrying beside him, his short plump legs almost running to keep up.

Tyrin, breathing hard, said, "I was wondering what, exactly, was your thinking in abandoning the surveillance as soon as we saw him?"

"It's obvious," Rostov said irritably, then reminded himself that Tyrin's loyalty was valuable and began to explain. "Dickstein has been under surveillance a great deal during the last few weeks. Each time he eventually has made us and thrown us off. Now a certain amount of surveillance is inevitable for someone who has been in the game as long as Dickstein. But on a particular operation, the more he is followed the more likely he is to abandon what he's doing and hand it over—or be forced to hand it over—to someone else, someone totally unknown to us. Too damn often the information we gain by following someone is canceled out by their discovering that we're following them and thereby knowing that we've got the information in question . . . This way, by abandoning the surveillance as we have done today, we know where he is but he doesn't know we know . . . He'll spot those Israelis in no time at all, I'm sure . . . he must be hypersensitive by now—"

"Why do you suppose they're following their own man?"

"That I really can't understand . . . I'm sure Dickstein met Borg this morning—which would explain why Borg threw off his tail with that taxi maneuver. It's possible Borg pulled Dickstein out and now he's simply checking that Dickstein really does come out, and doesn't try to carry on unofficially." He shook his head. "It doesn't convince me . . . but the alternative is that Borg doesn't trust Dickstein anymore, and I find that unlikely too—careful, now."

Book Press
Galley 0143 Take 0002 Version code 02-09
Job 00015928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3277, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

They were at the door to Dickstein's hotel room. Tyrin took out a small, powerful flashlight and shone it around the edges of the door. "No telltales," he said.

Rostov nodded, waiting. This was Tyrin's province. The little round man was the best general technician in the KGB, in Rostov's opinion. He watched as Tyrin took a skeleton key from his pocket, one of a large collection of such keys that he carried. By trying several on the door of his own room here, he had already established which one was the *passe-partout*, which fitted the locks of the Jacobean Hotel. Now he slowly opened Dickstein's door and stayed outside, looking in.

"No boobytraps," he said after a minute or so of careful searching.

He moved inside and Rostov followed, closing the door. This part of the game gave Rostov no pleasure at all . . . he preferred to observe, to speculate, to plot—burglary was distinctly not his style; it made him feel exposed and vulnerable. If a maid should come in now, or the hotel manager, or even Dickstein, who might evade the sentry in the lobby . . . it would be so undignified, so humiliating. "Let's make it fast," he now said.

The room was laid out according to the universal Holiday Inn plan: the door opened into a little passage with the bathroom on one side and the wardrobe opposite. Beyond the bathroom the room was square, with the single bed against one wall and the television set against the other. There was a large window in the exterior wall opposite the door.

Tyrin picked up the phone and began to unscrew the mouthpiece. Rostov stood at the foot of the bed, looked around trying to get an impression of the man who was staying in this room. There was not much to go on. The room had been cleaned and the bed made. On the bedside table were a book of chess problems and an evening newspaper. There were no signs of tobacco or alcohol. The wastepaper basket was empty. A small black vinyl suitcase on a stool contained clean underwear and one clean shirt. "The man travels with one spare shirt!" Rostov muttered. The drawers of the dresser were empty. Rostov looked into the bathroom—a toothbrush, a rechargeable electric shaver with spare plugs for different kinds of electrical outlets, and—the only personal touch—a pack of indigestion tablets.

Rostov went back into the bedroom, where Tyrin was reassembling the telephone. "It's done."

"Put one behind the headboard," Rostov said.

Tyrin was taping a bug to the wall behind the bed when the phone rang.

If Dickstein returned the sentry in the lobby was to call Dickstein's room on the house phone, let it ring twice, then hang up.

It rang a second time. Rostov and Tyrin stood still, silent, waiting.

It rang again.

They relaxed.

It stopped after the seventh ring.

Rostov said, "I wish he had a car for us to bug."

"I've got a shirt button."

"What?"

"A bug like a shirt button."

"I didn't know such things existed."

Galley 0144 Take 0002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3277; Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

"It's new."

"Got a needle? And thread?"

"Of course."

"Then go ahead."

Tyrin went to Dickstein's case and without taking the shirt out snipped off the second button, carefully removing all the loose thread. With a few swift strokes he sewed on the new button. His pudgy hands were surprisingly dexterous, Rostov observed.

Rostov's thoughts, however, were elsewhere. He wanted very much to do more to ensure that he would hear what Dickstein might say and do. The Israeli might find the bugs in the phone and the headboard; he would not wear the bugged shirt all the time. Rostov preferred to be more sure of things, and Dickstein had so far been maddeningly slippery: there just seemed nowhere you could hook onto him. Rostov had held a faint hope that somewhere in this room there would be a photograph of someone Dickstein particularly cared about, a girl . . .

"There . . ." Tyrin showed him his handiwork. The shirt was plain white nylon with the commonest sort of white buttons. The new one was indistinguishable from the others.

"Good," Rostov said. "Close the case."

Tyrin did so. "Anything else?"

"Take another quick look around for telltales. I can't believe Dickstein would go out without taking any precautions at all."

They searched again, quickly, silently, their movements practised and economical, showing no signs of the haste they both felt. There were dozens of ways of planting telltales . . . a hair lightly stuck across the crack of the door was the most simple; a scrap of paper jammed against the back of a drawer would fall out when the drawer was opened; a lump of sugar under a thick carpet would be silently crushed by a footstep; a penny behind the lining of a suitcase lid would slide from front to back if the case were opened . . .

They found nothing.

Rostov said, "All Israelis are paranoid. Why should he be different?"

"Maybe he's been pulled out."

At the moment Rostov tended to agree. "Yes . . . why else would he suddenly get careless?"

"He could have fallen in love—"

Rostov laughed. "Sure," he said, "and Joe Stalin could have been canonized by the Vatican. Let's get out of here."

He went out, and Tyrin followed, closing the door softly behind him.

▼

So it was a woman.

Pierre Borg was mystified and deeply worried.

Dickstein *never* had women.

Borg sat on a park bench under an umbrella. He had been unable to think in the Embassy, with phones ringing and people constantly asking him questions. The rain blew across the empty park in sheets, and every now and then a drop would land on the tip of his cigar and he would have to relight it. At least, though, he could hear himself think out here . . . It was the tension in Dickstein that made the man so fierce. Naturally the last thing one wanted was for him to learn how to relax. The sidewalk artists had followed Dickstein to a small apartment house in Chelsea where he had met a woman. "It's a sexual relationship, all right," one of them had said. "I *heard* it." The caretaker of the building had been interviewed, but he knew nothing about the woman except that she was a close friend of the people who

Book Press
Galley 0145 Take 0002 Version code 02-09
Job 0005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3277, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

owned the apartment.

The obvious conclusion, to someone else, was that Dickstein owned the flat (and had bribed the caretaker to lie); that he used it as a rendezvous; that he met someone from the opposition, a woman; that they made love and he told her secrets. Borg might have bought that idea too if he had found out about the woman some other way. But if Dickstein had suddenly become a traitor he would never have allowed Borg to become suspicious. He was far too clever. He would have covered his tracks, he would never had led the sidewalk artists straight to the flat without once looking over his shoulder. His behavior had innocence written all over it—which, in a way, was worse. He had met with Borg looking like the cat that got at the cream, either not knowing or not caring that his mood was all over his face. When Borg asked what was going on, Dickstein made jokes. Borg, he knew, was bound to have him tailed. Hours later he was screwing some girl who seemed to like it so much you could hear her all the way out in the *street*. The whole thing on Dickstein's part was so outrageously innocent . . . naive, actually . . . it had to be true.

All right, then . . . some woman had found a way to get past Dickstein's defenses and seduced him. Dickstein was reacting like a teenager because he never had a teenage. The important question was, who was she?

The Russians had files, too, and they ought to have assumed, like Borg, that Dickstein was invulnerable to a sexual approach. But maybe they thought it was at least worth a try. And just maybe they were right . . .

Once again, Borg's instinct was to pull Dickstein out immediately. And once again, he hesitated. If it had been any project other than this one, any agent other than Dickstein, he would have known what to do. But Dickstein was his man . . . the only man who had a chance to set up this operation. Borg still felt he had no option but to stick to his original scheme—wait until Dickstein had fully conceived his plan, then pull him out.

He could, though, at least have the London Station investigate the woman and find out all they could about her.

Meanwhile he would just have to hope that if she were an agent Dickstein would have the ingrained sense of his trade not to tell her anything.

It would be a dangerous time, but for now there was no more Borg could do.

His cigar went out, he hardly noticed. The park was completely deserted now. Borg sat on his bench, his body uncharacteristically still, holding the umbrella over his head, looking like a statue, worrying himself to death.

▼

The pleasure was over, Dickstein told himself: it was time to get back to work.

Entering his hotel room at ten o'clock in the morning, he realized that—incredibly—he had left no telltales. For the first time in twenty years as an agent, he had simply neglected to take elementary precautions. He stood now in the doorway, looking, and thinking about the shattering effect that she had had on him. Leaving her and going back to his world was like climbing into a familiar car that has been garaged for a year: he had to let the old habits, the old instincts, the old paranoia seep back into his mind.

He went into the bathroom and ran a tub, thinking that he now

Book Press
Galley 0146 Take 0002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3277, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

had a kind of emotional breathing-space . . . Suza was going back to work today. She was with BOAC, and her tour of duty would take her all the way around the world. She expected to be back in twenty-one days, but it might be longer. He had no idea where he might be in three weeks' time—which meant he did not know when he would see her again. But see her again he would, if he lived long enough.

Everything looked different now, past and future. The last twenty years of his life, never mind that he had shot people and been shot at, traveled all over the world, disguised himself and deceived people and managed fairly outrageous, clandestine coups, all seemed trivial.

He even wondered what he would do with the rest of his life, something he had not thought seriously of for years, and for starters had decided he would not be a spy anymore—but what then? It seemed all possibilities were open to him. He could stand for election to the Knesset, or start his own business, or simply stay on the kibbutz and make the best wine in Israel. Would he marry Suza? If he did, would they live in Israel? He found the uncertainty delicious, like wondering what you would be given for Christmas.

If I live, he thought. Suddenly, something new was added. He was afraid to die. Until now death had been something to avoid with all skill only because it constituted, so to speak, a losing move in the game. Now he *wanted,* wanted very badly, to live.

It would be terrible to lose his life so soon after she had saved it.

He got out of the bath, rubbed himself dry and dressed. Very well, first things first . . . the way to begin to keep his life was to win this fight.

His next move was a phone call. He considered the hotel phone, decided to start being extra careful here and now, and went out to find a call box.

The weather had changed. Yesterday had emptied the sky of rain, and now it was pleasantly sunny and warm. He passed the phone booth nearest to the hotel and went on to the next one. Extra careful. He looked up Lloyd's of London in the directory and dialed their number.

"Lloyd's, good morning."

"I require some information about a ship—"

"That's Lloyd's of London Press—I'll put you through."

While he waited Dickstein looked out the windows of the phone booth at the London traffic, and wondered whether Lloyd's would really give him what he wanted. It had better—he had no idea where else to go for the information. He tapped his foot nervously. Someone had scrawled "Joan sucks" on the cover of the phone book. The coldness of it made him sick. Better watch it . . . he was getting altogether too delicate—

"Lloyd's of London Press."

"Good morning, I'd like some information about a ship."

"What sort of information?" the voice said, with—Dickstein thought—a trace of suspicion.

"I want to know whether she was built as part of a series; and if so, the names of her sister ships, who owns them, and their present locations. As well as plans, if possible."

"I'm afraid I can't help you there."

"Why not?"

Book Press
Galley 0147 Take 0002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3277, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

"We don't keep plans, that's Lloyd's Register, and they only give them out to owners."

"But the other information? The sister ships?"

"Can't help you there either."

Dickstein wanted to get the man by the throat. "Then who can?"

"We're the only people who have such information."

"And you keep it secret?"

"We don't give it out over the phone."

"Wait a minute, you mean you can't help me *over the phone.*"

"That's right."

"But you can if I write or call personally." Ah, bureaucrats . . . worse than spies.

"Um . . . yes, this inquiry shouldn't take too long, so you could call personally."

"Give me the address." He wrote it down. "And you could get these details while I wait?"

"I think so."

"All right. I'll give you the name of the ship now, and you should have all the information ready by the time I get there. Her name is *Coparelli.*" He spelled it.

"And your name?"

"Ed Rodgers."

"The company?"

"Science International."

"Will you want us to bill the company?"

"No, I'll pay by personal check."

"So long as you have some identification."

"Of course. I'll be there in an hour. Goodbye."

Dickstein hung up and left the phone box, crossed the road to a café and ordered coffee and a sandwich. He had lied to Borg, of course. He knew very well how he planned to hijack the *Coparelli.* He would buy one of the sister ships—if there were such—and take his team on it to meet the *Coparelli* at sea. After the hijack, instead of the dicey business of transferring the cargo from one ship to another offshore, he would sink his own ship and transfer its papers to the *Coparelli.* He would also paint out the *Coparelli's* name and over it paint the name of the sunken sister ship. And then he would sail what would appear to be his own ship into Haifa.

It was good, he felt, though of course still only the rudiments of a plan. What would he do about the crew of the *Coparelli?* How would the apparent loss of the *Coparelli* be explained? How would he avoid an international inquiry into the loss at sea of tons of uranium ore? There would be a major search for any large ship that was thought to have sunk. With uranium aboard, the search would attract publicity and so be even more thorough. And what if the searchers found not the *Coparelli* but the sister ship which was supposed to belong to him? There were still too many unknowns in the equation. Either the sandwich or the problem had stuck in his stomach: he took an indigestion tablet.

He turned his mind to evading the opposition. Had he covered his tracks well enough? Only Borg could know of his plans. Even if his hotel room were bugged—even if the phone booth nearest the hotel were bugged—still nobody else could know of his specific interest in the *Coparelli.* He had been extra careful.

He was sipping his coffee when a customer, on his way out of the caféœ jogged his elbow, causing him to spill coffee all down the front of his spanking clean shirt

▼

"*Coparelli,*" said David Rostov excitedly. "Where have I

Book Press
Galley 0148 Take 0002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3277, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

heard of a ship called the *Coparelli?*"

Yasif Hassan said, "It's familiar to me, too."

"Let me see that computer printout."

They were in the back of a listening van parked near the Jacobean Hotel. The van, which belonged to the KGB, was dark blue, without markings, and very dirty. Powerful radio equipment, honed in on Dickstein's shirt bug, occupied most of the space inside, but there was a small compartment behind the front seats where Rostov and Hassan could squeeze in. Tyrin was at the wheel. Large speakers above their heads were giving out an undertone of distant conversation and the occasional clink of crockery. A moment ago there had been an incomprehensible exchange, with someone apologizing for something and Dickstein saying it was all right, it had been an accident. Nothing distinct had been said since then.

Rostov's pleasure at being able to listen to Dickstein's conversation was marred only by the fact that Hassan was listening too. Hassan had become altogether too damn self-confident since his triumph in discovering that Dickstein was in England; now he apparently thought he was a professional spy, like everyone else. He had insisted on being in on every detail of the London operation, threatening to complain to Cairo if he were excluded. Rostov had considered calling his bluff, but that would have meant another head-on collision with Feliks Vorontsov, and Rostov did not want to go over Feliks's head to Andropov again so soon after the last time. So he had settled on an alternative: he would allow Hassan to come along, and caution him against reporting anything to Cairo.

Hassan, who had been reading the printout, passed it across to Rostov. While the Russian was looking through the sheets, the sound from the speakers changed to street noises for a minute or two, followed by more dialogue.

Where to, guy?

Dickstein's voice: *Lime Street.*

Rostov looked up and spoke to Tyrin. "That'll be Lloyd's, the address he was given over the phone. Let's go."

Tyrin started the van and moved off, heading east toward the City district. Rostov returned to the printout.

Hassan said pessimistically, "Lloyd's will probably give him a written report."

Tyrin said, "The bug at least is working very well . . . so far."-He was driving with one hand and biting the fingernails of the other.

Meanwhile Rostov found what he was looking for. "Here it is . . . the *Coparelli.* Good. *Very* good."

Hassan said, "Show me."

Rostov hesitated momentarily, realized there was no way he could get out of it and smiled at Hassan as he pointed to the last page. "Under NON-NUCLEAR. Two hundred tons of yellowcake to go from Antwerp to Genoa aboard the motor vessel *Coparelli.*"

"That's *it,* then, that's Dickstein's target—"

"But if you report this to Cairo, Dickstein will probably switch to a different target. Hassan—"

Hassan's color deepened with anger. "You've said all that once," he said coldly. "I resent the implication that our security is—"

"Okay, okay," Rostov said quickly, and thought, Damn it, you have to be a diplomat too in this business. "All right," he said, "now we know *what* he's going to steal, and *who* he's going to steal it from. I call that some progress."

Book Press
Galley 0149 Take 0002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3277, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

"We don't know when, where, or how," Hassan said.

Rostov nodded. "All this business about sister ships must have something to do with it, though at the moment I don't see how . . ."

Two and sixpence, please, guv.

Keep the change.

"Find somewhere to park, Tyrin," said Rostov.

"That's not so easy around here—"

"If you can't find a space, just *stop*. Nobody cares if you get a parking ticket—"

Good morning. My name's Ed Rodgers. Ah, yes. Just a moment, please. Your report has just been typed, Mr. Rodgers. And here's the bill.

You're very efficient.

Hassan said, "It *is* a written report, just as I suspected—"

Thank you very much.

Goodbye, Mr. Rodgers.

"He's not very chatty, is he?" said Tyrin.

"Good agents never are. You might bear that in mind," Rostov told him.

"But now," Hassan said, "we won't know the answers to his questions."

"Makes no difference," Rostov told him. "It's just occurred to me"—he smiled—"we know the questions, all we have to do is ask the same questions ourselves and we should get the answers he got . . . Listen, he's on the street again. Go around the block, Tyrin, let's try to bring him in view."

The van moved off, but before it had completed a circuit of the block the street noises faded again.

Can I help you, sir?

"He's gone into a shop," Hassan said.

Rostov looked at Hassan. When his pride was not in the forefront—which was rare—he was clearly thrilled about the paraphernalia of espionage—the van, the bugs, the tailing . . . Conceivably he would keep his mouth shut if only so that he could continue to be in the game with the Russians—

I need a new shirt.

I can see that, sir. What is it?

Coffee.

It should have been sponged right away, sir. It will be very difficult to get the stain out now. Did you want a similar shirt?

Yes. Plain white nylon, button cuffs, collar size fourteen and a half.

Here we are. This one is thirty-two and sixpence.

That's fine.

Tyrin said, "I'll bet he charges it to expenses."

Thank you. Would you like to put it on now, perhaps?

Yes, please.

The fitting room is just through here.

Footsteps, then a brief silence.

Would you like a bag for the old one, sir?

Perhaps you'd throw it away for me.

"That button cost two thousand rubles!" Tyrin said.

Certainly, sir.

"That's it," Hassan said. "We won't get anymore now."

"Two thousand rubles!" Tyrin said again.

Rostov said, "I think we got our money's worth."

Book Press
Galley 0150 Take 0002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3277, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

"Where are we heading?" Tyrin asked.

"Back to the Embassy," Rostov told him. "I want to stretch my legs. I can't feel the left one at all. We've done a good morning's work."

As Tyrin drove west, Hassan said thoughtfully, "We need to find out where the *Coparelli* is right now."

"The squirrels can do that," Rostov said.

"Squirrels?"

"Desk workers in Moscow Center. They sit on their behinds all day, never doing anything more risky than crossing Granovsky Street in the rush hour and get paid more than agents in the field."

Rostov decided to use the opportunity to further Hassan's education. After all, the Arab was clearly eager . . . "Remember, an agent should never spend time acquiring information that is public knowledge. Anything in books, reports and files can be found by the squirrels. Since a squirrel is cheaper to run than an agent—not because of salaries but because of support work—the Committee always prefers a squirrel to do a given job of work if he can. Always use the squirrels. Nobody will think you're being lazy."

Hassan smiled coolly, an echo of his old, languid self. "Dickstein doesn't work that way."

"No, the Israelis have a completely different approach. Besides, I suspect Dickstein isn't much of a team man."

"How long will the squirrels take to get us the *Coparelli*'s location?"

"Maybe a day. I'll put in the inquiry as soon as we get to the Embassy."

Tyrin spoke over his shoulder. "Can you put through a fast requisition at the same time?"

"What do you need?"

"Six more shirt buttons."

"Six?"

"If they're like the last lot, five won't work."

Hassan laughed. "Is this Communist efficiency?"

"There's nothing wrong with Communist efficiency," Rostov told him. "It's *Russian* efficiency we suffer from."

As the van entered Embassy Row and was waved on by the duty policeman, Hassan asked, "What do we do when we've located the *Coparelli?*"

"Obviously," said Rostov, "we put a man aboard."

nine

THE DON HAD had a bad day.

It had started at breakfast in his palatial home in Buffalo, New

Book Press
Galley 0151 Take 0002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3277, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

York, with the news that some of his people had been busted in the night. The police had stopped and searched a truck containing two thousand five hundred pairs of furlined bedroom slippers and five kilos of adulterated heroin. The load, on its way from Canada to New York City, had been hit at Albany. The smack was confiscated and the driver and co-driver jailed.

The stuff did not belong to the don. However, the team that did the run paid dues to him, and in return expected protection. They would want him to get the men out of jail and get the heroin back. It was close to impossible. He might have been able to do it if the

Book Press
Galley 0152 Take 0002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3277, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

bust had involved only the state police; but if only the state police had been involved, the bust would not have happened.

And that was just the start of it. His eldest son had wired from Harvard for more money, having gambled away the whole of his next semester's allowance weeks before classes started. He had spent the morning finding out why his chain of restaurants was losing money, and the afternoon explaining to his mistress why he could not take her to Europe this year. Finally his doctor told him he had gonorrhea, again.

He looked in his dressing-room mirror, adjusting his bow tie

Book Press
Galley 0153 Take 0002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3277, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

and said to himself, "What a crummy day." A crummy day in Buffalo—mid-America was no protection.

It had turned out that the New York City police had been behind the bust: they had passed the tip to the state police in order to avoid trouble with the city Mafia. The city police could have ignored the tip, of course: the fact that they did not was a sign that the tip had originated with someone important, like the Drug Enforcement Agency of the Treasury Department. The don had assigned lawyers to the jailed drivers, sent people to visit their families and opened negotiations to buy back the heroin from the police.

Book Press
Galley 0154 Take 0002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3277, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

He put on his tuxedo. He liked to dress for dinner; he always had, ever since he'd gotten rich. He did not know what to do about his son Giovanni. Why wasn't he home for the summer? College boys were supposed to come home for the summer. The don had thought of sending somebody to see Giovanni; but then the boy would think his father was only worried about the money. It looked like he would have to go himself.

The phone rang. "Yes."

"Gate here, sir. I got an Englishman asking for you, won't give his name."

"So send him away," said the don, still thinking about Giovanni.

Book Press
Galley 0155 Take 0002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3277, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

"He said to tell you he's a friend from Oxford University."

"I don't know anybody—wait a minute. What's he look like?"

"Little guy with glasses, looks like a bum."

"No kidding!" The don's face broke into a smile. "Bring him in—and put out the red carpet."

▼

It had been a year for seeing old friends and observing how they had changed; but Al Cortone's appearance was the most startling. The increase in weight that had just begun when he returned from Frankfurt seemed to have continued steadily through the years, and now he went at least two hundred and fifty pounds. There was a look of sensuality about his puffy face that had been only hinted at in 1947 and totally absent during the war. And he was completely bald. Dickstein thought this was unusual among Italians.

Dickstein could remember, as clearly as if it were yesterday, the had been learning about the psychology of a cornered animal. When there is no longer any possibility of running away, you realize how fiercely you can fight. Landed in a strange country, separated from his unit, advancing across unknown terrain with his rifle in his hand, Dickstein had drawn on reserves of patience, cunning and ruthlessness he had no idea he had. He had lain for half an hour in that thicket, watching the abandoned tank which he *knew*—without understanding how—was the bait in a trap. He had spotted the one sniper and was looking for another when the Americans came roaring up. That made it safe for Dickstein to shoot—if there were another sniper, he would fire at the obvious target, the Americans, rather than search the bushes for the source of the shot.

Book Press
Galley 0156 Take 0002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3277, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

So, without especially intending to, with his thoughts primarily, and understandably, on his own survival, Dickstein had coincidentally saved Al Cortone's life.

Cortone had been even newer to the war than Dickstein, and had learned just as fast. They were both streetwise kids applying old principles to new terrain. For a while they fought together, and cursed and laughed and talked about women together. When Sicily was taken, they had sneaked off during the buildup for the next push and visited Cortone's Sicilian cousins.

It was those cousins that were the focus of Dickstein's interest now.

They had helped him once before, in 1948 . . . He'd known they had acquired vast stocks of weapons during the fighting on the island—weapons abandoned by Italian and German troops as well as those taken from battlefields. He had wanted those weapons for Israel but had no money to buy them. So he'd found Arab buyers for the guns and introduced them to the cousins. The Sicilians had made a small fortune from the sale. In return for Dickstein's services, they had told him exactly how and where delivery was to be made, and Dickstein had stolen the whole consignment from the Arabs. It was an operation after the Sicilians' own hearts. There had been profit for them in that, so Dickstein had gone straight to them with the plan.

This project, of course, was very different: he wanted a favor and he could offer no percentage. Consequently he had to go to Al and call in the twenty-four-year-old debt. He was not at all sure it would work. Cortone was rich now. The house was large—in England it would have been called a mansion—with beautiful grounds inside a high wall and guards at the gate. There were three cars in the gravel drive, and Dickstein had lost count of the servants. A rich and comfortable middle-aged American might not be in a hurry to get involved in Mediterranean political shenanigans, even for the sake of a man who had saved his life.

Cortone, though, seemed very pleased to see him, which at least was a good start. They slapped each other on the back, just as they had on that November Sunday in 1947, and kept saying, "How the hell are you?" to each other without giving each other time to answer.

Cortone looked Dickstein up and down. "You're the same, Nat. I lost all my hair and gained a hundred pounds, and you haven't even turned gray. What have you been up to?"

"I went to Israel. I'm sort of a farmer, and you?"

"Doing business, you know? . . . Come on, let's eat and talk."

The meal was a strange affair. Mrs. Cortone sat at the foot of the table without speaking or being spoken to throughout. Two ill-mannered boys wolfed their food and left early with a roar of sports-car exhaust. Cortone ate large quantities of the heavy Italian food and drank several glasses of California red wine. But the most intriguing character was a well-dressed, shark-faced man who behaved sometimes like a friend, sometimes like an adviser and sometimes like a servant. Once Cortone called him a counselor. No business was talked about during dinner. Instead they told war stories—Cortone telling most of them. He also told the story of Dickstein's 1948 coup against the Arabs—he had heard it from his cousins and had been as delighted as they. The tale had become embroidered in the retelling.

Dickstein decided that Cortone was genuinely glad to see him. Maybe the man was bored. He should be, if he ate dinner every night with a silent wife, two surly boys and a shark-faced counselor. Dickstein did all he could to keep the bonhomie going: he wanted Cortone in a good mood when he asked his favor.

Book Press
Galley 0157 Take 0002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3277, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

Afterward Cortone and Dickstein sat in leather armchairs in a den and a butler brought brandy and cigars. Dickstein refused both.

"You used to be a hell of a drinker," Cortone said.

"It was a hell of a war," Dickstein replied. The butler left the room. Dickstein watched Cortone sip brandy and pull on the cigar, and thought that the man ate, drank and smoked joylessly, as though if he did these things long enough he would eventually acquire the taste. Recalling the sheer fun the two of them had had with the Sicilian cousins, Dickstein wondered whether there were any real people left in Cortone's life.

Suddenly Cortone laughed out loud. "I remember every minute of that day in Oxford. Hey, did you ever make it with that professor's wife, the Ay-rab you were so gone on . . . ?Jesus, I can still see your face when—"

"No." Dickstein barely smiled. "She's dead, now."

"I'm sorry."

"A strange thing happened, though . . . I went back there, to that house by the river, and met her daughter . . . She looks just like Eila used to."

"No kidding. And . . ." Cortone leered. "And you made it with the daughter—I don't believe it!"

Dickstein looked at him. "I want to marry her. I plan to ask her . . . next time I see her."

"Will she say yes?"

"I'm not sure. I think so. I'm older than she is—"

"Age doesn't matter . . . you could put on a little weight, though. A woman likes to have something to get hold of, you know?"

The conversation was annoying Dickstein. Cortone was so set on keeping it light, revealing nothing of himself. It might have been the habit of years of being close-mouthed because so much of his "family business" was criminal business and he did not want Dickstein to know it (though Dickstein had already guessed); and there might have been something else . . . a fear of revealing some deep secret disappointment he just couldn't share . . . Anyhow, the open, garrulous, excitable young man had long since disappeared inside this older fat man. Dickstein wanted to say, Tell me what gives you pleasure, who you love, how goes your life, I mean really . . . Instead, he said, "Do you remember what you said to me in Oxford?"

"Sure. I told you I owe you a debt, you saved my life." Cortone inhaled on his cigar.

Thank god, at least that hadn't changed. "I'm here to ask for your help, Al . . ."

"Go ahead and ask."

"Mind if I put the radio on?"

Cortone smiled. "This place is swept for bugs at least once a week."

"Good," but he put the radio on all the same. "Cards on the table, Al. I work for Israeli Intelligence."

Cortone's eyes stayed steady. "I could have guessed."

"I'm running an operation in the Mediterranean in November. It's . . ." Dickstein wondered how much he needed to tell, and decided very little. He'd build it up, though . . . "It's something that could mean the end of the wars in the Middle East." He paused, remembering a phrase Cortone had always used . . . "And I ain't shittin' you."

Book Press
Galley 0158 Take 0002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3277, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

Cortone laughed. "If you were going to shit me, I figure you would have been here doing it sooner than twenty years."

"It's important that the operation not be traceable back to Israel. I need a base to work from. I need a big house on the coast with a landing for small boats and an anchorage not too far offshore for a big ship. While I'm there—a couple of weeks, maybe more—I need to be protected from inquiring police and any other nosy officials. I can think of only one place where I could get all that, and only one person who could get it for me."

Cortone nodded. "I know a place—a derelict house in Sicily. It's not exactly plush, kid . . . no heat, no phone—but it could fill the bill."

Dickstein smiled. "That sounds terrific, perfect. Exactly what I wanted. Thank you, Al. I mean it. It's what I came to ask for."

"You're kidding," said Cortone. "That's *all*?"

TO: Head of Mossad
FROM: Head of London Station
DATE: 29 July 1968

Suza Ashford is almost certainly an agent of an Arab intelligence service.

She was born in Oxford, England, 17 June 1944, the only child of Mr. (now Professor) Stephen Ashford (born Guildford, England, 1908) and Eila Zuabi (born Tripoli, Lebanon, 1925). The mother, who died in 1954, was a full-blooded Arab. The father is what is known in England as an "Arabist"; he spent most of the first forty years of his life in the Middle East and was an explorer, entrepreneur and linguist. He now teaches Semitic Languages at Oxford University, where he is well known for his pro-Arab views, however moderately stated.

It is believed, therefore, that although Suza Ashford is strictly speaking a U.K. national, her loyalties may be assumed to lie with the Arab cause.

She works as an air hostess for BOAC on intercontinental routes, traveling frequently to such places as Tehran, Singapore and Zurich, and consequently has numerous opportunities to make contacts with Arab diplomatic staff. She is a strikingly beautiful young woman (see attached photograph—which, however, does not do her justice, according to the field agent on this case). She is sexually liberated but not unusually so by the standards of her profession nor by those of her generation in London. For her to have sexual relations with a man for the purpose of obtaining information might be an unpleasant experience but hardly a traumatic one.

Yasif Hassan, the agent who made Dickstein in Luxembourg, studied under her father, Professor Ashford, at the same time as Dickstein, and has remained in occasional contact with Ashford in the intervening years. He may have visited Ashford—a man answering his description *did* so visit—about the time Dickstein's affair with Suza Ashford began.

I recommend that surveillance be continued.

(Signed)
Robert Jakes

TO: Head of London Station
FROM: Head of Mossad
DATE: 30 July 1968

Book Press
Galley 0159 Take 0002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 per 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3277, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

I cannot understand why you do not recommend we eliminate her.

(Signed)

Pierre Borg

TO Head of Mossad

FROM: Head of London Station

DATE: 31 July 1968

I do not recommend eliminating Suza Ashford for the following reasons:

1. The evidence against her is strong but circumstantial.

2. From what I know of Dickstein, I doubt very much that he has given her any information, even if he is romantically involved.

3. If we eliminate her the other side will begin looking for another way to get at Dickstein. Better the devil we know.

4. We may be able to use her to feed misinformation to the other side.

5. I do not like to kill on the basis of circumstantial evidence. We are not barbarians. We are Jews.

6. If we kill a woman Dickstein loves, I think he will kill you, me and everyone else involved.

(Signed)

Robert Jakes

TO: Head of London Station

FROM: Head of Mossad

DATE: 1 August 1968

Do it your way.

(Signed)

Pierre Borg

POSTSCRIPT (marked PERSONAL):

Your point 5 is *very* noble, touching, but remarks like that will not get you promoted in this man's army.—P.B.

▼

She was a small, old, ugly, dirty, cantankerous bitch.

Rust bloomed like a skin rash in great orange blotches all over her hull. If there had ever been any paint on her upperworks it had long ago been peeled away and blasted off and dissolved by the wind and the rain and the sea. Her starboard gunwale had been badly buckled just aft of the prow in an old collision, and nobody had ever bothered to straighten it out. Her funnel bore a layer of grime ten years thick. Her deck was scored and dented and stained; and although it was swabbed often, it was never swabbed thoroughly, so that there were traces of past cargoes—grains of corn, splinters of timber, bits of rotting vegetation and fragments of sacking—hidden behind lifeboats and under coils of rope and inside cracks and joints and holes. On a warm day she tended to smell foul.

She was some 2,500 tons, 200 feet long and a little over 30 feet broad. There was a tall radio mast in her blunt prow. Most of her deck was taken up by two large hatches opening into the main cargo holds. There were three cranes on deck: one forward of the hatches, one aft and one in between. The wheelhouse, officers' cabins, galley and crew's quarters were in the stern clustered around the funnel. She had a single screw driven by a six-cylinder diesel engine theoretically capable of developing 2,450 b.h.p. and maintaining a service speed of thirteen knots.

Book Press
Galley 0160 Take 0002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3277, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

Fully loaded, she would pitch badly. In ballast she would yaw like the very devil. Either way she would roll through seventy degrees of arc at the slightest provocation. The quarters were cramped and poorly ventilated, the galley was often flooded and the engine room had been designed by Hieronymous Bosch.

She was crewed by thirty-one officers and men, not one of whom had a good word to say for her.

The only passengers were a colony of cockroaches in the galley, a few mice and several hundred rats.

Nobody loved her, and her name was *Coparelli.*

TEN

NAT DICKSTEIN went to New York to become a shipping tycoon. It took him all morning.

He looked in the Manhattan phone book and selected a lawyer with an address on the lower East Side. Instead of calling on the phone he went there personally, and was satisfied when he saw that the lawyer's office was one room over a Chinese restaurant. The lawyer's name was Mr. Chung.

Dickstein and Chung took a cab to the Park Avenue offices of Liberian Corporation Services, Inc., a company set up to assist people who wanted to register a Liberian corporation but had no intention of ever going within three thousand miles of Liberia. Dickstein was not asked for references, and he was not required to establish that he was honest or solvent or sane. For a fee of five hundred dollars—which Dickstein paid in cash—they registered the Savile Shipping Corporation of Liberia. The fact that at this stage Dickstein did not own so much as a rowboat was of no interest to anyone.

The company's headquarters was listed as No. 80 Broad Street, Monrovia, Liberia; and its directors were P. Satia, E.K. Nugba and J.D. Boyd, all residents of Liberia. This was also the headquarters address of most Liberian corporations, and the address of the Liberian Trust Company. Satia, Nugba and Boyd were founding directors of many such corporations; indeed this was the way they made their living. They were also employees of the Liberian Trust Company.

Mr. Chung asked for fifty dollars and cab fare. Dickstein paid him in cash and told him to take the bus.

And so, without giving an address, Dickstein had created a legitimate shipping company which could not be traced back either to himself or to the Mossad. . . .

Satia, Nugba and Boyd resigned twenty-four hours later, as was the custom; and that same day the notary public of Montserrado county, Liberia, stamped an affidavit which declared that total control of the Savile Shipping Corporation now lay in the hands of one Andre Papagopolous.

By this time Dickstein was riding the bus from Zurich airport into town, on his way to meet Papagopolous for lunch.

When he had time to reflect on it, even he was shaken by the complexity of his plan, the number of pieces that had to be made to *fit,* the number of people who had to be persuaded, bribed or coerced into performing their parts. He had been successful so far, first with Stiffcollar and then Al Cortone, not to mention Lloyd's of London and Liberian Corporation Services, Inc., but from now on . . .

Book Press
Galley 0161 Take 0002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 0● Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3277, Book Press: Triple, 13/14x26 T.R., 606

Papagopolous was in some ways the greatest challenge: a man as elusive, clever and ruthless in his fashion as Dickstein was in his. He had been born in 1912 in a village that during his boyhood was variously Turkish, Bulgarian and Greek. His father was a fisherman. In his teenage he graduated from fishing to ●ther kinds of maritime work, mostly smuggling. After World War Two he turned up in Ethiopia, buying for knock-down prices the piles of surplus military supplies that had suddenly become worthless when the war ended. He bought rifles, handguns, machine guns, antitank guns, as well as ammunition for all of these. He then contacted the Jewish Agency in Cairo and sold the arms at an enormous profit to the underground Israeli army. He arranged shipping—for which his smuggling background was invaluable—and delivered the goods to Palestine. He always asked if they wanted more.

Which was how he had met Nat Dickstein.

He so●n moved on, to Farouk's Cairo and thence to Switzerland. His Israeli deals had marked a transition from totally illegal business to dealings which were at worst shady and at times quite legitimate. Now he called himself a ship broker, and that was most—though by no means all—of his business.

He had no address. He could be reached via half a dozen telephone numbers all over the world, but he was never *there*—always, somebody took a message and Papagopolous called one back. Many people knew him and trusted him, especially in the shipping business—he never let anyone down—but this trust was based ●n reputation, not personal contact. He lived well but quietly, and Nat Dickstein was one of the few people in the world who knew of his single vice, which was that he liked to go to bed with many young women—say, ten or twelve. He also had no sense of humor.

Dickstein got off the bus at the railway station, where Papagopolous was waiting for him on the pavement. He was a big man, ●live-skinned with thin dark hair combed over a growing bald patch. On a bright summer day in Zurich he wore a navy blue suit, pale blue shirt and dark blue striped tie. He had small dark eyes.

They shook hands. Dickstein said, "How's business?"

"Up and down." Papagopolous smiled. "Mostly up."

They walked through the clean, tidy streets, looking like a managing director and his accountant. Dickstein inhaled the cold air. "I like this town," he said.

"I've booked a table at the Veltliner Keller in the old city," Papagopolous said. "I know you don't care about food, but I do."

Dickstein said, "You've been to the Pelikanstrasse?"

"Yes."

"Good." The Zurich office of Liberian Corporation Services, Inc., was in the Pelikanstrasse. Dickstein had asked Papagopolous to go there to register himself as president and chief executive of Savile shipping. For this he would receive ten thousand U.S. dollars, paid out of Mossad's acc●unt in a Swiss bank to Papagopolous's account in the same branch of the same bank—a transaction very difficult for anyone to discover.

Papagopolous said, "But I didn't promise to do anything else. You may have wasted y●ur money."

"I'm sure I didn't."

They reached the restaurant. Dickstein had expected that Papagopolous would be known there, but there was no sign of recognition from the head waiter, and Dickstein reminded himself, of course, he's not known anywhere.

Book Press
Galley 0162 Take 0002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., ▮N 119, SN 3277, ▮ook Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

They ordered food and wine. Dickstein noted with regret that the domestic Swiss white wine was still better than the Israeli.

While they ate, Dickstein explained Papagopolous's duties as president of Savile Shipping.

"One—buy a small, fast ship, a thousand or fifteen hundred tons, small crew. Register her in Liberia." This would involve another visit to the Pelikanstrasse and a fee of about a dollar per ton. "For the purchase, take your percentage as a broker. Do some business with the ship, and take your broker's percentage on that. I don't care what the ship does so long as she completes a voyage by docking in Haifa on or before October 7. Dismiss the crew at Haifa. Do you want to take notes?"

Papagopolous smiled. "I think not."

The implication was not lost on Dickstein. Papagopolous was listening, but he had not yet agreed to do the job. Dickstein continued. "Two: buy any one of the ships on this list." He handed over a single sheet of paper bearing the names of the four sister ships of the *Coparelli*, with their owners and last known locations—the information he had gotten from Lloyd's. "Offer whatever price is necessary—I must have one of them. Take your broker's percentage. Deliver her to Haifa by October 7. Dismiss the crew."

Papagopolous was eating chocolate mousse, his smooth face imperturbable. He put down his spoon and put on gold-rimmed glasses to read the list. He folded the sheet of paper in half and set it on the table without comment. He was waiting for more.

Dickstein handed him another sheet of paper. "Three: buy this ship— the *Coparelli*. But you must buy her at exactly the right time. She sails from Antwerp on Sunday, November 17. We must buy her *after* she sails but *before* she passes through the Strait of Gibraltar."

Papagopolous looked dubious.

"Wait, let me give you the rest of it. Four: early in 1969 you sell ship No. 1, the little one, and ship No. 3, THE *Coparelli*. You get from me a certificate showing that ship No. 2 has been sold for scrap. You send that certificate to Lloyd's. You wind up Savile Shipping." Dickstein sipped his coffee.

"I gather what you want to do is make a ship disappear without a trace."

Dickstein nodded.

"As you must realize," Papagopolous went on, "all this is straightforward except for the purchase of the *Coparelli* while she is at sea. The normal procedure for the sale of a ship is for negotiations to take place, a price to be agreed on, and the documents drawn up. The ship goes into dry dock for inspection. When she's been pronounced satisfactory the documents are signed, the money is paid and the new owner takes her out of dry dock. Buying a ship while she is sailing is most irregular—"

"But not impossible."

"No, not impossible . . ."

Dickstein watched him.

He looked thoughtful, then said, "We would have to open negotiations, agree on the price and have the inspection arranged for a date after her November voyage. Then, when she has sailed, we say that the purchaser needs to spend the money immediately, perhaps for tax reasons. The buyer would then take out insurance against any major repairs which might prove necessary after the inspection. . . . but this is not the seller's concern. He is concerned about his reputation as a shipper. He will want cast-iron guarantees that his cargo will be delivered by the new owner of the *Coparelli*."

Book Press
Galley 0163 Take 0002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3277, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

"Would he accept a guarantee based on your personal reputation?"

"Of course. But why would I give such a guarantee?"

Dickstein looked at him. "I can promise you that the owner of the cargo will not complain."

Papagopolous made an open-handed gesture. "It is obvious that you are perpetrating some kind of a swindle here. You need me as a respectable front. That I can do. But you also want me to lay my reputation on the line and take your word that it will not suffer?"

"Yes. Listen. Let me ask you one thing. You trusted the Israelis once before, remember?"

"Of course."

"Did you ever regret it?"

Papagopolous smiled, remembering the old days. "It was the best decision I ever made."

"So, will you trust us again?" Dickstein found himself holding his breath.

"I had less to lose in those days. I was . . . thirty-five. But we did have a good deal of fun . . . And I must say, this is the most intriguing offer I've had in nearly twenty years . . . What the hell, then, I believe I'll do it."

Dickstein extended his hand across the restaurant table. Papagopolous shook it.

A waitress brought a little bowl of Swiss chocolates for them to eat with their coffee. Papagopolous took one, Dickstein refused.

"Details," Dickstein said. "Open an account for Savile Shipping at your bank here. The Embassy will put funds in as they are required. You report to me simply by leaving a written message at the bank. The note will be picked up by someone from the Embassy. If we need to meet and talk, we use the usual phone numbers."

"Agreed."

"I'm glad we're in business again."

Papagopolous was not letting it go so quickly . . . "Ship No. 2 is a sister ship of the *Coparelli* . . . I think I can perhaps guess what you're up to. There's one thing I'd like to know, though, even if I'm certain you won't tell me. What *kind* of cargo will the *Coparelli* be carrying?"

"You're right," Dickstein said. "I won't."

▼

Pyotr Tyrin looked gloomily at the *Coparelli* and said, "She's a grubby old ship."

Rostov did not reply. They were sitting in a rented Ford on a quay at Cardiff docks. The squirrels at Moscow Center had informed them that the *Coparelli* would make port there this day, and they were now watching her tie up. She was to unload a cargo of Swedish timber and take on a mixture of small machinery and cotton goods; it would take her some days.

"At least the mess decks aren't in the foc'sle," Tyrin muttered, more or less to himself.

"She's not *that* old," Rostov said.

Tyrin was surprised Rostov knew what he was talking about. Rostov continually surprised him with such odd bits of knowledge.

From the rear seat of the car Nik Bunin said, "Is that the front or the back of the boat?"

Book Press
Galley 0164 Take 0002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3277, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

Rostov and Tyrin looked at one another. "The back," Tyrin said. "They have a quaint name for it—the stern."

It was raining. The Welsh rain was even more persistent and monotonous than the English, and colder. Pyotr Tyrin was unhappy. It so happened that he had done two years in the Soviet Navy. That, plus the fact that he was the radio and electronics expert, made him the obvious choice as the man to be planted aboard the *Coparelli*. He did not want to go back to sea. In truth, the main reason he had applied to join the KGB was to get *out* of the navy. He hated the damp and the cold and the food and the discipline. Besides, he had a warm comfortable wife in an apartment in Moscow, and he missed her considerably.

Of course, there was no question of his saying no to Rostov.

"We'll get you on as radio operator, but you must take your own equipment as a fallback," Rostov said.

Tyrin wondered how this was to be managed. His approach would have been to find the ship's radio man, knock him on the head, throw him in the water and board the ship, saying, "I hear you need a new radio operator." No doubt Rostov would be able to come up with something a little more subtle . . . presumably that was why he was a colonel. . . .

The activity on deck had died down, and the *Coparelli*'s engines were quiet. Five or six sailors came across the gangplank in a bunch, laughing and shouting, and headed for the town. Rostov said, "See which pub they go to, Nik." Bunin got out of the car and followed the sailors.

Watching him go, Tyrin found himself depressed by the scene: the figures crossing the wet concrete quay with their raincoat collars turned up; the sounds of tugs hooting and men shouting nautical instructions and chains winding and unwinding; the stacks of pallets; the bare cranes like sentries; the smell of engine oil and ship's ropes and salt spray . . . it all put him too much in mind of the Moscow flat, the chair in front of the paraffin heater, salt fish and black bread, beer and vodka and an evening of television . . . He was also unable to share Rostov's irrepressible cheerfulness about the way the operation was going. Once again they had no idea where Dickstein was—even though they had not exactly lost him but had, on Rostov's orders, deliberately let him go. Now he was afraid of getting too close to Dickstein, of scaring the man off. "We'll follow the *Coparelli*, and Dickstein will come to us," Rostov had said. Hassan had argued with him, but Rostov had won. Though he had no contribution to make to such strategic discussions, he did think Rostov was probably correct but also that he had no reason to be so confident—

"Your first job is to befriend the crew," Rostov said, interrupting Tyrin's thoughts. "You're a radio operator. You suffered a minor accident aboard your last ship, the *Christmas Rose*—you broke your arm—and you were discharged here in Cardiff to convalesce. You received an excellent compensation payment from the owners and are spending the money and having a good time while it lasts. You say vaguely that you'll look for another job when your money runs out. You must discover two things: the identity of the radio man, and the anticipated date and time of departure of the ship."

"Fine," said Tyrin, though it was far from fine. Just *how* was he to "befriend" these people? He was not much of an actor, in his view. Would he have to play the part of a hearty hail-fellow-well-met? Suppose the crew of this ship thought him a bore, a lonely man trying to attach himself to their tight little group? What if they just plain did not like him . . .?

Book Press
Galley 0165 Take 0002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3277, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

Bunin was coming back across the quay then, and Rostov said, "Get in the back, let Nik drive." Tyrin got out and held the door for Nik. The young man's face was streaming with rain. He started the car, Tyrin got in. As the car pulled away Rostov turned around to speak to Tyrin in the back seat. "Here's a hundred pounds," he said, and handed over a roll of banknotes. "Don't spend it too carefully."

Bunin stopped the car opposite a small dockland pub on a corner. A sign outside, flapping gently in the wind, read, "Brains Beers." A smoky yellow light glowed behind the frosted-glass windows. There were, Tyrin supposed, worse places to be on a day like this.

"What nationality are the crew?" he said suddenly.

"Swedish," Bunin said.

Tyrin's false papers made him out to be Austrian. "What language should I use with them?"

"All Swedes speak English," Rostov told him. A moment of silence. "Any more questions? I want to get back to our friend Hassan before he gets up to any mischief," Rostov added.

"No more questions." Tyrin opened the car door.

Rostov said, "Speak to me when you get back to the hotel tonight—no matter how late. Good luck."

Tyrin slammed the car door, crossed the road to the pub. As he reached the entrance a man came out, and the warm smell of beer and tobacco engulfed Tyrin as he went inside.

It was a poky little place, with hard wooden benches around the walls and plastic tables nailed to the floor. Four of the sailors were playing darts in the corner, a fifth was at the bar calling out encouragement to them.

The barman nodded to Tyrin. "Good morning," Tyrin said. "A pint of lager, a large whiskey and a ham sandwich."

The sailor at the bar turned around and nodded pleasantly. Tyrin smiled. "Have you just made port?"

"Yes. The *Coparelli,*" the sailor replied.

"*Christmas Rose,*" Tyrin said. "She left me behind."

"You're lucky."

"I broke my arm."

"So?" said the Swedish sailor with a grin, "you can drink with the other one."

"I like that," Tyrin said. "Let me buy you a drink. What will it be?" . . .

Two days later they were still drinking. There were changes in the composition of the group as some sailors went on duty and others came ashore; and there was a short period between four A.M. and opening time when there was nowhere in the city, legal or illegal, where one could buy a drink . . . but otherwise life was one long pub crawl. Tyrin had forgotten how sailors could drink. He was dreading the hangover. He was glad, though, that he had not got into a situation where he felt obliged to go with prostitutes—the Swedes were interested in women, but not in whores. Tyrin would never have been able to convince his wife that he had caught venereal disease in the service of Mother Russia. The Swedes' other vice was gambling. Tyrin had now lost about fifty pounds of KGB money at poker and was so well in with the crew of the *Coparelli* that the previous night he had been invited aboard at two A.M. He had fallen asleep on the mess deck and they had left him there until eight bells.

Book Press
Galley 0166 Take 0002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3277. Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

Tonight would not be like that. The *Coparelli* was to sail on the morning tide, and all officers and men had to be aboard by midnight. It was now ten past eleven. The landlord of the pub was moving about the room collecting glasses, emptying ashtrays. Tyrin was playing dominoes with Lars, the radio operator. Actually they had abandoned the proper game and were now competing to see who could stand the most blocks in a line without knocking the lot down. Lars was very drunk, Tyrin was pretending to be. He was also very frightened about what he had to do in a few minutes' time, and skeptical of its outcome.

The landlord called out, "Time, gentlemen, please! Thank you very much."

Tyrin knocked his dominoes down, and laughed. Lars said, "You see—I am a steadier alcoholic than you."

The other crew were leaving. Tyrin and Lars stood up. Tyrin put his arm around Lars's shoulders and staggered with him out into the street.

The night air was cool and damp. From now on he had to stay very close to Lars . . . He hoped Bunin got his timing right, he hoped the car didn't break down, that Lars didn't get killed . . .

He began talking, fast, asking questions about Lars' home and family, keeping the two of them a few yards behind the main group of sailors.

They passed a blonde woman in a microskirt. She touched her left breast. "Hello, boys, fancy a cuddle?"

"Not tonight, sweetheart," Tyrin thought and kept walking. He must not let Lars stop and chat . . . timing, it was the timing. Nik, where are you—?

There. They approached a dark blue Ford Capri 2000 parked at the roadside with its lights out. As the interior light flashed on and off Tyrin glimpsed the face of the man at the wheel. Nik Bunin. Tyrin took a flat white cap from his pocket and put it on, the signal that Bunin was to go ahead. When the sailors had passed on the car started up and moved away in the opposite direction.

Not long now.

"I have a fiancée . . ." Lars was mumbling.

Oh, no, don't start that.

Lars giggled. "She has . . . hot pants."

"You going to marry her?" Tyrin was peering ahead listening, talking only to keep Lars close.

"What for?" said the faithful Lars.

"Is she faithful?"

"Better be or I slit her throat."

"I thought Swedish people believed in free love . . ." Tyrin was saying anything that came to mind . . .

"Free love, yes . . . but she better be faithful."

"I see."

"I can explain . . . just a little fuzzy . . ."

Come on, Nik, get it *over* with . . .

One of the sailors in the group stopped to urinate in the gutter while the others stood around making ribald remarks, laughing. Tyrin wished the man would hurry up—the timing, the timing—but he seemed as if he would go on forever.

At last he finished, they all walked on.

Tyrin heard a car.

He tensed, Lars said, "What's matter?"

Book Press
Galley 0167 Take 0002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3277, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

"Nothing." Tyrin saw the headlights. The car was moving steadily toward them in the middle of the road. The sailors moved onto the sidewalk to get out of its way. It wasn't right, it shouldn't be like this, it wouldn't work this way . . . suddenly Tyrin was confused, panicky—then saw the outline of the car more clearly as it passed beneath a street light, and he realized it was not the one he was waiting for, it was a patrolling police car. It went harmlessly by.

The end of the street opened into a wide, empty square, badly paved. There was no traffic about. The sailors headed straight across the middle of the square.

Now.

Come *on.*

They were halfway across—

A car came full tilt around a corner and into the square, headlights blazing. Tyrin tightened his grip on Lars's shoulder. The car was veering wildly.

"Drunk driver," Lars said thickly.

It was a Ford Capri and swung toward the bunch of sailors in front. They stopped laughing and scattered out of its way, shouting curses. The car turned away, then screeched around and accelerated dead straight for Tyrin and Lars.

"Look *out,*" Tyrin yelled.

When the car was almost on top of them he pulled Lars to one side, jerking the man off balance, and threw himself sideways. There was a stomach-turning thud, followed by a scream and crash of breaking glass. The car went by.

It's done, Tyrin thought. He scrambled to his feet and looked for Lars.

The sailor lay on the road a few feet away. Blood glistened in the lamplight.

Lars groaned.

He's alive, Tyrin thought. Thank god.

The car braked. One of its headlights had gone out—the one that he presumed had hit Lars. It coasted, as if the driver were hesitating. Then it gathered speed and, one-eyed, disappeared into the night.

Tyrin bent over Lars as the other sailors gathered around, speaking excitedly in Swedish. Tyrin touched Lars's leg. He yelled out in pain.

"I think his leg is broken," Tyrin said. *Thank god that's all.*

Lights were going on in some of the buildings around the square. One of the officers said something, and a rating ran off toward a house presumably to call for an ambulance. More rapid dialogue and another went off in the direction of the dock.

Lars was bleeding, though not too heavily. The officer bent over him. He would not allow anyone to touch his leg.

The ambulance arrived within minutes, but it seemed forever to Tyrin—he had never killed a man, and he did not want to start now.

They put Lars on a stretcher. The officer got into the ambulance, and turned to speak to Tyrin. "You had better come."

"Yes . . .?"

"You seem to have saved his life."

Tyrin didn't answer as he got into the ambulance with the officer.

Book Press
Galley 0168 Take 0002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3277, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

They sped now through the wet streets, the flashing blue light on the roof casting an unpleasant glow over the buildings. Tyrin sat in the back, unable to look at Lars or the officer, unwilling to look out of the windows like a tourist, not knowing where to direct his eyes. He had done many unsavory things in the service of his country and Colonel Rostov—he had taped the conversations of lovers for blackmail, he had shown terrorists how to make bombs, he had helped capture people who would later be tortured—but he had never been forced to ride in the ambulance with his victim. He did not like it.

They arrived at the hospital. The ambulance men carried the stretcher inside. Tyrin and the officer were shown where to wait. And, suddenly, the rush was over. They had nothing to do but worry. Tyrin was astonished to look at the plain electric clock on the hospital wall and see that it was not yet midnight. It seemed hours since they had left the pub.

After a long wait a doctor came out. "He's broken his leg and lost some blood," he said. He seemed very tired. "He's got a lot of alcohol in him, which doesn't help. But he's young, strong and healthy. His leg will mend and he should be fit again in a few weeks."

Relief. Tyrin realized he was shaking with it.

The officer said, "Our ship sails in the morning—"

"I'm afraid he won't be on it," the doctor said. "Is your captain on his way here?"

"I sent for him."

"Fine," the doctor said, turned and left.

The captain arrived at the same time as the police. He spoke to the officer in Swedish while a young sergeant took down Tyrin's vague description of the car.

Afterward the captain approached Tyrin. "It seems you saved Lars from a much worse accident."

Tyrin wished people would stop saying that. "I tried to pull him out of the way but he fell . . . he was very drunk—"

"Horst here says you are between ships."

"Yes, sir."

"And that you are a fully qualified radio operator?"

"Yes, sir."

"I need a replacement for Lars. We have no time to seek elsewhere. Would you like to sail with us in the morning?"

▼

Pierre Borg said, "I'm pulling you out."

Dickstein whitened, stared at his boss.

"I want you to come back to Tel Aviv and run the operation from the office."

"You are crazy."

They stood beside the lake at Zurich. It was crowded with boats, their multicolored sails flapping prettily in the Swiss sunshine. Borg said, "No arguments, Nat."

"No arguments, *Pierre*. I won't be pulled out. Finish."

"I'm ordering you."

"And I'm telling you to go to hell."

"Look"—Borg took a deep breath—"your plan is complete. The only flaw in it is that you've been compromised. The opposition knows you're working, and they're trying to find you and screw up whatever it is you're doing. You can still run the project . . . all you have to do is keep your face out of it."

Book Press
Galley 0169 Take 0002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3277, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

"No," Dickstein said. "This isn't the kind of project where you can sit in an office and push all the buttons to make it go. It's too complex, too many variables. I have to be in the field myself to make quick decisions . . ." Dickstein stopped himself talking and began to think . . . *Why* do I want to do it myself? Am I really the only man in Israel who can pull this off? Is it just that I want the glory and—

Borg his thoughts. "Don't try to be a hero, Nat. You're too smart for that. You've survived too long for that . . . You're a professional, professionals follow orders—"

Dickstein shook his head. "You ought to know better than to take that line with me. Remember how Jews feel about people who always follow orders?"

"All right, so you were in a concentration camp—that doesn't give you the right to do whatever the hell you like for the rest of your life—"

Dickstein waved him off. "You can stop me. You can withdraw support. But you also won't get your precious uranium, because I'm not going to brief anyone else on how I've planned to do it."

Borg stared at him.

Dickstein watched Borg's expression. He had once had the embarrassing experience of seeing Borg have a row with his teenage son Dan. The boy had stood there, sullenly confident, while Borg tried to explain that going on peace marches was disloyal to father, mother, country and God, until Borg had strangled himself with his own inarticulate rage. Dan, like himself, had learned how to refuse to be bullied, and Borg would never quite know how to handle people who could not be bullied.

The script now called for Borg to go red in the face, to begin to yell . . . Suddenly Dickstein realized that this was not going to happen. Borg was remaining calm. Dickstein didn't like it.

Borg even allowed himself a smile. "Nat, I believe you're sleeping with one of their agents."

Dickstein stopped breathing, felt as if he'd been hit from behind with a giant fist. Suza was private, in a compartment separate from the rest of his life, and now Borg had invaded it. Violated it.

"You're misinformed," Dickstein said tonelessly.

"I'll give you the headlines," Borg said. "She's an Arab, her father's politics are pro-Arab, she travels all over the world in her cover job to have opportunity for contacts, and the agent Yasif Hassan, who made you in Luxembourg, is a friend of the family."

Dickstein turned to face him. "That's all?"

"All? You'd shoot people on that much evidence!"

"Not people I know."

"Has she gotten any information out of you?"

He refused to dignify it.

"You're getting angry because you know you've made a mistake—"

Dickstein turned away, looked across the lake, struggling to make himself calm—rage was Borg's act, not his. Finally he said, "Yes, I'm angry because I've made a mistake. I should have told you about her, not the other way around. I can understand how it might *seem* to you—"

"Seem? You mean you don't believe she's an agent?"

"Have you checked through Cairo?"

"You talk as if Cairo was my intelligence service. I can't just call and ask them to look her up in their files while I hold the line—"

Book Press
Galley 0170 Take 0002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3277, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

"But you've got a very good double agent in Egyptian Intelligence."

"How can he be good? Everybody seems to know about him."

"Stop playing games, since the Six-Day War even the newspapers say you have good doubles in Egypt. The point is, you haven't checked her."

Borg held up both hands, palms outward, in an apparent gesture of appeasement. "Okay, I'm going to check her with Cairo. It will take a little time. Meanwhile, You're going to write a report giving all details of your scheme and I'm going to put other agents on the job."

Dickstein thought of Al Cortone and Andre Papagopolous; neither of them would do what he'd agreed to do for anyone except Nat Dickstein . . . "It won't work, Pierre," he said quietly. "You've got to have that uranium, and I'm the only one who can get it for you."

"And if Cairo confirms her to be an agent?'-

"The answer will be negative." He had to believe that.

"But if it's not?"

"You'll kill her, I suppose."

"Oh, no." Borg pointed a finger at Dickstein's nose. "Oh, no, if she's an agent, *you* will."

With deliberate slowness, Dickstein took hold of Borg's wrist and removed the pointing finger from in front of his face. There was only the faintest perceptible tremor in his voice as he said, "Yes, I will kill her." And right after that, Pierre Borg and himself.

Eleven

IN THE BAR at Heathrow Airport Rostov ordered another round of drinks and decided to take a gamble on Yasif Hassan. The problem, still, was how to stop Hassan telling all he knew to an Israeli double agent in Cairo. Rostov and Hassan were both going back for interim debriefing so a decision needed to be made immediately. Rostov opted for disclosure to Hassan, at the same time invoking his desire to be considered a professional. The alternative was to provoke him, and just now he needed him as a ally, not a suspicious antagonist.

"Look at this," Rostov said as he showed Hassan a decoded message.

TO: Colonel David Rostov *via* London Residency
FROM: Moscow Center
DATE: 3 September 1968
Comrade Colonel:

We refer to your signal g/35–21a, requesting further information concerning each of four ships named in our signal 4/35–21.

The motor vessel Stromberg, 2500 tons, Dutch ownership and registration, has recently changed hands. She was purchased for DM1,500,000 by one Andre Papagopolous, a ship broker, on behalf of the Savile Shipping Corporation of Liberia.

Book Press
Galley 0171 Take 0002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3277, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

Savile Shipping was incorporated on 6 August this year at the New York office of Liberian Corporation Services, Inc., with a share capital of five hundred dollars. The shareholders are Mr. Lee Chung, a New York lawyer, and a Mr. Robert Roberts, whose address is care of Mr. Chung's office. The three directors were provided in the usual way by Liberian Corporation Services, and resigned the day after the company was organized, again in the usual way. The aforementioned Papagopolous was then named president and chief executive.

Savile Shipping has also bought the motor vessel Gil Hamilton, 1500 tons, for £80,000.

Our people in New York have interviewed Chung. He says that "Mr. Roberts" came into his office from the street, gave no address and paid his fee in cash. He appeared to be an Englishman. The detailed description is on file here, but it is not particularly helpful.

Papagopolous is known to us. He is a wealthy international businessman of indeterminate nationality. Shipbroking is his principal activity. He is believed to operate close to the fringes of the law. We have no address for him. There is considerable material in his file, much of it speculative. He is believed to have done business with Israeli Intelligence in 1948. Nevertheless, he has no known political affiliation.

We continue to gather information on all the ships in the list.

—Moscow Center.

Hassan gave the sheet of paper back to Rostov. "How do they get all this?"

Rostov began tearing the signal into shreds. "It's all on file somewhere or other. The sale of the *Stromberg* would have been notified to Lloyd's of London. Someone from our consulate in Liberia would have gotten the details on Savile Shipping from public records in Monrovia. Our New York people got Chung's address out of the phone book, and Papagopolous was on file in Moscow. None of it is secret, except the Papagopolous file. It's all knowing where to go to ask the questions. The squirrels specialize in that. It's all they do."

Rostov put the shreds of paper into a large glass ashtray and set fire to them. "Your people should have squirrels."

"I expect we're working on it."

"Suggest it yourself. It won't do you any harm. You might even get the job of setting it up, which could help your career."

Hassan nodded. "Perhaps I will."

Fresh drinks arrived—vodka for Rostov, gin for Hassan. Rostov was pleased that Hassan was responding well to his friendly overtures. He examined the cinders in the ashtray to make sure the signal had burned completely.

"You're assuming Dickstein is behind the Savile Shipping Corporation."

Book Press
Galley 0172 Take 0002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3277, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

"Yes."

"What will we do about the *Stromberg?*"

Rostov emptied his glass and set it on the table. "My guess is he wants the *Stromberg* so he can get an exact layout of the *Coparelli,* a sister ship."

"It will be an expensive blueprint."

"He can sell the ship again. However, he may also use the *Stromberg* in the hijack of the *Coparelli* . . . though as yet I'm not clear how . . ."

"Will you put a man aboard the *Stromberg,* like Tyrin on the *Coparelli?*"

"No point in it. Dickstein is sure to get rid of the old crew and fill the ship with Israeli sailors. I'll have to think of something else."

"Do we know where the Stromberg is now?"

"Do we know where the *Stromberg* is now?"

"I've asked the squirrels. They'll have an answer by the time I get to Moscow."

Hassan's flight was being called. He stood up. "We meet in Luxembourg?"

"I'll let you know. Listen, there's something I've got to say. Sit down again."

Hassan sat down.

"When we started to work together on Dickstein I was very hostile to you. I regret that now, I'm apologizing. But I must tell you there was a reason for it. You see, Cairo isn't secure. It's certain there are double agents in the Egyptian Intelligence apparatus. What I was concerned about—and still am—is that whatever you report to your superiors will get back, via a double agent, to Tel Aviv. That will enable Dickstein to know how close we are, move him to take evasive action."

"I appreciate your frankness."

Of course you do, Rostov thought. You love it . . . "However, you are now completely in the picture, and what we must discuss is how to prevent the information you have in your possession from getting back to Tel Aviv."

"What do you suggest?"

"Well, you'll of course have to tell what we've found out, but I want you to be as vague as possible about details. Don't offer names, times, places. When you're pushed, complain about me, say I've refused to let you share all the information. Don't talk to anyone except the people you're obliged to report to. In particular, tell nobody about Savile Shipping, the *Stromberg,* or the *Coparelli.* As for Pyotr Tyrin being aboard the *Coparelli*—try to forget it."

Hassan looked understandably worried. "What's left to tell?"

"A good deal . . . Dickstein, Euratom, uranium, the meeting with Pierre Borg . . . my friend, you'll be a hero in Cairo if you tell half the story."

Hassan was not convinced. "I'll be as frank as you. If I do this your way, my report will hardly be as impressive as yours."

Rostov gave a wry smile. "Is that really unfair?"

Book Press
Galley 0173 Take 0002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Rd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3277, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

"No," Hassan conceded, "you deserve most of the credit—"

"Besides, nobody but the two of us will know how different the reports are. And in the end you're going to get all the credit you need, I assure you."

"All right," Hassan said finally, "I'll be vague as possible" . . . including my friend, with *you* . . . Unlike the Russian, he was careful *not* to smile . . . let Rostov continue to think him a fool . . . he would go along for *his* reasons . . .

"Good." Rostov waved his hand for a waiter. "You've got a little time, have a quick one before you go." He settled back in his chair and crossed his legs. He was satisfied; Hassan would do as he'd been told. "I'm looking forward to getting home."

"Any plans?"

"I'll try to take a few days on the coast with Mariya and the boys. We've a dacha in the Riga Bay."

"Sounds nice."

"It's pleasant there—but not as warm as where you're going, of course. Where will you head for—Alexandria?"

The last call for Hassan's flight came over the public address system, and the Arab stood up. "No such luck," he said. "I expect to spend the whole time stuck in filthy Cairo."

And abruptly Rostov—the manipulator—had the peculiar feeling that perhaps Yasif Hassan was lying.

▼

Franz Albrecht Pedler's old life was ruined when Germany lost the war. At the age of fifty, a career officer in the Wehrmacht, he was suddenly homeless, penniless and unemployed. He started again.

He became a salesman for a French dye manufacturer—small commission, no salary. In 1946 there were few customers, but by 1951 German industry was rebuilding and when at last things began to look up Pedler was in a good position to take advantage of the new opportunities. He opened an office in Wiesbaden, a rail junction on the right bank of the Rhine that promised to develop into an industrial center. His product list grew, so did his tally of customers, soon he was selling soaps as well as dyes, and he gained entry to the U.S. bases, which at the time administered that portion of occupied Germany. He had learned, during the difficult years, to be an opportunist: if a U.S. Army procurement officer wanted disinfectant in pint bottles, Pedler would buy disinfectant in ten-gallon drums, pour the stuff from the drums into secondhand bottles in a rented barn, put on a label saying "F. A. Pedler's Special Disinfectant" and resell at a nice profit.

From buying in bulk and repackaging it was not a very big step to buying ingredients and manufacturing. The first barrel of F. A. Pedler's Special Industrial Cleanser—never called simply "soap"—was mixed in the same rented barn and sold to the U.S. Air Force for use by aircraft maintenance engineers. In the late fifties Pedler read a book about chemical warfare and proceeded to win a big defense contract to supply a range of solutions designed to neutralize various kinds of chemical weapons.

Book Press
Galley 0174 Take 0002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3277, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

F. A. Pedler had become a military supplier, small but secure and profitable. The rented barn had grown into a small complex of single-story buildings. Franz married again—his first wife had been killed in the 1944 bombing—and fathered a child. But he was still an opportunist at heart, and when he heard about a small mountain of uranium ore going cheap, he smelled a profit.

The uranium belonged to a Belgian company called Société Générale de la Chimie. Chimie was one of the corporations which ran Belgium's African colony, the Belgian Congo, a country rich in minerals. After the 1960 pullout Chimie stayed on; but, knowing that those who did not walk out would eventually be thrown out, the company expended all its efforts to ship home as much raw material as it could before the gates slammed shut. Between 1960 and 1965 it accumulated a large stockpile of yellowcake at its refinery near the Dutch border. Sadly for Chimie, a nuclear test ban treaty was ratified in the meantime, and when Chimie was finally thrown out of the Congo there were few buyers for uranium. The yellowcake sat in a silo, tying up scarce capital.

F. A. Pedler did not actually use very much uranium in the manufacture of their dyes. Franz, however, loved a gamble of this sort: the price was low, the could make a little money by having the stuff refined, and if the uranium market improved—as he felt it was likely to sooner or later—he would make a big capital profit. So he bought himself some.

To his surprise, Nat Dickstein liked Pedler right away. The German was a sprightly seventy-three-year-old who still had all his hair and the twinkle in his eye. They met on a Saturday. Pedler wore a loud sports jacket and fawn trousers, spoke good English with an American accent and gave Dickstein a glass of Sekt, the local champagne.

They were, of course, wary of each other at first. After all, they had fought on opposite sides in a war which had been cruel to them both. But Dickstein had always believed that the enemy was not so much Germany as nazism, and he was concerned that Pedler might be uneasy. It seemed Pedler felt the same way.

Dickstein had called from his hotel in Wiesbaden to make an appointment. His call had been accepted eagerly. The local Israeli consul had alerted Pedler that Mr. Dickstein, a senior army procurement officer with a large shopping list, was on his way. Pedler had suggested a short tour of the factory on Saturday morning, when it would be empty, followed by lunch at his home.

If Dickstein had been a conventional customer he would have been put off by the tour: the factory was no gleaming model of German efficiency but rather a straggling collection of old huts and cluttered yards with a pervasive, unpleasant aroma.

After sitting up half the night with a textbook on chemical engineering Dickstein was ready with a handful of reasonably knowing questions about agitators and baffles, materials-handling and quality-control and packaging. He relied upon the language problem to camouflage any errors. It seemed to be working.

The situation was peculiar. Dickstein had to play the role of a buyer and be dubious and noncommittal while the seller wooed him, whereas in reality *he* was hoping to seduce Pedler into a relationship the German would be unable or unwilling to sever. It was Pedler's uranium he wanted, but he was not going to ask for it. Instead he would try to maneuver Pedler into a position where he was dependent upon Dickstein for his livelihood.

Book Press
Galley 0175 Take 0002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3277, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

After the factory tour Pedler drove him in a new Mercedes from the works to a wide chalet-style house on a hillside. They sat in front of a big window and sipped their Sekt while Frau Pedler, a pretty, cheerful woman in her forties, busied herself in the kitchen. Bringing a potential customer home to lunch on the weekend was a somewhat Jewish way of doing business, Dickstein thought, and he wondered if Pedler had thought of that.

The window overlooked the valley. Down below, the river was wide and slow, with a narrow road running alongside it. Small gray houses with white shutters clustered in small groups along the banks, and the vineyards sloped upward to the Pedlers' house and beyond it to the treeline. If one were going to live in a cold country, Dickstein thought, this would do nicely.

"Well, what do you think?" said Pedler.

"About the view, or the factory?"

Pedler smiled and shrugged. "Both."

"The view is magnificent, the factory is smaller than I expected."

Pedler lit a cigarette. He was a heavy smoker—lucky to have lived so long, he often thought. "Small?"

"Perhaps I should explain what I'm looking for."

"Please."

Dickstein launched into his story. "Right now the Army buys cleaning materials from a variety of suppliers . . . detergents from one, ordinary soap from another, solvents for machinery from someone else and so forth. We're trying to cut costs, and perhaps we can do this by taking our entire business in this area to one manufacturer."

Pedler's eyes widened. "That is . . ." He fumbled for a phrase ". . . a tall order."

"I'm afraid it may be too tall for you," Dickstein said, thinking, don't agree with me.

"Not necessarily . . . the only reason we haven't got that kind of bulk manufacturing capacity is simply that we've never had this scale of business. We certainly have the managerial and technical knowhow, and with a large firm order we could get finance to expand . . . it all, of course, depends on the figures . . ."

Dickstein picked up his briefcase from beside his chair and opened it. "Here are the specifications for the products," he said, handing Pedler a list. "Plus the quantities required and the time scale. You'll want an opportunity, I assume, to consult with your directors and do your figures—"

"I'm the boss," Pedler said with a smile. "I don't have to consult anybody. Give me tomorrow to work on the figures, and Monday to see the bank. On Tuesday I'll call and give you prices."

"I was told you were a good man to work with," Dickstein said.

"There are some advantages to being a small company."

Frau Pedler came in from the kitchen and announced that lunch was ready. Her husband, as Dickstein expected, was too excited to eat.

My darling Suza,

I have never written a love letter before. I don't believe I ever called anyone darling until now. I must tell you, it feels very good.

Book Press
Galley 0176 Take 0002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3277, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

I am alone in a strange town on a cold Sunday afternoon. The town is quite pretty, with a good many parks. In fact I'm sitting in one of them now, writing to you with a leaky ballpoint pen and some vile green stationery, the only kind I could get. My bench is beneath a curious kind of pagoda with a circular dome and Greek columns all about in a circle—like the kind of summer house you might find in an English country garden designed by a Victorian eccentric. In front of me is a flat lawn dotted with poplar trees, and in the distance I can hear a brass band playing something by Edward Elgar. The park is full of people with children and footballs and dogs.

I don't know why I'm telling you all this. What I really want to say is that I love you and I want to spend the rest of my life with you. I believe I knew that a couple of days after we met. I hesitated to tell you, not because I wasn't sure, but . . . Well, if you want to know the truth, I thought it might scare you off. I believe you love me, but I also know that you are twenty-five, that love comes easily to you (I'm the opposite way), and that love that comes easily may go the same way . . . So I thought, all right, softly, softly, at least give her a chance to get to like you before you ask her to say forever. Now that we've been apart for so many weeks I'm no longer capable of such deviousness. I just have to tell you how it is with me. Forever is what I want, and you might as well know it now.

I'm a changed man. I know that sounds trite, but when it happens to you it isn't trite at all, quite the opposite. Life looks very different to me now, in several ways—some of which you know about, others I'll tell you one day. Even this is different, this being alone in a strange place with nothing to do until Monday. Not that I mind it, particularly. But before, I wouldn't even have thought of it as something I might like or dislike. Before, there was nothing I'd *prefer* to do. Now there is always something I'd prefer to do, and you're the person I'd prefer to do it to . . . I mean WITH you, not *to* . . . well, either, or both. I'm going to have to get off that subject, it's making me fidget.

I'll be gone from here in a couple of days, don't know where I'm going next, don't know—and this is the worst part—don't even know when I'll see you again. But when I do, believe me, I'm not going to allow you out of my sight for at least ten or fifteen years.

None of this sounds how it's supposed to sound. I want to tell you how I feel, and I can't put it into words. I want you to know what it's like for me to picture your face many times every day, to see a slender girl with black hair, and to hope against all reason that somehow she might be you, to imagine all the time what you might say about a view, a newspaper article, a small man with a large dog, a pretty dress. I want you to know how, when I get into bed alone, I ache with the need to touch you.

I love you very much.

N.

Franz Pedler's secretary phoned Nat Dickstein at his hotel on Tuesday morning and made a date for lunch.

They went to a modest restaurant in the Wilhelmstrasse and ordered beer instead of wine—this was to be a working session. Dickstein controlled his impatience—Pedler, not he, was supposed to do the wooing.

Book Press
Galley 0177 Take 0002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3277, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

Pedler said, "Well, I think we can accommodate you."

Dickstein kept his face impassive. Pedler continued: "The prices, which I'll give you in a moment, are conditional. We need a five-year contract. We will guarantee prices for the first twelve months, after that they may be varied in accordance with an index of world prices of certain raw materials. And there's a cancellation penalty amounting to ten percent of the value of one year's supply."

Dickstein wanted to say, "Done!" and shake hands on the deal, but he reminded himself to continue to play his part . . . "Ten percent is rather stiff."

"It's not excessive," Pedler argued. "It certainly would not recompense us for our losses if you did cancel, but it at least must be large enough to deter you from canceling except under very compelling circumstances."

"I see that . . . but we may suggest a smaller percentage."

Pedler shrugged. "Everything is negotiable. Here are the prices."

Dickstein studied the list, then said, "This is, I must say, close to what we're looking for."

"Does that mean we have a deal?"

"No, it means that I think we can do business."

Pedler beamed. "In that case," he said, "let's have a real drink. Waiter!"

When the drinks came Pedler raised his glass in a toast. "To many years of business together."

"I'll drink to that," Dickstein said. As he raised his glass he was thinking: Lucky Pierre, your least favorite pirate seems to have done it again.

▼

Life at sea was uncomfortable, but still not as bad as Pyotr Tyrin had expected. In the Soviet Navy, ships had been run on the principles of unremitting hard work, harsh discipline and bad food. The *Coparelli* was very different. The captain, Eriksen, asked only for safety and good seamanship, and even there his standards were not remarkably high. The deck was swabbed occasionally, but nothing was ever polished or painted. The food was quite good, and Tyrin had the advantage of sharing a cabin with the cook. In theory Tyrin could be called upon at any hour of the day or night to send radio signals, but in practice all the traffic occurred during the normal working day so he even got his eight hours sleep every night. It was a comfortable regimen, and Pyotr Tyrin was concerned about comfort.

The ship, however, held no comfort. She was a bitch. As soon as they rounded Cape Wrath and left The Minch and the North Sea she began to pitch and roll like a toy yacht in a gale. Tyrin felt wretchedly seasick, but of course was obliged to conceal it . . . he was supposed to be a sailor. Fortunately this occurred while the cook was busy in the galley and Tyrin was not needed in the radio room, so he was able to lie flat on his back in his bunk until the worse was over.

The quarters were poorly ventilated and inadequately heated, so it immediately got a little damp above, the mess decks were full of wet clothing hanging up to dry and making the atmosphere worse.

Tyrin's radio gear was in his sea-bag, well protected by polythene and canvas and some sweaters. He could not, however, set it up and operate it in his cabin, where the cook or anyone else might walk in. He had already made routine radio contact with Moscow on the ship's radio during a quiet but nonetheless tense moment when nobody was listening; but he needed something

Book Press
Galley 0178 Take 0002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3277, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

safer and more reliable.

Tyrin was a nest-building man. Whereas Rostov would move from embassy to hotel room to safe house without noticing his environment, Tyrin liked to have a base, a place where he could feel comfortable, familiar and secure. On static surveillance, the kind of assignment he preferred, he would always find a large easy chair to place in front of the window and sit at the telescope for hours, perfectly content with his bag of sandwiches, his bottle of soda and his thoughts.

Here on the *Coparelli*, he had found a place to nest. Exploring the ship in daylight, he had discovered a little labyrinth of stores up in the bow beyond the for'ard hatch. The naval architect had put them there merely to fill a space between the hold and the prow. The main store was entered by a semiconcealed door down a flight of steps. It contained some tools, several drums of grease for the cranes and—inexplicably—a rusty old lawn mower. Several smaller rooms opened off the main one—some containing ropes, bits of machinery and decaying cardboard boxes of nuts and bolts, others empty but for insects. Tyrin had never seen anyone enter the area—stuff that was used was stored aft, where it was needed.

He chose a moment when darkness was falling and most of the crew and officers were at supper. He went to his cabin, picked up his sea-bag and climbed the companionway to the deck. He took a flashlight from a locker below the bridge but did not yet switch it on.

The almanac said there was a moon, but it did not show through the thick clouds. Tyrin made his way stealthily for'ard holding on to the gunwale, where his silhouette would be less likely to show against the off-white deck. There was some light from the bridge and the wheelhouse, but the duty officers would be watching the surrounding sea, not the deck.

Cold spray fell on him, and as the *Coparelli* executed her notorious roll he had to grab the rail with both hands to avoid being swept overboard. At times she shipped water—not much, but enough to soak into Tyrin's sea boots and freeze his feet. He fervently hoped that he would never find out what she was like in a real gale.

He was miserably wet and shivering when he reached the bow and entered the little store. He closed the door behind him, switched on his flashlight and made his way through the assorted junk to one of the small rooms off the main store. He closed that door behind him too, took off his oilskin, rubbed his hands on his sweater to dry and warm them some, then opened his bag. He put the transmitter in a corner, lashed it to the bulkhead with a wire tied through rings in the deck, and wedged it with a cardboard box.

He was wearing rubber soles, but he put on rubber gloves as an additional precaution for the next task. The cables to the ship's radio mast ran through a pipe along the deckhead above him. With a small hacksaw pilfered from the engine room Tyrin cut away a six-inch section of the pipe, exposing the cables. He took a tap from the power cable to the power input of the transmitter, then connected the aerial socket of his radio with the signal wire from the mast.

He switched on the radio and called Moscow.

His outgoing signals would not interfere with the ship's radio because he was the radio operator and it was unlikely that anyone else would attempt to send on the ship's equipment. However, while he was using his own radio, incoming signals would not reach the ship's radio room; and he would not hear them either since his set would be tuned to another frequency. He could have

Book Press
Galley 0179 Take 0002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3277, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

wired everything so that both radios would receive at the same time, but then Moscow's replies to him would be received by the ship's radio, and somebody might notice . . . Well, there was nothing very suspicious about a small ship taking a few minutes to pick up signals. Tyrin would take care to use his radio only at times when no traffic was expected for the ship.

When he reached Moscow he made: *Checking secondary transmitter.*

They acknowledged, then made: *Stand by for signal from Rostov.* All this was in a standard KGB code.

Tyrin made: *Standing by, but hurry.*

The message came: *Keep your head down until something happens. Rostov.*

Tyrin made: *Understood. Over and out.* Without waiting for their sign-off he disconnected his wires and restored the ship's cables to normal. The business of twisting and untwisting bare wires, even with insulated pliers, was time-consuming and not very safe. He had some quick-release connectors among his equipment in the ship's radio room. He would pocket a few and bring them here next time to speed up the process.

He was well satisfied with his evening's work. He had made his nest, he had opened his lines of communication, and he had remained undiscovered. All he had to do now was sit tight; and sitting tight was what he liked to do.

He decided to drag in another cardboard box to put in front of the radio and conceal it from a casual glance. He opened the door and shined his flashlight into the main store—and got a shock.

He had company.

The overhead light was on, casting restless shadows with its yellow glow. In the center of the storeroom, sitting against a grease drum with his legs stretched out before him, was a young sailor. He looked up, just as startled as Tyrin and—Tyrin realized from his face—just as guilty.

Tyrin recognized him. His name was Ravlo. He was about nineteen years old, with pale blond hair and a thin white face. He had not joined in the pub-crawls in Cardiff, yet he often looked hung over, with dark discs under his eyes and a distracted air.

Tyrin said, "What are you doing here?" And then he saw.

Ravlo had rolled up his left sleeve past the elbow. On the deck between his legs were a phial, a watch-glass and a small waterproof bag. In his right hand was a hypodermic syringe, with which he was about to inject himself.

Tyrin frowned. "Are you diabetic?"

Ravlo's face twisted, he gave a dry, humorless laugh.

"An addict," Tyrin said, understanding. He did not know much about drugs, but he knew that what Ravlo was doing could get him discharged at the next port of call. He began to relax a little. This could be handled.

Ravlo was looking past him, into the smaller store. Tyrin looked back and saw that the radio was clearly visible. The two men stared at one another each understanding that the other was doing something he needed to hide.

Tyrin said, "We will keep each other's secrets."

Ravlo gave the twisted smile and the dry, humorless laugh again; then he looked away from Tyrin, down at his arm, and he stuck the needle into his flesh.

▼

The exchange between the *Caparelli* and Moscow was picked up and recorded by a British Intelligence listening station. Since it was in standard KGB code, they were able to decipher it. But all it told them was that someone aboard a ship—they did not know

Book Press
Galley 0180 Take 0002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3277, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

which ship—was checking his secondary transmitter, and somebody called Rostov—the name was not on any of their files—wanted him to keep his head down. Nobody could make any sense of it, so they opened a file titled "Rostov" and put the signal in the file and forgot about it.

Twelve

WHEN HE HAD finished his interim debriefing in Cairo, Hassan asked permission to go to Syria to visit his parents in the refugee camp. He was given four days. He took a plane to Damascus and a taxi to the camp.

He did not visit his parents.

He made certain inquiries at the camp, and one of the refugees took him, by means of a series of buses, to Dara, across the Jordanian border, and all the way to Amman. From there another man took him on another bus to the Jordan river.

Book Press
Galley 0181 Take 0002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3277, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

On the night of the second day he crossed the river, guided by two men who carried submachine guns. By now Hassan was wearing Arab robes and a headdress like them, but he did not ask for a gun. They were young men, their soft adolescent faces just taking on lines of weariness and cruelty, like recruits in a new army. They moved across the Jordan valley in confident silence, directing Hassan with a touch or a whisper: they seemed to have made the journey many times. At one point all three of them lay flat behind a stand of cactus while lights and soldiers' voices passed a quarter of a mile away.

Book Press
Galley 0182 Take 0002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3277, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

Hassan felt helpless—and something more. At first he thought that the feeling was due to his being so completely in the hands of these boys, his life dependent on their knowledge and courage. But later, when they had left him and he was alone on a country road trying to get a lift, he realized that this journey was a kind of regression. For years now he had been a European banker, living in Luxembourg with his car and his refrigerator and his television set. Now, suddenly, he was walking in sandals along the dusty Palestine roads of his youth. No car, no jet; an Arab again, a

Book Press
Galley 0183 Take 0002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3277, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

peasant, a second-class citizen in the country of his birth. None of his reflexes would work here—it was not possible to solve a problem by picking up a phone or pulling out a credit card or calling a cab. He felt like a child, a pauper and a fugitive all at the same time.

He walked five miles without seeing a vehicle, then a fruit truck passed him, its engine coughing unhealthily and pouring smoke, and pulled up a few yards ahead. Hassan ran after it.

"To Nablus?" he shouted.

"Jump in."

The driver was a heavy man whose forearms bulged with muscle as he heaved the truck around bends at top speed. He

Book Press
Galley 0184 Take 0002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3277, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

smoked all the time. He must have been certain there would not be another vehicle in the way all night, driving as he did on the crown of the road and never using the brake. Hassan could have used some sleep, but the driver wanted to talk. He told Hassan that the Jews were good rulers, business had prospered since they occupied Jordan, but of course the land must be free one day. Half of what he said was insincere, no doubt; but Hassan could not tell which half.

They entered Nablus in the cool Samaritan dawn, with a red sun rising behind the hillside and the town still asleep. The truck

Book Press
Galley 0185 Take 0002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3277, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

roared into the market square and stopped. Hassan said goodbye to the driver.

He walked slowly through the empty streets as the sun began to take away the chill of the night. He savored the clean air and the low white buildings, enjoying every detail, basking in the glow of nostalgia for his boyhood: he was in Palestine, he was home.

He had precise directions to a house with no number in a street with no name. It was in a poor quarter, where the little stone houses were crowded too close together and nobody swept the streets. A goat was tethered outside, and he wondered briefly what it ate; there was no grass. The door was unlocked.

Book Press
Galley 0186 Take 0002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3277, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

He hesitated a moment outside, fighting down the excitement in his belly. He had been away too long—now he was back in the Land. He had waited too many years for this opportunity to strike a blow in revenge for what they had done to his father. He had suffered exile, he had endured with patience, he had nursed his hatred enough, perhaps too much.

He went in.

There were four or five people asleep on the floor. One of them, a woman, opened her eyes, saw him and sat up instantly, her hand under the pillow reaching for what might have been a gun.

Book Press
Galley 0187 Take 0002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3277, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

"What do you want?"

Hassan spoke the name of the man who commanded the Fedayeen.

▼

Mahmoud had lived not far from Yasif Hassan when they were both boys in the late thirties, but they had never met, or if they had neither remembered it. After the European war, when Yasif went to England to study, Mahmoud tended sheep with his brothers, his father, his uncles and his grandfather. Their lives would have continued to go in quite different directions except for the 1948 war. Mahmoud's father, like Yasif's, made the decision to pack up and leave. The two sons—Yasif was a few years older than Mahmoud—met at the refugee camp. Mahmoud's reaction to the ceasefire was even stronger than Yasif's, which was paradoxical, inasmuch as Yasif had lost more. Mahmoud, however, was possessed by a rage that would allow him to do nothing except fight for the liberation of his homeland. Until then he had been oblivious of politics, thinking it had nothing to do with shepherds; now he set out to understand it. Before he could do that, he had to teach himself to read.

They met again in the fifties, in Gaza. By then Mahmoud had blossomed, if that was the appropriate word for something so fierce. He had read Clausewitz on war and Plato's *Republic, Das Kapital and Mein Kampf,*, Keynes and Mao and Galbraith and Ganhi, history and biography, classical novels and modern plays. He spoke good English and bad Russian and a smattering of Cantonese. He was directing a small cadre of terrorists on forays in Israel, bombing and shooting and stealing and then returning to disappear into the Gaza camps like rats into a garbage dump. The terrorists were getting money, weapons and intelligence from Cairo: Hassan was, briefly, part of the intelligence back up, and when they met again Yasif told Mahmoud where his ultimate loyalty lay—not with Cairo, not even with any pan-Arab cause, but with Palestine.

Yasif had been ready to abandon everything there and then—his job at the bank, his home in Luxembourg, his role in Egyptian Intelligence—and join the freedom fighters. But Mahmoud had said no—the habit of command was already fitting him like a tailored coat. In a few years, he said—he took a long view—they would have all the guerrillas they wanted, but they would still need friends in high places, European connections, and secret intelligence.

They had met once more, in Cairo, and set up lines of communication which bypassed the Egyptians. And Hassan had continued to cultivate his front of a rather naïve, even bumbling type so as not to put off his colleagues—especially the Russians, whose arrogance was his best advantage. Rostov was a prime example. At first Yasif sent over much the same king of stuff he was giving to Cairo, principally the names of loyal Arabs who were stashing away fortunes in Europe and could therefore be touched for funds. Recently he had been of more immediate

Book Press
Galley 0188 Take 0002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3277, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

practical value as the Palestinian movement began to operate in Europe. He had booked hotels and flights, rented cars and houses, stockpiled weapons and transferred funds.

He was not the kind of man to use a gun. He knew this and was faintly ashamed of it, so he was all the more proud to be so useful in other non violent but nonetheless practical ways.

The results of his work had begun to explode in Rome that year. Yasif believed in Mahmoud's program of European terrorism. He was convinced that the Arab armies, even with Russian support, could never defeat the Jews, since this allowed the Jews to think of themselves as a beleaguered people defending their homes against foreign soldiers, which in turn gave them strength. The truth was, in Yasif's view, that the Palestine Arabs were defending their home against invading Zionists. There were still more Arab Palestinians than Jewish Israelis, if one counted the exiles in the camps; and it was *they*, not a rabble of soldiers from Cairo and Damascus, who would liberate the homeland. But first they had to believe in the Fedayeen. Acts such as the Rome airport affair would convince them that the Fedayeen had international resources. And when the people believed in the Fedayeen, the people would *be* the Fedayeen, and then they would be unstoppable.

The Rome airport affair was trivial, a peccadillo, by comparison with what Hassan had in mind.

It was an outrageous, mind-boggling scheme that would put the Fedayeen on the front pages of the world's newspapers for weeks, and prove that they were a powerful international force, not a gaggle of ragged refugees. Hassan hoped desperately that Mahmoud would accept it.

Yasif Hassan had come to propose that the Fedayeen should hijack a holocaust.

They embraced like brothers, kissing cheeks, then stood back to look at one another.

Mahmoud was a big man, a fraction taller than Hassan and much broader; and he *looked* big, the way he held his head and walked and spoke.

The house had two rooms—the one Hassan had entered, and behind that another, where Mahmoud slept on the floor with two other men. There was no upper story. Cooking was done in a yard at the back, and the nearest water supply was one hundred yards away. The woman lit a fire and began to make a porridge of crushed beans. While they waited for it, Hassan told Mahmoud his story.

"Three months ago in Luxembourg I met a man I had known at Oxford, a Jew called Dickstein. I discovered he is a key Mossad operative. Since then I have been watching him, with the help of the Russians, in particular a KGB man named Rostov, who conveniently takes me for a fool. We have discovered that Dickstein plans to steal a shipload of uranium so the Zionists will be able to make atom bombs . . ."

At first Mahmoud refused to believe this. He cross-questioned Hassan: how good was the information, what exactly was the evidence, who might be lying, what mistakes might have been made? Then, as Hassan's answers made more and more sense, the truth began to sink in, and Mahmoud became very serious. "These bombs could ravage the whole of the Middle East. What do you and this Russian propose to do?"

Book Press
Galley 0189 Take 0002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3277, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

"The plan is to stop Dickstein and expose the Israeli plot, showing the Zionists to be lawless adventurers. We haven't worked out the details yet. But I have an alternative proposal." He paused, trying to form the right phrases, then blurted it out. "I think the Fedayeen should hijack the ship before Dickstein gets there."

Mahmoud stared at him for a long moment, then slowly began to shake his head from side to side, his mouth widened in a smile, and at last he began to laugh, eventually so wholeheartedly it brought the rest of the household around to see what was happening.

Hassan ventured, "But what do you think?"

Mahmoud sighed. "It's wonderful," he said. "I don't see how we can do it, but it's a wonderful idea."

Then he started asking questions.

He asked questions all through breakfast and for most of the morning: the quantity of uranium, the names of the ships involved, how the yellowcake was converted into nuclear explosive, places and dates and people. They talked in the back room, just the two of them for most of the time, but occasionally Mahmoud would call someone in and tell him to listen while Hassan repeated some particular point.

About midday he summoned two men who seemed to be his lieutenants. With them listening, he again went over the points he thought crucial.

"The *Coparelli* is an ordinary merchant ship with a regular crew?"

"Yes."

"She will be sailing through the Mediterranean to Genoa."

"Yes."

"What does this yellowcake weigh?"

"Two hundred tons."

"And it is packed in drums."

"Five hundred sixty of them."

"Its market price?"

"Two million American dollars."

"And it is used to make nuclear bombs."

"Yes . . . well, it is the raw material."

"Is the conversion to the explosive form an expensive or difficult process?"

"Not if one has a nuclear reactor. Otherwise, yes."

Mahmoud nodded to the two lieutenants. "Go and tell this to the others."

▼

In the afternoon, when the sun was past its zenith and it was cool enough to go out, Mahmoud and Yasif walked over the hills outside the town. Yasif was desperate to know what Mahmoud really thought of his plan. Mahmoud did not seem inclined to tell him. So Yasif spoke about David Rostov and said that, despite his arrogance and the difficulties he had made for him, he admired the Russian's professionalism.

"It's well to admire the Russians," Mahmoud said, "so long as we don't trust them. I think you understand. Their heart is not in our cause. There are three reasons why they take our side. The least important is that we cause trouble for the West, and anything that is bad for the West is good for the Russians. Then there is their image. The underdeveloped nations identify with us rather than with the Zionists, so by supporting us the Russians gain credit with the Third World—and remember, in the contest between the United States and the Soviet Union the Third World has all the floating votes. But the most important reason—the

Book Press
Galley 0190 Take 0002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3277, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

only *really* important reason—is oil. The arabs have oil."

They passed a boy tending a small flock of bony sheep. The boy was playing a flute. Yasif remembered that Mahmoud had once been a shepherd boy who could neither read nor write.

"Do you understand how important oil is?" Mahmoud said. "Hitler lost the European war because of oil."

"No—"

"Listen. The Russians defeated Hitler. They were bound to. Hitler knew this . . . he knew about Napoleon, he knew nobody could conquer Russia. Then why did he try? He was running out of oil. There is oil in Georgia, in the Caucasian oilfields. Hitler had to have the Caucasus. But you cannot hold the Caucasus secure unless you have Volgograd, which was then called Stalingrad, the place where the tide turned against Hitler. Oil. That's what our struggle is about, whether we like it or not, do you realize that? If it were not for oil, nobody but ourselves would care about a few Arabs and Jews fighting over a dusty little outpost country like ours."

Mahmoud was magnetic when he talked. His strong, clear voice rolled out short phrases, simple explanations, statements that sounded like devastating basic truths: Hassan suspected he said these same things often to his troops. In the back of his mind he remembered the sophisticated ways in which politics were discussed in places like Luxembourg and Oxford, and it seemed to him now that for all their mountains of information those people knew less than Mahmoud. He knew, too, that international politics *were* complicated: that there was more than oil behind these things, yet at bottom . . . or the bottom line, as the financial people called it . . . he believed Mahmoud was right.

They sat in the shade of a fig tree. The smooth, dun-colored landscape stretched all around them, empty. The sky glared hot and blue, cloudless from one horizon to the other. Mahmoud uncorked a water bottle and gave it to Hassan, who drank the tepid liquid and handed it back. He asked Mahmoud whether he wanted to rule Palestine after the Zionists were beaten back.

"I've killed many people," Mahmoud said. "At first I did it with my own hands, with a knife or a gun or a bomb. Now I kill by devising plans and giving orders, but I still kill them. We know this is a sin, but I cannot repent. I have no remorse, Yasif. Even if we make a mistake, kill children and Arabs instead of soldiers and Zionists, still I think only, "This is bad for our reputation," not, "This is bad for my soul." There is blood on my hands, and I will not wash it off. I will not try. There is a story called *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. It is about a man who leads an evil and debilitating life, the kind of life that should make him look old, give him lines on his face and bags under his eyes, a destroyed liver and venereal disease. Still, he does not suffer. Indeed, as the years go by he seems to stay young, as if he had found the elixir of life. But in a locked room in his house there is a painting of him, and it is the picture that ages, and takes on the ravages of evil living and terrible disease. Do you know this story? It is English."

"I saw the movie," said Yasif. He did not smile.

"I read it when I was in Moscow. I would like to see that film. Do you remember how it ended?"

"Oh, yes. Dorian Gray destroyed the painting, and then all the disease and damage fell on him in an instant, and he died."

"Yes." Mahmoud put the stopper back in the bottle, and looked out over the brown hillsides. "When Palestine is free, my picture will be destroyed."

Book Press
Galley 0191 Take 0002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3277, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

After that they sat in silence for a while. Eventually, without speaking, they stood up and began to walk back to the town.

▼

Several men came to the small house in Nablus at dusk that evening, just before curfew. Hassan did not know who they were exactly; they might have been the local leaders of the movement, or an assorted group of people whose judgment Mahmoud respected, or a permanent council of war that stayed close to Mahmoud but did not actually live with him. Hassan could see the logic in the last alternative . . . if they all lived together, they could all be destroyed together.

The woman gave them bread and fish and watery wine, and Mahmoud told them about Hassan's grand scheme. Mahmoud had thought it through more thoroughly than Hassan. He now proposed that they hijack the *Coparelli* before Dickstein got there, then ambush the Israelis as they came aboard. Expecting only an ordinary crew and half hearted resistance, Dickstein's group would be more vulnerable. Afterward the Fedayeen would take the *Coparelli* to a North African port and invite the world to come aboard and see the bodies of the international Zionist criminals. The cargo would be offered to its owners for a ransom of half its market price—one million U.S. dollars.

There was a long debate. Clearly a faction in the movement was already nervous about Mahmoud's policy of taking the war into Europe, and saw the proposed hijack as a further extension of the same strategy. They suggested that the Fedayeen could achieve most of what they wanted simply by calling a press conference in Beirut or Damascus and revealing the Israeli plot to the international press. Hassan was convinced that was not enough—accusations were cheap. It was not just the lawlessness of Israel that had to be demonstrated, it was the *power* of the Fedayeen.

They spoke as equals, and Mahmoud seemed to listen to each with the same attention. Hassan sat quietly, hearing the calm voices of people who looked like peasants and spoke like senators. He was hopeful, and fearful, too, that they would adopt his plan: hopeful because it would be the fulfillment of twenty years of vengeful dreams; fearful because it would mean he would have to do things far more difficult, violent and risky than the work he'd been involved in so far.

In the end he could not stand it any longer and went outside and squatted in the mean yard, smelling the night and the dying fire. A little later there was a chorus of quiet voices from inside. Voting?

Mahmoud came out and sat beside Hassan. "I've sent for a car."

"Oh?"

"We must go to Damascus. Tonight. There is a great deal to do. It will be our biggest operation. We must start work immediately."

"It's decided then?"

"Yes. The Fedayeen will hijack the ship and steal the uranium."

▼

The first day of Rostov's holiday with his family was fine. He made breakfast, they walked along the beach, and in the afternoon Vladimir, the young genius, played chess against Rostov, Mariya, and Yuri simultaneously, and won all three games. They took hours over supper, catching up on all the news and drinking a little wine. The second day was similar, but they

Book Press
Galley 0192 Take 0002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3277, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

enjoyed it less; and by the third day the novelty of each other's company had worn thin. Vladimir remembered he was supposed to be a prodigy and stuck his nose back into his books; Yuri began to play degenerate Western music on the record player and argued with his father about dissident poets; and Mariya fled into the kitchen of the dacha and stopped putting make-up on her face.

So when the message game to say that Nik Bunin was back from Rotterdam and had successfully placed "bugs" on the *Stromberg*, Rostov used that as an excuse to return to Moscow.

Nik reported that the *Stromberg* had been in dry dock for the usual inspection prior to completion of the sale to Savile Shipping. A number of small repairs were in progress, and without much difficulty Nik had gotten on board, posing as an electrician, and planted a powerful radio beacon in the prow of the ship. On leaving he had been questioned by the dock foreman, who did not have any electrical work on his schedule for that day; Nik had pointed out that if the work had not been requested, no doubt it would not have to be paid for.

From that moment, whenever the ship's power was on—which was all the time she was at sea and most of the time she was in dock—the beacon would send out a signal every thirty minutes until the ship sank or was broken up for scrap. For the rest of her life, wherever in the world she was, Moscow would be able to locate her within an hour.

Rostov listened to Nik, then sent him home. He had plans for the evening. It was a long time since he had seen Olga, and he was impatient to see what she would do with the battery-operated vibrator he had brought her as a present from London.

▼

In Israeli Naval Intelligence there was a young captain named Dieter Koch who had trained as a ship's engineer. When the *Coparelli* sailed from Antwerp with her cargo of yellowcake, it was necessary that Koch be aboard.

Nat Dickstein reached Antwerp with only the vaguest idea of how this was to be achieved. From his hotel room he phoned the local representative of the company that owned the *Coparelli*.

When I die, he thought as he waited for the connection, they will bury me from a hotel room.

A girl answered the phone. Dickstein said briskly, "This is Pierre Beaudaire, give me the director."

"Hold on, please."

A man's voice, "Yes?"

"Good morning, this is Pierre Beaudaire from the Beaudaire Crew List," Dickstein improvised.

"I don't know you."

"That's why I'm calling you. You see, we're contemplating opening an office in Antwerp, and I'm wondering whether you would be willing to try us."

"I doubt it, but you can write to me and—"

"Are you completely satisfied with your present crew agency?"

"They could be worse. Look here—"

"One more question and I won't trouble you further. May I ask whom you use at the moment?"

"Cohen's. Now, I haven't any more time—"

"I understand. Thank you for your patience. Goodbye."

Book Press
Galley 0193 Take 0002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3277, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

"Cohen's! A piece of luck. It was unexpected—docks and shipping were not typical Jewish enterprises. He looked up Cohen's crew agency in the phone book, memorized the address, put on his coat, left the hotel and hailed a cab . . .

Cohen had a little two-room office above a sailor's bar in the red-light district of the city. It was not yet midday, and the night people were still asleep—the whores and thieves, musicians and strippers and waiters and bouncers, the people who made the place come to life in the evening. Now it might have been any run-down business district, gray and cold in the morning, and none too clean.

Dickstein went up a staircase to a first-floor door, knocked and went in. A middle-aged secretary presided over a small reception room furnished with filing cabinets and orange plastic chairs.

"I'd like to see Mr. Cohen," Dickstein told her.

She looked him over and seemed to think he did not appear to be a sailor. "Are you wanting a ship?" she said doubtfully.

"No," he said. "I'm from Israel."

"Oh . . ." She had dark hair and deep-set, shadowed eyes, and she wore a wedding ring. Dickstein wondered if she might be Mrs. Cohen as she got up and went through a door behind her desk into the inner office. She was wearing a pants suit, which from behind she filled more than amply.

A minute later she reappeared and ushered him into Cohen's office. Cohen stood up, shook hands and said without preamble, "I give to the cause every year. In the war I gave twenty thousand guilders, I can show you the check. This is some new appeal? There is another war?"

"I'm not here to raise money, Mr. Cohen," Dickstein said, and smiled his most gracious smile. Mrs. Cohen had left the door open. Dickstein closed it. "May I sit down?"

"If you don't want money, sit down, have some coffee, stay all day," said Cohen, and now he smiled too.

Dickstein sat. Cohen, a short man in spectacles, bald and clean-shaven, looked to be about fifty years old. He wore a brown check suit that was not very new. He had a good little business here, Dickstein guessed, but he was no millionaire . . . "Were you here in World War II?"

Cohen nodded. "I was a young man. I went into the country and worked on a farm where nobody knew me, nobody knew I was Jewish. I was lucky."

"Do you think it will happen again?"

"Yes. It's happened all through history, why should it stop now? It will happen again—but not in my lifetime. It's all right here. I don't want to go to Israel."

"Okay, I understand . . . I work for the government of Israel. We would like you to do something for us."

Cohen shrugged. "So?"

"In a few weeks' time, one of your clients will call you with an urgent request. They will want an engineer officer for a ship called *Coparelli*. We would like you to send them a certain man provided by us. His name is Koch, and he is an Israeli, but he will be using a different name and false papers. However, he *is* a ship's engineer—your clients will not be dissatisfied."

Dickstein waited for Cohen to say something. You're a nice man, he thought; a decent Jewish businessman, smart and hardworking and a little frayed at the edges; please don't make me be rough on you . . .

Book Press
Galley 0194 Take 0002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3277, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

Cohen finally said, "You're not going to tell me why the government of Israel wants this man Koch aboard the *Coparelli*?"

"No."

There was a silence.

"You carry any identification?"

"No."

The secretary came in without knocking and gave them coffee. Dickstein got distinctly hostile vibrations from her. Cohen used the interruption to gather his thoughts. When she had gone out he said, "I would have to be *meshugenah* to do this."

"Why?" "You come in off the street saying you represent the government of Israel, you have no identification, you don't even tell me your name. You ask me to take part in something that's obviously underhanded and maybe criminal. You won't tell me what it is that you're trying to do. Even if I believe your story, I don't know that I would approve of the Israelis doing what you want to do."

Dickstein sighed, thinking of the alternatives—blackmail him, kidnap his wife, take over his office on the crucial day . . . He said, "Is there anything I can do to convince you?"

"I'd need a personal request from a high official of Israel before I would do this thing. How about the prime minister . . ." He half smiled at his own *chutzpah*.

Dickstein stood up to leave, then thought, Why not? Why indeed not? It was a wild idea, they would think he was crazy . . . .but it just might work, serve his purpose . . . He grinned as he thought it through, Borg would have apoplexy . . . He said to Cohen, "All right."

"What do you mean, 'All right'?"

"Put on your coat. We'll go to Jerusalem."

"Now?"

"Are you busy?"

"Are you serious?"

"I told you it's important." Dickstein pointed to the phone on the desk. "Call your wife."

"She's just outside—"

Dickstein went to the door and opened it. "Mrs. Cohen?"

"Yes."

"Would you come in here, please?"

She hurried in, looking worried. "What is it, Josef?" she asked her husband.

"This man wants me to go to Jerusalem with him."

"When?"

"Now."

"You mean this week—?"

"I mean this morning, Mrs. Cohen. I must warn you that all this is highly confidential . . . I've asked your husband to do something for the Israeli government. Naturally he wants to be certain that it is the government that is asking this favor and not some crank or criminal. I'm going to take him there to convince him."

"Don't get involved, Josef—"

Cohen shrugged. "I'm Jewish, I'm involved already. Mind the shop."

"You don't know anything about this man!"

"So I'm going to find out."

"I don't like it."

Book Press
Galley 0195 Take 0002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3277, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

"There's no danger," Cohen told her. "We'll take a scheduled flight, we'll go to Jerusalem, I'll see . . . his man and we'll come back."

"What men?" she said.

"Would the prime minister do?"

"The prime minister! You're crazy . . ."

"Some would agree, Mrs. Cohen. But crazy or no, I am serious. Now, as you can understand, I'm sure, this has to be secret, Mrs. Cohen. Please tell people your husband has gone to Rotterdam on business. He will be back tomorrow."

She stared at the two of them. "My Josef meets the prime minister, and I can't tell Rachel Rothstein?"

Cohen took his coat from a hook and put it on. Mrs. Cohen kissed him, then put her arms around him.

"It's all right," he told her . . . My god, the prime minister . . ."

She nodded silently and let him go.

▼

They took a cab to the airport. Dickstein's sense of pleasure grew as they traveled. The scheme had an air of mischief about it, he felt a bit like a schoolboy, this was, in a way, a monumental prank, however serious the cause. He had to turn his face away so that Cohen would not see the beginning of a huge grin as he once again thought of Borg's outraged reaction.

He bought two round trip tickets to Tel Aviv, paying with his credit card. They had to take a connecting flight to Paris. Before taking off he called the embassy in Paris and arranged for someone to meet them in the transit lounge.

In Paris he gave the man from the embassy a message to send to Borg, explaining what was required. The diplomat was a Mossad man, and treated Dickstein with deference. Cohen was allowed to listen to the conversation, and when the man had gone back to the embassy he said, "We could go back, I'm convinced already—"

"Oh, no," Dickstein said. "Now that we've come this far I want to be absolutely sure of you." And there was also the pleasure of Borg's anticipated displeasure.

On the plane Cohen said, "You must be an important man in Israel."

"No. It's just what I'm trying to do."

Cohen wanted to know how to behave, how to address the prime minister. Dickstein told him, "I don't know, I've never met him. Shake hands and call him by his name."

Cohen smiled. He was, perhaps, beginning to share Dickstein's feeling of mischievousness.

Pierre Borg met them at Lod airport with a car to take them to Jerusalem. He smiled and shook hands with Cohen. Underneath he was on fire. As they walked to the car he muttered to Dickstein, "You better have a powerful good reason for all this—"

"I have."

They were with Cohen all the while, which meant Borg did not have an opportunity to cross-examine Dickstein. They went straight to the prime minister's residence in Jerusalem. Dickstein and Cohen waited in an anteroom while Borg explained to the prime minister what was required and why. Cohen was getting very cold feet, and said so. Dickstein waved him silent.

Book Press
Galley 0196 Take 0002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3277, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

Minutes later they were admitted. "This is Nat Dickstein, sir," Borg said.

They shook hands, and the prime minister said, "We haven't met before, but I've heard of you, Mr. Dickstein."

Borg said, "And this is Mr. Josef Cohen of Antwerp."

"Mr. Cohen." The prime minister smiled. "You're a *very* cautious man. You should be a politician. Well, now . . . please do this thing for us. It is very important, and you will come to no harm from it."

Cohen was bedazzled. "Yes, sir, of course I will do this, I'm sorry to have caused so much trouble . . ."

"Not at all. You did the right thing." He shook Cohen's hand again. "Thank you for coming. Goodbye."

Borg was less polite on the way back to the airport. He sat silent in the front seat of the car, smoking a cigar and fidgeting. At the airport he managed to get Dickstein alone for a minute. "If you ever pull a stunt like this again—"

"It was necessary," Dickstein said. "It took less than a minute. Why not?"

"Why not, is because half my department has been working all day to fix that minute. Why didn't you just point a gun at the man's head or something?"

"Because we're not barbarians," Dickstein said.

"So people keep telling me."

"They do? That's a bad sign."

"Why?"

"Because you shouldn't need to be told."

Fortunately their flight was called. Boarding the plane with Cohen, Dickstein reflected that his relationship with Borg was in ruins. They had always talked like this, with bantering insults, but until now there had been an undertone of . . . perhaps not affection but at least respect. Now that had gone. Borg was genuinely hostile. Dickstein's refusal to be pulled out was a piece of basic defiance which could not be tolerated. If Dickstein had wanted to continue in the Mossad, he would have had to fight Borg for the job of director—there was no longer sufficient room for both men in the organization. Except there would be no contest now, because, Dickstein decided, he was going to resign. When this one was over.

Flying back to Europe through the night, Cohen drank some gin and went to sleep. Dickstein took the opportunity to run over in his mind what he had done in the past five months. Back in May he had started out with no real idea of how he was going to steal the uranium Israel needed. He had taken the problems as they came up, and somehow found a solution to each: how to locate uranium, which uranium to steal, how to hijack a ship, how to camouflage the Israeli involvement in the theft, how to prevent the disappearance of the uranium being reported to the authorities, how to placate the owners of the uranium . . . If he had sat down at the beginning and tried to imagine the whole scheme he could never possibly have foreseen all the complications. He had had some good luck and some bad. The fact that the owners of the *Coparelli* used a Jewish crew agency in Antwerp was decidedly a piece of luck; so was the existence of a consignment of uranium for non-nuclear purposes, and one going by sea. The bad luck was mostly the accidental meeting with Yasif Hassan.

Hassan, the proverbial fly in the ointment. Dickstein was reasonably certain he had shaken off the opposition when he flew to Buffalo to see Cortone, and that they had not picked up his trail again since. But that did not, of course, mean they had dropped the case.

Book Press
Galley 0197 Take 0002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 ●per 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3277, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

0999
0001 It would be useful—important—to know how much they had
0002 found out before they lost him.
0003 He also had realized he could not see Suza again until the
0004 whole affair was over, and Hassan was to blame for that too. If he
0005 were to go to Oxford, Hassan was sure to pick up the trail
0006 somehow. And then there was that damnable implication of
0007 Borg's about her sympathies. No way to answer it for certain
0008 except not to see her.
0009
0010
0011
0012

Book Press
Galley 0198 Take 0003 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79

C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3277, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

The plane began its descent. Dickstein fastened his seat belt. It was all done now, the scheme in place, the preparations made. The cards, to use the old metaphor, had been dealt. He knew what was in his hand, and he knew some of his opponents' cards, and they knew some of his. All that remained was to play out the game. No one could foretell the outcome. He wished he could see the future more clearly, he wished his plan were less complicated, he wished he did not have to risk his life once more—it was worth too much to him since Suza—and he wished the game would start so that he could stop wishing and start doing . . .

Cohen was awake. "Did I dream all that?" he said.

"No." Dickstein smiled. There was one more unpleasant duty he had to perform—scare Cohen half to death. "Mr. Cohen, I told you this was important, and secret."

"Of course, I understand—"

"You don't understand. If you talk about this to anyone other than your wife, we will need to take direct action."

"Is this a threat? What are you saying . . .?"

"I'm saying, if you don't keep your mouth shut, Mr. Cohen, we will kill your wife."

Cohen stared, went pale, then after a moment he turned away and looked out of the window at the airport coming up to meet them.

Thirteen

Moscow's Hotel Rossiya was the largest hotel in Europe. It had 5,738 beds, ten miles of corridors, and no air-conditioning.

Yasif Hassan slept very badly there.

It was simple to say, "The Fedayeen should hijack the ship before Dickstein gets there," but the more he thought about it, the more unsure he was.

The Palestine Liberation Organization in this year of 1968 was not the tightly-knit political entity it pretended to be. It was not even a loose federation of individual groups working together. It was more like a club for people with a common interest . . . it represented its members, but it did not control them. The individual guerrilla groups could speak with one voice through the PLO, but they did not and could not act as one. So when Mahmoud said the Fedayeen would so something, he spoke only for his own group. Furthermore, in this case it would be unwise even to ask for PLO cooperation. The organization was given money, facilities and a home by the Egyptians, but it had also been infiltrated by them—if you wanted to keep something secret from the Arab establishment, you had to keep it secret from the PLO. Of course, after the coup, when the world's press came to

Book Press
Galley #199 Take 0003 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3277, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

look over the captured ship with its atomic cargo, the Egyptians would know and would probably suspect that the Fedayeen had deliberately thwarted them; but Mahmoud would play innocent and the Egyptians would be obliged to join in the general acclamation of the Fedayeen for frustrating an Israeli act of aggression . . . Anyway, Mahmoud believed he did not need the help of others. His group had the best connections outside Palestine, the best European set-up, and plenty of money. He was now in Benghazi arranging to borrow a ship while his international team was gathered up from various parts of the world.

But the most crucial task, Hassan realized, devolved on him: if the Fedayeen were to get to the *Caparelli* before the Israelis, he would have to establish exactly when and where Dickstein's hijack was to take place. And for that, he needed the KGB.

He felt especially uneasy around Rostov now. Until his visit to Mahmoud he had been able to tell himself he was in a fashion working for two organizations with a common objective. Now he was indisputably a double agent, merely pretending to work with the Egyptians and the KGB while he sabotaged their plans. He felt different—a traitor, in a way—and he was afraid that Rostov would observe the difference in him . . .

When Hassan had flown in to Moscow Rostov himself had been uneasy. He had said there was not enough room in his apartment for Hassan to stay, although Hassan knew the rest of the family were away on holiday. It seemed Rostov was hiding something. Hassan suspected he was seeing some woman and understandably did not want him in the way.

After his restless night at the Hotel Rossiya, Hassan met Rostov at the KGB building on the Moscow ring road, in the office of Rostov's superior, Feliks Vorontsov. There were undercurrents there too. The two men were having an argument when Hassan entered the room, and although they broke it off immediately the air was stiff with unspoken hostility. Hassan, however, was too busy with his own private moves to pay much attention to theirs.

He sat down. "Have there been any developments?"

Rostov and Vorontsov looked at one another. Rostov shrugged. Vorontsov offered, "The *Stromberg* has been fitted with a very powerful radio beacon. She's out of dry dock now and heading south across the Bay of Biscay. The assumption would be that she is going to Haifa to take on a crew of Mossad agents. I think we can all be quite satisfied with our intelligence-gathering work. The project now falls into the sphere of positive action. Our task becomes prescriptive rather than descriptive, as it were."

"They all talk like this in Moscow Center," Rostov said irreverently. Vorontsov glared at him.

Hassan said, "What action?"

"Rostov here is going to Odessa to board a Polish merchant ship called the *Karla*," Vorontsov said. "She's an ordinary cargo vessel superficially, but she's very fast and has certain extra equipment—we use her quite often."

Rostov was staring up at the ceiling, an expression of mild distaste on his face. Hassan guessed that Rostov wanted to keep some of these details from the Egyptians, that perhaps this was what he and Vorontsov had been arguing about.

Book Press
Galley 0200 Take 0003 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3277, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

Vorontsov went on, "Your job is to get an Egyptian vessel and make contact with the *Karla* in the Mediterranean."

"And then?"

"We wait for Tyrin, aboard the *Coparelli*, to tell us when the Israeli hijack takes place. He will also tell us whether the uranium is transferred from the *Coparelli* to the *Stromberg*, or simply left aboard the *Coparelli* to be taken to Haifa and unloaded."

"And then?" Hassan persisted.

Vorontsov began to speak, but Rostov stopped him. "I want you to tell Cairo a cover story," he said to Hassan. "I want your people to think that we don't know about the *Coparelli*, that we just know the Israelis are planning something in the Mediterranean and we are still trying to discover what."

Hassan nodded, keeping his face impassive. He *had* to know what the plan was, and Rostov did not want to tell him. He said, "Yes, I'll tell them that—*if* you tell *me* the actual plan."

Rostov looked at Vorontsov and shrugged. Vorontsov took over. "After the hijack the *Karla* will set a course for Dickstein's ship, whichever one carries the uranium. The *Karla* will collide with that ship—"

"Collide?"

"Your ship will witness the collision, report it and observe that the crew of the vessel are Israelis and their cargo is uranium. You will report these facts too. There will be an international inquiry into the collision. The presence of both Israelis and stolen uranium on the ship will be established beyond doubt. Meanwhile the uranium will be returned to its rightful owners and the Israelis will be properly covered with opprobrium."

"The Israelis will fight," Hassan said.

Rostov said, "So much the better, with your ship there to see them attack us and help us beat them off."

"It's a good plan," said Vorontsov. "It's simple. All they have to do is crash—the rest follows automatically."

"Yes, it's a good plan," Hassan said. Especially since it fitted in perfectly with the Fedayeen plan. Unlike Dickstein, Hassan knew that Tyrin was aboard the *Coparelli*. After the Fedayeen had hijacked the *Coparelli* and ambushed the Israelis, they could throw Tyrin and his radio into the sea, then Rostov would have no way of locating them.

But Hassan needed to know when and where Dickstein intended to carry out his hijack so that the Fedayeen could be sure of getting there first . . . Vorontsov's office was hot. Hassan went to the window and looked down at the traffic on the Moscow ring road. "We need to know exactly when and where Dickstein will hijack the *Coparelli*," he said.

"Why?" Rostov asked. "We have Tyrin aboard the *Coparelli* and a beacon on the *Stromberg*. We know where both of them are at all times. We need only to stay close and move in when the time comes—"

"My ship has to be in the right area at the crucial time."

"Then follow the *Stromberg*, staying just over the horizon—you can pick up her radio signal. Or keep in touch with me on the *Karla*. Or both."

"Suppose the beacon fails, or Tyrin is discovered?"

"The risk of that," Rostov said, "must be weighed against the danger of tipping our hand if we start following Dickstein around again—assuming, of course, we could find him."

Book Press
Galley 0201 Take 0003 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3277, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

"He has a point, though," Vorontsov said.

It was Rostov's turn to glare.

Hassan unbuttoned his collar. "May I open a window?"

"They don't open," said Vorontsov.

"Haven't you people heard of air-conditioning?"

"In Moscow?"

Hassan turned and spoke to Rostov. "Think about it. I want to be perfectly sure we get these people."

"I've thought about it," Rostov said. "We're as certain as we can be. Go back to Cairo, organize that ship and stay in touch with me."

You patronizing . . . Hassan cut off the thought, turned to Vorontsov. "I cannot, in all honesty, tell my people I'm happy with the plan unless we can eliminate that remaining uncertainty."

Vorontsov said, "I agree with Hassan."

"I do *not*," said Rostov. "And the plan as it stands has already been approved by Andropov."

Until now Hassan had thought he was going to have his way, since Vorontsov was on his side and Vorontsov was Rostov's boss. But the mention of the Chairman of the KGB seemed to constitute a winning move in this game—Vorontsov was almost cowed by it, and once again Hassan had to conceal his desperation.

"The plan can be changed—"

"Only with Andrópov's approval," Rostov broke in, "and you won't get my support for the change."

Vorontsov's lips were compressed into a thin line. "Very *well*, then."

In all his time in the intelligence business Hassan had been part of a professional team—Egyptian Intelligence, the KGB, even the Fedayeen. There had been other people, experienced and decisive people, to give him orders and guidance and to take ultimate responsibility. Now, as he left the KGB building to return to his hotel, he realized he was thoroughly on his own.

Alone, he had to find a remarkably elusive and clever man and discover his most closely guarded secret.

For several days he was in a near panic. He returned to Cairo, told them Rostov's cover story, and organized the Egyptian ship Rostov had requested. The problem stayed in front of his mind like a sheer cliff he could not begin to climb until he saw at least part of the route to the top. Unconsciously he searched back in his personal history for attitudes, approaches that would help him tackle such a task—independently.

He had to go a long way back.

Once upon a time Yasif Hassan had been a different kind of man. He had been a wealthy, almost aristocratic young Arab with the world at his feet. He had gone about with the attitude that he could do more or less anything—and thinking had made it so. He had gone to study in England, an alien country, without qualm; and he had entered its society without caring or even wondering what people thought of him. There had been times, even then, when he had to learn new and strange things; but he did that easily too. Once a fellow undergraduate, a Viscount something-or-other, had invited him down to the country to play polo. Hassan had never played polo. He had asked the rules and watched the others play for a while, noticing how they held the mallets, how they hit the ball, how they passed it and why. He had joined in. He was clumsy with the mallet but he could ride like the wind: he played passably well, he thoroughly enjoyed the game and his team won.

Book Press
Galley 0202 Take 0003 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3277, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

Now, in 1968, he said to himself once again, I can do anything, but who is my model?

The answer, of course, was David Rostov.

Rostov—independent, confident, capable, brilliant. He could find Dickstein, even when it seemed he was stumped, clueless, up a blind alley. He had done it twice. Hassan recalled: *Question*: Why is Dickstein in Luxembourg? All right, what do we know about Luxembourg? What is there here? There is the stock exchange, the banks, the Council of Europe, Euratom—

Question: Dickstein has disappeared—where might he have gone? Who do we know that he knows? Only Professor Ashford in Oxford—

Oxford.

Rostov's approach was to search out bits of information—*any* information, no matter how trivial—in order to get an approach to the target.

Trouble was, they seemed to have used all the bits of information they had . . . Then I'll get more, I can do anything. Remember . . .?

He searched for all that he could remember from the time they had been at Oxford together. Dickstein had been in the war, he played chess, his clothes were shabby—

He had a mother.

But she had died.

Hassan had never met any brothers or sisters, no relatives of any sort. It was all such a long time ago, and they had not been exactly close even then.

There was, however, someone else who might know a bit more about Dickstein—Professor Ashford.

So, in desperation, Yasif Hassan went back to Oxford.

All the way—in the plane from Cairo, the taxi from London airport to Paddington station, the train to Oxford and the taxi to the little green-and-white house by the river—he wondered about Ashford. The truth was, he despised the professor. In his youth he had perhaps been an adventurer but he had become a weak old man, a political dilettante, an academic who could not even hold his wife. He took pains to like Hassan because he thought he should, but he was not smart enough to conceal this. One could not respect an old cuckold—and the fact that the English did not think in this fashion only increased Hassan's contempt.

He worried that Ashford's weakness, together with some kind of loyalty to Dickstein as one who had been a friend and a student, might incline him to balk at getting involved.

He wondered whether to play up to the fact that Dickstein was Jewish. He knew from his time at Oxford that the most enduring anti-Semitism in England was that of the upper classes: the London clubs that still blackballed Jews were in the West End, not the East End. But Ashford was exceptional there. He loved the Middle East, and his pro-Arab stance was ethical, not racial or religious, in motivation. No, that approach would be a mistake.

In the end he decided to play it, as the Americans said, straight; to tell Ashford why he wanted to find Dickstein, and hope that Ashford would agree to help for reasons of his old pro-Arab sympathies . . .

▼

When they had shaken hands and poured sherry, they sat down in the garden and Ashford said, "What brings you back to England so soon?"

Book Press
Galley 0203 Take 0003 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3277, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

Hassan told the truth. "I'm after Nat Dickstein."

They were sitting by the river in the little corner of the garden that was cut off by the hedge where Hassan had kissed lovely Eila Ashford all those years ago. The corner was sheltered from the October wind, and there was a little autumn sunshine to warm them.

Ashford was guarded, his face expressionless. "I think you'd better tell me more of what's going on."

Hassan observed that during the summer the professor had actually yielded a bit to fashion. He had cultivated side-whiskers and allowed his monkish fringe of hair to grow long, and was wearing denim jeans with a wide leather belt beneath his old tweed jacket.

"I'll tell you," Hassan said, realizing that Rostov would probably have been more subtle, but not clear how . . . "but I must have your word that it will go no further."

"Agreed."

"Dickstein is an Israeli spy."

Ashford said nothing.

Hassan went on. "The Zionists are planning to make nuclear bombs but they have no plutonium. They are trying to secure in secrecy a supply of uranium to feed to their reactor to make plutonium. Dickstein's job is to steal that uranium—and my job is to find him and stop him. Professor, I am being this forthright with you because I know and respect your philosophical dedication to the equitable treatment of the Palestinian people. I suspect you do not hate the Israelis, but that is hardly necessary to see the terrible threat to the Middle East, in fact to the stability of the world, such an eventuality would be . . ." There, that was better, he was doing as well as, *better* than, Rostov . . . "I want you to help me, professor. Will you . . .?"

Ashford stared into his sherry, then drained the glass at a gulp. "There are two questions at issue here," he said, and Hassan realized, as he suspected, that Ashford was going to treat this as an intellectual problem, the characteristic defense of the academic. "One is whether or not I *can* help. The other, whether or not I *should*. The latter is preeminent, I think; morally, in any case."

And Hassan thought, I'd like to pick you up by the scruff of the neck and shake you. Maybe I can do that, at least figuratively . . . "Of course you *should*, you believe in the justice of our cause—"

"It's not so simple. I'm asked to interfere in a contest between two people, both of whom are my friends."

"But only one of them, you must grant, is in the right."

"So I should help the one who is in the right—and betray the one who is in the wrong?"

"Of course."

"There is not any 'of course' about it . . . What will you do, if and when you find Dickstein?"

"I'm with Egyptian Intelligence, professor. But my loyalty—and as I said I believe yours—lies with Palestine."

Ashford did not take up the bait. "Go on," he said noncommittally.

"I must find out exactly when and where Dickstein plans to steal this uranium." Hassan hesitated . . . He was on his own . . . Ashford was his only reasonable lead . . . there was nothing for it, he felt, except to go all the way to break through and enlist him . . . "Once I discover the time and place . . . the Fedayeen will get there before Dickstein and steal it for themselves, *ourselves* . . . professor."

Book Press
Galley 0204 Take 0003 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3277, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

Ashford's eyes took on a new life. "My god . . ."

He's almost there, Hassan thought. He's frightened, but he's clearly excited too. "Forgive me, professor, but it is rather easy for you to be loyal to your Palestinian sympathies here in Oxford, giving lectures, going to meetings. But things are a bit more difficult for those out in the field, fighting for the cause of justice. I'm here to ask you to do something practical about your philosophy, to decide how much your fine ideals truly mean. This, professor, is where you, and I, find out whether the just, historical Arab cause is anything more to you than a grand romantic concept. This is the test, professor. For all of us."

Ashford said quietly, "Perhaps you're right."

And Hassan thought it was enough. He had done it.

▼

Suza had decided to tell her father that she was in love with Nat Dickstein.

At first she had not been sure of it herself, not really. The few days they had spent together in London had been wild and happy and loving, but afterward she had realized that those feelings could be transient. She had resolved to make no resolutions. She would carry on normally and see how her feelings sorted out.

Something, however, had happened in Singapore to change her mind. Two of the cabin stewards on the trip were gay, and used only one of the two hotel rooms allotted to them; the crew could therefore use the other for a party, at which the pilot had made a pass at Suza. He was a quiet, smiling blond man with a good physique and a delightfully wacky sense of humor. The stewardesses all agreed he was a most likely stud. One, using the male image, thought he'd be a fine "piece of ass." Under other circumstances Suza would have bedded down with him without a quibble. But she had said no, astonishing the whole crew, and even herself a little. Thinking about it later, she decided that she no longer wanted to get *laid*. She had just gone off the whole idea. All she *wanted* was *Nathaniel*. It was like . . . it was a bit like five years ago when the second Beatles album came out, and she had gone through her pile of records by Elvis and Roy Orbison and the Everly Brothers and realized that she did not want to play them, they held no more enchantment for her, the old familiar tunes had been heard once too often, and she now wanted music of a higher order. Well, it was a bit like that now—but more so. Much much more

Dickstein's letter had been the clincher. It had been written god knew where and posted at Orly airport, Paris. In his small neat handwriting with its incongruously curly loops on the *g* and *y* he had opened up his heart in a manner that was all the more devastating because it came from a normally taciturn man. She had cried over that letter. It was the first she ever had. Also the first man.

She wished she could think of a way to explain all that to her father. She knew that he disapproved of Israelis, or rather Israel. Dickstein was an old student, and her father had been genuinely pleased to see him and prepared to overlook the fact that the old student was on the opposing side. But now she planned to make Dickstein a permanent part of her life, a member of the family. His letter said "Forever is what I want," and Suza could barely wait to tell him, "Oh, yes, Nathaniel. Me, too."

Book Press
Galley 0205 Take 0003 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3277, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

Actually, for herself, she believed both sides were in the wrong in the Middle East. The plight of the refugees was, she agreed, unjust and pitiful, but she thought they ought to set about making themselves new homes—it was not easy, but it was easier than war, and she despised the theatrical heroics which so many Arab men found irresistible. On the other hand, the Zionists had occupied a country that many felt belonged to other people. Such a more or less even-handed view had no appeal for her father, who in his academic fashion tended to see the abstracts of Right on one side and Wrong on the other, with the beautiful ghost of his wife forever on the side of Right.

It would be difficult for him. She had long ago scotched his dreams of walking up the aisle with his daughter beside him in a white wedding dress; but he still occasionally talked of her settling down and giving him a granddaughter. The idea that his grandchildren might be Israelis would come as a blow.

Still, that was the price of being a parent, Suza thought as she entered the house. She called, "Daddy, I'm home," as she took off her coat and put down her airline bag. There was no reply, but his briefcase was in the hall: he must be in the garden. She put the kettle on and walked out of the kitchen and down toward the river, still searching in her mind for the right words to tell him her news with. Maybe she should begin by talking about her trip, and gradually work around—

She heard voices as she approached the hedge.

"And what will you do with him?" It was her father's voice.

Suza stopped, wondering whether she ought to interrupt or not.

"Just follow him," said another voice, a strange one. "Dickstein must not be taken care of until afterwards, of course."

"Taken care of"? . . . She put her hand over her mouth, turned around and ran, soft-footed, back to the house.

▼

"Well, now," said Professor Ashford, "following what you might call the Rostov Method, let us recall everything we know about Nat Dickstein."

Do it any way you want, Hassan thought, but for god's sake come up with *something*.

Ashford went on: "He was born in the East End of London. His father died when he was a boy. What about the mother?"

"She's dead, too, according to our files."

"Ah. Well, he went into the army midway through the war—1943, I think it was. In any case he was in time to be part of the attack on Sicily. He was taken prisoner soon afterward, about halfway up the leg of Italy, I don't recall the place. It was rumored—you'll remember this, I'm sure—that he had a particularly bad time in the concentration camps, being Jewish. After the war he came here. He—"

"Sicily," Hassan interrupted.

"Yes?"

"Sicily is mentioned in his file. He is supposed to have been involved in the theft of a boatload of guns. Our people had bought the guns from a gang of criminals in Sicily."

"If we are to believe what we read in the newspapers," said Ashford, "there is only one so-called gang of criminals in Sicily."

Hassan added, "Our people suspected that the hijackers had bribed the Sicilians for a tip-off."

Book Press
Galley 0206 Take 0003 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3277, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

"Wasn't it Sicily where he saved that man's life . . .?"

Hassan wondered what Ashford was talking about. He controlled his impatience, thinking, let him ramble—it was, after all, the whole idea . . . "He saved someone's life?"

"The American. Don't you remember? I've never forgotten it. Dickstein brought the man here. A rather brutish American G.I. He told me the whole story, right here at this house. Now I believe we're getting somewhere . . . you must have met the man, you were here that day, don't you remember?"

"I can't say I do," Hassan muttered. He was embarrassed . . . he had probably been in the garden making love to Eila.

"It was . . . unsettling," Ashford said. He stared at the slowly moving water as his mind went back twenty years, and his face was shadowed by sadness for a moment, as if he was remembering his wife. Then he said, "Here we all were, a gathering of academics and students, probably discussing atonal music or existentialism while we sipped our sherry, when in came this big G.I. who started talking about snipers and tanks and blood and death. It cast a considerable chill . . . that's why I recall it so clearly. He said his family originated in Sicily, and his cousins had fêted Dickstein after the life-saving incident . . . Did you say a Sicilian gang had tipped off Dickstein about the boatload of guns?"

"It's possible, that's all . . ."

"Perhaps he didn't have to bribe them . . ."

Hassan shook his head. This was information, the kind of trivial information Rostov always seemed to make something of—but how was *he* going to use it? "I don't see what use all this is going to be to us," he said. "How could Dickstein's ancient hijack be connected with the Mafia?"

"The Mafia," said Ashford. "That's the word I was looking for. And the man's name was . . . Cortone—Tony Cortone—no, Al Cortone . . . from an unlikely place called Buffalo . . . I told you, I remember every detail of it—"

"But the connection?" Hassan said impatiently.

Ashford shrugged. "Simply this. Once before Dickstein used his connection with Cortone to call on the Sicilian Mafia for help with an act of piracy in the Mediterranean. People tend to repeat themselves, you know. I suggest he may do the same thing once again."

It was a long shot, a sheer guess, but a guess that at least did make sense . . .

Ashford looked pleased with himself, as though he'd just propounded a fine piece of speculative reasoning and was thinking how to publish it, with footnotes.

"I wonder," said Hassan, more excited than he allowed himself to show. "I wonder . . ."

"It's getting cool, let's go into the house."

As they walked up the garden Hassan thought that if he had not entirely learned to be a Rostov, he had at least found in Ashford something of an academic substitute. Still, his once proud sense of independence seemed unretrieved. There was something . . . unmanly about it, and he wondered if the other Fedayeen felt the same way, if perhaps that was why they were so bloodthirsty. They . . . he . . .

Ashford was saying, "Trouble is, I doubt Cortone will tell you anything, whatever he knows."

Book Press
Galley 0207 Take 0003 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3277, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

"Would he tell you?"

"Why should he? He'll hardly remember me. Now, if Eila were alive, she could have gone to see him and told him some story . . ."

"Well . . ." Hassan wished Eila would stay out of the conversation. "I'll simply have to try myself."

They entered the house. As they went into the kitchen they saw Suza, and when they looked at each other, each knew he had found the answer.

▼

By the time the two men came into the house Suza had almost convined herself that she had been mistaken when, in the garden, she thought she heard them talk about "taking care of" Nat Dickstein. Taking care of . . . killing . . . ? It was simply unreal. The garden, the river, the autumn sunshine, her professor father and his guest . . . death, murder, had no place here, the whole idea was fantastic, like a polar bear in the Sahara Desert. Besides, there was a very good psychological explanation for her mistake . . . she had been planning to tell her father that she loved Dickstein, and she had been afraid of his reaction—Freud could probably have predicted that at *that* point she might well imagine her father plotting to take care of, to kill her lover . . .

Because she nearly believed this reasoning—because she so much *needed* to—she was able to smile brightly . . . a bit overbrightly? . . . at them. "Who wants coffee? I've just made some," she chattered.

Her father kissed her cheek. "I didn't realize you were back, my dear."

"I just arrived, I was thinking of coming out to look for you." . . . Why am I telling these lies . . .?

"You don't know Yasif Hassan—he was one of my students when you were very small."

Hassan kissed her hand and stared at her the way people always did when they had known Eila. "You're every bit as beautiful as your mother," he said, and his voice was not flirtatious, not even flattering: rather, it sounded amazed.

Her father said, "Yasif was here a few months ago, shortly after a contemporary of his visited us—Nat Dickstein. You met Dickstein, I think, but you were away by the time Yasif came."

"Was there any connec—connection?" she asked, and silently cursed her voice for cracking on the last word.

The two men looked at one another, and her father said, "Matter of fact, Suza, there was."

And then she knew it was true, she had not misheard, they really *were* going to kill Nat Dickstein—the only man she had ever been able to love. She felt dangerously, infuriatingly, close to tears, and turned away from them to fiddle with cups and saucers.

"I want to ask you to do something, my dear," said her father. "Something very important, for the sake of your mother's memory. Sit down."

No more, she thought; this mustn't get even worse, please.

She took a deep breath, turned around, and sat down facing him.

"I want you to help my friend Yasif here to find Nat Dickstein."

Book Press
Galley 0208 Take 0003 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3277, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

From that moment she hated her father. Suddenly, instantly, his love for her was fraudulent. He had never seen her as a person, had used her as he had used her mother. Well, at least she never again would feel obliged to take care of him, *serve* him. Never again worry about how he felt, whether he was lonely, what he needed . . . She realized, in the same rush of insight and accompanying fear, and hatred, that her mother must in her fashion have reached this same point with him, and that she would now do what her mother had done—despise him.

Ashford was going on . . . "There is a man in America who may know where Dickstein is. I want you to go there with Yasif and ask this man . . ."

She said nothing. Hassan took her silence, her blank expression, for incomprehension, and felt he had better try to explain. "You see, Miss Ashford, this Dickstein is an Israeli agent, working against our people, your late mother's people. We must stop him. Cortone—this man in Buffalo—may be helping him, and if he is he will not, of course, help us. But he will remember your mother, and so he may cooperate with you. You might even tell him that you and Dickstein are lovers."

Suza's hard-edged laugh was involuntary, and she only hoped they would assume the wrong reasons for it. She controlled herself, and managed to become numb, to keep her body still and her face expressionless . . . while, God help her, they told her about the yellowcake, and the man aboard the *Coparelli*, and the radio beacon on the *Stromberg*, and about Mahmoud and *his* hijack plan, and how very much it would all mean for the Palestine liberation movement, her dear mother's heritage and legacy . . . And at the end she *was* numb, she no longer had to pretend.

Finally her father said, "So, my dear, will you help? Will you do it?"

With an effort of self-control that astonished her, she gave them a bright air-hostess smile, got up from her stool and said, "It's a lot to take in in one go, isn't it? I'll think about it while I'm in the bath."

▼

It all sank in, gradually, as she lay in the hot water with a locked door between her and *them*.

So this was the thing that Nathaniel had to do before he could see her again—steal a ship. And then, he had said, he would not let her out of his sight for ten or fifteen years . . . Perhaps that meant he would give up this work . . .

But, of course, none of his plans was going to succeed, because his enemies knew too much about them. A Russian planned to destroy Nat's ship, and Hassan planned to steal the ship first and surprise Nat. Either way her lover was in terrible danger. Either way they wanted to destroy him. Well, at least she could warn him. She *had* to.

But to do that she had to know where he was.

How little those two strangers downstairs knew about her! Hassan simply assumed, just like a typical Arab male chauvinist—the worst of the breed—that she would do as she was told. Her father assumed she would take the Palestinian side, because he did and he was, after all, the brains of the family. He had never, of course, known what was in his daughter's mind; he had, for that matter, been equally ignorant about his wife. Eila had always been able to deceive him because in his self-centeredness he never suspected that she might not be what she seemed.

Book Press
Galley 0209 Take 0003 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3277, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

When Suza realized what she had to do, she was terrified all over again.

There was, after all, one way she might find Nathaniel and warn him.

"Find Nat" was what *they* wanted her to do.

She believed, hoped, she could deceive them . . . they already assumed, presumed, she was on their side, thought as they thought . . . So she would *do* what they wanted. She would find Nat—and then she could warn him . . .

But would she be making things worse? To find him herself, she had to lead them to him.

But even if Hassan did not find him, he was still in mortal danger from the Russian . . .

And if he was forewarned, at least he would have a chance . . . a chance perhaps to escape both of them . . .

Perhaps, too, she could get rid of Hassan, somehow, before she actually reached Nat . . .

What, after all, was the alternative? To wait, to go on as if nothing had happened, to hope for a phone call that might never come . . . It was, she realized, at least partly her hungry need to see Dickstein again in the flesh that led her to think like this, partly the thought that after the hijack they intended to kill him, that this might well be her last chance . . . By doing nothing she might help frustrate Hassan's scheme, but that still left the Russians, hardly inconsiderable adversaries.

Her decision was made. She would pretend to work with Hassan so that she could find Nathaniel. There was nothing else for it.

Strangely, she felt a kind of exhilaration . . . she was trapped in a bad situation but she felt free. She was obeying her father, but at the same time she felt that finally she was defying him. Above all, win or lose, life or death, she was committed to her man, Nathaniel Dickstein.

She was also very, very frightened.

She got out of the bath, dried herself, dressed, and went downstairs to tell them the good news.

▼

At four A.M. on November 16, 1968, the *Coparelli* hove to at Vlissingen, on the Belgian coast, and took on board a port pilot to guide her through the channel of the Westerschelde to Antwerp. Four hours later, at the entrance to the harbor, she took on another pilot to negotiate her passage through the docks. From the main harbor she went through Royers Lock, along the Suez Canal, under the Siberia Bridge and into Kattendijk Dock, where she tied up at her berth.

Dickstein was watching.

When he saw her sweep slowly in, and read the name *Coparelli* on her side, and thought of the drums of yellowcake that would soon fill her belly, he was overcome by a most peculiar feeling, like the one he had when he looked at Suza's naked body . . . yes, almost like lust.

He looked away from berth No. 42 to the railway line, which ran almost to the edge of the quay. There was a train on the line now, consisting of eleven cars and an engine. Ten of the cars carried fifty-one 200-liter drums with sealed lids and the word PLUMBAT stenciled on the side; the eleventh car had only fifty drums. He was so close to those drums, to that uranium; he could stroll over and touch the railway cars—he already had done this once, earlier in the morning, and had thought, Wouldn't it be great just to raid this place with choppers and Israeli commandos and simply *steal* the stuff . . . Damn the injunction of his brief for

Book Press
Galley 0210 Take 0003 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3277, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

secrecy, for leaving no trail to Israel.

The *Coparelli* was scheduled for a fast turnabout. The port authorities had been convinced that the yellowcake could be handled safely, but all the same they did not want the stuff hanging about their harbor one minute longer than necessary. There was a crane standing by ready to load the drums onto the ship.

Nevertheless, there were formalities to be completed before loading could begin.

The first person Dickstein saw boarding the ship was an official from the shipping company. He had to give the pilots their *pourboire* and secure from the captain a crew list for the harbor police.

The second person aboard was Josef Cohen. He was here for the sake of customer relations: he would give the captain a bottle of whiskey and sit down for a drink with him and the shipping company official. He also had a bunch of tickets for free entry and one drink at the best nightclub in town, which he would give to the captain for the officers. And he would discover the name of the ship's engineer. Dickstein had suggested he do this by asking to see the crew list, then counting out one ticket for each officer on the list.

Whatever way he had decided to do it, he had been successful . . . As he left the ship and crossed the quay to return to his office he passed Dickstein and said sotto voce, "The engineer's name is Sarne," without breaking stride . . .

It was not until afternoon that the crane went into action and the dockers began loading the drums into the three holds of the *Coparelli*. The drums had to be moved one at a time, and inside the ship each drum had to be secured with wedges of wood. As expected, the loading was not completed that day.

In the evening Dickstein went to the best nightclub in town. Sitting at the bar, close to the telephone, was a quite astonishing woman of about thirty, with black hair and a long, aristocratic face possessed of a faintly haughty expression. She wore an elegant black dress which made the most of her extraordinary legs and her high, round breasts. Dickstein gave her an almost imperceptible nod but did not speak to her.

He sat in a corner, nursing a glass of beer, hoping the sailors would come. Surely they would. Did sailors ever refuse a free drink?

Yes.

m The club began to fill up. The woman in the black dress was propositioned a couple of times but refused both men, thereby establishing that she was not a professional. At nine o'clock Dickstein went out to the lobby and phoned Cohen. By previous arrangement, Cohen had called the captain of the *Coparelli* on a pretext. He now told Dickstein what he had discovered: that all but two of the officers were using their free tickets. The exceptions were the captain himself, who was busy with paperwork, and the radio operator—a new man they had taken on in Cardiff after Lars broke his leg—who had a head cold.

Dickstein then dialed the number of the club he was in. He asked to speak to Mr. Sarne, who, he understood, would be found in the bar. While he waited he could hear a barman calling out Sarne's name: it came to him two ways, directly from the bar, the other through several miles of telephone cable. Eventually he heard over the phone a voice say, "Yes? Hello? This is Sarne. Is anybody there? Hello?"

Book Press
Galley 0211 Take 0003 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3277, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

Dickstein hung up and walked quickly back into the bar. He looked over to where the bar phone was. The woman in the black dress was speaking to a tall, suntanned blond man in his thirties whom Dickstein had seen on the quay earlier that day. Sarne.

The woman smiled at Sarne. It was a nice smile, a smile to make any man look twice—warm and red-lipped, showing even, white teeth, and it was accompanied by a measured, languid half-closing of the eyes, which looked not at all as though it had been rehearsed a thousand times in front of a mirror.

Dickstein watched. He had very little idea how this sort of thing worked, how men picked up women and women picked up men, and he understood even less how a woman could pick up a man while letting the man believe *he* was doing the picking up.

Sarne had his own charm, it seemed. He gave her his smile, a grin with something wickedly boyish in it that seemed to make him look several years younger. He said something to her, and she smiled again. He hesitated, like a man who wants to talk more but can't think of anything to say; then, to ruin it all, he turned away to leave.

"I owe Dickstein my life. Now I have a chance to save his, if you're telling the truth. It's a debt of honor. I have to pay it back myself, in person. So what do I do?" He paused.

Suza held her breath.

"Dickstein is in a wreck of a house somewhere on the Mediterranean. It's a ruin, hasn't been lived in for years, there's not even a phone there. I could send a message, but I couldn't be sure it would get there, and like I said, I have to do this myself, in person."

He drew on the cigar. "I could tell you where to go look for him, but, little lady, you just might pass the information on to the wrong people. I won't take that risk."

"What, then?" Suza said impatiently. "We have to help him—"

"I know that," Cortone said. "So I'm going there myself."

"Oh!" Somehow it was a possibility she had never considered . . . because she so much had wanted to go herself, to *see* him herself . . .

"And what about you?" he went on. "I'm not going to tell you where I'm headed, but you could still have people follow me. I need to keep you real close from now on, little lady. Let's face it, old Nat may have the hots for you, but to me you're just another broad who could be playing it both ways. I'm taking you with me."

She stared at him. Tension drained out of her, she slumped in her chair. Thank god, she thought, and then, at last, she was able to cry.

▼

They flew first class. Cortone always did. After the meal Suza left him to go to the toilet. She looked through the curtain into economy, hoping against hope, but, of course, she was disappointed: there was Hassan's wary brown face staring at her over the rows of headrests.

She looked into the galley and spoke confidentially to the chief steward. She had a problem, she said. She needed to contact her boyfriend but she couldn't get away from her Italian father, who wanted her to wear iron panties until she was twenty-one. Would he phone the Israeli consulate in Rome and leave a message for a Nathaniel Dickstein? Just say, Hassan has told me everything, he and I are coming to see you. She gave him extra money for the phone call, she hoped it was enough of a tip, bribe . . . he wrote the message down and promised.

Book Press
Galley 0212 Take 0003 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3277, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

She went back to Cortone. Bad news, she said. One of the Arabs was back there in economy. He must be following them.

Cortone cursed, then told her never mind, the man would just have to be taken care of later.

▼

From the big house on the clifftop Dickstein went down a long zigzag flight of steps cut into the rock to the beach. He splashed through the shallows to a waiting motorboat, jumped in and nodded to the man at the wheel.

The engine roared, the boat surged through the waves and out to sea. The sun had just set. In the last faint light the clouds were massing above, obscuring the stars as soon as they appeared. Dickstein was deep in thought, racking his brains for things he had not done, precautions he might still take, loopholes he still had time to close. He went over his plan again and again in his mind, like a man who has learned by heart an important speech he must make but still wishes it were better.

The high shadow of the *Stromberg* loomed ahead, and the boatman brought the little vessel around in a foamy arc to stop alongside, where a rope ladder dangled in the water. Dickstein scrambled up the ladder and onto the deck.

The ship's master shook his hand and introduced himself. Like all the officers aboard the *Stromberg*, he was borrowed from the Israeli navy.

They took a turn around the deck. Dickstein said, "Any problems, captain?"

"She's not a good ship," the captain said. "She's slow, clumsy and old. But we've got her in good shape."

From what Dickstein could see in the twilight the *Stromberg* was in better condition than her sister ship the *Coparelli* had been in Antwerp. She was clean, and everything on deck looked squared away, shipshape.

They went up to the bridge, looked over the powerful equipment in the radio room, then went down to the mess, where the crew were finishing dinner. Unlike the officers, the ordinary seamen were all Mossad agents, most with a little experience of the sea. Dickstein had worked with some of them before. They were all, he observed, at least ten years younger than he. They were bright-eyed, dressed in a peculiar assortment of denims and homemade sweaters. Tough, proud, well-trained men.

Dickstein took a cup of coffee and sat at one of the tables. He considerably outranked all these men, but there was not much bull about R. . . . P.—rank has its privileges—in the Israeli armed forces, and even less in the Mossad. The four men at the table nodded and said hello. Ish, a gloomy Palestine-born Israeli with a dark complexion, said, "The weather's changing."

"Don't say that. I was planning to get a tan on this cruise." The speaker was a lanky ash-blond New Yorker named Feinberg, a deceptively pretty-faced man with eyelashes women coveted. Calling this assignment a "cruise" was already a standing joke. In his briefing earlier in the day Dickstein had said the *Coparelli* would be almost deserted when they hijacked it. "Soon after she passes through the Strait of Gibraltar," he had told them, "her engines will break down. The damage will be such that it can't be repaired at sea. The captain will cable the owners to that effect—and we are now the owners. By an apparently lucky coincidence, another of our ships will be close by. She's the *Gil Hamilton*, now moored across the bay here. She will go to the *Coparelli* and take off the whole crew except for the engineer. Then she's out of the picture—she'll go to her next port of call, where the crew of the *Coparelli* will be let off and given their train

Book Press
Galley 0213 Take 0003 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3277, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

fares home."

They had had the day to think about the briefing, and Dickstein was expecting questions. Now Levi Abbas, a short, solid man—"built like a tank and about as handsome," Feinberg had said—said to Dickstein, "You didn't tell us how come you're so sure the *Coparelli* will break down when you want her to."

Dickstein sipped his coffee. "Do you know Dieter Koch, naval intelligence?"

Feinberg knew him.

"He's the *Coparelli*'s engineer."

Abbas nodded. "Which is also how come we know we'll be able to repair the *Coparelli*? We know what's going to go wrong?"

"Right."

Abbas went on. "Then, as you said, we paint out the name *Coparelli*, rename her *Stromberg*, switch log books, scuttle the old *Stromberg* and sail the *Coparelli*, now the *Stromberg*, to Haifa with the cargo . . . But why not transfer the cargo from one ship to the other at sea? We have cranes—"

"That was my original notion," Dickstein said. "But it was too risky. Especially in bad weather."

"We could still do it if the good weather holds."

"Yes, but now that we have identical sister ships—and that took a little doing—it will be a lot easier to switch names than cargoes."

Ish said lugubriously, "Anyway, the good weather won't hold."

The fourth man at the table was Porush, a crewcut youngster with a chest like a barrel of ale who happened to be married to Abbas's sister . . . "If it's going to be so easy, what are all of us tough guys doing here?"

Dickstein turned to him. "I've been running around the world for the past six months setting up this thing. Once or twice I've bumped into people from the other side—inevitably. I don't *think* they know what we're about to do . . . but if they do, we may find out just how tough you tough guys are."

One of the officers came in with a piece of paper and approached Dickstein. "Signal from Tel Aviv, sir. The *Coparelli* just passed Gibraltar."

"That's it," said Dickstein, standing up. "We sail in the morning."

▼

Suza Ashford and Al Cortone changed planes in Rome and arrived in Sicily early in the morning. Two of Cortone's cousins were at the airport to meet him. There was an extended argument between them; not acrimonious, but loud and excitable. Suza could not entirely follow the rapid dialect but she gathered the cousins wanted to accompany Cortone and he was insisting that this was something he had to do alone because it was a debt of honor.

Cortone seemed to win the argument. They left the airport, without the cousins, in a big white Fiat. Suza drove, Cortone directed her onto the coast road. For the hundredth time she played over in her mind the reunion scene with Nathaniel: she saw his slight, angular body, he looked up, he recognized her and smiled his lovely pinched smile, and she ran to him, they threw their arms around each other, he squeezing her so hard it hurt, she saying, I love you, and kissing his cheek, nose, mouth . . . But she was frightened too, and there was another scene she played less often in which he stared at her stony-faced and said, "What the hell do you think you're doing here?" . . . It was a

Book Press
Galley 0214 Take 0003 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3277, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

little like the time she had behaved badly on Christmas Eve, and her mother got angry and told her Santa Claus would put stones in her Christmas stocking instead of toys and candy. She had not known whether to believe this or not, and she had lain awake, alternately wishing for and dreading the morning . . .

She glanced across at Cortone in the seat beside her. The transatlantic journey seemed to have tired him. Suza found it difficult to think of him as being the same age as Nat, he was so fat and bald and . . . well, he had an air of weary depravity that might have been amusing but in fact only said prematurely old . . .

The island was pretty when the sun came out. Suza looked at the scenery, trying to distract herself so that the time would pass more quickly. The road twisted along the edge of the sea from town to town, and on her right-hand side there were views of rocky beaches and the sparkling Mediterranean.

Cortone lit a cigar. "I used to do this kind of thing a lot when I was young," he said. "Get on a plane, go somewhere with a pretty girl, drive around, see places. Not anymore. I've been stuck in 'shuffle off to Buffalo' for years, it seems like. That's the thing with . . . business—you get rich, but there's always something to worry about. So you never go places, you have people come to you, bring you stuff. You get too damn fat and lazy to have fun."

"You made your bed," Suza said, not meaning it to sound as harsh as she quickly realized it must to him.

"I did that, all right," Cortone said. "Young people have no mercy." He gave a rare half smile and puffed on his cigar.

For the third time Suza saw the same blue car in her rearview mirror. "We're being followed," she said, trying to keep her voice calm.

"Your Arab?"

"Must be." She could not see the face behind the windshield. "What will we do, you said you'd handle it—"

"I will."

That was all. Expecting him to say more, Suza glanced across at him. He was loading a pistol with brown-black bullets. She had never seen a gun in her life.

Cortone looked up at her, then ahead. "Christ, lady, watch the goddamn *road*."

She looked ahead, braked hard for a sharp bend. "Where did you get that thing?"

"From my cousin."

It was a nightmare. She had not slept in a bed for four days. From the moment she'd heard her father talking so calmly about killing Nathaniel she had been running—running from the awful truth about Hassan and her father, running to the safety of Dickstein's wiry arms . . . and, as in a nightmare, the destination seemed to recede as fast as she ran . . .

"Why don't you tell me where we're going?" she asked Cortone.

He felt it was safe now. "Nat asked me for the loan of a house with a mooring and protection from snooping police. We're going to that house."

"How far?"

"Couple of miles."

A minute later Cortone said, "We'll get there, don't rush. We don't want to die on the way."

Book Press
Galley 0215 Take 0003 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3277, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

She realized she had unconsciously put her foot down. She eased off the accelerator but she could not slow her thoughts. Any minute now, to see him and touch his face, to kiss him hello, to feel his hands on her shoulders—

"Turn in there, on the right."

She drove through an open gateway and along a short gravel drive overgrown with weeds to a large ruined villa of white stone. When she pulled up in front of the pillared portico she somehow expected Nathaniel to come running out to greet her.

There were no signs of life on this side of the house.

They got out of the car and climbed the broken stone staircase to the front entrance. The great wooden door was closed but not locked. Suza opened it and they went in.

There was a great hall with a floor of smashed marble. The ceiling sagged and the walls were blotched with damp. In the center of the hall was a great fallen chandelier sprawled on the floor like a dead eagle.

Cortone called out, "Hello, anybody here?"

No reply.

It was a big place, she thought, he had to be here, it was just that he couldn't hear, maybe he was out in the garden . . .

They crossed the hall, skirting the chandelier. They entered a cavernous drawing room, their footsteps echoing loudly, and went out through the glassless french doors at the back of the building.

A short garden ran down to the edge of the cliff. They walked that far and saw a long stairway cut into the rock zigzagging down to the sea.

No one in sight.

He's *not* here, Suza thought . . . This time, Santa really did leave me stones.

"Look." Cortone was pointing out to sea with one fat hand. Suza looked, and saw two vessels—a ship and a motorboat. The motorboat was coming toward them fast, jumping the waves and slicing the water with its sharp prow; there was one man in it. The ship was sailing out of the bay, leaving a broad wake.

"Looks like we just missed them," Cortone said.

Book Press
Galley 0216 Take 8001 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79

C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3283, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

Suza ran down the steps, shouting and waving, trying to attract the attention of someone on the ship, and at the same time knowing it was impossible, they were too far away . . . She slipped on the stones and fell heavily on her bottom, and she began to cry as though her heart would break.

Cortone ran down after her, his heavy body jerking on the steps. "It's no good," he said, pulling her to her feet.

"The motorboat," she said, "maybe we can take the motorboat and catch up with the ship—"

"No way . . . by the time the boat gets here the ship will be too far away, much too far, and going faster than the boat can."

He led her back up the steps. She had run a long way down, and the climb back taxed him heavily. Suza hardly noticed, she was too full of her own misery . . . Her mind was a blank as they walked up the slope of the garden and back into the house.

"Have to sit down," Cortone said as they crossed the drawing room.

Suza looked at him. He was breathing hard, his face was gray and covered with perspiration. And finally she realized it had all been too much for his overweight body. For a moment she forgot her own awful disappointment. "The stairs," she said. They went into the ruined hall and she led Cortone to the wide curving staircase and sat him on the second step. He went down heavily. He closed his eyes and rested his head on the wall beside him.

"Listen," he said, "you can call ships . . . or send them a wire . . . we can still reach him . . ."

"Sit quietly for a minute," she said. "Don't talk."

"Ask my cousins—who's there?"

Suza turned around. There had been a clink of chandelier shards, and now she saw what had caused it.

Yasif Hassan walked toward them across the room.

And suddenly, with a massive effort, Cortone stood up.

Hassan stopped.

Cortone's breath was coming in ragged gulps. He fumbled in his pocket, pulled out the gun.

Hassan seemed frozen, unable to move.

Cortone staggered, the gun in his hand weaving, but he managed to pull the trigger. The gun went off twice, with a huge, deafening double report. The shots went wild. Cortone collapsed onto the floor, his face dark as death. The gun fell from his fingers, hit the cracked marble floor.

Suza knelt beside Cortone. He opened his eyes. "Listen . . ." he began hoarsely.

Hassan now found his customary courage . . . "Leave him. Let's go."

Book Press
Galley 0217 Take 8001 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3283, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

Suza turned her head to face him. "*You*," she said, "you just fuck *off*," and then turned back to Cortone.

". . . I've killed a lot of men," Cortone was saying, and Suza bent closer to hear. "Eleven men, I killed myself . . . I slept with a lot of women . . ." His voice trailed off, his eyes closed, and then he made a huge effort to speak again. "All my goddamn life I been a thief and a lot worse . . . But, goddamn, I died for my friend, right? This counts for something, right . . . ? It has to, doesn't it . . . ?"

"Yes," she said. "It really counts . . ."

"Okay," he said.

Suza had never seen a man die. It was terrible. Suddenly there was nothing there, nothing but a body . . . the person had vanished. She realized her own face was streaked with tears. And she realized something else about death, it exposed hypocrites . . . I didn't even like him, she thought, not until now . . .

Hassan broke in, saying, "You did very well, now, let's get out of here."

"Very well . . . ?" And then she understood . . . Hassan didn't know she'd told Cortone he'd been following them. As far as Hassan was concerned she had done just what he wanted her to—she had led him here. Now dhe must try to keep up the pretense that she was on his side. Until she could find a way to contact Nat . . . But I can't lie. I'm so damn tired . . . And then she remembered . . . You can phone a ship, or at least send a cable, Cortone had said.

She *could* still warn Nat.

Oh, god, when can I sleep?

She stood up. "What are we waiting for?"

They went out through the high derelict entrance. "We'll take my car," Hassan told her.

She thought of trying to run away from him then, quickly realized it was a foolish idea. He would let her go soon . . . she had done what he'd asked, hadn't she? Now he would send her home . . .

She got into the car.

"Wait," Hassan said. He ran to Cortone's car, took out the keys and threw them into the bushes. He got into his own car. "So the man in the motorboat can't follow."

As they drove off he said, "I'm disappointed in your attitude. That man was helping our enemies. You should rejoice, not cry, when an enemy dies."

She covered her eyes with her hand. "He was helping his friend."

Hassan patted her knee. "You've done well, I shouldn't criticize you. You got the information I wanted."

She looked at him. "Did I?"

"Sure. That big ship we saw leaving the bay—that was the *Stromberg*. I know her time of departure and her maximum speed, so now I can figure out the earliest possible moment at which she could meet up with the *Caparelli*. And I can have my men there a day earlier." He patted her knee again, this time letting his hand rest on her thigh.

"Don't touch me," she said.

He took his hand away.

She closed her eyes and tried to think . . . She had achieved the worst possible outcome by what she had done . . . she'd led Hassan to Sicily but she'd failed to warn Nat . . . She must find out how to send a telegram to a ship, and do it as soon as she and Hassan parted company . . . Only one other chance—the airplane steward who had promised to call the Israeli consulate in Rome . . . "Oh, god, I'll be glad to get back to Oxford—"

Book Press
Galley 0218 Take 8001 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3283, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

"Oxford?" Hassan laughed. "Not yet. You'll have to stay with me until the operation is over."

Dear god, I can't stand it. "But I'm so tired," she said.

"We'll rest soon. I couldn't let you go. Security, you know. Anyway, you wouldn't want to miss seeing the dead body of Israel's most important spy."

▼

At the Alitalia desk in the airport three men approached Yasif Hassan. Two of them were young and thuggish, the third was a tall sharp-faced man in his fifties.

The older man said, "You damn fool, you deserve to be *shot.*"

Hassan looked up at him, and Suza saw genuine fear in his eyes as he said, "Rostov!"

Rostov took hold of Hassan's arm. It seemed for a moment that Hassan would resist, jerk his arm away. The two young thugs moved closer. Suza and Hassan were enclosed. Rostov led Hassan away from the ticket desk. One of the thugs took Suza's arm and they followed.

They went into a quiet corner. Rostov, obviously blazing, kept his voice low. "You might have blown the whole thing if you hadn't been a few minutes late."

"What do you mean—?"

"You think I don't know you've been running around the world looking for Dickstein? You think I can't have you followed just like any other bloody imbecile? I've been getting hourly reports on your movements ever since you left Cairo. And what made you think you could trust her?" He nodded imperceptibly toward Suza.

"She *led* me here—"

"Do you know why . . . ?"

Suza stood still, confused. The multiple shocks of the morning—missing Nat, watching Cortone die, now this Russian—had all but paralyzed her ability to think clearly . . . Keeping the lies straight had been difficult enough when she had been deceiving Hassan and telling Cortone a truth that Hassan thought was a lie. Now there was this Rostov, to whom Hassan was lying, and she could not even begin to think about whether what she said to Rostov should be the truth or another, different lie.

Hassan was saying, "How did you get here?"

"On the *Karla,* of course. We were only forty or fifty miles off Sicily when I got the report that you had landed here. I also obtained permission from Cairo to order you to return there immediately and directly."

"I still think I did the right thing," said Hassan.

"Get out of my sight."

Hassan walked away. Suza began to follow him but Rostov said, "Not you." He took her arm and began to walk. "You may feel you've proved your loyalty to us, Miss Ashford, but in the middle of a project like this we can't, of course, allow newly recruited people simply to go home. On the other hand I have no people here in Sicily other than those I need with me on the ship, so I can't have you escorted somewhere else. I'm afraid you're going to have to come aboard the *Karla* with me until this business is over. I hope you don't mind. Do you know, you look exactly like your mother. Yes, I expect you do."

Book Press
Galley 0219 Take 8001 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3283, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

They had walked out of the airport to a waiting car. Rostov opened the door for her. Now was the time she should run . . . after this it might be too late. She hesitated. One of the thugs stood beside her. His jacket fell open slightly and she saw the butt of his gun. She remembered Cortone's gun, the sound of it going off in the ruined villa; and suddenly she was afraid to die, Cortone's poor fat body reduced to nothingness, and suddenly, hating herself for it, she began to shake . . .

"What is it?" Rostov said.

"Nothing, I'm just tired . . ."

"Of course," Rostov said. "Get in the car."

She was also, he suspected, something else.

▼

Pierre Borg drove out of Athens and parked his car at one end of a stretch of beach where occasional lovers strolled. He got out and walked along the shoreline until he met Kawash coming the other way. They stood side by side, looking out to sea, wavelets lapping sleepily at their feet. Borg could see the handsome face of the tall Arab double agent by starlight, and he was not his usual confident self.

"Thank you for coming," Kawash said.

Borg had no idea why he was being thanked. If anyone should say thank you, it was he. And then he realized that Kawash had been making precisely that point . . . the man did everything with subtlety, including insults.

"The Russians suspect there is a leak out of Cairo," Kawash was saying. "They are playing their cards very close. Even when Yasif Hassan came back to Cairo for debriefing we didn't learn much—and *I* didn't get all the information Hassan gave."

"Don't waste time with excuses, please. Just tell me what you do know."

"All right. I know that they know that Dickstein is to steal some uranium."

"You told me that last time."

"I don't think they know any of the details. Their intention is to let it happen, then expose it afterward. They've put a couple of ships into the Mediterranean, but they don't know where to send them."

A plastic bottle floated in on the tide and landed at Borg's feet. He kicked it back into the water. "What about Suza Ashford?"

"Definitely working for the Arab side . . . Now listen to this . . . there was an argument between Rostov and Hassan. Hassan wanted to find out exactly where Dickstein was, and Rostov thought it was unnecessary."

"Bad news. Go on."

"Afterward Hassan went out on a limb. He got the Ashford girl to help him look for Dickstein. They went to a place called Buffalo, in the U.S., and met a gangster called Cortone who took them to Sicily. They missed Dickstein, but only *just*—they even saw the *Stromberg* leave. Hassan is in considerable trouble over this. He has been ordered back to Cairo but hasn't turned up as yet."

"But the girl led them to where Dickstein had been?"

"Exactly."

Borg thought of the message that had arrived in the Rome consulate for Nat Dickstein from his "girlfriend," and told Kawash about it . . . "Hassan has told me everything, he and I are coming to see you." . . . Was it intended to warn Dickstein, or to delay him, or to confuse him? Or was it a double bluff—an attempt to make him think she was being coerced into leading Hassan to him?

Book Press
Galley 0220 Take 8001 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3283, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

A double bluff was Kawash's opinion. "She knew her role in this would eventually be exposed, so she tried for a longer lease on Dickstein's trust . . . You won't pass the message on . . ."

"Of course not." Borg's mind turned to another tack. "If they went to Sicily they know about the *Stromberg*. What conclusions can they draw from that?"

"That the *Stromberg* will be used in the uranium theft?"

"Exactly. Now, if I were Rostov, I'd follow the *Stromberg*, let the hijack take place, then attack. Damn it, I think this will have to be called off." He dug the toe of his shoe into the soft sand. "What's the situation at Qattara?"

"I was saving the worst news until last. All tests have been satisfactorily completed. The Russians are supplying uranium. The reactor goes on stream three weeks from today."

Borg stared out to sea, thoroughly miserable. "You know what this means? It means we *can't* call it off. It means I can't stop Dickstein. It means, God help us, that Nat Dickstein is Israel's last chance."

Kawash was silent. His eyes were closed. "What are you doing?" Borg said.

Slowly Kawash opened his eyes, looked at Borg, and gave his polite little half smile. "Praying," he said.

TEL AVIV TO MV STROMBERG
PERSONAL BORG TO DICKSTEIN EYES ONLY
MUST BE DECODED BY THE ADDRESSEE
BEGINS SUZA ASHFORD CONFIRMED ARAB AGENT STOP SHE PERSUADED
CORTONE TO TAKE HER AND HASSAN TO SICILY STOP THEY ARRIVED AFTER
YOU LEFT STOP CORTONE NOW DEAD STOP THIS AND OTHER DATA INDICATES
STRONG POSSIBILITY YOU WILL BE ATTACKED AT SEA STOP NO FURTHER
ACTION WE CAN TAKE AT THIS END STOP YOU FOULED IT UP ON YOUR OWN
NOW GET OUT OF IT SAME WAY ENDS

The clouds which had been massing over the western Mediterranean for the previous few days finally burst that night, drenching the *Stromberg* with rain. Next a brisk wind blew up, and the shortcomings of the ship's design became apparent as she began to roll and yaw in the burgeoning waves.

Dickstein did not notice the weather.

He sat alone in his cabin at the table which was screwed to the bulkhead, a pencil in hand and a pad, a codebook and a signal in front of him, transcribing Borg's message—word by crucifying word.

He read it over, and over again, and finally sat staring at the blank steel wall in front of him.

It was pointless to speculate about why she might have done this, to invent farfetched hypotheses that Hassan had coerced or blackmailed her, to imagine that she had acted from mistaken beliefs or confused motives. Borg—never mind his rotten disposition . . . he wouldn't lie about something like this—had said she was a spy, and now it seemed he was right . . . she'd been one all along. No wonder she'd made love to him. He'd thought it was too good to be true. He was right.

Book Press
Galley 0221 Take 8001 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3283, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

She had a big future in the intelligence business, his beloved.

Dickstein put his face in his hands, pressed his eyeballs with his fingertips. No use . . . he still could see her, in the buff, leaning against the cupboard in the kitchen of that little flat, reading the morning paper while she waited for a kettle to boil. for him to boil . . .

Worst of all . . . he probably still loved her. At least was obsessed by her . . . not possible to just turn off what had brought him back from the dead . . . Before he met her he'd been a cripple, an emotional amputee with an empty sleeve hanging where he should have had love. She had, no question, performed a miracle, made him whole again. And now . . . she had betrayed him, cut off what she had given, leaving him a paraplegic. He had written her a love letter . . . God, what did she do when she read that letter? Laugh? Show it to Hassan? See how I've got him hooked . . . ?

Take a blind man, give him back his sight, make him blind again during the night while he's sleeping . . . how would he feel when he woke up? Like Dickstein did now . . . Yes, he'd told Borg he would kill Suza if she proved out to be an agent, but he knew even then that he'd been lying. It was she who could do the killing . . .

It was late. Most of the crew were asleep except for those taking watches. He left the cabin and went up on deck without seeing anyone. Walking from the hatch to the gunwale he got soaked to the skin. He did not notice. He stood at the rail, looking into the darkness, unable to see where the black sea ended and the black sky began, letting the rain stream across his face like tears.

No . . . he could never kill Suza, but Hassan was a different matter . . . Hassan, whose sensual encounter with Eila Dickstein had observed in misery, suffering nonetheless because his own feelings for the woman were too locked in to make known to her . . . Hassan who now had managed to corrupt, take over, Eila's daughter, his Suza, all these years later. *His* Suza . . . ? He was still at it, still deceiving himself. She was not now, never had been . . .

But Hassan . . . oh, yes, *he* at least belonged to him. Hassan was his to kill . . .

Borg had thought they would be attacked at sea. Dickstein stood now gripping the rail as the ship made its way through the rough sea. The wid rose momentarily and lashed his face with cold rain. He welcomed it. He could hardly wait. . . .

Fifteen

HASSAN DID NOT GO BACK TO CAIRO, then or ever.

As his plane took off from Palermo he considered how close he'd come to disaster in nearly allowing Dickstein to be warned by Cortone and, for all he knew, Suza . . . as a woman he'd never trusted her fully anyway . . . and then promptly took delight in the realization that he'd outwitted Rostov once again . . . He could hardly believe it when Rostov had told him to get out of his sight. He'd felt sure he would be forced to board the *Karla* and thereby miss the hijack by the Fedayeen. But Rostov had considered him, as usual, merely impulsive, inexperienced, even stupid. It had never occurred to him that he might be wrong, that this Arab might have a vision, a dedication that transcended the narrow ones of those in Cairo. No . . . he was

Book Press
Galley 0222 Take 8001 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3283, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

the representative of Egyptian Intelligence on the team. He was an Arab. Egyptians were Arabs. They were all the same. Wonderful. Clever, arrogant, patronizing Colonel Rostov and the might of the KGB had been fooled by a lousy Palestinian refugee, a man they barely tolerated, a nobody . . . But of course it was not over yet. He still had to join forces with the Fedayeen. . . .

The flight from Palermo took him to Rome, where he tried to get a plane to Annaba or Constantine, both near the Algerian coast. The nearest the airlines could offer was Algiers or Tunis. He went to Tunis, where he found a young taxi driver with a newish Renault and thrust in front of the man's face more money in American dollars than he normally earned in a year. The taxi took him across the hundred mile breadth of Tunisia, over the border into Algeria and dropped him off at a fishing village with a small natural harbor.

One of the Fedayeen, by prearrangement, was waiting for him. Hassan found him on the beach, sitting under a propped-up dinghy that sheltered him from the rain, playing backgammon with a fisherman. The three men got into the fisherman's boat and cast off. The sea was rough as they headed out in the last of the day. Hassan, no seaman, worried that the little motorboat would capsize, though the fisherman grinned cheerfully at him and the weather through it all.

The trip took them less than a half hour. As they approached the looming hulk of the ship, Hassan felt again a rising sense of the possibility of success for the farfetched operation he'd conceived. A ship . . . they had a *ship* . . .

He clambered up onto the deck while the man who had met him paid off the fisherman. Mahmoud was waiting for him on deck. They embraced, and Hassan said, "We should weigh anchor immediately—things are moving very fast now."

"Come to the bridge with me."

Hassan followed Mahmoud forward. The ship was a small coaster of about one thousand tons, quite new and in good condition. She was sleek, with most of her accommodations below deck. There was a hatch for one hold. She had been designed to carry small loads quickly and to maneuver in local North African ports.

They stood on the foredeck for a moment, looking about. "She appears to be just what we need—"

"I've renamed her the *Nablus*," Mahmoud told him. "The first ship of the Palestine Navy."

Both men were clearly delighted. They climbed the ladder and Mahmoud added, "I got her from a Libyan businessman who wanted to save his soul. Also his life."

The bridge was compact and tidy. There was, in fact, only one serious lack—radar. Many of these small coastal vessels still managed without it, and there had been no time to buy the equipment and fit it . . . Mahmoud introduced the captain, also a Libyan—the businessman had provided a crew as well as a ship; after all, none of the Fedayeen were sailors. The captain promptly gave orders to weigh anchor and start engines.

The three men bent over a chart as Hassan told what he had learned in Sicily. "The *Stromberg* left the south coast of Sicily at midday today. The *Coparelli* was due to pass through the Strait of Gibraltar late last night, heading for Genoa. They are sister ships, with the same top speed, so the earliest they can meet is twelve hours east of the midpoint between Sicily and Gibraltar."

Book Press
Galley 0223 Take 8001 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119. SN 3283, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

The captain made some calculations, looked at another chart. "They will meet southeast of the island of Minorca."

"We should intercept the *Coparelli* no less than eight hours earlier."

The captain ran his finger back along the trade route. "That would put her just south of the island of Ibiza at dusk tomorrow."

"Can we make it?"

"Yes, with a little time to spare, unless there is a storm."

"Will there be a storm?"

"Sometime in the next few days, yes. But not tomorrow, I think."

"Good. Where is the radio operator?"

"Here. This is Yaacov."

Hassan turned to see a small, smiling man with tobacco-stained teeth and told him, "There is a Russian aboard the *Coparelli,* a man called Tyrin, who will be sending signals to a Polish ship, the *Karla.* You must listen on this wavelength . . ." He wrote it down. "Also, there is a radio beacon on the *Stromberg* that sends a simple thirty-second tone every half hour. If we listen for that every time we will be sure the *Stromberg* is not outrunning us."

The captain was giving a course. Down on the deck the first officer had the hands making ready. Mahmoud was speaking to one of the Fedayeen about an arms inspection. The radio operator began to question Hassan about the *Stromberg*'s beacon . . . But Yasif Hassan was not really listening. His thoughts, his feelings were taken over by a kind of ecstasy he'd never thought possible for him. He was, at this moment, a supremely happy man . . .

The ship's engines roared, the deck tilted, the prow broke water.

They were on their way.

▼

Dieter Koch, the new engineer officer of the *Coparelli,* lay in his bunk in the middle of the night wondering what he would say if somebody saw him.

His job now was to go to the aft engineering store, take out the spare oil pump and get rid of it. His cabin was close to the store, most of the crew were asleep, and those that were awake were on the bridge and in the engine room and likely to stay there. He ought to be able to manage it without being seen . . . But if he should fail, if anyone should suspect, now or later, what he was really up to . . .

He put on a sweater, trousers, sea boots and an oilskin. He pocketed the key to the store, opened his cabin door and went out. As he made his way along the gangway he decided if he were stopped or observed that his story would be that he couldn't sleep so he was checking the stores.

He unlocked the door to the store, turned on the light, went in and closed it behind him. Engineering spares were racked and shelved all around him—gaskets, valves, plugs, cable, bolts, filters . . . given a cylinder block, you could build a whole engine out of these parts.

He found the spare oil pump in a box on a high shelf. He lifted it down—it was not bulky but it was heavy—and then spent five minutes double-checking that there was not a second spare oil pump.

Book Press
Galley 0224 Take 8001 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3283, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

Now for the difficult part.

. . . I couldn't sleep, sir, so I was checking the spares. Very good, everything in order? Yes, sir. And what's that you've got under your arm? A bottle of whiskey, sir. A cake my mother sent me. The spare oil pump, sir, I'm going to throw it overboard . . .

He opened the storeroom door and looked out.

Nobody.

He killed the light, went out, closed the door behind him and locked it. He walked along the gangway and out on deck.

Nobody.

It was still raining. He could see only a few yards, which he reminded himself was good, because it meant others could see only that far.

He crossed the deck to the gunwale, leaned over the rail, dropped the oil pump into the sea, turned and bumped into someone.

A cake my mother sent me, it was so dry—

"Who's that?" a voice said in accented English.

"Engineer. You?" As Koch spoke, the other man turned so that his profile was visible in the deck light, and Koch recognized the rotund figure and big-nosed face of the radio operator.

"I couldn't sleep," the radio operator said. "I was . . . getting some air."

He's as embarrassed as I am, Koch thought. I wonder why?

"Lousy night," Koch said. "I'm going in."

"Goodnight."

Koch went inside and made his way to his cabin. Strange fellow, that radio operator. He was not one of the regular crew. He had been taken on in Cardiff after the original radioman broke his leg. Like himself, he was something of an outsider here. A good thing he'd bumped into him instead of one of the others . . .

Inside his cabin he took off his wet outer clothes and lay on his bunk. He knew he would not sleep. His plan for tomorrow was all worked out, there was no point in going over it again. He tried to think of other things: of his mother, who made the best potato kugel in the world; of his fiancée, who gave the best head in the world; of his mad father now in an institution in Tel Aviv; of the magnificent tapedeck he would buy with his back pay after this assignment; of his fine apartment in Haifa; of the children he would have, and how they would grow up in Israel safe from war.

He got up two hours later. He went aft to the galley for some coffee. The cook's apprentice was there, standing in a couple of inches of water, frying bacon for the crew.

"Lousy weather," Koch said.

"It will get worse."

Koch drank his coffee, then refilled his mug and took a second one up to the bridge. The first officer was there. "Good morning," Koch said.

"Not really," said the first officer, looking out into a curtain of rain.

"Coffee?"

"Good of you. Thank you."

Koch handed him the mug. "Where are we?"

"Here." The officer showed him their position on a chart. "Dead on schedule, in spite of the weather."

Koch nodded. He had to stop the ship in fifteen minutes. "See you later," he said, left the bridge and went below to the engine room.

Book Press
Galley 0225 Take 8001 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3283, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

His number two was there, looking quite fresh, as if he had taken a good long nap during his night's duty. "How's the oil pressure?" Koch asked him.

"Steady."

"It was going up and down a bit yesterday."

"Well, there was no sign of trouble in the night," the number two said. He was a little too firm about it, as if he was afraid of being accused of sleeping while the gauge oscillated.

"Good," Koch said. "Perhaps it's repaired itself." He put his mug down on a level cowling, then picked it up quickly as the ship rolled. "Wake Larsen on your way to bed."

"Right."

"Sleep well."

The number two left, and Koch drank down his coffee and went to work.

The oil pressure gauge was located in a bank of dials aft of the engine. The dials were set into a thin metal casing, painted matt black and secured by four self-tapping screws. Using a large screwdriver, Koch removed the four screws and pulled the casing away. Behind it was a mass of many-colored wires leading to the different gauges. Koch swapped his large screwdriver for a small electrical one with an insulated handle. With a few turns he disconnected one of the wires to the oil pressure gauge. He wrapped a couple of inches of insulating tape around the bare end of the wire, then taped it to the back of the dial so that only a close inspection would reveal that it was not connected to the terminal. Then he replaced the casing and secured it with the four screws.

When Larsen came in he was topping up the transmission fluid.

"Can I do that, sir?" Larsen said. He was a Donkeyman Greaser, and lubrication was his province.

"I've done it now," Koch said. He replaced the filler cap and stowed the can in a locker.

Larsen rubbed his eyes and lit a cigarette. He looked over the dials, did a double take and said, "Sir! Oil pressure zero!"

"Zero?"

"Yes!"

"Stop engines!"

"Aye, aye, sir."

Without oil, friction between the engines' metal parts would, of course, cause a very rapid build-up of heat until the metal melted, the parts fused and the engines stopped, never to go again. So dangerous, in fact, was the sudden absence of oil pressure that Larsen might well have stopped the engines on his own initiative, without asking Koch.

Everyone on the ship heard the engine die and felt the *Coparelli* lose way; even those dayworkers who were still asleep in their bunks heard it through their dreams and woke up. Before the engine was completely still the first officer's voice came down the pipe. "Bridge! What's going on below?"

Koch spoke into the voice-pipe. "Sudden loss of oil pressure."

"Any idea why?"

"Not yet."

"Keep me posted."

"Aye, aye, sir."

Koch turned to Larsen. "We're going to drop the sump," he said. Larsen picked up a toolbox and followed Koch down a half deck to where they could get at the engine from underneath. Koch told him, "If the main bearings or the big end bearings were worn the drop in oil pressure would have been gradual. A sudden drop means a failure in the oil supply. There's plenty of oil in the system—I checked earlier—and there are no signs of leaks. So

Book Press
Galley 0226 Take 8001 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3283, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

there's probably a blockage."

Koch released the sump with a power spanner and the two of them lowered it to the deck. They checked the sump strainer, the full-flow filter, the filter relief valve and the main relief valve without finding any obstructions.

"If there's no blockage, the fault must be in the pump," Koch said. "Break out the spare oil pump."

"That will be in the store on the main deck," Larsen said.

Koch handed him the key, and Larsen went above.

Now Koch had to work very quickly. He took the casing off the oil pjmp, exposing two broad-boothed meshing gear wheels. He took the spanner off the power drill and fitted a bit, then attacked the cogs of the gear wheels with the drill, chipping and breaking them until they were all but useless. He put down the drill, picked up a crowbar and a hammer and forced the bar in between the two wheels, prising them apart until he heard something give with a loud, dull crack. Finally he took out of his pocket a small nut made of toughened steel, battered and shipped. He'd brought it with him when he'd boarded the ship. He dropped the nut into the sump.

Done.

Larsen came back."

Koch realized he had not taken the bit off the power drill . . . when Larsen left there had been a spanner attachment on the tool. Don't look at the drill! he thought.

Larsen said, "The pump isn't there, sir."

Koch fished the nut out of the sump. "Look at this," he said, distracting Larsen's eye from the incriminating power drill. "Here's the culprit." He showed Larsen the ruined gear wheels of the oil pump. "The nut must have been dropped in the last time the filters were changed. It got into the pump and it's been going round and round in those gear wheels ever since. I'm surprised we didn't hear the noise, even over the sound of the engine. Anyway, the oil pump is beyond repair, so you'll have to find that spare. Get a few hands to help you look for it."

Larsen went out. Koch took the bit off the power drill and put back the spanner attachment. He ran up the steps to the main engine room to remove the other piece of incriminating evidence. Working at top speed in case someone else should come in, he removed the casing on the gauges and reconnected the oil pressure gauge. Now it would genuinely read zero. He replaced the casing and threw away the insulating tape.

It was finished. Now to pull the wool over the captain's eyes.

As soon as the search party admitted defeat Koch went up to the bridge and told the captain, "A mechanic must have dropped a nut into the oil sump last time the engine was serviced, sir." He showed the captain the nut. "At some point—maybe while the ship was pitching so steeply—the nut got into the oil pump. After that it was just a matter of time. The nut went around in the gear wheels until it had totally ruined them. I'm afraid we can't make gear wheels like that on board. The ship should carry a spare oil pump, but it doesn't—"

"Are you telling me you can't repair it?"

"I'm afraid so."

"And I'm telling you there wsll be hell to pay when I find out who's responsible for this—"

"It's the engineer's job to check the spares, but as you know, sir, I came on board at the last minute—"

Book Press
Galley 0227 Take 8001 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3283, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

"That means it's Sarne's fault."

"There may be an explanation—"

"Such as he spent too much time chasing Belgian whores to look after his engine. Can we limp along?"

"Absolutely not, sir. We wouldn't move half a cable before she seized."

"Damnation. Where's that radio operator?"

The first officer said, "I'll find him, sir," and went out.

"You're certain you can't put something together?" the captain asked Koch.

"I'm afraid you can't make an oil pump out of spare parts and string. That's why we have to carry a spare pump, sir."

The first officer came back with the radio operator. The captain said, "Where the devil have you been?"

The radio operator was the rotund, big-nosed man Koch had bumped into on the deck during the night. He looked hurt. "I was helping to search the for'ard store for the oil pump, sir, then I went to wash my hands." He glanced at Koch, but there seemed no hint of suspicion in his look . . . Koch was not sure how much he had seen during that little confrontation on the deck, but if he had made any connection between a missing spare and a package thrown overboard by the engineer, he wasn't saying.

"All right," the captain said. "Make a signal to the owners: Report engine breakdown at . . . What's our exact position, number one?"

The first officer gave the radio operator the position.

The captain continued: "Require new oil pump or tow to port. Please instruct."

Koch's shoulders imperceptibly slumped. He had done it.

Eventually the reply came from the owners: COPARELLI SOLD TO SAVILE SHIPPING OF ZURICH. YOUR MESSAGE PASSED TO NEW OWNERS. STAND BY FOR THEIR INSTRUCTIONS.

Almost immediately afterward there was a signal from Savile Shipping: OUR VESSEL GIL HAMILTON IN YOUR WATERS. SHE WILL COME ALONGSIDE AT APPROXIMATELY NOON. PREPARE TO DISEMBARK ALL CREW EXCEPT ENGINEER. GIL HAMILTON WILL TAKE CREW TO MARSEILLES. ENGINEER WILL AWAIT NEW OIL PUMP. PAPAGOPOLOUS.

▼

The exchange of signals was heard sixty miles away by Solly Weinberg, the master of the *Gil Hamilton* and a commander in the Israeli navy. "Right on schedule. Well done, Koch." He set a course for the *Coparelli* and ordered full speed ahead.

▼

It was *not* heard by Yasif Hassan and Mahmoud aboard the *Nablus* 150 miles away. They were in the captain's cabin, bent over a sketch plan Hassan had drawn of the *Coparelli*, and they were deciding exactly how they would board her and take over. Hassan had instructed the *Nablus*'s radio operator to listen out on two wavelengths: the one on which the *Stromberg*'s radio beacon broadcast and the one Tyrin was using for his clandestine signals from the *Coparelli* to Rostov aboard the *Karla*. Because the messages were sent on the *Coparelli*'s *regular* wavelength, the *Nablus* did not pick them up. It would be some time before the Fedayeen realized they were hijacking an almost abandoned ship.

▼

The exchange was heard 200 miles away on the bridge of the *Stromberg*. When the *Coparelli* acknowledged the signal from Papagopolous, the officers on the bridge cheered and clapped. Nat Dickstein, leaning against a bulkhead with a mug of black

Book Press
Galley 0228 Take 8001 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3283, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

coffee in his hand, staring ahead at the rain and the heaving sea, did not cheer. His body was hunched and tense, one of the others noticed his silence and made a remark about getting over the first big hurdle. Dickstein's muttered reply was uncharacteristically peppered with obscenities. The officer turned away, and later in the mess observed that Dickstein looked like the kind of man who would stick a knife in you if you stepped on his goddamn toe.

▼

And it was heard by David Rostov and Suza Ashford 300 miles away aboard the *Karla.*

Suza had been in a daze as she walked across the gangplank from the Sicilian quayside onto the Polish vessel. She had hardly noticed what was happening as Rostov showed her to her cabin—an officer's room with its own head—and said he hoped she would be *very* comfortable. She sat on the bed. She was still there, in the same position, an hour later when a sailor brought some cold food on a tray and set it down on her table without speaking. She did not eat it. When it got dark she began to shiver, got into the bed and lay there with her eyes wide open, staring at nothing. Still shivering.

Eventually she had slept—fitfully at first, with strange meaningless nightmares, but in the end deeply. Dawn woke her.

She lay still, feeling the motion of the ship and looking blankly at the cabin around her; and then she realized where she was. It was like waking up and remembering the blind terror of a nightmare, except that instead of thinking, Oh, thank god it was a dream, she realized it was all true and it was still going on.

She had been fooling herself, she could see it now . . . or rather, face it . . . oh yes, she had convinced herself that she had to find Nat to warn him, no matter the risk, but the truth was she would have reached for *any* excuse to rationalize her desire to see him. The disastrous consequences of what she'd done followed naturally . . . almost inevitably, she now realized . . . from the confusion of her motives . . . It was true enough, god knew, that Nat had been in danger. But it was just as true that he was in worse danger now. And it was *her* fault . . .

She was at sea in a Polish ship, commanded by Nat's enemies . . . a wonderful result for her efforts . . . She closed her eyes tight, pushed her head under the pillow to help fight the building hysteria . . . And then, blessedly, she began to feel anger—which turned out to be its own best therapy . . . She thought of her father, and how he'd been willing to use her to further his so-called political ideals . . . She thought of Hassan, manipulating her father, a deceitful, disgusting man, presuming that she would welcome his advances . . . And she thought of the Russian, Rostov, of his hard, intelligent face and frigid smile, and how he intended to ram Nat's ship and kill him . . .

Not, by god, if she could help it.

Perhaps she was willful, but she was also not accustomed to losing what she wanted. And she badly wanted a man named Nat Dickstein . . . a strange, strong man who wrote wonderfully tender, vulnerable love letters, who made love as though it were the first . . . and last . . . time.

All right, fine, brave thoughts. But what was she going to *do* . . . ?

She was in the enemy cap, a prisoner, but only from *her* point of view. So far as she could tell, they still considered her to be one of them. She ought to have a chance to throw a wrench in their precious works. She would move about the ship, pretend to a coolness she didn't feel, talk to them, build their confidence in her, pretend to share their ambitions and concerns, until she saw

Book Press
Galley 0229 Take 8001 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3283, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

her opportunity . . .

I've no choice, she instructed herself. If I don't do it, I lose him. And if I lose him, I stop living. . . .

She got out of bed, took off the clothes she had slept in, washed and put on clean sweater and pants from her suitcase. She sat at the small nailed-down table and forced herself to eat some of the sausage and cheese that had been left there the day before. She brushed her hair, put on a trace of make-up.

She tried her cabin door. It was not locked.

She went out.

She walked along a gangway and followed the smell of food to the galley. She went in a looked swiftly about.

Rostov sat alone, eating eggs slowly with a fork. Now he looked up and saw her. His narrow mouth seemed hard, his eyes without emotion. Suza hesitated, then forced herself to walk toward him. Reaching his table, she leaned briefly on a chair to steady herself.

"Sit down."

She dropped into the chair.

"How did you sleep?"

She was breathing too quickly, as if she had been walking very fast. "Fine."

His sharp, skeptical eyes seemed to bore into her brain. "You seem rather upset." He spoke evenly, without sympathy or hostility.

"I . . ." Damn it, the words seemed to stick in her throat, nearly choking her. "Yesterday . . . was confusing." That much was certainly true. So was "I never saw anyone die."

"Ah." He reached for a coffee pot and poured her a cup. "You're very young," he said. "You can't be much older than my first son."

Suza sipped at the hot coffee, hoping he would go on talking in this fashion. It would build his feeling of being at ease with her, perhaps . . . who knew? . . . help him to confide in her . . . "Your son?"

"Yuri Davidovitch, he's twenty."

"What does he do?"

Rostov's smile was distinctly less chilly than before. "Unfortunately he spends most of his time listening to ridiculous music. He also doesn't study as hard as he should. Not like his brother."

Suza's breathing was slowing to normal, her hand no longer felt unsteady when she picked up her cup. She reminded herself that this man was no less dangerous just because he had a family. Her father had a family . . . But at least he seemed less frightening when he talked on like this . . . "And your other son?" she asked. "The younger one?"

Rostov nodded. "Vladimir. He's very gifted. He will be a great mathematician if he gets the right schooling."

"That shouldn't be a problem," she said, watching him closely. "Soviet education is supposed to be the best in the world."

It seemed a likely thing to say, but it must have had some special significance for him, because the benign look disappeared and his face turned hard and cold again. "No," he said. "It shouldn't be a problem." He continued eating his eggs.

Damn it, she thought. He was becoming friendly, I mustn't lose him now. She cast about for something to bring him back. What did they have in common? . . . and then remembered . . . "I wish I could remember you from when you were at Oxford."

Comp 02:30 Take 8001 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3283, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

"You were very small." He poured himself some coffee. "Everyone remembers your mother. She was easily the most beautiful woman we'd ever seen. And you're exactly like her."

That's better, Suza thought, and asked him, "What did you study?"

"Economics."

"Not an exact science in those days, I imagine."

"And not much better today." Damn near heresy, he thought, for a good Soviet citizen whose god was supposed to be economic determinism . . .

Suza put on a faintly solemn expression. "We speak of bourgeois economics, of course."

"Of course." Rostov looked at her as if he could not tell whether she were serious or not. In fact, he couldn't. This woman had intrigued him from the start . . . An officer came into the galley and spoke to him in Russian. Rostov looked at Suza a bit regretfully, she thought. "I must go up to the bridge."

She had to go with him. She forced herself to speak calmly. "May I come?"

He hesitated, and as she waited for her answer—the seconds seemed hours—she tried to reassure herself, telling herself that he'd seemed to enjoy talking to her, and that even if for some reason he didn't trust her completely, what in the world could she do with any secrets stuck here as she was on a KGB ship . . . ?

After a century she saw him nod, heard him say, "Follow me." . . .

Up in the radio room Rostov was smiling as he read through the messages and even translated them for Suza's benefit. He seemed delighted with Dickstein's ingenuity. "The man is smart, very smart," he said.

"What's Savile Shipping?" Suza asked.

"A front for Israeli intelligence. Dickstein is eliminating all the people who have reason to be interested in what happens to the uranium. The shipping company isn't interested because they no longer own the ship. Now he's taking off the captain and crew. No doubt he has some kind of hold over the people who actually own the uranium." He shook his head in appreciation.

Suza was also delighted. Rostov was talking easily to her, almost like a colleague. "I suppose the breakdown was rigged?"

"Yes. Now Dickstein can probably take over the ship without firing a shot."

It was her opportunity . . . the moment to prove her loyalty to Rostov's side, by betraying Hassan, the man they all detested most.

"And so can Yasif Hassan, of course."

"What?"

"Hassan can also take over the *Coparelli* without firing a shot."

Rostov stared at her. The blood seemed to drain from his thin face. "You are suggesting that *Hassan* intends to take over the *Coparelli*?"

"Are *you* suggesting that you didn't know?"

"But not with the Egyptians, surely—"

"The Fedayeen. Hassan said this was *your* plan—"

Rostov banged the bulkhead with his fist. The family man, the sophisticated operative able to admire his Israeli adversary was gone. "Hassan is not only a fool, he's a liar."

"But"—god, let her do this right—"but surely there's some way we can stop him . . ."

Book Press
Galley 0231 Take 8001 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., BN 119, SN 3283, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 666

Rostov looked at her. "What's his plan?"

"To take over, to hijack the *Coparelli* before Dickstein gets there, then ambush the Israeli team, and sail to . . . he didn't tell me exactly, somewhere in North Africa, I believe. . . . What was your plan?"

And he told her . . . "To ram the ship after Dickstein had stolen the uranium—"

"Can't we . . . still do that?"

"No. We're too far away, we'd never catch them."

Suza knew everything depended on what came next. She crossed her arms to stop the tremors she felt. She said, "Then there seems to be only one thing left to do." And before he could interrupt . . . "Warn Dickstein about the Fedayeen ambush so that he can have a good chance to take back the *Coparelli.*"

She watched Rostov's face. Incredibly, he was half smiling, as though he not only approved but had been thinking along with her . . . perhaps ahead of her? "Warn Dickstein so that he can take the *Coparelli* back from the Fedayeen, so he can proceed according to *his* plan . . . and we can proceed according to *ours* . . ."

FROM: SAVILE SHIPPING, ZURICH
ANGELUZZI E BIANCO, GENOA
YOUR YELLOWCAKE CONSIGNMENT FROM F.A. PEDLER INDEFINITELY DELAYED DUE TO ENGINE TROUBLE AT SEA. WILL ADVISE SOONEST OF NEW DELIVERY DATES. PAPAGOPOLOUS.

As the *Gil Hamilton* came into view, Pyotr Tyrin cornered Ravlo, the addict, in the 'tween-decks of the *Coparelli.* Tyrin acted with a confidence he did not feel, grabbing hold of Ravlo's sweater. Tyrin was a bulky man, and Ravlo was somewhat wasted. Tyrin said, "Listen, friend, you're going to do something for me—"

"Sure, anything you say."

Tyrin hesitated. It would be risky, depending on a man like Ravlo. Still, there was no alternative. "I need to stay on board ship when the rest of you go on the *Gil Hamilton.* If I'm missed, you will say that you have seen me go over. Is that clear?"

"Right, okay, sure—"

"If I'm discovered, and I have to board the *Gil Hamilton,* you can be sure I'll tell them *your* secret."

"I'll do everything, I'll do it—"

"You'd better, I'm counting on it," and he released him, still not reassured but feeling he'd done all he could. . . .

All hands were summoned on deck for the changeover. The sea was too rough for the *Gil Hamilton* to come alongside, so she sent a launch. All wore lifebelts for the crossing. The officers and crew of the *Coparelli* stood quietly in the pouring rain while they were counted, then the first sailor went over the side, down the ladder, jumped into the well of the launch.

The boat would be too small to take the whole crew—they would have to go over in two or three detachments, Tyrin realized. While everyone's attention was on the first men to go over the rail, Tyrin whispered to Ravlo, "Try and be last to go."

The two of them edged out to the back of the crowd on deck. The officers were peering over the side at the launch. The men were standing, waiting, facing toward the *Gil Hamilton.*

Book Press
Galley 0232 Take 8001 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3283, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

Tyrin slipped back behind a bulkhead. He was two steps from a lifeboat, the cover of which he'd loosened earlier. The stem of the boat could be seen from the deck amidships, where the sailors were standing, but the stern could not. Tyrin moved to the stern, lifted the cover, got in and from inside put the cover back in place. He was a big man, and the life jacket made him biger. With some difficulty he crawled the length of the boat to a position from which he could see the deck through an eyelet in the tarpaulin. Now, damn it, it was up to Ravlo. He watched as a second detachment of men went down the ladder to the launch, then heard the first officer say, "Where's that radio operator?"

Tyrin looked for Ravlo, located him. Speak up, damn you . . .

Ravlo hesitated . . . "He went over with the first lot, sir."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, sir, I saw him."

Tyrin breathed easier.

The officer nodded, said something about not being able to tell one from another in this filthy rain.

The captain called to Koch, and the two men stood talking in the lee of a bulkhead, close to Tyrin's hiding place. "I've never heard of Savile Shipping, have you?"

"No, sir."

"This is all wrong, selling a ship while she's at sea, then leaving the engineer in charge of her and taking the captain off."

"Yes, sir . . . I imagine they're not seafaring people, these new owners—"

"They're surely not, or they'd know better. Probably accountants." There was a pause. "You could refuse to stay alone, of course, then I would have to stay with you. I'd back you up afterward . . ."

"I'm afraid I'd lose my ticket."

"Right, I shouldn't have suggested it. Well, good luck."

"Thank you, sir."

The third group of seamen had boarded the launch. The first officer was at the top of the ladder waiting for the captain, who was still muttering about accountants as he turned around, crossed the deck and followed the first officer over the side.

Tyrin turned his attention to Koch, who now thought he was the only man aboard the *Coparelli*. The engineer watched the launch go across to the *Gil Hamilton*, then climbed the ladder to the bridge.

Tyrin cursed silently . . . he wanted Koch to go below so that he could get to the for'ard store and radio to the *Karla*. He watched the bridge, saw Koch's face appear from time to time behind the glass. If Koch stayed there, he'd have to wait until dark before he could contact and report to Rostov.

It looked very much as if Koch planned to remain on the bridge all day.

Tyrin settled down for a long wait.

▼

When the *Nablus* reached the point south of Ibiza where Hassan expected to encounter the *Coparelli*, there was not a single ship in sight.

They circled the point in a widening spiral while Hassan scanned the desolate rainswept horizon through binoculars.

Mahmoud said, "You have made a mistake."

Book Press
Galley 0233 Take 8001 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3283, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

"Not necessarily." Hassan was determined he would not appear panicked. "This was just the earliest point at which we could meet her. She doesn't have to travel at top speed . . ."

"Why should she be delayed?"

Hassan shrugged. "Perhaps the engine isn't running well. Perhaps they've had worse w eather than we have. Many reasons."

"What do you suggest, then?"

Mahmoud was also very uneasy, Hassan realized. On this ship he was not in control, the decisions were not his . . . "We travel southwest, backing along the *Coparelli*'s route. We must meet her sooner or later."

"Give the order to the captain," Mahmoud said, and went below to his troops, leaving Hassan on the bridge with the captain.

Mahmoud burned with the anger of tension. So did his troops, Hassan had observed. They'd been expecting a fight at midday, now they had to wait, dawdling about in the crew quarters and the galley, cleaning weapons, playing cards, bragging about past and future battles. One of them had cut the faces of two seamen over an imaginary insult. Thereafter the crew kept their distance from the crazy Fedayeen.

Hassan wondered how he would handle them if he were responsible for them. He'd thought more than a little like this recently. Mahmoud was still the commander, but he was the one who had done all important work—discovered Dickstein, brought the news of his plan, conceived the counter-hijack, established the *Stromberg*'s whereabouts. It was heady business to speculate on what his position would be in the Palestinian movement, the Fedayeen, when all this was over . . . And it was pretty clear that such thoughts were on Mahmoud's mind as well . . . But if there was to be a power struggle between the two of them, it would have to wait . . . First there was the matter of taking over the *Coparelli* and destroying Dickstein when he attacked it. For that Hassan was more than willing to have Mahmoud around. He himself had never been in war, never even had a gun pointed at him except by Cortone in that ruined villa. And he hadn't liked it. In fact, the thought of it made him nauseous, as did the violence that was certain to come now. . . .

There was a false alarm at four-thirty in the afternoon when they sighted another ship coming toward them, but after examining her through binoculars Hassan decided she was not the *Coparelli,* and as she passed they were able to read the name on her side—*Gil Hamilton.*

As daylight began to fade Hassan, though, became truly worried. In this weather, even with navigation lights, two ships could pass within half a mile of each other at night without seeing each other. And there had been not a sound out of the *Coparelli*'s secret radio all afternoon, although Yaacov had reported that Rostov was trying to raise Tyrin. To be certain that the *Coparelli* did not pass the *Nablus* in the night they would have to spend the night traveling toward Genoa at the *Coparelli*'s speed, then resume searching in the morning. But by that time the *Stromberg* would be close by and the Fedayeen troop might lose the chance of springing a trap on Dickstein.

Hassan was about to acknowledge all this to Mahmoud—who had just returned to the bridge—when a single white light winked on in the distance.

Book Press
Galley 0234 Take 8001 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3283, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

"She's at anchor," said the captain.

"How can you tell?" Mahmoud asked.

"That's what a single white light *means*."

Hassan put in quickly, "That would explain why she wasn't off Ibiza when we expected her. If that's the *Coparelli,* you should prepare to board—"

Mahmoud nodded vigorously and went off to tell his men.

"Turn out your navigation lights," Hassan told the captain, and as the *Nablus* closed with the other ship, night fell.

"I'm *almost* certain that's the *Coparelli*," Hassan said.

The captain lowered his bioculars. "She has three cranes on deck, and all her upperworks are aft of the hatches."

"Your eyesight is better than mine," Hassan said, satisfied. "She's the *Coparelli*."

He went below to the galley, where Mahmoud was facing his troops. Mahmoud looked at him as he stepped inside, and Hassan nodded. "There's no question any longer."

Mahmoud turned back to his men. "We do not expect great resistance. The ship is crewed by ordinary seamen, and there is no reason for them to be armed. We go in two boats, one to attack the port side, one the starboard. On board our first task is to take the bridge and prevent the crew from using the radio. Next we round up the crew on deck . . ." He paused and turned to Hassan. "Tell the captain to get as close as possible to the *Coparelli* and then stop engines."

Hassan turned to go, aware that suddenly he was again an errand boy, Mahmoud demonstrating that when it counted, in battle, he was still the undisputed leader. Hassan felt a rush of blood to his cheeks.

"Yasif."

He turned back.

"Your weapon." Mahmoud threw him a gun, which Hassan fumbled slightly as he caught it. It was a small pistol, almost a toy, the kind of gun a woman might carry in her handbag. Mahmoud's troops thought it very funny.

Hassan decided he could play their games too. He found what looked like the safety catch and released it. He pointed the gun at the floor and pulled the trigger. The report was very loud. He emptied the gun into the deck.

There was a silence.

Hassan said, "I thought I saw a mouse," and grandly threw the gun back to Mahmoud.

The men laughed even louder.

Hassan, with no gesture left, went back up to the bridge, passed the message to the captain and returned to the deck. It was very dark now. For a time all that could be seen of the *Coparelli* was its light, then, gradually, a silhouette of solid black became distinguishable against the wash of dark gray.

Mahmoud's men, quiet now, had emerged from the galley and stood on deck with the crew. The *Nablus*'s engines died, the crew lowered the boats.

Hassan and his Fedayeen went over the side.

Hassan was in the same boat as Mahmoud (he had to be, from his point of view and Mahmoud's). The small launch bobbed on the waves, which now seemed immense. They approached the side of the *Coparelli*. There was no sign of activity on the ship. Surely, Hassan thought, the officer on watch must hear the sound of two engines approaching? But no alarms sounded, no lights flooded the deck, no one shouted orders or came to the rail.

Book Press
Galley 0235 Take 8001 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3283, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

Mahmoud was first up the ladder.

By the time Hassan reached the *Coparelli*'s deck the other team was swarming over the starboard gunwale.

Men poured down the companionways and up the ladders.

Still no sign of the *Coparelli*'s crew. Hassan had a dreadful premonition. Something seemed terribly wrong.

He followed after Mahmoud up to the bridge. Two of the men had already made their way there. Hassan asked, "Did they have time to use the radio?"

"*Who?*" Mahmoud said in disgust.

They went back down to the deck. Slowly the men were emerging from the bowels of the boat, looking puzzled, unused guns in hand.

Now two men came across the deck with a frightened looking sailor between them.

Hassan nervously spoke to the sailor in English. "What's happened here?"

The sailor, Dieter Koch, began to answer in German when Hassan had a sudden, terrifying thought. "We haven't checked the hold," he said to Mahmoud. They found a companionway leading below and down into the hold.

Hassan found a light switch, turned it on. The hold, to Hassan's relief, was empty of men. What filled it were wooden wedges. The drums had the word PLUMBAT stenciled on their sides.

The uranium.

Hassan said the word, the two men looked at the drums, then at each other. Their expressions were solemn, their feelings ecstatic. Especially Hassan's. For the moment all rivalry was forgotten in the grandeur of their victory.

▼

As darkness fell Tyrin had watched the engineer go forward to switch on the white light. Coming back, he had not gone up to the bridge but had walked further aft and entered the galley. Tyrin was hungry too. He would give his arm for a plate of salted herring and a loaf of brown bread. Sitting cramped in his lifeboat all afternoon, waiting for Koch to move, he had had little else to occupy his thoughts besides his hunger, and had tortured himself with thoughts of daviar, smoked salmon, marinated mushrooms and—most of all—brown bread.

Once Koch had disappeared from sight, Tyrin got out of the lifeboat, his muscles protesting as he stretched, and hurried along the deck to the for'ard store.

He had shifted the boxes and assorted junk in the main store so that they concealed the entrance to his small radio room. Now he was obliged to get down on hands and knees, pull away boxes, crawl through a little tunnel to get in.

The set was repeating a short two-letter signal. Tyrin checked the code book, found it meant he was to switch to another wavelength before acknowledging. He set the radio to transmit and followed his instructions.

Rostov immediately replied. CHANGE OF PLAN. HASSAN WILL ATTACK COPARELLI.

Tyrin was understandably puzzled, and made: REPEAT PLEASE.

Hassan a traitor. Fedayeen will attack Coparelli.

The *Coparelli* was *here*, he was on it . . . alone except for the engineer . . . Why would Hassan—for the uranium, of course—

Book Press
Galley 0236 Take 8001 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3283, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R.. 606

Rostov was still signaling. HASSAN PLANS AMBUSH DICKSTEIN. OBEY FOLLOWING INSTRUCTIONS PRECISELY. FOR OUR PLAN TO PROCEED WE MUST WARN DICKSTEIN OF AMBUSH . . .

Tyrin decoded, at first confused, then understanding. It puts things back in place, very clever. Except what do *I* do?

He made: HOW?

YOU WILL CALL STROMBERG ON COPARELLI'S REGULAR WAVELENGTH. SEND FOLLOWING MESSAGE PRECISELY REPEAT PRECISELY. QUOTE COPARELLI TO STROMBERG I AM BOARDED ARABS UNQUOTE.

Tyrin nodded. Dickstein would think that Koch had time to get a few words off before the Arabs killed him. Forewarned, Dickstein should be able to take the *Coparelli*. Then Rostov's *Karla* could collide with Dickstein's *Coparelli* as planned. Fine, very neat . . . but what about me?

He made: UNDERSTOOD, heard a distant bump, as if something had hit the ship's hull. At first he ignored it, then remembered there was nobody aboard but himself and Koch. He went to the door of the for'ard store and looked out.

Hassan and the Fedayeen.

He closed the door, hurried back to his transmitter. He made: HASSAN IS HERE.

Rostov replied, SIGNAL DICKSTEIN NOW.

WHAT THEN?

DISAPPEAR.

Tyrin did not transmit the expletive he uttered to himself. Instead, as directed, he signed off and tuned to the regular wavelength to signal the *Stromberg*.

The thought occurred to him that he might never eat salted herring again.

▼

The message from the *Coparelli* had altered Dickstein's mood. At first he had been shocked. How had the opposition managed to learn so much of his plan that they had been able to attack the *Coparelli* first? Somewhere, somehow, he must have made terrible errors of judgment. Suza . . . ? But there was no point now in berating himself. Now there was a genuine fight ahead. His black depression vanished. The tension was still there, coiled tight inside him like a steel spring, but now at least he could ride it, use it. Now he had something to *do* with it.

The twelve men in the mess room of the *Stromberg sensed the change in Dickstein, caught his eagerness for the battle.*

Each had an Uzi 9-mm submachine gun, a reliable, compact firearm weighing nine pounds when loaded wih the 25-round magazine and only an inch over two feet long with its metal stock extended. They had three spare magazines each. Each man had a 9-mm Luger in a belt holster—the pistol would take the same cartridges as the machine gun—and a clip of four grenades on the opposite side of his belt. Almost certainly, Dickstein realized, they had extra weapons of their own choice—knives, blackjacks, bayonets, knuckle-dusters and others more exotic carried superstitiously more as talismen than fighting implements.

Dickstein recognized their mood, knew without conceit—though with some pride—that ultimately it came from him. He had felt it before with men before a fight. Fear . . . and an impatience to get started to relieve the fear. Waiting, that was always the worst part. The action was anesthetic. The aftermath, win or lose, was counting the dead.

Book Press
Galley 0237 Take 8001 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3283, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

He had figured his battle plan in detail and briefed them. The *Coparelli* was designed like a miniature tanker, holds forward and amidships, main superstructure on the afterdeck, a secondary superstructure in the stern. The main superstructure contained the bridge, the officers' quarters and the mess; below were crew's quarters. The stern superstructure contained the galley, below that stores, and below these the engine room. The two superstructures were separate above deck, but below deck they were connected by gangways.

They were to go over in three teams. Abbas's would attack the bows. The other two, led by Bader and Gibli, would go up the port and starboard ladders at the stern. The two stern teams were detailed to go below and work forward, flushing out the enemy amids ips where they could be attacked by Abbas and his men from the prow. The strategy, he realized, was likely to leave a pocket of resistance at the bridge, which Dickstein assigned to himself.

The attack would be by night; otherwise they would never get aboard, would be picked off as they came over the rails. Which left the problem of how to avoid shooting at one another as well as the enemy. For this he provided a recognition signal—the word *Aliyah*—and the attack plan was designed so that they were not expected to come together until the very end of the action.

Now they were waiting.

They sat in a loose circle in the galley of the *Stromberg*, identical to the galley of the *Coparelli*. Dickstein was speaking to Abbas: "From the bows you'll control the foredeck, an open field of fire. Deploy your men behind cover and stay there. When the enemy on deck reveal their positions, pick them off. Your main problem is going to be hailing fire from the bridge."

Slumped in his chair, Abbas looked even more like a tank than usual (Dickstein was glad Abbas was on his side). "And we hold our fire at first . . ."

"Yes. You've a good chance of getting aboard unseen. No point in shooting until you know the rest of us have arrived."

Abbas nodded. "I see Porush is on my team. You know he's my brother-in-law."

"Yes. I also know he's the only married man here. I thought you might want to take care of him."

"Thanks."

Feinberg looked up from the knife he was cleaning. The lanky New Yorker was, for once, not grinning. "How do you figure these Arabs?"

Dickstein shook his head. "They could be regular army or Fedayeen."

Feinberg grinned. "Let's hope they're regular army—we make faces, they surrender."

It was a lousy joke, but in the tension earned a few insincere laughs anyway.

Ish, ever a pessimist, sitting with his feet on a table and his eyes closed, said, "Going over the rail will be the worst part. We'll be naked as babes."

"Except," Dickstein said, "remember that they believe we're expecting to take over a deserted boat. Their presence is supposed to be a big surprise for us. They're looking for an easy victory. We're forewarned, and we'll have the dark . . ."

The door opened, the captain entered. "We've sighted the *Coparelli*."

Book Press
Galley 0238 Take 8001 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3283, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

Dickstein took a deep breath, stood up. "Let's go."

Sixteen

THE THREE BOATS pulled away from the *Stromberg* in the last few minutes before dawn.

Within seconds the ship behind them was invisible. She had no navigation lights, all deck lights and cabin lamps had been extinguished even below the waterline to ensure that no light escaped to warn the *Coparelli.*

The weather had worsened during the night. The *Stromberg* captain said it was still not bad enough to be called a storm, but the rain was torrential, the wind strong enough to blow a steel bucket clattering along the deck, the waves so high that now Dickstein was obliged to cling tightly to his bench seat in the well of the motorbowt.

For a while they were in limbo, nothing visible ahead or behind. Dickstein could not even make out the faces of the four men in the boat with him. Feinberg broke their silence: "I still say we should have postponed this fishing trip until tomorrow."

Whistling past the graveyard.

Dickstein was as superstitious as the rest: underneath his oilskin and life jacket he wore his father's old striped waistcoat with a smashed fob watch in the pocket over his heart. The watch, after all, had once stopped a German bullet. Powerful magic not in the Koran . . .

In a way he knew he had gone a little crazy. His affair with Suza, her incredible betrayal, had turned him upside down: his old values had been jolted, the new ones he'd found with her turned to dust. He still cared about some things, though—he wanted to win this battle, he wanted Israel to have the uranium, and he wanted, personally, to kill Yasif Hassan. He had no particular fear of bullets, pain, even death. Suza had taken care of that. Let Israel get its bomb, and Esther would die peacefully, Mottie would finish *Treasure Island,* and Yigael could look after the grapes.

He gripped the barrel of the machine gun beneath his oilskin.

They crested a wave, and there in the next trough, was the *Coparelli.*

▼

Switching several times from forward to reverse in rapid succession Levi Abbas edged his boat closer to the bows of the *Coparelli.* The white light above them enabled him to see clearly, while the outward-curving hull shielded his boat from the sight of anyone on deck or on the bridge. When the boat was close enough to the ladder Abbas took a rope and tied it around his waist under the oilskin. He hesitated a moment, shucked off the oilskin, unwrapped his gun and slung it over his neck. He stood with one foot in the boat and one on the gunwale, waited for his moment, and jumped.

He hit the ladder with both feet and hands, untied the rope around his waist and secured it to a rung of the ladder, went up the ladder almost to the top, stopped. They wanted to go over the rail as close together as possible.

Book Press
Galley 0239 Take 8001 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3283, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

He looked back down. Sharrett and Sapir were already on the ladder below him. As he looked, Porush made his jump, landed awkwardly and missed his grip, then slipped down a rung before he managed to hook an arm around the side of the ladder and arrest his descent.

Abbas waited for Porush to come up close behind Sapir, then put himself over the rail. He landed softly on all fours and crouched low beside the gunwale. The others followed swiftly—one, two, three. The white light was above them, they were very exposed.

Abbas looked about. Sharrett was the smallest, he could wriggle like a snake. Abbas touched his shoulder and pointed across the deck. "Take cover on the port side." Sharrett bellied across two yards of open deck, partly concealed now by the raised edge of the for'ard hatch. He inched forward.

Abbas looked up and down the deck. At any moment they could be spotted, which fact would be announced by bullets tearing into them. Up in the stem was the winding gear for the anchor, with a large pile of slack chain. "Sapir . . ." Abbas pointed, and Sapir, understanding, crawled along the deck to the position.

"I'll take the crane," Porush said.

Abbas looked at the derrick towering over them, dominating the whole of the foredeck. The control cabin was some ten feet above deck level. It would be a dangerous position, but it made good tactical sense. "Go," he said.

Porush crawled forward, following Sharrett's route. Watching, Abbas thought, He's got a fat ass—my sister feeds him too well. Porush gained the foot of the crane, began to climb the ladder as Abbas held his breath until he reached the cabin.

Behind Abbas, in the prow, was a companion head over a short flight of steps leading down to a door. The area was not big enough to be called a fo'c'sle, and there was almost certainly no proper accommodation in there—it was simply a for'ard store. He crawled to it, crouched at the foot of the steps in the little well, gently cracked open the door. It was dark inside. He closed the door and turned around, resting his gun on the head of the steps, satisfied that he was alone . . .

▼

There was almost no light at the stern end, and Dickstein's boat had to get very close to the *Coparelli*'s starboard ladder. Gibli, the team leader, found it difficult to keep the boat in position. Dickstein found a boathook in the well of the launch and used it to hold the boat steady, pulling toward the *Coparelli* when the sea tried to part them and pushing away when the boat and the ship threatened to collide broadside.

Gibli, ex-army, insisted on adhering to the Israeli tradition that the officers lead their men from in front, not from behind. He went first. He always wore a hat to conceal his receding hairline, and now sported a beret. He crouched at the edge of the boat while it slid down a wave; then, in the trough when boat and ship moved closer together, he jumped, landed well, moved forward.

On the edge, waiting for his moment, Feinberg said, "Now, then—I count to three, then open my parachute, right?" He jumped into the teeth of his nervous man's humor.

Katzen went next, then Raoul Dovrat. Dickstein dropped the boathook and followed. On the ladder, he leaned back and looked up through the streaming rain to see Gibli just reaching the level of the gunwale, then swing one leg over the rail.

Book Press
Galley 0240 Take 8001 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3283, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

Dickstein looked back over his shoulder, saw a faint band of lighter gray in the distant sky, the first sign of dawn—

A burst of machine-gun fire and a shout.

Dickstein looked up again to see Gibli falling slowly backward off the top of the ladder. His beret came off, to be whipped away by the wind, disappearing into the darkness. Gibli fell down, down past Dickstein down into the sea.

Dickstein, stomach turning, gave the order to open fire.

Feinberg vaulted over the rail. He would hit the deck rolling, Dickstein knew, then—yes, there was the sound of his gun as he gave covering fire for the others . . .

And now Katzen was over, and there were four, five, guns crackling, and Dickstein was scampering up the ladder and pulling the pin from a grenade with his teeth and hurling it up and over the rail some thirty yards forward, where he hoped it would cause a diversion without injuring any of his men already on deck . . . and then Dovrat was over the rail and Dickstein saw him hit the deck rolling, gain his feet, dive for cover behind the stern superstructure.

Dickstein followed, landed on hands and knees, bent double under a sheet of covering fire and scampered to the stern. "Where are they?"

Feinberg stopped shooting only to answer him. "In the galley," jerking a thumb toward the bulkhead beside them. "And the lifeboats and the doorways amidships."

"All right"—Dickstein got to his feet—"we hold this position until Bader's group makes the deck. When you hear them open fire, move. Dovrat and Katzen, hit the galley door and head below. Feinberg, cover them, then work your way forward along this edge to the deck. I'll make for the first lifeboat. Meantime give them something to distract their attention from the port stern ladder and Bader's team. Fire at will."

▼

Hassan and Mahmoud were interrogating Koch when the shooting started. They were in the chart room, aft of the bridge. Koch would speak only German, but Hassan spoke German too. Koch's story was that the *Coparelli* had broken down and the crew had been taken off, leaving him to wait in the ship until a spare part arrived. He knew nothing of uranium or hijacks or Dickstein. Hassan did not believe him—as he pointed out to Mahmoud, if Dickstein could arrange for the ship to break down, he could surely arrange for one of his own men to be left aboard it. Koch was tied to a chair, and now Mahmoud proceeded to cut off his fingers, one by one, to encourage him to tell a different story.

They heard one quick burst of firing, then a silence, then a second burst followed by a barrage. Mahmoud sheathed his knife and went down the stairs, which led from the chartroom to the officers' quarters.

Hassan tried to assess the situation. Mahmoud's men were grouped in three places—the lifeboats, the galley and the main amidships superstructure. From where he was Hassan could see both port and starboard sides of the deck, and if he went forward from the chartroom to the bridge he could see the foredeck. Most of the Israelis seemed to have boarded the ship at the stern. The Fedayeen, both those immediately below Hassan and those in the lifeboats at either side, were firing toward the stern. There was no firing from the galley, which must mean the Israelis had taken it. Apparently they'd gone below but had left two men on deck, one on either side, to guard their rear . . .

Book Press
Galley 0241 Take 8001 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3283, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

So Mahmoud's hoped-for ambush had failed, and Hassan, in spite of himself, almost took a secret pleasure in it. The Israelis were supposed to be shot down as they came over the rail. In fact, they'd succeeded in reaching cover. The advantage was gone . . . it was now all even. . . .

The fighting on the deck was stalemated, with both sides shooting at each other from good cover . . . which was the Israelis' intention, Hassan assumed—to keep the opposition busy on deck while they made their progress below, attacking the Fedayeen stronghold, the amidships superstructure, after making their way the length of the 'tweendecks gangways. . . .

Where was the best place for him to be? Right where he was, Hassan decided. To reach him the Israelis would have to fight their way along the 'tweendecks, then up through the officers' quarters, then up again to the bridge and chartroom—a tough position to take.

A huge explosion from the bridge. The heavy door separating bridge and chartroom rattled, sagged on its hinges and fell slowly inward. Hassan looked through. A grenade had landed in the bridge. The bodies of three Fedayeen were spread across the bulkheads. All the glass of the bridge was smashed. The grenade must have come from the foredeck, which meant that there was another group of Israelis in the prow. As if to confirm his thought, a burst of gunfire came from the for'ard crane.

Hassan, the armchair warrior, was retired. He picked up a submachine gun from the floor, rested it on the window frame, and commenced to shoot back.

▼

Levi Abbas watched Porush's grenade sail through the air and into the bridge, saw the explosion shatter what remained of the glass. The guns from that quarter were briefly silenced, and then a new one started up. For a minute Abbas could not figure out what the new gun was shooting at . . . none of the bullets landed even near him. He looked at either side. Sapir and Sharrett were both shooting at the bridge, and neither seemed to be under fire. Abbas looked up at the crane—Porush, it was Porush who was under fire. There was a burst from the cabin of the crane as Porush fired back.

The shooting from the bridge was amateurish, wild and inaccurate—the man was just spraying bullets. But he had a good position . . . he was high, and well protected by the walls of the bridge. Sooner or later he *would* hit something. Abbas took out a grenade, lobbed it, but it fell short. Only Porush was close enough to throw into the bridge, and he had used all his grenades, though only the fourth had landed on target.

Abbas fired again, then looked up at the control cabin of the crane. As he looked, he saw Porush come toppling backward out of the control cabin, turn over in the air, and fall, a dead weight, to the deck.

And Abbas thought, How will I tell my sister?

The gunman in the bridge stopped firing, then resumed with a burst in Sharrett's direction. Unlike Abbas and Sapir, Sharrett had very little cover, squeezed as he was between a capstan and the gunwale. Abbas and Sapir both shot at the bridge. The unseen sniper was improving . . . bullets stitched a seam in the deck toward Sharrett's capstan, and found their target. Sharrett screamed, jumped sideways, jerked as if electrocuted while bullets shredded his body, until at last he lay still, his screaming a dead echo.

Book Press
Galley 0242 Take 8001 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3283, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

The situation was bad. Abbas's team was supposed to command the foredeck, but at the moment some damn Arab on the bridge was doing that . . . Abbas threw another grenade. It landed short of the bridge and exploded . . . at least the flash might dazzle the sniper for a second or two. Abbas was on his feet and running for the crane, the sound of Sapir's covering fire in his ears. He made the foot of the ladder and started firing before the sniper on the bridge saw him. Bullets were clanging on the girders all around him. It seemed to take him an age to climb each step, some autonomous part of his mind began to count the steps—seven-eight-nine-ten—

A ricochet bullet entered his thigh just below the hip bone, the shock of it seeming to paralyze the muscles in the lower half of his body. His feet slipped from the rungs of the ladder, a moment of confused panic as he discovered that his legs would not work. Instinctively he grabbed for the ladder with his hands, missed, and fell, turning partly over as he landed awkwardly, and broke his neck.

The door to the for'ard store opened slightly and a frightened Tyrin looked out. Nobody saw him as he quickly retreated back inside, closing the door tight after him.

▼

As Katzen and Dovrat rushed the galley, Dickstein took advantage of Feinberg's covering fire to move forward, running bent double past the point at which they'd boarded the ship, past the galley door, throwing himself behind the first of the lifeboats, one that had already been grenaded. From there, in the faint but increasing light, he could make out the lines of the amidships superstructure, shaped like a flight of three steps rising forward. At the main deck level was the officers' mess, the officers' dayroom, the sick bay and a passenger cabin used as a dry store. On the next level up were officers' cabins, heads, and the captain's quarters. On the top deck was the bridge with adjoining chart room and radio booth.

Most of the enemy would now be at deck level in the mess and the dayroom. He could bypass them by climbing a ladder alongside the funnel to the walkway around the second deck, but the only way to the bridge was through the second deck. He would have to take out any soldiers in the cabins on his own . . . He looked back. Feinberg had retreated behind the galley, perhaps to reload. He waited until Feinberg started shooting again, then got to his feet. Firing from the hip, he broke from behind the lifeboat, ran across the afterdeck to the ladder and without breaking stride jumped onto the fourth rung and scrambled up, very aware that for a few long seconds he made an easy target, hearing a clutch of bullets rattle on the funnel beside him, finally reaching the level of the upper deck, where he flung himself across the walkway, lying now against the door to the officers' quarters.

"Stone the bloody crows," he muttered, his old Cockney soul asserting itself. He reloaded his gun, put his back to the door and slowly slid himself upright to a porthole in the door at eye level. He risked a look, saw a passage with three doors on either side and, at the far end, ladders going down to the mess and up to the chartroom. He realized that the bridge could be reached by either of two outside ladders leading up from the main deck as well as by way of the chartroom. Except the Arabs still controlled that part of the deck and could cover the outside ladders . . . the only way to the bridge was *this* way.

Book Press
Galley 0243 Take 8001 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3283, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

He opened the door and stepped in, crept along the passage to the first cabin door, opened it and threw in a grenade. He saw one of the enemy begin to turn around, and closed the door. He heard the grenade explode in the small space. He ran to the next door on the same side, opened it, threw in another grenade. It exploded into empty space.

One more door on this side, for his last grenade. He ran to the door, threw it open, went in firing. There was one man here. He'd been firing through the porthole, but now he was easing his gun out of the hole, turning around . . . Dickstein's burst ripped him across the middle.

Dickstein turned quickly, faced the open door. Waiting. The door of the opposite cabin abruptly opened, Dickstein shot down the man behind it, then stepped into the gangway, firing blind.

Two more cabins to account for. The door of the nearer one opened as Dickstein was spraying it, and a body fell out.

One to go. Dickstein watched. The door opened a crack, closed. Dickstein ran down the gangway, kicked open the door, sprayed the cabin. No return fire. He stepped inside—the occupant had been hit by a ricochet and lay bleeding on the bunk.

Dickstein was too beside himself to realize fully what he'd done—taken the entire deck on his own.

Next, the bridge. The inner motor propelling him now was on automatic as he ran forward along the gangway. At the far end the companionway led up to the chartroom and down to the officers' mess. He stepped onto the ladder, looked up, and threw himself down and away from the snout of a gun poked down at him and began to fire.

His grenades were gone, he reminded himself. The man in the chartroom was impregnable to gunfire, he could stay behind the edge of the companionhead and fire blind down the ladder, yet Dickstein needed to get onto that ladder, to get up to the bridge.

He went into one of the forward cabins to overlook the deck, to try to assess the situation. It was worse than he thought on the foredeck: three dead bodies, only one of the four men of Abbas's team still firing, with at least two or three guns firing from the bridge at him, trapping him behind a stack of anchor chain.

Dickstein looked to the side. Feinberg was still well aft—he had not managed to progress forward. And there was still no sign of the men who had gone below.

The Fedayeen were well entrenched in the mess below him, and from their superior position they were able to keep at bay the men on deck and the men in the 'tweendecks below them. The only way to take the mess would be to attack it from all sides at once—including from above. Which meant taking the bridge first. And the bridge was impregnable.

Dickstein ran back along the gangway and out of the aft door. It was still pouring, but there was a dim, cold light in the sky. He could make out Feinberg on one side and Dovrat on the other. He called out their names, pointed at the galley, then jumped from the walkway to the afterdeck, raced across it and literally dove into the galley.

They got his meaning, and a moment later followed him in.

"We have to take the mess," Dickstein told them.

"How?" said Feinberg.

"By rushing it from all sides at once . . . port, starboard, below and above. First we have to take the bridge. That's mine. When I get there I'll sound the foghorn, that will be the signal. You two go below and tell the men there—"

Book Press
Galley 0244 Take 8001 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3283, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

"And how will you get to the bridge?" Feinberg said, no smile on his face now.

"Over the roof."

▼

On the bridge, Hassan had been joined by Mahmoud and two of his Fedayeen, who took up firing positions while the leaders sat on the floor and conferred.

"They can't win," Mahmoud said. "From here we control too much deck. They can't attack the mess from below, the companionway is easy to dominate from above. They can't attack from the sides or the front because we can fire down on them from here. They can't attack from above because we control the down companion. We need only to keep shooting until they surrender."

"One of them tried to take this companion a few minutes ago. I stopped him . . ."

"You were on your own up there?"

"Yes."

The Fedayeen leader smiled, put his hands on Hassan's shoulders. "I believe you are now one of us—"

Hassan spoke out with the thought that was on both of their minds. "And after this?"

Mahmoud nodded. "Equal partners." And clasped his hand.

Hassan repeated: "Equal partners."

"And now," Mahmoud said, "I think they will certainly try for that companionway again—it is their only hope."

"I'll cover it from the chartroom," Hassan said.

As they stood up, a stray bullet from the foredeck came in through the glassless windows and entered Mahmoud's brain.

And Yasif Hassan, of all people, was suddenly leader of the Fedayeen.

▼

Lying on his stomach, arms and legs spread wide for traction, Dickstein inched his way across the roof—which was curved, totally without handholds and slick with rain. As the *Coparelli* heaved and shifted in the waves, the roof tilted forward, backward, from side to side. The best Dickstein could do was press himself to the metal to slow down his sliding about with the roof's tilt.

At the forward end of the roof was a navigation light. If he reached that he would have a handhold, but his progress toward it was painfully slow. He was within a foot of it when the ship rolled to port and he slid away, a long roll that took him all the way to the edge of the roof, where for a moment he hung by one arm over a thirty-foot drop to the deck. The ship rolled more, he tried to dig the fingernails of his right hand into the painted metal of the roof.

The ship, and Dickstein, seemed suspended.

The *Coparelli* rolled back.

Book Press
Galley 0247 Take 8002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3283, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

Hassan turned to go, aware that suddenly he was again an errand boy, Mahmoud demonstrating that when it counted, in battle, he was still the undisputed leader. Hassan felt a rush of blood to his cheeks.

"Yasif."

He turned back.

"Your weapon." Mahmoud threw him a gun, which Hassan fumbled slightly as he caught it. It was a small pistol, almost a toy, the kind of gun a woman might carry in her handbag. Mahmoud's troops thought it very funny.

Hassan decided he could play their games too. He found what looked like the safety catch and released it. He pointed the gun at the floor and pulled the trigger. The report was very loud. He emptied the gun into the deck.

There was a silence.

Hassan said, "I thought I saw a mouse," and grandly threw the gun back to Mahmoud.

The men laughed even louder.

Hassan, with no gesture left, went back up to the bridge, passed the message to the captain and returned to the deck. It was very dark now. For a time all that could be seen of the *Coparelli* was its light, then, gradually, a silhouette of solid black became distinguishable against the wash of dark gray.

Mahmoud's men, quiet now, had emerged from the galley and stood on deck with the crew. The *Nablus*'s engines died, the crew lowered the boats.

Hassan and his Fedayeen went over the side.

Hassan was in the same boat as Mahmoud (he had to be, from his point of view and Mahmoud's). The small launch bobbed on the waves, which now seemed immense. They approached the side of the *Coparelli*. There was no sign of activity on the ship. Surely, Hassan thought, the officer on watch must hear the sound of two engines approaching? But no alarms sounded, no lights flooded the deck, no one shouted orders or came to the rail.

Mahmoud was first up the ladder.

By the time Hassan reached the *Coparelli*'s deck the other team was swarming over the starboard gunwale.

Men poured down the companionways and up the ladders.

Still no sign of the *Coparelli*'s crew. Hassan had a dreadful premonition. Something seemed terribly wrong.

He followed after Mahmoud up to the bridge. Two of the men had already made their way there. Hassan asked, "Did they have time to use the radio?"

"*Who?*" Mahmoud said in disgust.

They went back down to the deck. Slowly the men were emerging from the bowels of the boat, looking puzzled, unused guns in hand.

Now two men came across the deck with a frightened looking sailor between them.

Hassan nervously spoke to the sailor in English. "What's happened here?"

The sailor, Dieter Koch, began to answer in German when Hassan had a sudden, terrifying thought. "We haven't checked the hold," he said to Mahmoud. They found a companionway leading below and down into the hold.

Hassan found a light switch, turned it on. The hold, to Hassan's relief, was empty of men. What filled it were wooden wedges. The drums had the word PLUMBAT stenciled on their sides.

Book Press
Galley 0248 Take 8002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3283, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

The uranium.

Hassan said the word, the two men looked at the drums, then at each other. Their expressions were solemn, their feelings ecstatic. Especially Hassan's. For the moment all rivalry was forgotten in the grandeur of their victory.

▼

As darkness fell Tyrin had watched the engineer go forward to switch on the white light. Coming back, he had not gone up to the bridge but had walked further aft and entered the galley. Tyrin was hungry too. He would give his arm for a plate of salted herring and a loaf of brown bread. Sitting cramped in his lifeboat all afternoon, waiting for Koch to move, he had had little else to occupy his thoughts besides his hunger, and had tortured himself with thoughts of daviar, smoked salmon, marinated mushrooms and—most of all—brown bread.

Once Koch had disappeared from sight, Tyrin got out of the lifeboat, his muscles protesting as he stretched, and hurried along the deck to the for'ard store.

He had shifted the boxes and assorted junk in the main store so that they concealed the entrance to his small radio room. Now he was obliged to get down on hands and knees, pull away boxes, crawl through a little tunnel to get in.

The set was repeating a short two-letter signal. Tyrin checked the code book, found it meant he was to switch to another wavelength before acknowledging. He set the radio to transmit and followed his instructions.

Rostov immediately replied. CHANGE OF PLAN. HASSAN WILL ATTACK COPARELLI.

Tyrin was understandably puzzled, and made: REPEAT PLEASE.

Hassan a traitor. Fedayeen will attack Coparelli.

The *Coparelli* was *here,* he was on it . . . alone except for the engineer . . . Why would Hassan—for the uranium, of course—

Rostov was still signaling. HASSAN PLANS AMBUSH DICKSTEIN. OBEY FOLLOWING INSTRUCTIONS PRECISELY. FOR OUR PLAN TO PROCEED WE MUST WARN DICKSTEIN OF AMBUSH . . .

Tyrin decoded, at first confused, then understanding. It puts things back in place, very clever. Except what do *I* do?

He made: HOW?

YOU WILL CALL STROMBERG ON COPARELLI'S REGULAR WAVELENGTH. SEND FOLLOWING MESSAGE PRECISELY REPEAT PRECISELY. QUOTE COPARELLI TO STROMBERG I AM BOARDED ARABS UNQUOTE.

Tyrin nodded. Dickstein would think that Koch had time to get a few words off before the Arabs killed him. Forewarned, Dickstein should be able to take the *Coparelli.* Then Rostov's *Karla* could collide with Dickstein's *Coparelli* as planned. Fine, very neat . . . but what about me?

He made: UNDERSTOOD, heard a distant bump, as if something had hit the ship's hull. At first he ignored it, then remembered there was nobody aboard but himself and Koch. He went to the door of the for'ard store and looked out.

Hassan and the Fedayeen.

He closed the door, hurried back to his transmitter. He made: HASSAN IS HERE.

Rostov replied, SIGNAL DICKSTEIN NOW.

WHAT THEN?

DISAPPEAR.

Book Press
Galley 0249 Take 8002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3283, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

Tyrin did not transmit the expletive he uttered to himself. Instead, as directed, he signed off and tuned to the regular wavelength to signal the *Stromberg*.

The thought occurred to him that he might never eat salted herring again.

▼

The message from the *Coparelli* had altered Dickstein's mood. At first he had been shocked. How had the opposition managed to learn so much of his plan that they had been able to attack the *Coparelli* first? Somewhere, somehow, he must have made terrible errors of judgment. Suza . . . ? But there was no point now in berating himself. Now there was a genuine fight ahead. His black depression vanished. The tension was still there, coiled tight inside him like a steel spring, but now at least he could ride it, use it. Now he had something to *do* with it.

The twelve men in the mess room of the *Stromberg sensed the change in Dickstein, caught his eagerness for the battle.*

Each had an Uzi 9-mm submachine gun, a reliable, compact firearm weighing nine pounds when loaded wih the 25-round magazine and only an inch over two feet long with its metal stock extended. They had three spare magazines each. Each man had a 9-mm Luger in a belt holster—the pistol would take the same cartridges as the machine gun—and a clip of four grenades on the opposite side of his belt. Almost certainly, Dickstein realized, they had extra weapons of their own choice—knives, blackjacks, bayonets, knuckle-dusters and others more exotic carried superstitiously more as talismen than fighting implements.

Dickstein recognized their mood, knew without conceit—though with some pride—that ultimately it came from him. He had felt it before with men before a fight. Fear . . . and an impatience to get started to relieve the fear. Waiting, that was always the worst part. The action was anesthetic. The aftermath, win or lose, was counting the dead.

He had figured his battle plan in detail and briefed them. The *Coparelli* was designed like a miniature tanker, holds forward and amidships, main superstructure on the afterdeck, a secondary superstructure in the stern. The main superstructure contained the bridge, the officers' quarters and the mess; below were crew's quarters. The stern superstructure contained the galley, below that stores, and below these the engine room. The two superstructures were separate above deck, but below deck they were connected by gangways.

They were to go over in three teams. Abbas's would attack the bows. The other two, led by Bader and Gibli, would go up the port and starboard ladders at the stern. The two stern teams were detailed to go below and work forward, flushing out the enemy amids ips where they could be attacked by Abbas and his men from the prow. The strategy, he realized, was likely to leave a pocket of resistance at the bridge, which Dickstein assigned to himself.

The attack would be by night; otherwise they would never get aboard, would be picked off as they came over the rails. Which left the problem of how to avoid shooting at one another as well as the enemy. For this he provided a recognition signal—the word *Aliyah*—and the attack plan was designed so that they were not expected to come together until the very end of the action.

Book Press
Galley 0250 Take 8002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3283, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

Now they were waiting.

They sat in a loose circle in the galley of the *Stromberg*, identical to the galley of the *Coparelli*. Dickstein was speaking to Abbas: "From the bows you'll control the foredeck, an open field of fire. Deploy your men behind cover and stay there. When the enemy on deck reveal their positions, pick them off. Your main problem is going to be hailing fire from the bridge."

Slumped in his chair, Abbas looked even more like a tank than usual (Dickstein was glad Abbas was on his side). "And we hold our fire at first . . ."

"Yes. You've a good chance of getting aboard unseen. No point in shooting until you know the rest of us have arrived."

Abbas nodded. "I see Porush is on my team. You know he's my brother-in-law."

"Yes. I also know he's the only married man here. I thought you might want to take care of him."

"Thanks."

Feinberg looked up from the knife he was cleaning. The lanky New Yorker was, for once, not grinning. "How do you figure these Arabs?"

Dickstein shook his head. "They could be regular army or Fedayeen."

Feinberg grinned. "Let's hope they're regular army—we make faces, they surrender."

It was a lousy joke, but in the tension earned a few insincere laughs anyway.

Ish, ever a pessimist, sitting with his feet on a table and his eyes closed, said, "Going over the rail will be the worst part. We'll be naked as babes."

"Except," Dickstein said, "remember that they believe we're expecting to take over a deserted boat. Their presence is supposed to be a big surprise for us. They're looking for an easy victory. We're forewarned, and we'll have the dark . . ."

The door opened, the captain entered. "We've sighted the *Coparelli*."

Dickstein took a deep breath, stood up. "Let's go."

Sixteen

THE THREE BOATS pulled away from the *Stromberg* in the last few minutes before dawn.

Within seconds the ship behind them was invisible. She had no navigation lights, all deck lights and cabin lamps had been extinguished even below the waterline to ensure that no light escaped to warn the *Coparelli*.

The weather had worsened during the night. The *Stromberg* captain said it was still not bad enough to be called a storm, but the rain was torrential, the wind strong enough to blow a steel bucket clattering along the deck, the waves so high that now Dickstein was obliged to cling tightly to his bench seat in the well of the motorboat.

For a while they were in limbo, nothing visible ahead or behind. Dickstein could not even make out the faces of the four men in the boat with him. Feinberg broke their silence: "I still say we should have postponed this fishing trip until tomorrow."

Book Press
Galley 0251 Take 8002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3283, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

Whistling past the graveyard.

Dickstein was as superstitious as the rest: underneath his oilskin and life jacket he wore his father's old striped waistcoat with a smashed fob watch in the pocket over his heart. The watch, after all, had once stopped a German bullet. Powerful magic not in the Koran . . .

In a way he knew he had gone a little crazy. His affair with Suza, her incredible betrayal, had turned him upside down: his old values had been jolted, the new ones he'd found with her turned to dust. He still cared about some things, though—he wanted to win this battle, he wanted Israel to have the uranium, and he wanted, personally, to kill Yasif Hassan. He had no particular fear of bullets, pain, even death. Suza had taken care of that. Let Israel get its bomb, and Esther would die peacefully, Mottie would finish *Treasure Island*, and Yigael could look after the grapes.

He gripped the barrel of the machine gun beneath his oilskin.

They crested a wave, and there in the next trough, was the *Coparelli*.

▼

Switching several times from forward to reverse in rapid succession Levi Abbas edged his boat closer to the bows of the *Coparelli*. The white light above them enabled him to see clearly, while the outward-curving hull shielded his boat from the sight of anyone on deck or on the bridge. When the boat was close enough to the ladder Abbas took a rope and tied it around his waist under the oilskin. He hesitated a moment, shucked off the oilskin, unwrapped his gun and slung it over his neck. He stood with one foot in the boat and one on the gunwale, waited for his moment, and jumped.

He hit the ladder with both feet and hands, untied the rope around his waist and secured it to a rung of the ladder, went up the ladder almost to the top, stopped. They wanted to go over the rail as close together as possible.

He looked back down. Sharrett and Sapir were already on the ladder below him. As he looked, Porush made his jump, landed awkwardly and missed his grip, then slipped down a rung before he managed to hook an arm around the side of the ladder and arrest his descent.

Abbas waited for Porush to come up close behind Sapir, then put himself over the rail. He landed softly on all fours and crouched low beside the gunwale. The others followed swiftly—one, two, three. The white light was above them, they were very exposed.

Abbas looked about. Sharrett was the smallest, he could wriggle like a snake. Abbas touched his shoulder and pointed across the deck. "Take cover on the port side." Sharrett bellied across two yards of open deck, partly concealed now by the raised edge of the for'ard hatch. He inched forward.

Abbas looked up and down the deck. At any moment they could be spotted, which fact would be announced by bullets tearing into them. Up in the stem was the winding gear for the anchor, with a large pile of slack chain. "Sapir . . ." Abbas pointed, and Sapir, understanding, crawled along the deck to the position.

"I'll take the crane," Porush said.

Book Press
Galley 0252 Take 8002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3283, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

Abbas looked at the derrick towering over them, dominating the whole of the foredeck. The control cabin was some ten feet above deck level. It would be a dangerous position, but it made good tactical sense. "Go," he said.

Porush crawled forward, following Sharrett's route. Watching, Abbas thought, He's got a fat ass—my sister feeds him too well. Porush gained the foot of the crane, began to climb the ladder as Abbas held his breath until he reached the cabin.

Behind Abbas, in the prow, was a companion head over a short flight of steps leading down to a door. The area was not big enough to be called a fo'c'sle, and there was almost certainly no proper accommodation in there—it was simply a for'ard store. He crawled to it, crouched at the foot of the steps in the little well, gently cracked open the door. It was dark inside. He closed the door and turned around, resting his gun on the head of the steps, satisfied that he was alone . . .

▼

There was almost no light at the stern end, and Dickstein's boat had to get very close to the *Coparelli*'s starboard ladder. Gibli, the team leader, found it difficult to keep the boat in position. Dickstein found a boathook in the well of the launch and used it to hold the boat steady, pulling toward the *Coparelli* when the sea tried to part them and pushing away when the boat and the ship threatened to collide broadside.

Gibli, ex-army, insisted on adhering to the Israeli tradition that the officers lead their men from in front, not from behind. He went first. He always wore a hat to conceal his receding hairline, and now sported a beret. He crouched at the edge of the boat while it slid down a wave; then, in the trough when boat and ship moved closer together, he jumped, landed well, moved forward.

On the edge, waiting for his moment, Feinberg said, "Now, then—I count to three, then open my parachute, right?" He jumped into the teeth of his nervous man's humor.

Katzen went next, then Raoul Dovrat. Dickstein dropped the boathook and followed. On the ladder, he leaned back and looked up through the streaming rain to see Gibli just reaching the level of the gunwale, then swing one leg over the rail.

Dickstein looked back over his shoulder, saw a faint band of lighter gray in the distant sky, the first sign of dawn—

A burst of machine-gun fire and a shout.

Dickstein looked up again to see Gibli falling slowly backward off the top of the ladder. His beret came off, to be whipped away by the wind, disappearing into the darkness. Gibli fell down, down past Dickstein down into the sea.

Dickstein, stomach turning, gave the order to open fire.

Feinberg vaulted over the rail. He would hit the deck rolling, Dickstein knew, then—yes, there was the sound of his gun as he gave covering fire for the others . . .

And now Katzen was over, and there were four, five, guns crackling, and Dickstein was scampering up the ladder and pulling the pin from a grenade with his teeth and hurling it up and over the rail some thirty yards forward, where he hoped it would cause a diversion without injuring any of his men already on deck . . . and then Dovrat was over the rail and Dickstein saw him hit the deck rolling, gain his feet, dive for cover behind the stern superstructure.

Book Press
Galley 0253 Take 8002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3283, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

Dickstein followed, landed on hands and knees, bent double under a sheet of covering fire and scampered to the stern. "Where are they?"

Feinberg stopped shooting only to answer him. "In the galley," jerking a thumb toward the bulkhead beside them. "And the lifeboats and the doorways amidships."

"All right"—Dickstein got to his feet—"we hold this position until Bader's group makes the deck. When you hear them open fire, move. Dovrat and Katzen, hit the galley door and head below. Feinberg, cover them, then work your way forward along this edge to the deck. I'll make for the first lifeboat. Meantime give them something to distract their attention from the port stern ladder and Bader's team. Fire at will."

▼

Hassan and Mahmoud were interrogating Koch when the shooting started. They were in the chart room, aft of the bridge. Koch would speak only German, but Hassan spoke German too. Koch's story was that the *Coparelli* had broken down and the crew had been taken off, leaving him to wait in the ship until a spare part arrived. He knew nothing of uranium or hijacks or Dickstein. Hassan did not believe him—as he pointed out to Mahmoud, if Dickstein could arrange for the ship to break down, he could surely arrange for one of his own men to be left aboard it. Koch was tied to a chair, and now Mahmoud proceeded to cut off his fingers, one by one, to encourage him to tell a different story.

They heard one quick burst of firing, then a silence, then a second burst followed by a barrage. Mahmoud sheathed his knife and went down the stairs, which led from the chartroom to the officers' quarters.

Hassan tried to assess the situation. Mahmoud's men were grouped in three places—the lifeboats, the galley and the main amidships superstructure. From where he was Hassan could see both port and starboard sides of the deck, and if he went forward from the chartroom to the bridge he could see the foredeck. Most of the Israelis seemed to have boarded the ship at the stern. The Fedayeen, both those immediately below Hassan and those in the lifeboats at either side, were firing toward the stern. There was no firing from the galley, which must mean the Israelis had taken it. Apparently they'd gone below but had left two men on deck, one on either side, to guard their rear . . .

So Mahmoud's hoped-for ambush had failed, and Hassan, in spite of himself, almost took a secret pleasure in it. The Israelis were supposed to be shot down as they came over the rail. In fact, they'd succeeded in reaching cover. The advantage was gone . . . it was now all even. . . .

The fighting on the deck was stalemated, with both sides shooting at each other from good cover . . . which was the Israelis' intention, Hassan assumed—to keep the opposition busy on deck while they made their progress below, attacking the Fedayeen stronghold, the amidships superstructure, after making their way the length of the 'tweendecks gangways. . . .

Where was the best place for him to be? Right where he was, Hassan decided. To reach him the Israelis would have to fight their way along the 'tweendecks, then up through the officers' quarters, then up again to the bridge and chartroom—a tough position to take.

Galley 0254 Take 8002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3283, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

A huge explosion from the bridge. The heavy door separating bridge and chartroom rattled, sagged on its hinges and fell slowly inward. Hassan looked through. A grenade had landed in the bridge. The bodies of three Fedayeen were spread across the bulkheads. All the glass of the bridge was smashed. The grenade must have come from the foredeck, which meant that there was another group of Israelis in the prow. As if to confirm his thought, a burst of gunfire came from the for'ard crane.

Hassan, the armchair warrior, was retired. He picked up a submachine gun from the floor, rested it on the window frame, and commenced to shoot back.

▼

Levi Abbas watched Porush's grenade sail through the air and into the bridge, saw the explosion shatter what remained of the glass. The guns from that quarter were briefly silenced, and then a new one started up. For a minute Abbas could not figure out what the new gun was shooting at . . . none of the bullets landed even near him. He looked at either side. Sapir and Sharrett were both shooting at the bridge, and neither seemed to be under fire. Abbas looked up at the crane—Porush, it was Porush who was under fire. There was a burst from the cabin of the crane as Porush fired back.

The shooting from the bridge was amateurish, wild and inaccurate—the man was just spraying bullets. But he had a good position . . . he was high, and well protected by the walls of the bridge. Sooner or later he *would* hit something. Abbas took out a grenade, lobbed it, but it fell short. Only Porush was close enough to throw into the bridge, and he had used all his grenades, though only the fourth had landed on target.

Abbas fired again, then looked up at the control cabin of the crane. As he looked, he saw Porush come toppling backward out of the control cabin, turn over in the air, and fall, a dead weight, to the deck.

And Abbas thought, How will I tell my sister?

The gunman in the bridge stopped firing, then resumed with a burst in Sharrett's direction. Unlike Abbas and Sapir, Sharrett had very little cover, squeezed as he was between a capstan and the gunwale. Abbas and Sapir both shot at the bridge. The unseen sniper was improving . . . bullets stitched a seam in the deck toward Sharrett's capstan, and found their target. Sharrett screamed, jumped sideways, jerked as if electrocuted while bullets shredded his body, until at last he lay still, his screaming a dead echo.

The situation was bad. Abbas's team was supposed to command the foredeck, but at the moment some damn Arab on the bridge was doing that . . . Abbas threw another grenade. It landed short of the bridge and exploded . . . at least the flash might dazzle the sniper for a second or two. Abbas was on his feet and running for the crane, the sound of Sapir's covering fire in his ears. He made the foot of the ladder and started firing before the sniper on the bridge saw him. Bullets were clanging on the girders all around him. It seemed to take him an age to climb each step, some autonomous part of his mind began to count the steps—seven-eight-nine-ten—

A ricochet bullet entered his thigh just below the hip bone, the shock of it seeming to paralyze the muscles in the lower half of his body. His feet slipped from the rungs of the ladder, a moment of confused panic as he discovered that his legs would not work. Instinctively he grabbed for the ladder with his hands, missed, and fell, turning partly over as he landed awkwardly, and broke his neck.

Book Press
Galley 0255 Take 8002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3283, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

The door to the for'ard store opened slightly and a frightened Tyrin looked out. Nobody saw him as he quickly retreated back inside, closing the door tight after him.

▼

As Katzen and Dovrat rushed the galley, Dickstein took advantage of Feinberg's covering fire to move forward, running bent double past the point at which they'd boarded the ship, past the galley door, throw ing himself behind the first of the lifeboats, one that had already been grenaded. From there, in the faint but increasing light, he could make out the lines of the amidships superstructure, shaped like a flight of three steps rising forward. At the main deck level was the officers' mess, the officers' dayroom, the sick bay and a passenger cabin used as a dry store. On the next level up were officers' cabins, heads, and the captain's quarters. On the top deck was the bridge with adjoining chart room and radio booth.

Most of the enemy would now be at deck level in the mess and the dayroom. He could bypass them by climbing a ladder alongside the funnel to the walkway around the second deck, but the only way to the bridge was through the second deck. He would have to take out any soldiers in the cabins on his own . . . He looked back. Feinberg had retreated behind the galley, perhaps to reload. He waited until Feinberg started shooting again, then got to his feet. Firing from the hip, he broke from behind the lifeboat, ran across the afterdeck to the ladder and without breaking stride jumped onto the fourth rung and scrambled up, very aware that for a few long seconds he made an easy target, hearing a clutch of bullets rattle on the funnel beside him, finally reaching the level of the upper deck, where he flung himself across the walkway, lying now against the door to the officers' quarters.

"Stone the bloody crows," he muttered, his old Cockney soul asserting itself. He reloaded his gun, put his back to the door and slowly slid himself upright to a porthole in the door at eye level. He risked a look, saw a passage with three doors on either side and, at the far end, ladders going down to the mess and up to the chartroom. He realized that the bridge could be reached by either of two outside ladders leading up from the main deck as well as by way of the chartroom. Except the Arabs still controlled that part of the deck and could cover the outside ladders . . . the only way to the bridge was *this* way.

He opened the door and stepped in, crept along the passage to the first cabin door, opened it and threw in a grenade. He saw one of the enemy begin to turn around, and closed the door. He heard the grenade explode in the small space. He ran to the next door on the same side, opened it, threw in another grenade. It exploded into empty space.

One more door on this side, for his last grenade. He ran to the door, threw it open, went in firing. There was one man here. He'd been firing through the porthole, but now he was easing his gun out of the hole, turning around . . . Dickstein's burst ripped him across the middle.

Dickstein turned quickly, faced the open door. Waiting. The door of the opposite cabin abruptly opened, Dickstein shot down the man behind it, then stepped into the gangway, firing blind.

Two more cabins to account for. The door of the nearer one opened as Dickstein was spraying it, and a body fell out.

Book Press
Galley 0256 Take 8002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 0● Key Bd. 8● Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3283, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

One to go. Dickstein watched. The door opened a crack, closed. Dickstein ran down the gangway, kicked open the door, sprayed the cabin. No return fire. He stepped inside—the occupant had been hit by a ricochet and lay bleeding on the bunk.

Dickstein was too beside himself to realize fully what he'd done—taken the entire deck on his own.

Next, the bridge. The inner motor propelling him now was on automatic as he ran forward along the gangway. At the far end the companionway led up to the chartroom and down to the officers' mess. He stepped onto the ladder, looked up, and threw himself down and away from the snout of a gun poked down at him and began to fire.

His grenades were gone, he reminded himself. The man in the chartroom was impregnable to gunfire, he could stay behind the edge of the companionhead and fire blind down the ladder, yet Dickstein needed to get onto that ladder, to get up to the bridge.

He went into one of the forward cabins to overlook the deck, to try to assess the situation. It was worse than he thought on the foredeck: three dead bodies, only one of the four men of Abbas's team still firing, with at least two or three guns firing from the bridge at him, trapping him behind a stack of anchor chain.

Dickstein looked to the side. Feinberg was still well aft—he had not managed to progress forward. And there was still no sign of the men who had gone below.

The Fedayeen were well entrenched in the mess below him, and from their superior position they were able to keep at bay the men on deck and the men in the 'tweendecks below them. The only way to take the mess would be to attack it from all sides at once—including from above. Which meant taking the bridge first. And the bridge was impregnable.

Dickstein ran back along the gangway and out of the aft door. It was still pouring, but there was a dim, cold light in the sky. He could make out Feinberg on one side and Dovrat on the other. He called out their names, pointed at the galley, then jumped from the walkway to the afterdeck, raced across it and literally dove into the galley.

They got his meaning, and a moment later followed him in.

"We have to take the mess," Dickstein told them.

"How?" said Feinberg.

"By rushing it from all sides at once . . . port, starboard, below and above. First we have to take the bridge. That's mine. When I get there I'll sound the foghorn, that will be the signal. You two go below and tell the men there—"

"And how will you get to the bridge?" Feinberg said, no smile on his face now.

"Over the roof."

▼

On the bridge, Hassan had been joined by Mahmoud and two of his Fedayeen, who took up firing positions while the leaders sat on the floor and conferred.

"They can't win," Mahmoud said. "From here we control too much deck. They can't attack the mess from below, the companionway is easy to dominate from above. They can't attack from the sides or the front because we can fire down on them from here. They can't attack from above because we control the down companion. We need only to keep shooting until they surrender."

Book Press
Galley 0257 Take 8002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3283, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

"One of them tried to take this companion a few minutes ago. I stopped him . . ."

"You were on your own up there?"

"Yes."

The Fedayeen leader smiled, put his hands on Hassan's shoulders. "I believe you are now one of us—"

Hassan spoke out with the thought that was on both of their minds. "And after this?"

Mahmoud nodded. "Equal partners." And clasped his hand.

Hassan repeated: "Equal partners."

"And now," Mahmoud said, "I think they will certainly try for that companionway again—it is their only hope."

"I'll cover it from the chartroom," Hassan said.

As they stood up, a stray bullet from the foredeck came in through the glassless windows and entered Mahmoud's brain.

And Yasif Hassan, of all people, was suddenly leader of the Fedayeen.

▼

Lying on his stomach, arms and legs spread wide for traction, Dickstein inched his way across the roof—which was curved, totally without handholds and slick with rain. As the *Coparelli* heaved and shifted in the waves, the roof tilted forward, backward, from side to side. The best Dickstein could do was press himself to the metal to slow down his sliding about with the roof's tilt.

At the forward end of the roof was a navigation light. If he reached that he would have a handhold, but his progress toward it was painfully slow. He was within a foot of it when the ship rolled to port and he slid away, a long roll that took him all the way to the edge of the roof, where for a moment he hung by one arm over a thirty-foot drop to the deck. The ship rolled more, he tried to dig the fingernails of his right hand into the painted metal of the roof.

The ship, and Dickstein, seemed suspended.

The *Coparelli* rolled back.

Dickstein let himself go with the roll, sliding toward the navigation light . . . until the ship pitched up, the roof tilted backward, and he slid of their surprise to lash out with a foot which landed on the point of the man's elbow, momentarily paralyzing his gun arm. Dickstein then jumped for the other man as his machine gun was swinging toward Dickstein, a split second too late. Dickstein got inside its swing, brought up his right hand in a two-stroke blow, the heel of his hand hitting the point of the Arab's chin, snapping his head back for the second stroke as Dickstein's fingers, stiffened for a karate chop, came down into the exposed flesh of the man's throat. Before the man could fall Dickstein grabbed him by the jacket, swung him around between himself and the other Arab, who was bringing up his gun. Dickstein lifted the dead man, hurled him across the bridge as the machine gun began firing. The dead body took the bullets, crashed into the other Arab, who lost his balance, went backward out through the open doorway and fell to the deck below.

But there was a third man in the chartroom, this one guarding the companionway leading down. In the few seconds during which Dickstein had been on the bridge the man had become aware, stood up, and turned around.

Book Press
Galley 0258 Take 8002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3283, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

Yasif Hassan.

Dickstein dropped to a crouch, stuck out a leg, kicked at the broken door which lay on the floor between himself and Hassan. The door slid along the deck, striking Hassan's feet, just enough to throw him off balance. As he spread his arms to recover his equilibrium Dickstein moved. No longer was he the creature of his instincts and training. Something new had been added. This was the man he most hated, his *personal* enemy. Rage gave its own dimension to his speed and power. He took hold of Hassan's gun arm by the wrist and shoulder, with a downward pull broke the arm over his knee. Hassan screamed, the gun dropped from his useless hand. Turning slightly, Dickstein brought his elbow back in a blow which caught Hassan just under the ear. Hassan turned away, falling. Dickstein grabbed his hair from behind, pulling the head backward. As Hassan sagged away from him he lifted his foot high and kicked. His heel struck the back of Hassan's neck at the moment he jerked the head. A telltale snap as muscles went slack, the head lolled. A lifeless thing.

Dickstein let go, the body crumpled.

He stared for a moment, coming back as though from an altered state.

And then he saw Koch.

The engineer was tied to a chair, slumped over, pale as death but conscious. There was blood on his clothes. Dickstein drew his knife, cut the ropes that bound Koch, and saw the man's hands. He wanted to be sick.

"I'll live," Koch muttered . . . "I think . . ." But he did not get up from the chair.

Dickstein picked up Hassan's machine gun, checked the magazine. It was almost full. He moved out onto the bridge and located the foghorn.

"Koch," he said, "can you get out of that chair?"

Koch did, swaying unsteadily until Dickstein stepped across and supported him, leading him through to the bridge. "See this button? I want you to count, slowly, to ten, then . . . lean on it."

Koch shook his head to clear it. "I'll handle it . . ." Neither smiled at the unintended irony.

"Start. Now."

"One," Koch said. "two . . ."

Dickstein went down the companionway, came out on the second deck, the one he had cleared himself. It was still empty. He went on down, and stopped just before the ladder emerged into the mess, where he figured all the remaining Fedayeen must be . . . lined against the walls, shooting out through portholes and doorways; one or two perhaps watching the companionway. There was no safe, calculated way to take such a strong defensive position.

Come on, *Koch* . . .

Dickstein had intended to spend at most a second or two hiding in the companionway. At any moment one of the Arabs might look up it to check . . . If Koch had collapsed he'd have to go back up there and—

The foghorn sounded.

Dickstein moved, was firing before he landed. There were two men close to the foot of the ladder. He shot them first. The firing from outside went into a crescendo. Dickstein turned in a rapid half circle, dropped to one knee to make a smaller target, and sprayed the Fedayeen along the walls. Suddenly there was another gun as Ish came up from below; then Feinberg was at one door, shooting; and Dovrat, wounded, came in through another door. And then, as if by signal, they all stopped shooting. The silence was like thunder.

Book Press
Galley 0258 Take 8002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 ●per 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3283, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

They were alone with the corpses of the enemy. All dead.

Dickstein, still kneeling, bowed his head in exhaustion. After a moment he stood up and looked at his men. "Where are the others?" he said.

Feinberg gave him a peculiar look. "There's someone on the foredeck, Sapir, I think."

Dickstein was afraid to ask the next question. He didn't have to.

"That's it," Feinberg said. "All the others, dead."

Dickstein half slumped against a bulkhead. "What a price," he said, himself feeling more dead than alive.

▼

Through the smashed porthole the rays of first daylight made their own announcement.

Seventeen

A YEAR EARLIER THE BOAC JET in which Suza Ashford was then serving dinner had abruptly begun to lose height for no apparent reason over the Atlantic Ocean. The pilot had switched on the seat-belt lights. Suza had walked up and down the aisle, intoning "Just a little turbulence," and helping people fasten their seat belts, all the time thinking, We're going to die, we're all going to die.

She felt something like that now.

There had been a short message from Tyrin: *Israelis attacking*—then silence. At this moment Nathaniel was being shot at. He might be wounded, he might have been captured, he might be dead . . . all the while Suza seethed inside she had to show the radio operator the BOAC Big Smile and say, "It's really quite a setup you've got here . . ."

The *Karla*'s radio operator was a big gray-haired man from Odessa. His name was Aleksandr, and he spoke passable English. "It cost one hundred thousand dollar," he said proudly. "You know anything about radio?"

"A little . . . I used to be an air hostess. I've seen the air crew using their radios. I guess I know the basics."

"Well, this is four radios," Aleksandr explained, pleased by the company. "One picks up the *Stromberg* beacon, One listens to Tyrin on *Coparelli*. One listens to *Coparelli*'s regular wavelength. And this one wanders. Look."

He showed her a dial whose pointer moved around slowly. "It seeks a transmitter, stops when it finds one." Aleksandr said.

"That's remarkable . . . did you invent that?"

"I am an operator, not inventor."

"And you can broadcast on any of the sets, just by switching to TRANSMIT?"

"Yes, Morse code or speech. But of course, on this operation nobody uses speech."

"Did you have to go through long training to become a radio operator?"

"Not long. Learning Morse is easy. But to be a ship's radioman you must know how to repair the set." He theatrically lowered his voice. "And to be a KGB operator, you must go to spy school." He laughed, and Suza laughed with him, thinking . . . Come on, Tyrin, and then her wish was granted.

Book Press
Galley 0260 Take 8002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3283, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

The message began, Aleksandr started writing and at the same time said to Suza, "Tyrin. Get Rostov, please."

Suza reluctantly left the bridge, badly wanting to know what was in the message. She hurried to the mess, expecting to find Rostov there drinking strong black coffee. The room was empty. She went down another deck, made her way to his cabin, knocked on the door.

His response, in Russian, she presumed meant come in.

She opened the door. Rostov was semidressed, shaving. "Tyrin's coming through," Suza said, and turned quickly to leave.

"Suza."

She stopped without turning.

"What would you say if I surprised you in this way."

"I'd say," she said, "piss off."

"Wait for me outside."

She closed the door, thinking now she'd done it.

When he came out she said, "I'm sorry . . ."

He gave a tight smile. "I should not have been so unprofessional. Let's go."

She followed him up to the radio room, which was immediately below the bridge in what should have been the captain's cabin. Because of the mass of extra equipment, Aleksandr had explained, it was not possible to put the radio operator adjacent to the bridge, as was customary. Suza realized that this arrangement had the additional advantage of segregating the radio from the crew when the ship carried a mixture of ordinary seamen and KGB agents.

Aleksandr had transcribed Tyrin's signal. He handed it now to Rostov, who read it in English. "Israelis have taken *Coparelli*. *Stromberg* alongside. Dickstein alive."

Suza sat, actually slumped, into a chair.

No one noticed. Rostov was already composing his reply to Tyrin: "We will hit at six A.M. tomorrow."

Out went the tide of relief . . . What in god's name did she do now? . . .

▼

Dickstein stood in silence, wearing a borrowed seaman's cap, as the captain of the *Stromberg* read the words of the service for the dead, raising his voice against the noise of wind, rain and sea. One by one the canvas-wrapped bodies were tipped over the rail into the black water: Abbas, Sharrett, Porush, Gibli, Bader, Remez, Jabotinsky. Seven of the twelve had died. Uranium was the most costly metal in the world in seven more ways than one.

There had been another funeral earlier. Four of the Arabs, it turned out, had been left alive—three wounded, one who'd lost his nerve and hidden—and after they'd been disarmed Dickstein had allowed them to bury their dead. Theirs had been a bigger funeral—they had deposited twenty-five bodies into the sea. They had hurried through their ceremony under the watchful eyes—and guns—of three surviving Israelis, who understood the courtesy but did not like it.

Meanwhile, the *Stromberg*'s captain had brought aboard all his ship's papers. The team of fitters and joiners, which had come along in case it was necessary to alter the *Coparelli* to match the *Stromberg*, was set to work repairing the battle damage. Dickstein told them to concentrate on what was visible from the deck . . . the rest would have to wait until they reached port. They set about filling holes, repairing furniture, replacing panes of glass and metal fittings with spares cannibalized from the doomed *Stromberg*. A painter went down a ladder to remove the

Book Press
Galley 0261 Take 8002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3283, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

name *Coparelli* from the hull and replace it with the stenciled letters S-T-R-O-M-B-E-R-G. When he had finished he set about painting over the repaired bulkheads and woodwork on deck. All the *Coparelli*'s lifeboats, damaged beyond repair, were chopped up and thrown over the side, and the *Stromberg*'s boats were brought over to replace them. The new oil pump, which the *Stromberg* had carried on Koch's instructions, was installed in the *Coparelli*'s engine. Work had stopped for the burial. Now, as soon as the captain had uttered the final words, it began again. Toward the end of the afternoon the engine rumbled to life. Dickstein stood on the bridge with the captain while the anchor was raised. The crew of the *Stromberg* quickly found their way around the new ship, which, of course, as a sister ship was identical to their old one. The captain set a course and ordered full speed ahead.

It was almost over, Dickstein thought. The *Coparelli* had disappeared, for all intents and purposes the ship in which he now sailed was the *Stromberg*, and the *Stromberg* was legally owned by Savile Shipping. Israel had her uranium, and nobody would ever know how she had obtained it. Everyone in the chain of operation was now taken care of—except Pedler, still the legal owner of the yellowcake. He was the one man who could ruin the whole scheme if he should become curious, or hostile. Papagopolous would be handling him right now . . . Dickstein silently wished him luck.

"We're clear," the captain was saying.

The explosives expert in the chartroom pulled a lever on his radio detonator as all had watched the empty *Stromberg*, now more than a mile away.

A loud, dull thud, like thunder, and the *Stromberg* seemed to sag in the middle. Her fuel tanks caught fire and the stormy evening was lit by a gout of flame reaching for the sky. The *Stromberg* began to sink, slowly at first and then faster. Her stern went under; seconds later her bows, her funnel . poked up above the water for a moment like the raised arm of a drowning man, and then she was gone.

Dickstein turned away.

He heard a noise. The captain heard it too. They went to the side of the bridge and looked out, and then they understood.

Down on the deck, men were cheering. They too understood.

▼

Franz Albrecht Pedler sat in his office on the outskirts of Wiesbaden and scratched his snowy-white head. The telegram from Angeluzzi e Bianco in Genoa, translated from the Italian by Pedler's multilingual secretary, was perfectly plain and at the same time totally incomprehensible. It said: PLEASE ADVISE SOONEST OF NEW EXPECTED DELIVERY DATE OF YELLOWCAKE.

As far as Pedler knew there was nothing wrong with the old expected delivery date, which was a couple of days away. Clearly Angeluzzi e Bianco knew something he did not. He had already wired the shippers: IS YELLOWCAKE DELAYED? He felt a little annoyed with them. Surely they should have informed him as well as the receiving company if there was a delay. But maybe the Italians had their wires crossed. Pedler had formed the opinion during the war that you could never trust Italians to do what they were told. He had thought they might be different nowadays, but perhaps they were the same.

Book Press
Galley 0262 Take 8002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3283, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

He stood at his window, watching the evening gather over his little cluster of factory buildings. He could almost wish he had not bought the uranium. The deal with the Israeli army, all signed, sealed and delivered, would keep his company in profit for the rest of his life, and he no longer needed to speculate.

His secretary came in with the reply from the shippers, already translated: COPARELLI SOLD TO SAVILE SHIPPING OF ZURICH WHO NOW HAVE RESPONSIBILITY FOR YOUR CARGO. WE ASSURE YOU OF COMPLETE RELIABILITY OF PURCHASERS. There followed the phone number of Savile Shipping and the words SPEAK TO PAPAGOPOLOUS.

Pedler gave the telegram back to the secretary. "Would you call that number in Zurich and get this Papagopolous on the line please?"

She came back a few minutes later. "Papagopolous will call you back."

Pedler looked at his watch. "I suppose I'd better wait for his call. I might as well get to the bottom of this now that I've started."

Papagopolous came through ten minutes later. Pedler said to him, "I'm told you are now responsible for my cargo on board the *Coparelli*. I've had a cable from the Italians asking for a new delivery date—is there some delay?"

"Yes, there is," Papagopolous said. "You should have been informed—I'm terribly sorry." The man spoke excellent German but it was still clear he was not a German. It was also clear he was not really terribly sorry. He went on, "The *Coparelli*'s oil pump broke down at sea and she is becalmed. We're making arrangements to have your cargo delivered as early as possible."

"Well, what am I to say to Angeluzzi e Bianco?"

"I have told them that I will let them know the new date just as soon as I know it myself," Papagopolous said. "Please leave it to me. I will keep you both informed."

"Very well. Goodbye."

Odd, Pedler thought as he hung up the phone. Looking out of the window, he saw that all the workers had left. The staff car parking lot was empty except for his Mercedes and his secretary's Volkswagen. What the hell, time to go home. He put on his coat. The uranium was insured. If it was lost he would get his money back. He turned out the office lights and helped his secretary on with her coat, then he got into his car and drove home to his wife.

▼

Suza Ashford did not close her eyes all during the night.

Once again, Nat Dickstein's life was in danger. And once again she was the only one who could warn him. Except this time she could not dupe others into helping her.

She had to do it alone.

It was simple, and impossible. She had to go to the *Karla*'s radio room, get rid of Aleksandr, and call the *Coparelli*.

Impossible. The ship is full of KGB. Aleksandr is a man. It's impossible. I can't do it. I've got to.

At four A.M. she put on jeans, a sweater, boots and an oilskin. The full bottle of vodka she had taken from the mess—"to help me sleep"—went in the inside pocket of the oilskin.

She had to know the *Karla*'s position.

She went up to the bridge. The first officer smiled at her. "Can't sleep?" he said in English.

Book Press
Galley 0263 Take 8002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3283, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

"The suspense is too much," she told him. The BOAC Big Smile . . . is your seat belt fastened, sir? . . . just a little turbulence, nothing to worry about . . . She asked the first officer, "Where are we?"

He showed her their position on the map, and the estimated position of the *Coparelli*.

"What's that in . . . numbers?" she said.

He told her the coordinates, the course, and the speed of the *Karla*. She repeated the numbers once aloud and twice more in her head, trying to burn them into her brain. "It's fascinating," she said brightly, "everyone on a ship has a special skill . . . Will we reach the *Coparelli* on time, do you think . . . ?"

"Oh, yes," he said. "Then—boom . . ."

She looked outside. Black—no stars, no ships' lights in sight. The weather was getting worse.

"You're shivering," the first officer said. "Are you cold?"

"Yes," she said, though it was not the weather making her shiver. "When does Colonel Rostov get up?"

"He's to be called at five."

"I think I'll try to get another hour's sleep."

She went down to the radio room. Aleksandr was there. "Couldn't you sleep, either?" she asked him.

"No. I've sent my number two to bed."

She looked over the radio equipment. "Aren't you listening to the *Stromberg* anymore?"

"The signal stopped. Either they found the beacon, or they sank the ship. We think they sank her."

Suza sat down and took out the bottle of vodka. She unscrewed the cap. "Have a drink." She handed him the bottle.

"Are you cold?"

"A little."

"Your hand is shaking." He took the bottle and put it to his lips, taking a long swallow. "Ah, thank you." He handed it back to her.

Suza drank a mouthful for courage. It was Russian vodka. Stolichnaya, and it burned her throat, but it had the desired effect. She screwed down the cap and waited for Aleksandr to turn his back on her.

"Tell me about life in England," he said conversationally. "Is it true it's full of homosexuals and poor people working to support a corrupt monarchy?"

"Not really," she said . . . Turn around, damn it, turn *around* . . . I can't do this facing you . . . "But there is *something* in what you say . . ."

"Seriously, are there not very different laws for rich and poor?"

"Well, there's a saying—'The law forbids rich and poor alike to steal bread and sleep under bridges.' "

Aleksandr nodded and laughed. "In the Soviet Union people are equal, except some are more equal than others . . . Will you live in Russia now?"

"I don't know." Suza opened the bottle and passed it to him again.

He took a long swallow and gave it back. "In Russia you won't have such clothes."

Time was passing, she had to do it now. She stood up to take the bottle. Her oilskin was open down the front. Standing before him, she tilted her head back to drink from the bottle. She had neither time nor the luxury to be ashamed of her performance. She allowed him a good look, then shifted her grip on the bottle and brought it down as hard as she could on the top of his head.

Book Press
Galley 0264 Take 8002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3283, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

His eyes closed and he slumped in the chair. Suza got hold of his feet and pulled. As he came off the chair his head hit the deck, making Suza wince, until she thought that what she'd done was bound to be more damaging.

She dragged him to a cupboard. From her jeans pocket she took a long piece of baling twine she had picked up in the stern. She tied Aleksandr's feet, then turned him over and bound his hands behind his back.

She had to get him into the cupboard. She put his feet in, then straddled his unconscious body and tried to lift him. He was a heavy man. She got him half upright, but when she tried to shift him into the cupboard he slipped from her grasp. She got behind him to try again. She grasped him beneath the armpits and lifted. This way was better, she could lean his weight against her chest while she shifted her grip. She got him half upright again, then wrapped her arms around his chest and inched sideways. She had to go into the cupboard with him, let him go, then wriggle out from underneath him.

He was in a sitting position now, his feet against one side of the cupboard, his knees bent, his back against the opposite side. She checked his bonds—still tight. She looked about for something to stuff in his mouth, could find nothing. She could not leave the room to search for something . . . he might come 'round in the meantime. The only thing that she could think of was her panties. It seemed to take her forever to do it. She had to pull off her borrowed sea-boots, take off her jeans, pull her panties off, put her jeans on, get into her boots, then crumple the nylon cloth into a ball and stuff it between his slack jaws.

She could not close the cupboard door . . . it was Aleksandr's elbow in the way. His bound hands rested on the floor of the cupboard, and because of his slumped position his arms were bent outward. No matter how she pushed and shoved at the door that elbow stopped it from closing. Finally she had to get back into the cupboard with him and turn him slightly sideways so that he leaned into the corner. Now, finally, his elbow was out of the way.

She looked at him a moment longer. How long would he stay unconscious? If he were only unconscious . . . ?

She looked at her wristwatch—ten minutes to five. The *Coparelli* would soon appear on the *Karla*'s radar screen, and Rostov would be here, and she would have lost her chance.

She sat down at the radio desk, switched the lever to TRANSMIT, selected the set that was already tuned to the *Coparelli*'s wavelength and leaned over the microphone.

"Calling *Coparelli,* come in please."

She waited.

Nothing.

"Calling *Coparelli,* come in please."

Nothing.

"Damn it to hell, Dickstein, *speak* to me. *Nathaniel* . . ."

▼

Dickstein stood in the amidships hold of the *Coparelli,* staring at the drums of sandy metallic ore that had cost so much. They hardly looked anything special—just large black oil drums with the word PLUMBAT stenciled on their sides.

He felt no elation. Unlike the man during the Jews' struggle to evict the British from their homeland he did not feel a little holiday in his heart each time one of his enemy died. He still found it difficult to hate collectively.

Galley 0265 Take 8002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3283, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

Mostly he could only mourn for his own dead. He went over the battle again, as he had been doing throughout a sleepless night . . . If he had told Abbas to open fire as soon as he got aboard it might have distracted the Fedayeen at least long enough for Gibli to get over the rail without being shot . . . If he had gone with three men to take out the bridge with grenades at the very start of the fight the mess might have been taken earlier and lives would have been saved . . . If . . . but there were a hundred ifs and maybes. Surely he would have done some things differently if he had been able to see into the future, or if he were just a wiser man. But he had not, and he was not . . .

Well, Israel would now have its previous bombs to ensure its survival.

And even that thought gave him no joy. A year ago, yes, but a year ago he had not met, or lost, Suza Ashford—

He looked up, his thoughts interrupted by the sound of people running about on deck. He climbed the ladder out of the hold. A rating peered at him. "Mr. Dickstein?"

"Yes. What do you want?"

"We've been searching the ship for you, sir . . . It's the radio, someone is calling the *Coparelli*. We haven't answered, sir, because we're not supposed to be the *Coparelli*, are we? But she says—"

"She?"

"Yes, sir. She's coming over clear—speech, not Morse code. She sounds close. And she's upset. 'Speak to me, Nathaniel,' she says, stuff like that, sir."

Dickstein grabbed the rating by his peajacket. "Nathaniel?" Did she really say Nathaniel?"

"Yes, sir, I'm sorry, if—"

Dickstein was already heading for the bridge at a run.

▼

Dickstein's voice came over the radio: "Who is calling *Coparelli?*"

She found her voice. "Oh, god, it's really you—"

"Suza? Is it you?"

"Yes, *yes.*"

"Where are you?"

She forced herself to be coherent. "With a David Rostov on a Russian ship called the *Karla* . . ." She gave him the position, course and speed just as the first officer had told them to her. "That was at four-ten this morning. This ship is going to ram yours at six A.M.—"

"Ram? Oh, yes . . . I see . . ."

"Nat, I don't have long at this radio—"

"Suza . . . listen to me . . . can you create a diversion of some kind at precisely five-thirty?"

"Diversion?"

"Start a fire, shout 'man overboard,' anything to keep them all busy for a few minutes."

"I'll try—"

"I know you'll do better than that . . . are they all KGB, so far as you can tell?"

"Yes."

"Okay, now—"

The door of the radio room opened—Suza flipped the switch to TRANSMIT and Dickstein's voice was silenced as Rostov walked in.

"Where's Aleksandr?"

BOAC smile. "He went for coffee. Seems I'm minding the shop."

"The damn fool . . ." His curses switched into Russian as he stormed out.

Suza moved the lever to RECEIVE.

Nat said, "I heard that. Make yourself scarce until five-thirty—"

"*Wait,* what are you going to do?"

"Do?" he said. "I'm coming to get you."

As she switched off, Morse began to come through on another set. Tyrin. He would have heard every word of her conversation, and now he would be trying to warn Rostov. God, she had *forgotten* to tell Nat about Tyrin.

She could try to contact Nat again, but it would be very risky, and Tyrin would surely get his message through to Rostov in the time it took Nat's men to search the *Coparelli,* locate Tyrin and destroy his equipment. And when Tyrin's message got to Rostov, he would know Nat was coming, he would be prepared.

She had to block that message.

She also had to get away.

She decided to wreck the radio.

How? All the wiring must be behind the panels. She would have to take a panel off. She needed a screwdriver. Quickly, before Rostov gives up looking for Aleksandr . . . She found Aleksandr's tools in a corner and picked out a small screwdriver. She undid the screws on two corners of the panel. Impatient, she pocketed the screwdriver and forced the panel out with her hands. Inside was a mass of wires like psychedelic spaghetti. She grapped a fistful and pulled. Nothing happened: she'd pulled too many at once. She selected one, and tugged: it came out. Furiously she pulled wires until fifteen or twenty were hanging loose. Still the Morse code chattered. She poured the remains of the vodka into the innards of the radio. The Morse stopped, and every light on the panel went out.

There was a thump from inside the cupboard. Aleksandr, coming round . . . Well, they would know everything as soon as they saw the radio now anyway.

She went out, closing the door behind her.

She went down the ladder and out onto the deck, trying to figure out where she could hide and what kind of diversion she could create. No point now in shouting "man overboard"—they certainly would not believe her after what she had done to their radio and their radio operator.

What was Rostov likely to do now? He would look for Aleksandr in the galley, the mess, and his cabin. Not finding him he would return to the radio room . . . and at that point would start a shipwide search for her.

He was a methodical man. No doubt he would start at the prow and work backward along the main deck, then send one party to search the upperworks and another to sweep below, deck by deck, starting at the top and working down.

What was the lowest part of the ship? The engine room. It would have to be her hiding place. She went inside and found her way to a downward companionway. She had her foot on the top rung of the ladder when she saw Rostov.

And he saw her.

Book Press
Galley 0267 Take 8002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3283, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

She had no idea where her next words came from. "Aleksandr's come back to the radio room, I'll be back in a moment."

Rostov nodded grimly, went off in the direction of the radio room.

She headed straight down through two decks and emerged into the engine room. The second engineer was on duty at night. He stared at her as she came in and approached him.

"This is the only warm place on the ship," she said cheerfully. "Mind if I keep you company?"

He looked mystified, and said slowly, "I cannot . . . speak English . . . please—"

"You don't speak English?"

He shook his head.

"I'm cold," she said, and mimed a shiver. She held her hands out toward the hot, throbbing engine. "Okay?"

A broad smile. He was more than happy to have this beautiful girl for company in the stinking engine room. "Okay," he said, nodding vigorously.

He continued to stare at her, with a pleased look on his face, until it occurred to him that he should perhaps show some hospitality. He looked about, pulled a pack of cigarettes from his pocket and offered her one.

"I don't usually, but I think I will," she said, and took a cigarette. It had a small cardboard tube for a filter. The engineer lit it for her as she looked up at the hatch, half expecting to see Rostov. She looked at her watch. Five-twenty-five already! No more time . . . diversion, start a diversion. Shout "man overboard," light a fire—

Light a fire.

With what?

Petrol, there must be petrol, or diesel fuel, or something like it right here in the engine room.

She looked over the engine. Where did the petrol come in? The thing was a mass of tubes and pipes. She wished she'd learned more about the engine of her car, though she was no Lady Stupid about it . . . Were boat engines the same? No, sometimes they used truck fuel. Which kind was this? It was supposed to be a fast ship, so perhaps it used petrol . . . she vaguely remembered that petrol engines were more expensive to run but faster. If it was a petrol engine it should at least be similar to the engine of her car. Were there cables leading to spark plugs? She'd changed a spark plug, once. . . .

She stared at it . . . yes, it was like her car . . . there were six plugs, with leads from them to a round cap like a distributor. Somewhere there had to be a carburetor. The petrol, she knew, went through the carburetor. It was a small thing that sometimes got blocked—

The voice-piped barked in Russian, the engineer walked toward it to answer. His back was to Suza.

She had to do it now.

There was something about the size of a coffee tin with a lid held on by a central nut. It could be the carburetor. She stretched herself across the engine and tried to undo the nut with her fingers. It would not budge. A heavy plastic pipe led into it. She grabbed it and tugged. She could not pull it out. She remembered she had put Aleksandr's screwdriver into her oilskin pocket. She took it out and jabbed at the pipe with the sharp end. The plastic was thick and tough. She stabbed the screwdriver into it . . . it made a small cut in the surface of the pipe. She stuck the point of the screwdriver into the cut and worked it.

Book Press
Galley 0268 Take 8002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3283, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

The engineer had now reached the voice pipe and spoke into it—in Russian, of course.

Suza felt the screwdriver break through the plastic. She tugged it out. A spray of clear liquid jetted out of the little hole, and the air was filled with the unmistakable smell of petrol. She dropped the screwdriver and moved quickly, quietly, toward the ladder.

She heard the engineer answer yes in Russian and nod his head to a question from the voice pipe. An order followed. The voice was angry. As she reached the foot of the ladder she looked back. The welcome map had disappeared from the engineer's face. She went up the ladder as he came on the run across the engine room deck after her.

At the top of the ladder she turned around to see a pool of petrol spreading over the deck, and the engineer stepping on the bottom run of the ladder. In her hand she still held the cigarette he'd given her. She threw it toward the engine, aiming at the place where the petrol was squirting out of the pipe.

She did not wait to see it land, but as her head and shoulders emerged onto the next deck she heard a loud *whooosh,* there was a bright red light from below, and a wave of scorching heat. Suza gasped as her trousers caught fire and the skin of her legs burned. She jumped the last few inches of the ladder and rolled, beating at her trousers, then struggling out of her oilskin, which she managed to wrap around her legs. The fire was out, but not pain.

She had to get away from the fire, she had to be somewhere where Nat could find her . . . She forced herself to stand up. Her legs felt as if they still burning. She looked down to see bits like burned paper falling off, and she wondered if they were pieces of trouser, or of the skin from her leg.

She took a step. At least she could walk. She made her way along the gangway. The fire alarm began to sound all over the ship. She reached the end of the gangway, and leaned on the ladder.

Up, go up.

She raised one foot, placed it on the bottom rung, and began the longest climb of her life.

Eighteen

FOR THE SECOND TIME IN TWENTY-FOUR HOURS Dickstein was crossing huge seas in a small boat to board a ship held by the enemy. He was dressed as before—life jacket, oilskin, and sea-boots; and armed as before with submachine gun, pistol and grenades. But this time he was alone.

There had been an argument aboard the *Coparelli* about what to do after Suza's radio message. Her dialogue with Dickstein had been listened-in to by the captain, Feinberg, and Ish. They had seen the excitement in Nat's face, and they had felt entitled to argue that his judgment was now effected by personal involvement.

"It's a trap," was Feinberg's view. "They can't catch us, so they want us to turn and fight. Damned convenient . . ."

"I've been up against Rostov for a long time," Dickstein said. "This is how his mind works . . . he waits for you to make a break, then pounces. This ramming has his name written all over it—"

Book Press
Galley 0269 Take 8002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3283, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

"This isn't a *game,* Dickstein."

"Listen, Nat," Ish said more reasonably, "let's just carry on and be ready to fight if and when they catch us. What have we got to gain by sending a boarding party?"

"I'm not suggesting a boarding party. *I'm* going—"

"Don't be a damn fool," Ish said. "If you go, so do we—you can't take a ship alone."

"Look," Dickstein said, trying to pacify them, "if I make it, the *Karla* will never catch this ship. If I don't, the rest of you can still fight when the *Karla* gets to you. And if the *Karla* really can't catch you, and it's a trap, then at least I'm the only one who falls into it . . . So I'm a damn fool, so kill me . . ."

"I don't think that will be necessary," Feinberg said.

"You seem to be set on handling that yourself," Ish said, finishing his thought.

Dickstein smiled. "I'm glad you see the light. Never, they say, argue with a crazy man. Or a senior officer, which is what I happen to be around here."

So he had dressed and armed himself, and the captain had shown him how to operate the launch's radio and how to maintain an interception course with the *Karla,* and they had lowered the launch, and he had climbed down into it and pulled away.

It was, of course, impossible for him to overcome a whole boatload of KGB all on his own. Well, he was not planning that. He'd not fight with any of them if he could help it. He would try to get aboard, hide himself until Suza's diversion began . . . Suza . . . and then look for her. And when he'd found her, he would get off the *Karla* with her and . . . he had a small magnetic mine with him that he'd fix to the *Karla*'s side before boarding. Whether he managed to escape or not, whether the whole thing was a trap or genuine, the *Karla* would have a big enough hole blown in her side to keep her from catching the *Coparelli* . . .

Except he was sure it was not a trap, he knew she was there, he knew she'd been forced to help them, and now had risked her life to save his.

He knew, once more, that she loved him.

And *that* damn near scared him to death.

Because suddenly he wanted so badly to live that he was afraid to die. The blood-lust was gone . . . he was no longer interested in killing his enemies, defeating Rostov, frustrating the schemes of the Fedayeen or outwitting Egyptian Intelligence. He wanted Suza, to take her home, to spend the rest of his life with her. The hollow man could be whole again, and yes, the prospect of dying scared him to death.

He tried to concentrate on steering his boat. Finding the *Karla* at night was not easy. He could keep a steady course but he had to estimate and make allowance for how much the wind and the waves were carrying him sideways. After fifteen minutes he knew he should have reached her. She was nowhere to be seen. He began to zigzag in a search pattern, with no idea how far off course he was.

He was contemplating radioing the *Coparelli* for a new fix when, suddenly, the *Karla* appeared out of the night alongside him. She was moving fast, faster than his launch could go, and he had to reach the ladder at her bows before she was past and at the same time avoid a collision. He gunned the launch forward, swerved away as the *Karla* rolled toward him, then turned back, homing in, while she rolled the other way.

Book Press
Galley 0270 Take 8002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3283, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

He had ready the rope tied around his waist. The ladder came within reach. He flipped the engine of his launch into idle, stepped on the gunwale, and jumped. The *Karla* began to pitch forward as he landed on the ladder. He clung on while her prow went down into the waves. The sea came up to his waist, up to his shoulders. He took a deep breath as his head went under. He seemed to be under water forever. The Karla just kept on going down. When he felt his lungs would burst she hesitated, and at last began to come up—which seemed to take even longer . . . At last he broke surface and gulped lungfuls of air. He went up the ladder a few steps, untied the rope around his waist and made it fast to the ladder, securing the boat to the *Karla* for his escape. The magnetic mine was hanging from a rope across his shoulders. He took it off and slapped it onto the *Karla*'s hull.

He shed his oilskin and climbed up the ladder.

The sound of the launch engine was inaudible in the noise of the wind, the sea, and the *Karla*'s own engines, but something must have attracted the attention of the man who looked over the rail just as Dickstein came up level with the deck. For a moment the man stared at Dickstein, which gave Dickstein the advantage he needed, gave him the moment, as he climbed over the rail to grab the man's arm and pull him overboard into the sea.

Dickstein crouched down on the deck. The *Karla* was a small ship, much smaller than the *Coparelli*. There was only one superstructure, located amidships, two decks high. There was only one superstructure, located amidships, two decks high. There were no cranes. The foredeck had a big hatch over the for'ard hold, but there was no aft hold . . . the crew accommodations and the engine room must occupy, Dickstein thought, all the below-surface space aft.

He looked at his watch. Five-twenty-five. Suza's diversion *should* begin any moment . . .

He began to walk along the deck. There was some light from the ship's lamps, but one of the crew would have to look twice at him before being sure he was not one of them. He took his knife out of the sheath at his belt . . . he did not want to use his gun, the noise would lead them to him. As he drew level with the superstructure a door opened, throwing a wedge of yellow light onto the rain-spattered deck. He dodged around the corner, flattening himself against the for'ard bulkhead and heard two voices speaking Russian. The door slammed, and the voices receded as the men walked aft in the rain.

In the lee of the superstructure he crossed to the port side and continued toward the stern. He stopped at the corner and, looking cautiously around it, saw the two men cross the afterdeck and speak to a third man in the stern. He was tempted to take all three out with a burst from his submachine gun but warned himself to be patient . . . it was too early, Suza's diversion had not yet started and he had no idea where she was . . .

The two men came back along the starboard deck and went inside. Dickstein walked up to the remaining man in the stern, who seemed to be on guard. The man spoke to him in Russian. Dickstein grunted something unintelligible, the man replied with a question. Dickstein, close enough now, moved in and cut the man's throat.

He threw the body overboard and retraced his steps. He looked at his watch. The luminous hands showed five-thirty. Time to go inside.

Book Press
Galley 0271 Take 8002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3283, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

He opened a door, saw an empty gangway and a companionway leading up, presumably to the bridge. He climbed the ladder.

Loud voices came from the bridge, and as he emerged through the companionhead he saw three men—the captain, the first officer and, he guessed, the second sublieutenant. The first officer was shouting into the voice pipe. A strange noise was coming back. As Dickstein brought his gun level, the captain pulled a lever and an alarm began to sound all over the ship. Dickstein pulled the trigger, the loud reports of the gun partly smothered by the wailing klaxon of the fire alarm. All three were killed where they stood.

Dickstein hurried back down the ladder. The alarm must mean that Suza's diversion had started. Now all he had to do was stay alive until he found her . . . The companionway from the bridge met the deck at a junction of two gangways—a lateral one, which Dickstein had used, and another running the length of the superstructure. In response to the alarm doors were opening and men emerging all down both gangways. None of them seemed to be armed . . . after all, this was a fire alarm, not a call to battle stations. Dickstein decided to run a bluff, and shoot only if it failed. He proceeded briskly along the central gangway, pushing his way through the milling men, shouting, "Get out of the way" in German. They stared at him momentarily, not knowing who he was or what he was doing, except that he seemed to be in authority and there was a fire emergency. One or two even spoke to him. He busily ignored them. There was a rasping order from somewhere, and the men began to move purposefully. Dickstein reached the end of the gangway and was about to go down the ladder when the officer who had given the order came into sight and pointed at him, shouting a question.

Dickstein dropped down.

On the lower deck things were better organized. The men were running in one direction, toward the stern, and a group of three hands under the supervision of an officer was breaking out fire-fighting gear . . . And then he saw a place where the gangway widened for access to hoses, and a red mist covered his eyes.

Suza was on the floor, her back to the bulkhead. Her legs were stretched out in front of her, her trousers torn. He could see her scorched and blackened skin through the tatters. He heard Rostov's voice, shouting at her over the sound of the alarm . . . "What did you tell him?" One of the hands looked as though he was about to kick her . . . again? Dickstein jumped from the ladder onto the deck. One of the hands moved in front of him. Dickstein knocked him to the deck with an elbow blow to the face, and jumped on Rostov.

Even in his rage, he realized that he could not use the gun in this confined space while Rostov was so close to Suza. Besides, he wanted to take care of the man with his own hands . . . He grabbed Rostov's shoulder, spun him around, took brief pleasure in his surprised look before hitting him a pile-driving blow to the stomach that buckled him at the waist, made him gasp for air. Instantly, as his head came down, Dickstein brought a knee up snapping his chin up and breaking his jaw; then, continuing the motion, he put all his strength behind a kick into the throat that smashed Rostov's neck and drove him backward into the bulkhead.

Book Press
Galley 0272 Take 8002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3283, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

Rostov had barely completed his fall when Dickstein turned quickly around, went down on one knee to bring his machine gun off his shoulder, and with Suza behind him and to one side opened fire on three hands who appeared in the gangway.

He turned again, picked Suza up in a fireman's lift, trying not to touch her charred flesh. He had a moment to think now. Clearly the fire was in the stern, the direction in which all the men had been running. If he went forward now he was less likely to be seen.

He ran the length of the gangway, then carried her up the ladder. He could tell by the feel of her body on his shoulder that she was still conscious, that she was not "dead weight." He came off the top of the ladder to the main deck level, found a door and stepped out.

There was some confusion out on deck. A man ran past him, heading for the stern; another ran off in the opposite direction. Somebody was in the prow. Down in the stern a man lay on the deck with two others bending over him; presumably he'd been injured in the fire.

Dickstein hurried forward to the ladder that he'd used to board, eased his gun onto his shoulder, shifted Suza a little on the other shoulder, and stepped over the rail.

But looking about the deck as he started to go down, he knew that they had seen him. It was one thing to see a strange face on board ship, wonder who he was, and delay asking questions until later because there was a fire alarm; it was another to see someone leaving the ship with a body over his shoulder.

He was not quite halfway down the ladder when they began to shoot at him.

A bullet pinged off the hull beside his head. He looked up to see three men leaning over the rail, two of them with pistols. Holding on to the ladder with his left hand, he put his right hand to his gun, pointed up and fired. His aim was hopeless but at least the men pulled back.

And he lost his balance.

As the prow of the ship pitched up, he swayed to the left, dropped his gun into the sea and grabbed hold of the ladder with his right hand. His right foot slipped off the rung—and then Suza began to slip from his left shoulder.

"Hold onto me," he yelled at her, no longer sure whether she was conscious or not. He felt her hands clutch at his sweater, but she continued to slip away, and as she did her unbalanced weight was pulling him even more to the left.

"*No . . .*"

She slipped completely off his shoulder, and went plunging into the sea.

Dickstein turned, made out the launch, and jumped, landing with a jarring shock in the well of the boat.

He called out her name into the black sea all around him, swinging himself from one side of the boat to the other, his desperation increasing with every second as she failed to surface. And then he heard, over the noise of the wind, a scream, and turning toward the sound he saw her head just above the surface, between the side of the boat and the hull of the *Karla*.

She was out of his reach.

The launch was tied to the *Karla* by the rope, most of which was piled on the deck of the boat. Dickstein cut the rope with his knife, letting go of the end that was tied to the *Karla*'s ladder and throwing the other end toward Suza.

Book Press
Galley 0273 Take 8002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3283, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

As she reached for the rope the sea rose again and engulfed her.

Up on the deck of the *Karla* they were again shooting over the rail.

Dickstein's eyes swept the sea, hoping that with the ship and the boat pitching and rolling in different directions the chances of a hit were relatively slim. And if not, what were his options . . . ?

After seconds that seemed hours, Suza surfaced again. Dickstein threw her the rope. This time she was able to grab it and he pulled it in, bringing her closer and closer until he was leaning far out over the gunwale of the launch to take hold of her wrists.

He pulled her into the well of the launch as up above them a machine gun opened fire. Dickstein threw the launch into gear then fell on top of Suza, covering her body with his own. The launch moved away from the *Karla,* undirected, riding the waves. . . .

The shooting seemed to have stopped. Dickstein looked back. The *Karla* was nearly out of sight.

Gently he turned Suza over. Her eyes were closed. He took the wheel of the launch, looked at the compass, and set an approximate course for the *Coparelli* . . . the *Stromberg*. He turned on the boat's radio and called the *Coparelli.* Waiting for them to come in, he lifted Suza toward him and tried to cradle her in his arms.

A muffled thud came from across the water . . . like a distant explosion. By god, the magnetic mine . . .

The *Coparelli* replied. Dickstein said, "The *Karla* is on fire. Turn back and pick me up. Have the sickbay ready for a burn case . . ." He waited for their acknowledgment, then switched off and stared at Suza's expressionless face. "Don't die," he said. Damn it, *please* don't die."

And after a while she opened her eyes and looked up at him. She opened her mouth, struggling to speak. He bent his head to her. "Is it really you?" And then, "Don't worry, I'll make it . . . I'm too damn stubborn not to—"

There was the sound of a tremendous explosion. The fire had reached the fuel tanks of the *Karla.* Then the sky was lit up for several moments by a sheet of flame, the air was filled with a roaring noise, and the rain stopped. The noise and the light died, and so did the *Karla.*

"She's gone down," Dickstein said to Suza. He looked at her. Her eyes were closed, she was unconscious again. But he thought she was smiling.

Epilogue

NATHANIEL DICKSTEIN resigned from the Mossad, but his name and exploits were talked of enough to make him into something of a living legend. He married Suza and took her back to the kibbutz, where they tended grapes by day and made love half the night. In his spare time he organized a political campaign to have the laws changed so that his children could be classified Jewish; or, better still, to abolish classification.

Book Press
Galley 0274 Take 8002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3283, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

Except they did not have children for a while. They were prepared to wait . . . Suza was young, and he was in no hurry. Her burns never healed completely. Sometimes, in bed, she would say, "My legs are horrible," and he would kiss her knees and tell her, "They are beautiful, they saved my life." . . .

When the opening of the Yom Kippur War took the Israeli armed forces by surprise, Pierre Borg was blamed for the lack of advance intelligence, and was forced to resign. The truth was more complicated. The fault lay with a Russian intelligence officer called David Rostov—an elderly-looking man who was obliged to wear a neck brace every moment of his life. He had gone to Cairo and, beginning with the interrogation and death of an Israeli agent called Towfik early in 1968, he had investigated all the events of that year and concluded that Kawash was a double agent. Instead of having Kawash tried and hanged for espionage, Rostov had told the Egyptians how to feed him disinformation, which Kawash, in all innocence, duly passed on to Pierre Borg.

The result was that Nat Dickstein came out of retirement to take over Pierre Borg's job for the duration of the war. On Monday, October 8, 1973, he attended a crisis meeting of the cabinet. After three days of war the Israelis were in deep trouble. The Egyptians had crossed the Suez Canal and pushed the Israelis back into Sinai with heavy casualties. On the other front, the Golan Heights, the Syrians were pushing forward, again with heavy losses to the Israeli side. The proposal before the cabinet was to drop atom bombs on Cairo and Damascus. Not even the most hawkish ministers actually liked the idea; but the situation was desperate and the Americans were dragging their heels over the arms airlift which might save the day.

The meeting seemed actually about to come around to accepting the terrible notion of using nuclear weapons when Nat Dickstein made his only contribution to the discussion: "Of course, we could *tell* the Americans that we plan to drop these bombs—on Wednesday, say—unless they start the airlift immediately . . ."

And that is exactly what they did.

▼

I The airlift turned the tide of the war, and later a similar crisis meeting took place in Cairo. Once again, nobody was in favor of nuclear war in the Middle East; once again, the politicians gathered around the table began to persuade one another that there was no alternative; and once again, the proposal was stopped by an unexpected contribution.

This time, at first inconspicuously, it was the military that stepped in. Knowing of the proposal that would be before the assembled presidents, they had run checks on their nuclear strike force in readiness for a positive decision. And they had found that all the plutonium in the bombs had been taken out and replaced with iron filings. It was assumed that the Russiand had done this, as they had mysteriously rendered unworkable the nuclear reactor in Qattara before being expelled from Egypt in 1972.

That night, one of the presidents talked to his wife for five minutes before falling asleep in his chair. "It's all over," he told her. "Israel has won—permanently. They have the bomb, and we do not, and that single fact will determine the course of history in our region for the rest of the century."

Galley 0275 Take 8002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3283, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

"What about the Palestine refugees?" his wife said.

The president shrugged and began to light his last pipe of the day. "I remember reading a story in the London *Times* . . . this must be five years ago, I suppose. It said that the Free Wales Army had put a bomb in the police station in Cardiff."

"Wales?" said his wife. "Where is Wales?"

"It is a part of England, more or less."

"I remember," she said. "They have coal mines and choirs."

"That's right. Have you any idea how long ago the English conquered the Welsh?"

"None at all."

"Nor have I, but it must be more than a thousand years ago, because the Norman French conquered the English nine hundred years ago. You see? A thousand years, but they will always be the losers, never mind what international agreements that may ever be signed."

His wife looked up at him. All these years they had been together, and still he was capable of surprising her. She had thought she would never hear words like this from him.

"I will tell you something else," he went on. "There will have to be peace. We cannot possibly win now, so we will have to make peace. Not this moment . . . perhaps not for five or ten years. But the time will come, and then I will have to go to Jerusalem and say, "No more war." I may even get some credit for it, when the dust settles. It is not how I planned to go down in history, but it's not such a bad way, for all that. 'The man who brought peace to the Middle East.' What would you say to that?"

His wife got up from her chair and came across to hold his hands. There were tears in her eyes. "I would give thanks to God," she said.

The president did not smile.

▼

Franz Albrecht Pedler died in 1974. He died content. His life had seen some ups and downs—he had, after all, lived through the most ignominious period in the history of his nation—but he had survived and ended his days happily.

He had guess what had happened to the uranium. One day early in 1969 his company had received a check for two million dollars, signed by A. Papagopolous, with a statement from Savile Shipping which read: "To lost cargo." The next day a representative of the Israeli Army had called, bringing the payment for the first shipment of cleaning materials. As he left, the army man had said, "On the matter of your lost cargo, we would be happy if you were not to pursue any further inquiries."

Pedler began to understand then. "But what if Euratom asks me questions?"

s "Tell them the truth," the man said. "The cargo was lost, and when you tried to discover what had happened to it, you found that Savile Shipping had gone out of business."

"Have they?"

"They have."

And that was what Pedler told Euratom. Why not? They sent an investigator to see him, and he repeated his story, which was completely true, if not truly complete. He said to the investigator, "I suppose there will be publicity about all this soon."

B "I doubt it," the investigator told him. "It reflects badly on us. I don't suppose we'll broadcast the story unless we get more information."

Book Press
Galley 0276 Take 8002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3283, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606

They did not get more information, of course; at least, not in Pedler's lifetime.

▼

On Yom Kippur in 1974 Suza Dickstein went into labor.

In accordance with the custom of this particular kibbutz, the baby was delivered by its father, with a midwife standing by to give advice and encouragement.

The baby was small, like both parents. As soon as its head emerged it opened its mouth and cried. Dickstein's sight became watery and blurred. He held the baby's head, checked that the cord was not around its neck, and said, "Almost there, Suza."

Suza gave one more heave, and the baby's shoulders were born, and after that it emerged easily. Dickstein tied the cord in two places and cut it, then—again in accordance with the local custom—he put the baby in the mother's arms.

"Is it all right?" she said.

"Perfect," said the midwife.

"What is it?"

Dickstein said, "Oh, god, I didn't even look . . . it's a boy."

A little later Suza said, "What shall we call him? Nathaniel?"

"I'd like to call him Towfik," Dickstein said.

"Towfik? Isn't that an Arab name?"

"Yes."

"Why? Why Towfik?"

"Well," he said, "that's quite a long story."

Postscript

FROM THE LONDON *Daily Telegraph* of May 7, 1977:

ISRAEL SUSPECTED OF HIJACKING SHIP WITH URANIUM

by Henry Miller in New York

Israel is believed to have been behind the disappearance from the high seas nine years ago of a uranium shipment large enough to build 30 nuclear weapons, it was disclosed yesterday.

Officials say that the incident was "a real James Bond affair" and that although intelligence agencies in four countries investigated the mystery, it was never determined what had actually happened to the 200 tons of uranium ore that vanished . . .

—Quoted by permission of the *Daily Telegraph*, Ltd.

▼

▼

▼

▼

▼

▼

▼

Book Press
Galley 0277 Take 8002 Version code 02-09
Job 00005928 Oper 00 Key Bd. 80 Date 07/05/79
C.Scan., DN 119, SN 3283, Book Press: Triple, 11/14x26 T.R., 606