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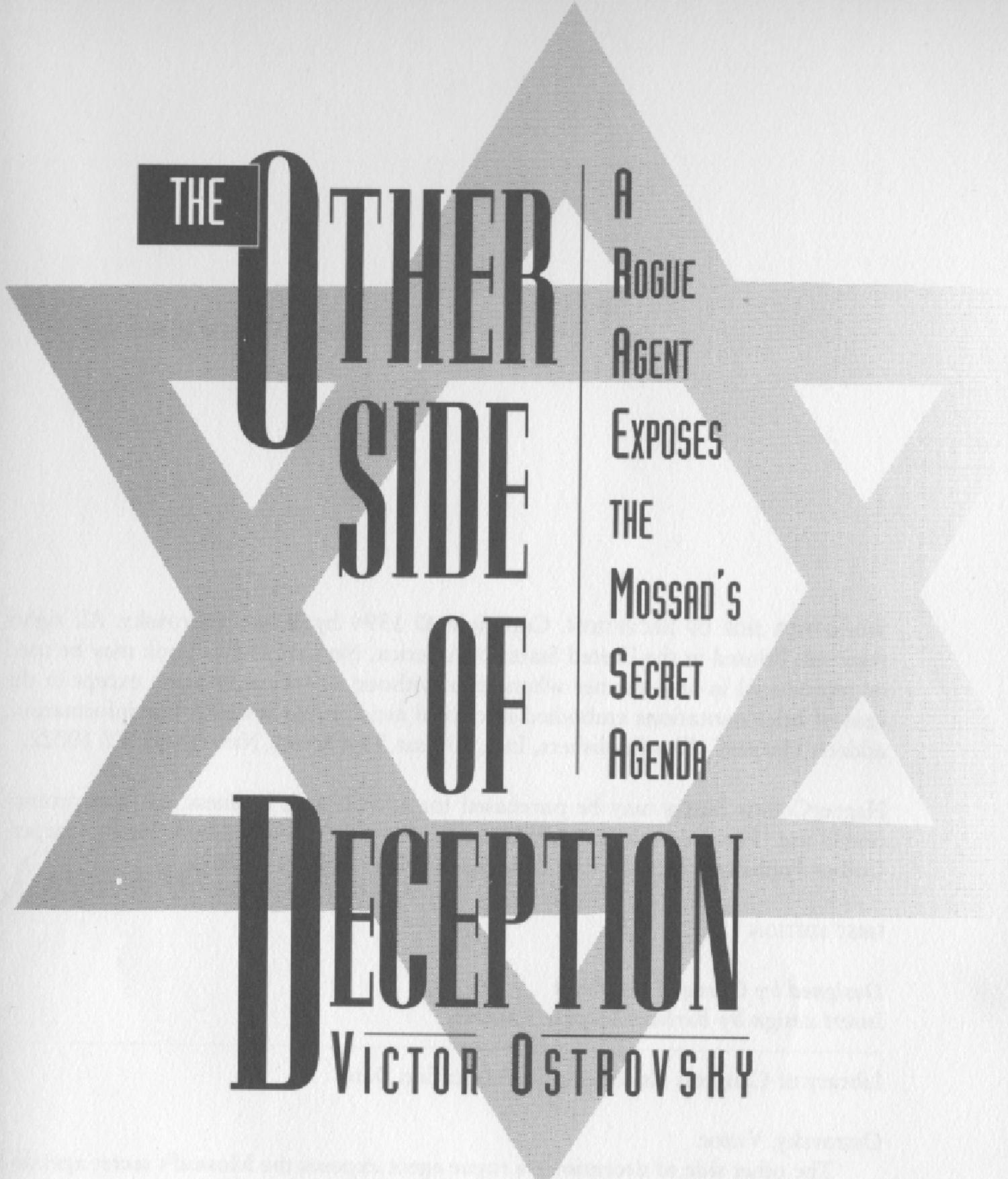
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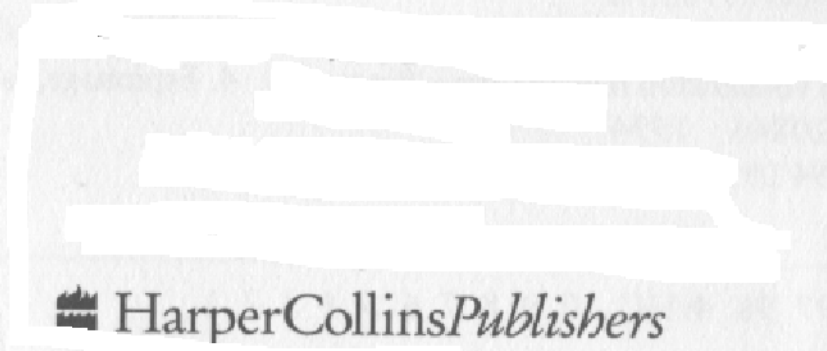

A
ROGUE
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THE
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DECEPTION

VICTOR OSTROVSKY



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 HarperCollins Publishers

To Bella with love

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I would, however, like to thank my agent, Tim Hays, whose belief in this project helped bring it to publication against so many protests, and my editor, Rick Horgan, an open-minded, diligent fellow whose sharp eye was a blessing. A final word of thanks goes to Harper-Collins publisher Jack McKeown and his staff, Judy Tashbook, Kathy Saypole, Chris McLaughlin, and Mary O'Shaughnessy.

Victor Ostrovsky

AUTHOR'S NOTE



I wrote this book to make known the truth about my journey. I have no doubt that there are those who would prefer that their account of the events be the record and who will do all in their power to make it so.

Because of the complexity of the subject matter, I decided that a book was the most appropriate medium through which to convey the facts. I also decided to present the material in more or less chronological order.

Although it's not usual for members of the intelligence services to keep written notes or records, I had kept some in order to carry out operational assignments I'd been given. Although they weren't originally intended as such, these notes did provide a useful additional resource in writing the book. Aside from these notes, I've relied largely on my memory to reconstruct the events described here and have made every effort to ensure that inaccuracies are minimal. Given that my capacity for recall was one of the main reasons I was originally sought by the Mossad, I feel confident in saying that the book is accurate in all but the most minor of details. All names in the book are real, with the exception of Dina, Rachel, Albert, David, Sarah, Rami, Edward, and Fadllal, which are aliases. Other names, such as those of active field operatives, are given by first name only to prevent those individuals from being exposed. Additionally, I've arranged for the Mossad to receive a copy of the book just prior to publication to allow them to take whatever precautions they deem necessary. The intention of this book is not personal vendetta.

Most major events in this book have been covered extensively by

the media, and articles on them are in the public record. I've provided a partial list of such articles at the end of the book to enable those interested to pursue further research on particular subjects.

That being said, this book is a factual account of events as they happened to me.

Victor Ostrovsky

PROLOGUE

My paternal grandparents immigrated to Canada from Russia at the turn of the century. They settled with other immigrants in the small Saskatchewan town of Wakaw, where my grandfather, Aaron Ostrovsky, built up a successful retail business, only to lose it during the Great Depression. Subsequently, he moved the family to Edmonton, Alberta.

At about the same time that the Ostrovskys arrived in Canada, the Margolin family—Esther, Hayyim, and their baby, Rafa—escaped the Russian pogroms and made their way to Palestine. They settled in Jerusalem and had two more children, Mira and Maza.

Sid Ostrovsky, the fifth of Aaron's seven children, served a full tour of duty as an airman in a Canadian bomber squadron over Europe during World War II. After the war, he joined the fledgling military of the newly formed state of Israel.

There he met Mira Margolin, who'd recently completed her tour of duty in the British army, fighting the Germans in North Africa.

The newlywed couple made their home in Edmonton, where, on November 28, 1949, I was born. My mother, who wasn't a typical housewife in any regard, found a job as a teacher in the Jewish school in Edmonton and left the chore of raising her child to my paternal grandmother, Bessie Ostrovsky.

I was fortunate in the grandparents fate had selected for me. My mother was what might be called a free spirit, a bohemian type. A graduate of the Israeli Haganah underground and the British military, she'd dreamed of becoming an actress. Theatrical parts were few and far between, though, which left her an extremely frustrated person. My father, on the other hand, knew that he would one day reach his goal: the American dream of financial security and a quiet life. But the road was long and hard. The unbridgeable difference in character

between my parents finally led them to separate. I was five at the time.

My mother took me back to Israel, where her parents, Hayyim and Esther Margolin, took on the job of looking after me. I remember fondly the small house on Ha-yod-daleth Street as a warm, loving home, full of books and long talks about the fulfillment of the Zionist dream and how it could be translated into everyday life.

Since I'd shown an inclination for the arts, my grandparents introduced me to a painter by the name of Gilady, who was living in our neighborhood. He gave me a box of oil paints and some of his time, instructing me in the basics of perspective and the use of color. Gilady's lessons were ones I'd apply ever after—even as my childhood hobby ripened into a midlife passion.

My early years were quiet. My mother would reappear from time to time like a swirling tornado, disappearing back into the blue sky just as fast. On one of her touchdowns, she decided that I would be better off in boarding school. All my grandmother's pleading was to no avail, and I wound up spending a year in a dreadful place called Hadasim, a boarding school in the center of Israel funded and supervised by Hadassah Wizo, a Jewish women's organization in Canada. I liked to think that, had the organization been fully aware of the school's strict, spartan quality and its penchant for putting the kids to work, they would have closed it.

They weren't aware, though—as far as I knew—and by year's end, I'd taken the initiative and returned to my grandparents' home. Shortly after, my self-confidence was lifted when I joined the Gadna youth brigades and attained second place in a countrywide shooting competition as a member of the Abu Kabir target shooting club headed by an old army major named Dan David.

During my high school years, I met Bella, and it was love at first sight. We spent every moment we could together; we enjoyed reading the same books, hiking, and talking about politics, and especially being with each other. At about the age of eighteen, we were recruited to the Israeli military. Bella was assigned to the ministry of defense, and I was sent to the military police.

After basic training, I completed a noncommissioned officers' course, and then went on to an officers' course, graduating as the youngest officer at the time in the Israeli Defense Force. I then graduated from the military police officers' course and the special military law course, and followed that up with demolition and sniper training.

Once I'd completed my military education, Bella and I got married. We were not yet twenty. We were told we were too young, but I never regarded our union as burdensome; it was something we were

building together. A year later, Sharon was born, and things were looking up.

After I completed my three-year term, I left the military, having attained the rank of lieutenant. We went to visit my family in Edmonton and wound up staying there for five years. Our second daughter, Leeorah, was born in Edmonton when Sharon was four.

We returned to Israel in 1977. The day after our arrival, I enlisted in the navy and was given the rank of captain. I served for the next five years, rising to the rank of lieutenant commander. For most of that period, I was in command of the department coordinating and testing new weapons systems before they were incorporated into the navy's arsenal. During that time, I was also sent to and graduated from staff and command college, where I was a guest lecturer for the duration of my service.

Bella and I had a great time in those days. We had a wide circle of friends with whom we enjoyed weekend trips, family outings, and parties. Then I got my first call from the guys in the security services. I guessed it was Mossad or something similar, and I went through a long and strenuous series of tests before more information about the job was forthcoming. Ultimately, I learned that I was being considered for a "combatant" position, which would mean that I'd be separated from Bella and the kids for long periods of time. I declined, and after numerous attempts to persuade me, some of which bordered on harassment, they finally accepted my refusal.

In 1982, I left the navy and started a video magazine that was the first of its kind in Israel. Like many firsts, it was a flop (the country's being embroiled right then in what was later known as the Lebanese quagmire didn't help). After that, I started a small stained-glass business (it also folded fairly quickly, owing to a lack of demand). I was also taking classes in computer programming, since I believed that was the wave of the future.

At that point, the Mossad came calling again. This time they made it clear that long separations from my family were not what they had in mind. I entered a second round of testing that was to last nearly a year.

While I was still working in my stained-glass shop in Herzelia, I was approached by two men I'd gotten to know in my dealings with the video magazine. They were the manufacturers of the plastic casings in which videocassettes were sold, and I'd done some graphic work for them. As it turned out, one of them, Itsik Zarug, was well connected in the Israeli underworld. He approached me on behalf of some of his friends, asking me to take part in a scam to forge large

numbers of credit cards—Visa, MasterCard, and the like. He handed me several stolen cards, telling me they wanted similar ones made.

I called a friend of mine, an attorney in Tel Aviv who was a former soldier of mine in the military police. I asked him to make contact with the police for me. I didn't want to put a stop to this affair without proper legal protection. My lawyer set up a meeting for me with a police officer named Eitan Golan, the head of the fraud department in Tel Aviv. I gave him all the information. He asked me if I'd be willing to work for the police undercover on a volunteer basis, and I agreed as long as my name was kept out of it.

Several months later, the entire ring was captured and sent to jail. The papers reported that the police had obtained the help of a graphic designer, but my name was not mentioned. The Mossad security department managed to squelch any police efforts to get me to testify. I was now under the aegis of the Mossad, a member of the elite team, a protector of the state. My life would never be the same again.

CHAPTER I

THURSDAY, JULY 17, 1986

The tiny cell was hot and musty. In a dim corner by the barred window, an old dingy-looking fan rattled, barely moving the foul-smelling air. I was trapped.

Three days earlier, I had arrived in Cairo on an Aer Lingus flight from New York. I was whisked away from the airport terminal by two burly men in short-sleeve gray safari suits. One of my seemingly friendly gorilla escorts spoke English. He explained that he and his friend were taking me to a safe place. They held my arms firmly and ushered me to a small white car parked at the curb outside the main doors.

"Welcome to Egypt," said the English speaker, who shared the back seat with me as the car took off. That was all he said until we cleared the airport complex. Then he handed me a blindfold and asked me to put it on.

Those who spend any time in the espionage world come to expect these things. For the next thirty minutes, I sat in the dark. I assumed we were on our way to meet the Egyptian intelligence and security brass, since the sole purpose of my visit was to sell out my former employer, the Mossad, Israel's famous intelligence agency.

It wasn't every day that a Mossad case officer appeared on Egyptian intelligence's doorstep, ready to deal. I'd expected the proverbial red carpet treatment, but this was not it. Since my hearing was unimpaired by the blindfold, I could hear the hustle-bustle of a large Middle Eastern city loud and clear. The noisy blend of honking cars and merchants announcing their wares sounded familiar to me. Soon the sounds commingled with the smell of charcoal stoves and camel dung, and I was reminded of Jaffa or East Jerusalem.

After a while, the sounds faded, and there was only the sensation

of the scorching air rushing by the open window. At one point, I thought I heard the revving sounds of a diesel engine and the squeaking of tank tracks. I'd spent enough time in the military to know we'd entered a military base.

When my blindfold was finally removed, I saw we were parked in the inner yard of an old British-style compound. The large square yard was surrounded by a dilapidated five-story building.

I was taken up a dark staircase to the third floor. Two uniformed guards armed with submachine guns greeted us and led the way through a long dim corridor to a green metal door. I expected to be taken to an office of some sort. Instead, I found myself in a ten-by-twelve cell. The heavy metal door slammed behind me. Then came the hollow sound of the key turning in the lock and the footsteps of my escorts as they walked away.

I assumed at first that this was a temporary holding room. But my confidence shrank as I looked around. There was a stench in the air of old urine and human excrement. The window, which gave a view of the inner yard, was secured with heavy metal bars. And the big iron bed that filled most of the cell hinted at a lengthy stay. Panic started to set in. At that instant, I realized I was a captive, and no one on the outside knew where I was.

I walked through an uneven opening knocked through the thick wall into what seemed like a crypt. I found a shower stall closed off by a stained plastic curtain. Facing the shower was a sloping floor with a hole in the center, known in the army as a shit hole, a primitive toilet. I backed away once I realized that the hole, which was the source of the stench, was swarming with cockroaches.

A minute later, I heard the key turning in the lock. That's it, I thought, they are here to get me out and apologize. I decided to accept their apology and brush it off as just one of those things.

An old man wearing a white galabia walked in, carrying a tray with fruit, a large glass pitcher of cold lemonade, and a single glass. He smiled and put the tray on the end table by the bed while a uniformed guard stood at the door watching. The old man entered the tiny, crypt-like shower and hung up the towel he had slung over his hand. I tried to speak to him, but he would only smile and nod his head.

Several hours later, the old man returned with more food and a fresh pitcher of lemonade. By nightfall, I'd begun to accept that I would be there a while, and the implications worried me. There was no logical reason for the way I was being treated—unless the Egyptians knew something they shouldn't have and were now playing some sort of game. What were they up to? Nothing made any sense.

From the window, I could see a uniformed guard seated on a wooden chair by the large gate. Occasionally, he'd open a small side door in the gate and talk to someone.

The big gate opened noisily every morning at nine, permitting a white car, similar to the one that had brought me there, to enter the compound. Each morning, I would get dressed and wait for someone to come and talk to me. But no one ever did. My watch slowly ticked off the hours until, finally, at six P.M., I would look out the window and see the white car leaving. I shouted and banged on the bars with the metal tray, but no one seemed to care.

The heat didn't let up, even after dark. I put the rattling little fan on the end table and directed it toward me. I then lay on my back in my underwear, wetting my face and chest with a damp towel. My head rested on a hard pillow as I tried to sleep.

After the first day, the stench didn't bother me. The swarming cockroaches didn't bother me either, as long as they stayed in the shit hole and away from my food. At night, a multitude of thoughts would run through my head, keeping me awake.

One question kept torturing me. How the hell did I end up in this ten-by-twelve hell somewhere outside Cairo? I couldn't shake the terrifying thought that this was where I'd spend the rest of my life, that my wife and children back in Canada would never know I hadn't run away, that I was trapped.

I couldn't tell where or when this was going to end, but I could almost pinpoint the time, if not the precise moment, it had all started . . .

Six months before, on Monday, February 3, 1986, I'd been at the Sun Hull Hotel in Larnaka, Cyprus. I was there to meet a Belgian terrorist, and in my pocket I had a false British passport under the name of Jason Burton. The Belgian was a member of a left-wing terrorist organization called the Communist Combatant Cells (CCC).

According to my passport, I'd arrived at the Larnaka airport the day before, and I had the Olympic Air ticket and boarding pass to prove it. The Belgian was expecting to receive from me a key to a car parked in Brussels, loaded with untraceable plastic explosives and several thousand top-of-the-line detonators. In exchange, I was to receive proof that over two million dollars had been transferred to a Swiss bank account.

It was a sting operation, and I was a full-fledged Mossad case officer at the time. It was on this assignment that things started to go haywire. I'd actually arrived in Larnaka by boat and not by plane. The

first leg of the journey, from the Ashdod harbor in Israel to a point fifty miles south of Cyprus, was made aboard a patrol boat, called a Dabur. I then transferred from the Dabur to a yacht. The yacht had a Greek registry and regularly anchored in the Larnaka harbor. It was a floating safe house for Mossad operatives.

I was only a pawn in this game planned by the Belgian desk in Melucha.¹ Once the ultra left-wing CCC members approached the car in Brussels, their entire ring would be nabbed by the Belgian police and security services. Another group would be arrested simultaneously by the Dutch police. The two police forces were already on the terrorists' trail, thanks to a series of tips the Belgium desk in the Mossad was feeding them.

There was more than one reason behind the sting. The CCC was involved in selling and buying arms from the Palestine Liberation Organization and other Palestinian groups. Putting them out of business would be a major victory for the Mossad in combating terrorism.

Another reason for the operation was more sinister, and I learned about it much later. Itsik Efrat, head of the Israel desk, handled that part. It involved a veteran case officer named Barda, who in 1984 had tracked down and contacted a band of Belgian renegade lawmen who were originally formed by NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) as an anti-Communist body to be activated in case of a Communist invasion. This plan, which was called Operation Gladiator, was never put into action, but NATO neglected to dismantle the special cells it had created, and so the Mossad stepped in to make use of one of them.

The dormant cell was activated with the consent of the Belgian state secret service and the Mossad's antiterrorist advisory section.

Barda made it clear to the Belgians that to create a public outcry for a strengthening of the security services, extreme measures were needed—that is, terrorist atrocities that could be blamed on the Communists. "Hesitation should be left to environmentalists and bleeding-heart democrats," he told them.

In addition to the NATO cell of right-wing lawmen, the Belgian secret service could draw from a deep well of right-wing fanatics—including a fascist party called Westland New Post (WNP), or so it was reported by sources within the Mossad. Under the auspices of the

1. Melucha: Code name for the recruitment branch of the Mossad; the branch is divided into geographical departments that have desks assigned to support stations.

Belgian secret service, this new combined right-wing element, which included several active policemen, carried out a series of robberies with extreme violence, eventually earning the nickname "the Murderers of Brabant." In September and November 1985, they hit several supermarkets and carried out the political assassination of a Belgian minister. They also engaged in several truck hijackings that were later attributed to crooks who were "killed in the chase." The attacks were not financially motivated. Their purpose was terror and the destabilization of the Belgian government, which was leaning left. Three members of the group had to leave the country in 1985. They escaped to Israel and were given new identities by the Mossad, as part of the initial agreement made with the Belgian extreme right wing.

The Belgians' request that the Mossad find a way to pass arms to the right-wingers, while keeping the Belgian authorities out of the picture, led to my being in Cyprus in February 1986 to help with the sting.

Barda gave the right-wing terrorists the location of the CCC stashes of arms the Mossad had sold them. He told them they could help themselves to the goods while the Communists were getting stung.

The day before I was to transfer the key to the CCC man, after a ten-minute struggle to transfer from one rocking boat to another on a choppy sea, I had met Ze'ev Alon. He was in charge of special technical operations, and on his way off the island. His presence on the boat was highly unusual. I was in the recruitment department and not part of special operations. He, on the other hand, provided services from his Proudot subdivision, mainly to combatants² from the highly secretive Metsada³ department. They would normally employ combatants in Arab countries on special Kidon⁴ operations.

Ze'ev briefed me on a new secondary assignment. I was now going to

2. Combatant: An Israeli who is recruited to carry out dangerous operations behind enemy lines. A combatant is trained separately from the rest of the Mossad and doesn't possess any information about the organization, so that if captured he will have no information to disclose.

3. Metsada: Code name for the Mossad section that employs combatants and the hit team called Kidon.

4. Kidon: Loosely translated, the word means "bayonet." It refers to a sub-unit of the secretive Metsada department assigned to carry out assassinations and special operations behind enemy lines. It consists of several squadrons. All assassinations carried out by the Mossad are the work of Kidon squadrons.

be a so-called relay station or backup relay station for an operation that, due to circumstances, had been hastily put together at the last minute.

"Cyprus is not a hospitable place for us," he said. "The fewer people we have there, the better."

Libyan leader Moamer al Qadhafi had called for a three-day summit of what he termed the Allied Leadership of the Revolutionary Forces of the Arab Nation. In other words, it was a meeting of all the terrorist kingpins. The Mossad was watching, drooling over this full house of goodies it couldn't wait to get its hands on.

A combatant had been dispatched to Libya for that occasion, posing as a reporter for the French-language paper *Afrique-Asie*. Once there, he learned that after the conference, several Palestinian terrorist leaders would fly to Syria aboard a private Gulfstream II executive jet. The Mossad convinced Israeli prime minister Shimon Peres to approve the skyjacking of the plane.

Because of the extremely sensitive nature of the operation, the Mossad chief wanted to have positive eyewitness verification that the people in question were on board. The combatant would watch the actual boarding of the plane. Then he would transmit a message via a special mobile burst-communication device. A merchant marine ship making its way to Gibraltar would receive the communiqué and transmit it to Israel. The need for a backup was due to previous communication problems with the same type of device. It depended on good weather, which in this case wasn't expected. As planned, it was really a very simple operation. The combatant, after verifying that the terrorists had boarded the Gulfstream, would activate the signaling device *and* call me at the hotel. If all was well, his message would be "The chickens have flown the coop." I would then use a beeper to send the signal, which would be picked up by a navy patrol boat close to the Cypriot shore, affirming the acceptance of the message.

After briefing me, Ze'ev wished me luck and transferred to the Dabur and back to Israel. I suspected that there was yet another backup besides me.

The meeting with the Belgian and the transfer of the key, my primary mission in Cyprus, went well. Nine days later, on February 12, 1986, the Belgian police nabbed the man and his CCC colleagues. The terrorists had in their possession over two hundred pounds of explosives and thousands of detonators. Simultaneously, Mossad's right-wing criminal partners entered several warehouses in the Antwerp area. The fascists got two truckloads of light weapons and several tons of ammunition.

It was while carrying out the secondary operation that I got into hot water. When I was at the hotel in Larnaka, I had made an approach to—or, as we called it in the field, "established contact with"—a Palestinian businessman from Amman, Jordan, who was one of the few tourists in the hotel. Such unauthorized contact was proscribed, but it was known that case officers did it all the time. Take the risk, we told ourselves. If it works, you're a hero; if not, you don't tell anyone.

It turned out that the businessman had just come from Libya and had contacts in the PLO. I learned from him that a trick would be played on us in Tripoli, Libya. He said something like, "The Israelis are going to eat shit tomorrow." I knew the Mossad had considered the possibility of a trick, but no one gave the Palestinians that much credit.

Convinced that my information was reliable, I tried to contact everybody I knew in the system to stop the operation. I struggled with the endless buffers Mossad puts on a command and control center during an operation. It was somewhat ironic that the buffers put in place to enhance security were now blocking a warning. The command center was in Mahaneh David military air base. I couldn't help thinking that someone *wanted* things to go wrong.

I eventually got the call from the combatant and relayed his message. Since I was only a relay station, I had to transmit the message as it came, without adding to or subtracting from it, even though I was almost sure the information it contained was incorrect. I never learned whether the communiqué was transmitted to the merchant marine ship. It is possible that it was, but that its reception was kept under wraps until after the operation was complete, so that if something went wrong, it could be blamed on the preselected scapegoat, namely myself. Anyway, sure enough, the plane was forced down, and the big prize was not aboard.

I left Cyprus on the yacht and eventually rendezvoused with the Dabur. Someone didn't want me back in Israel just yet, so the Dabur was instructed to stay at sea for several days. The Dabur captain was informed by navy command that he had developed "engine problems." Even as it was happening, I realized that the delay was to allow someone the time to set me up as the fall guy for this botched operation.

I couldn't see how that sort of scapegoating was possible, though, unless the combatant changed his story. Then *I* would be the one blamed for supposedly misunderstanding the message. Were that to happen, I had no doubt that the record of all my communications

attempting to warn the command center would be erased, and as it turned out, that's exactly what occurred. When we finally docked in Ashdod, Oren Riff, then chief of staff for the Mossad head, was there to greet me. It was his job to fill me in on what my duty to the Mossad was. I was to take responsibility for the foul-up, accepting that I was doing it for the good of the Office.⁵ I had no choice in the matter, and so I agreed.

CHAPTER 2

By mid-February, the "Cypriot screwup," as it came to be known, was a thing of the past. I, however, was placed under constant watch. Things became very difficult with that cloud of failure hanging over me.

I was still a probational rookie, which is the case for the first four years in Mossad, except that now I was under special observation. Most other rookies didn't want to be paired with me because of the extra supervision I brought along. "You can't always be perfect," Arik, one of my colleagues, said to me. "You're bound to slip, and then they'll be all over you. Why don't you just give up and quit?" I knew he was right, but I wasn't about to give up. To me, serving in the Mossad was the highest achievement. Inside the organization, the joke went that, if there was a second coming, the man would probably be Mossad.

I found it quite burdensome, double-checking every move to ensure everything was as perfect as it could be. But I was determined not to give the higher-ups the satisfaction of catching me in a mistake. I knew that many of them would be happy to be rid of me because of my political leanings. I was center, but in Mossad terms I was left, if not extreme left.

The constant pressure was taking its toll, and my home life wasn't much better. Whatever frustration I felt, I took out on my family. As a rule, all case officers in the Mossad must be married before they can serve abroad, but few have a happy marriage. Most have a bad one, and it's usually not their first. I began coming home later than usual, spending what little free time I had sitting with the guys at one of our regular hangouts. It was like working with a bunch of old gossips: the first one to leave was the one everybody talked about and slandered. The best protection you had was to stay till the end. I knew Bella and

5. Office: The term used by Mossad people when talking about the Mossad, which is never mentioned by name.

the kids were getting the short end of the stick. But I rationalized it by telling myself this was a temporary situation, and once I became well established in the system, I'd make it up to them.

Working in the Mossad, there was always an excuse for coming home late. Instead of turning to the one person who was my real friend, my wife, Bella, I turned away from her. And she didn't like anyone from the Office; she could see through them.

Since I couldn't change the reality, I tried to change the perception. I told myself that it was her view that was wrong, that she should see things the way we did. After all, I was a member of the Mossad, the elite, the select few. At home, I wasn't Mossad, and that was all I wanted to be.

Some time into my probationary period, I found myself in the middle of a minor operation in the one place the Mossad was not "allowed" to work: Israel. Though there are no specific laws guiding the activity of the Mossad, the proscription against operations within the country is vigilantly enforced by the Shaback (Israel's internal security body). Hence, the rule regarding these "impermissible" operations is: In the event of a foul-up, make the operation look like a mere exercise.

This particular operation was to benefit an Israeli optronics company called El Op, which was developing a special device to broadcast and receive digitized photographic images (DPI). It was also developing a similar system for the Mazlat. Mazlat (the word is a Hebrew abbreviation for unmanned remote-controlled plane) was a cooperative development project between Israeli Aeronautical Industries (IAI), a subsidiary of the Israeli Military Industry (IMI), and an American company called AAI Corporation that was based in Baltimore. The development of the DPI had proven to be extremely expensive and was running into technical difficulties as well. Further, IAI was on the Mossad support list because of its enormous financial and defense potential. Hence, the Mossad devised a plan to get the proverbial wagon out of the mud.

The IMI was advised to reach a development agreement with Recon Optical Industries, an American company that possessed the technology that El Op required. IMI chose as its pawn the Israeli air force, which at the time was involved in a project financed by American military aid to Israel. The plan was for the Mossad to insinuate Israeli engineers into Recon, posing as Israeli air force observers and quality controllers, and, under the auspices of this unrelated project, steal new technology that could then be manufactured in Israel. If this

technology theft was done right, the savings in research and development expenses could be enormous.

Before this exercise that I was involved in a military base in Ramat Gan, a city adjacent to Tel Aviv. Several Mossad teams had already entered the base and placed El Op personnel files into the air force reserve bank. That would smooth the way for El Op engineers to be inserted into Recon. We were there to carry out a similar operation for a company called Tadiran.

Arik and Amir showed up at the base gate in guard uniforms and with the proper documentation, in time for the changing of the guard. The real guards had been detained by other members of our team posing as military police, and the sergeant major in charge of the guard detail had received a telephone call from manpower assigning two new men—Arik and Amir. I made that call from a pay phone, and the sergeant major took it at face value. All he really cared about was having two warm bodies at the gate.

We were heading for the main office building when Yosy said to me, "I want you to meet someone."

"Now?" Yosy and I were in military uniforms, both of us wearing the insignia of corporal.

I remember him nodding and smiling. He didn't seem to think there was a problem.

"Look, Yosy," I whispered as we slowly walked up a small hill to the administration building. "We're in the middle of an exercise, and we have a job to do. How about we do this another time? We can come back whenever we want. All we have to do is flash our IDs."

"Yes." He smiled. "I know that, but we're here now. I planned it so that we'll have the time." He paused as a pair of officers came near. We saluted lazily as they passed us. They didn't bother saluting back.

When they were several steps down the road, Yosy continued, "If things go according to plan, we should have about ten minutes before we have to leave."

"What can we do in ten minutes?"

"I want you to meet someone."

"What if I don't want to?"

"I'm not going to force you to do anything. I can tell you, however, that I'm sick and tired of your long dreary face and your down-in-the-dumps attitude. I just want to pump some life into you."

"I appreciate it, but no thanks."

"I'm talking about a woman who is aching for it."

Good old Yosy, I thought. He of the one-track mind. "I don't have to break into a military base in the middle of the night for that."

"This one's different, trust me," Yosy said, making me wonder why, if she was so different, he wasn't keeping her for himself.

Yosy stopped. We had reached our target building, a three-story British relic, tan in color, square, with three rows of small windows. The eucalyptus trees that filled the grounds rustled in the wind. The floodlights along the road and on top of the high fence threw the tree shadows onto the fine stucco walls, creating swaying images to match my state of mind.

Yosy turned serious. This was work, and to my relief, he plunged into it.

"Do you have it with you?" he asked.

I slid my hand into my shirt just to feel the large plastic envelope. "Yes."

"Let's do it."

We walked straight to the small stairwell. We had to be careful as we climbed the stairs; on every second turn we could be seen from the ground. The building itself was not a high-security zone, but if a patrol had spotted us on the staircase or inside, it could be a problem. Three patrols were making their rounds.

Once inside, we moved fast, first making sure that there was no necking going on—a common pastime for off-duty military couples who were stuck on base. The room was filled with four-drawer filing cabinets. At the far end was a large gray safe. Yosy walked to the desk by the door and pulled out the drawer. "Get over there and open the safe. I'll read you the combination."

I walked to the safe and bent down, setting the dial at zero. "How did you get it?"

"That is the difference between a case officer and a burglar. I made contact with the girl working here and spent some time with her."

"Really?"

"Don't laugh. I sacrificed a lot," Yosy said.

"Sacrificed?"

"You should have seen her. Believe me, it was a sacrifice." He chuckled.

"You didn't have to take her to bed."

"It wasn't a bed. Besides, I can't help myself. For me, a woman is a woman is a woman."

"So why are you whining about it now?"

He shrugged and looked at the bottom of the drawer he was holding. "Seventeen to the right, four to the left." He went on until the lock clicked. I spun the chrome wheel and pulled the door open. There

was a stack of manila files inside. We did the switch in less than five minutes, and then we were ready to leave.

Suddenly, there was a noise from the outer door. We both froze. We didn't know if the patrols made a round inside the offices or only checked to see if the outer door was locked.

"Did you lock the outer door?" I whispered to him.

"Yes, I braced it!"

We moved quietly to the window and looked outside. It was a long drop. After several seconds of testing the door, the patrol moved away. They were women soldiers. We sighed in relief as we saw them walking out of the building. Everything had gone well. All I wanted to do now was to get the hell out of there. I lit a cigarette, and we started for the gate.

Yosy looked at his watch. "We still have about twenty minutes, much more than I planned for."

"What are you talking about? We finished. What are we waiting for?"

"Dov said we should not leave before ten."

"You want to tell me they are planning a tail on us now?" The thought frustrated me. To take full advantage of the jobs/exercises we were assigned, Mossad training personnel would throw extra obstacles into otherwise simple operations. They liked to test us, to see if we knew we were being followed. Similar exercises were carried out in Europe while officers were involved in routine operations. Knowing they might be followed by Mossad testers put case officers on their best behavior.

"Anyway," Yosy said, "we're not to leave before ten, and then only one at a time. If we're clean, we'll meet somewhere. If not, then you do what you have to do. I will be leaving last, like a good commander. Now would you follow me? I have someone I want you to meet."

"Forget it, Yosy. I'm not in the mood."

"Then do it for me. Haim and I can't handle her alone; we need help. We've been double-teaming her for the past month. Haim knew her from before, in Haifa."

"Why don't you call Jerry?" I said, smiling.

"We have a woman, what we need is an extra man. Come on."

It seemed he was determined to get me out of the mental slump I was in, and getting me laid was the best method he and Haim could come up with. Did I know I shouldn't be following him? Yes. Did I follow him anyway? Yes, I'm ashamed to say.

We headed for a gray-colored prefab office structure halfway

between the main building and the gate. It started to rain. I stood at the edge of the covered platform behind Yosy, who was about to knock on a door.

"Come over here," Yosy whispered to me. "I don't have time to fill you in on the cover story. Just remember we're from the Shaback. It would be better if you don't say anything. Oh yeah, we're not married, any of us, and don't use your own name, family name that is." He knocked on the door.

A soft feminine voice answered. "Who's that?"

"Yosy."

"Come on in."

He opened the door slowly, turned and winked at me, and entered.

"Dina, how are you?" He walked over to a slim, beautiful blond seated behind a large metal desk. She was wearing an oversized green army sweater with sergeant's stripes loosely pinned to her sleeves. A pair of tight faded jeans wrapped her long legs, which stretched out under the desk, almost touching a small glowing electric heater.

Yosy bent over and kissed her on the cheek. He then stood behind her, putting his hands on her shoulders, and said, "This, my beautiful candy, is my friend Dan."

I smiled at her, and she smiled back. I felt awkward, out of place, yet excited by those deep blue eyes. There was a reddish glow to the room, and I was starting to feel hot.

"What are you doing here?" she asked Yosy.

"It's an inspection. We're here to check if the place is secure."

"Is it?"

Yosy thought for a moment, leaning closer to her. "Not to worry, you're safe as long as we're here."

She stared at me, smiling. Yosy leaned over and kissed her on the lips. The kiss went on and on. As I turned to leave, I saw her slowly raise her hands and hold his head. My last glimpse was of his hand headed for her breast. I waited outside for a few seconds before I heard him say, "Listen, my flower. One of us will come over to your place, around twelve?"

"Okay. If I'm not there, you know where the key is, right?"

Yosy came out, smiling as he closed the door behind him. "Well, buddy, if all goes well, it will be Dina at midnight."

CHAPTER 3

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 1986, 22:00

After leaving the compound, I took steps to see if I was being followed. By now, this activity was second nature to me. After verifying I was indeed clean, I called Dov. The phone rang twice. "Yes?" Dov answered in his somewhat husky voice.

"It's Kid here."

"What's up?"

"I just wanted to tell you I'm clean."

"Positive?"

"No doubt."

"Where are you now?"

"At the Elite intersection. Will there be anything else? I want to get out of this uniform."

"On what side of the intersection are you?"

"By the diamond exchange."

"Okay. Just a minute." There was a two-minute pause on the line. When he came back, he just said, "Have a good night. I'll see you in the morning." His voice was slightly cynical; that was Dov's way. He'd picked it up from Mousa, his boss, and carried it a little further.

I hadn't even put the receiver back into place when a police car screeched to a stop by the phone booth. I watched as the uniformed policeman got out and headed for me. I slowly hung up the phone and turned to face him. I knew the routine; it was a typical training exercise to get us used to the kind of harassment we might encounter abroad. I was smirking; it wasn't a good idea to do that, but I just couldn't help myself. I knew what was coming, and yet I didn't care. I knew I could handle it.

"Hey, you!" the policeman called as he swaggered closer.

I found the situation comical. I could still remember when encoun-

ters like this got me excited and scared. "What?" I started to chuckle. "Are you talking to me?"

"What's so funny, soldier boy?"

"Are you talking to me?"

"You think it's funny, do you? I'll show you how funny this is." He slammed the booth door open to one side and stuck in his bulldog face, almost touching mine. In such situations, I'd been trained to be overly cooperative, friendly, even wimpish. Soothe the man and get the problem to shrink as fast as possible. But—maybe it was everything I'd gone through the past few weeks, maybe it was how the night had unfolded so far—for some reason, I wasn't in an obliging mood. "Are you talking to me?" The words just came out, and the smile on my face widened.

The cop grabbed my shirt collar and slammed me against the back of the booth. The metal shelf under the phone hit my lower back, sending bolts of pain through my legs. "Do you have papers?" His face was twisted with anger at my smile. He turned his head to his partner, who was slowly getting out of the car. "We got ourselves a smart aleck here. Should we take him downtown or feed him some knuckles first?"

The second cop was a giant. "Well, little soldier," he said. "I can see you want to play games."

"Are you talking to me?" I wasn't smiling anymore. The big cop's huge open hand came from behind and hit me on the top of my forehead. My head snapped back, slamming against the glass pane. I could hear the glass crack. The insides of my head vibrated; I was starting to lose consciousness.

Suddenly, both cops backed up, yanking me out of the booth. The contact with the cold air brought me around.

"You're coming with us, soldier boy," the bigger cop said as they tossed me into the back seat of the small Ford Escort patrol car.

"Where are you from?" the gorilla asked as he forced my head between my knees and cuffed my hands behind my back, closing the cuffs tight.

"Are you talking to me?"

A fast jab to my ribs brought a short cry of pain. When I tried to raise my head, he pushed it back down, hitting my lip on my knee. I could taste the blood. I stayed down. Whatever happened, I couldn't have them leave marks on my face. My face was the most important tool I had in this strange trade of mine. I could not do my job with a black and blue face. I knew they were instructed not to harm me or leave me visibly bruised, but often the cops would get carried away.

I felt like telling them, I know the routine; let's get it over with. But all I could say was, "Are you talking to me?" My mind wandered. Meanwhile, the beefy cop was slapping the back of my head and punching at my ribs. From time to time, a sharp pain would drag me out of my thoughts and force me to face what was taking place. I knew I could stop this by playing along, but something inside wouldn't let me.

Then I thought of Dina; how easy it would be to get into bed with her and forget everything, just let things happen. Even at such a low moment, the thought excited me. I tried to push the fantasy away, telling myself the encounter would never happen. But I knew it would somehow, and that became something to focus on.

It was almost a full hour of sheer agony before the police car returned to where it had picked me up. As the cruiser pulled over, the driver turned, grabbed me by the hair, and wrenched my head up. My vision was blurred, and I had a pounding headache.

The cop scowled.

"What were you doing here, you little bastard?" He spoke right into my face, tightening his grip on my hair.

"Are you talking to me?" I mumbled. I could see they were confused. This was not the way things were supposed to go. They weren't sure if I was doing it wrong or they were. The gorilla was now staring out the window, clearly worried that he might have overdone it.

"Yes, you little shit, I'm talking to you," he finally said. I didn't realize how much I'd needed that little victory.

"Why didn't you say so?" I smiled faintly.

He smiled back in relief and let go of my hair. His big friend took off my cuffs and opened the door. He then got out of the car and gently helped me out. Before he closed the door, he looked at me. "You okay? No hard feelings?"

"No hard feelings." I shrugged and staggered back into the phone booth. The cracked pane was staring me straight in the face. It seemed so long ago, I had almost forgotten how it started. I dialed, and on the second ring Dov answered.

"It's Kid," I said.

"What's up?"

"You son of a bitch. I just got off a roller coaster."

"What took you so long?"

"I don't know. I guess there was a communication problem with the operator of the amusement park."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean I'm tired, you asshole. What do you think I mean?"

"Are you okay?"

"As well as could be expected. I will live, though."

"Okay, just put it all in the report. I'll see you in the morning." He hung up.

I dialed again, this time to the phone in the academy's¹ main hall. Yosy or Haim was supposed to be there. It was a pact we had that we waited for one another until the last one was done. It was 23:40, and Yosy answered after the fifth ring. He was breathing hard, as if he had run.

"Yes?"

"Yosy?"

"Hey, Victor, where the hell are you? We were ready to give up on you."

"Who's we?"

"Haim and me, who else?"

"Why are you breathing like you just ran a marathon?"

"We've been playing Ping-Pong. So what are you up to?"

"Not much. I need a place to rest and relax."

He chuckled. "I think a candy factory would be in order."

"A candy factory?" I was still somewhat dazed by the beating and the constant pressure.

"Dina, I'm talking about Dina. Where are you now?"

"I'm at the Elite intersection in Ramat Gan."

"We'll meet you in ten minutes at the London mini-stores complex."

"See you there." I hung up and waved down a cab. Several minutes later, I was standing at the corner, staring north up Even Gvirol Avenue. The Jeep came to a screeching stop just behind me.

Haim was sitting in the back. He stuck his balding head out, looking at me. "Come on, come on, we don't have all night. We've got a job to do."

"A job?"

"There's a lawyer's office, we have to enter the building and photograph some of his files."

"When did this come up?"

"Yesterday."

"How come I never heard of it?"

1. Academy: Mossad training facility, located across from the country club outside Tel Aviv on the road to Haifa.

"You're not on our team. It's a nonelected setup; we didn't choose it, we were assigned."

I could feel the long blade slowly making its way through my back. Yosy, Haim, and I had been a team almost from day one. There was no reason to break us up; we complemented one another. The only thing that I could think of was that someone was trying to isolate me. I was not paranoid. Had this been a legitimate move, they would have brought it to my attention and given me an explanation. Because it was done behind my back, it was sinister. But there was nothing I could do now; accepting it was the only rational move.

"I thought we told her we'd be there at twelve?" Suddenly, I realized how anxious I was to see Dina. Funny thing was, it was the image of her smile, not her body, that fixed itself in my mind.

"What I thought we'd do," Yosy said, turning around to face Haim and me, "we'll drop Victor here over at her place, then we'll go and do the casing. Then we will come back and pick you up."

I nodded. "Fine with me."

"We'll come in with you just to get a cup of coffee, then we'll scoot," Yosy added.

I told them about my encounter with the police.

"How hard did they hit you?" Yosy asked.

"Hard enough. I was asking for it."

"I thought you could sweet-talk anyone." Haim stared at me from the dark rear of the Jeep.

"I don't know, I really don't know. All I can tell you is that I didn't feel like talking to those two."

The Jeep was on its way, crossing several lanes as we headed in the direction of Dizengoff Street. At the corner of Dizengoff and Gordon, Yosy made a sharp right, almost turning the Jeep over. It came to a stop on the sidewalk.

"Nice parking," I remarked. "I'm sure you're parallel to something." We all laughed; this was one of the perks of the job, ignoring traffic rules. The Jeep's license plate was false, and although it would show up on the police computer, it would do so only for a few days, then it would be changed. We also had a high-level special security ID card that would send a cop instantly in whatever direction we might choose. This was our God card, and we liked finding a chance to use it.

"We're here," Yosy announced and hopped out. I followed, and Haim was not far behind. It was a typical Tel Aviv apartment building.

"This is it." Yosy was at the door to the right of the dark stair-