

CHAPTER ONE

June 16, 1992

Jaffa, Israel

16:20

Sarah dashed downstairs to answer the door. She wasn't expecting Zachary back for another half an hour. She put her eye to the peephole. A tall, brawny man with slick black hair tied back in a ponytail stood, hands behind his back. He wore a dark suit, a tie, and Ray-Bans. Official looking. She tucked a tuft of hair behind her ear and opened the door.

"Can I help?" she asked.

The man removed his glasses and folded them into his breast pocket. "Sarah Cohen?"

"Yes, how may I help you?" she asked again.

Before Sarah could react, he slammed his fist into her face. He grabbed her arm before she hit the ground then lifted her and carried her into the house. Blood streamed from her nose, and the man cursed when some of it dripped onto his shoe. He dumped her on the couch and fetched a paper towel from the kitchen, then cleaned the blood spatters in the entrance hall. He went back and fetched a bag of frozen peas from the freezer and dropped it on a side table next to Sarah.

She sat up unsteadily. The man was busy in the kitchen, cutlery clinking and the kettle boiling.

"Don't move, Sarah," he called from the kitchen. "Put the bag on your face, your nose is broken." The man sauntered out of the kitchen, a steaming cup in his hand, and popped a toothpick in his mouth. "You're going to have black eyes; use the bag. I hate ugly bitches."

“Who are you?” Sarah sobbed, taking the makeshift ice pack and tenderly placing it on the side of her face. “What do you want?”

He chuckled, pointing his thumb at his chest. “Me? My name is Miguel Perreira.” He rolled the toothpick in his mouth, smirking at Sarah. “What I want?” He gave a small shrug. “To kill your husband. He cost me lots of money. He tried to kill my partner. My partner wants, how do you say . . .” Perreira rolled the toothpick in his mouth, examining his nails. He looked up and said with a crooked smile, “. . . revenge.” He spoke with a Spanish accent. “You know why he tried to kill my partner?”

Sarah stared at the intruder, a cushion clutched to her chest. “What are you talking about? Zach is a computer programmer. He works for IBM. You’re insane, mister.”

The tall man tsk-tsked. “Ah, you’ve been told lies too, I see. Your man Zachary, he is good at keeping secrets.” He grinned, flashing a gold-capped tooth. “But not from me, you will see,” he said, wagging a finger. Miguel Perreira glanced at his watch. “Your little man should be here in thirty-five minutes. Tonight is your dinner date, no?”

She swallowed then nodded.

He drained the cup and placed it on the table. “Your pretty baby *hijita* is visiting grandmama tonight. Now is the time for your shower, to put on the tight black dress.”

He casually leaned against the wall, examining his nails as he spoke. “You know you are taller than your little man when you wear your Prada shoes? It does not bother him, no?” he asked, sucking his teeth. He continued without waiting for an answer. “I phoned the restaurant, Pastel. Told them you are not coming no more. No

one will miss you tonight.” He spoke casually, not once looking up. “So it seems there is one thing for you to do now.”

“What?” she asked, cringing into the chair.

“Get off your clothes.”

“Why?” she asked, her arms clutching the cushion. “What are you going to do to me?”

Perreira glanced her way then chuckled. “Why? You need to be ready for the little man. I like the black G-string you always wear; I think maybe the little man likes the red one, no?” He grinned and sauntered towards her. “Maybe you will get lucky tonight.”

“Please, sir. Just leave us alone. We have nothing to do with—”

Perreira hit her across the face with the back of his hand. “Get your clothes *off*, bitch!” he roared, spittle flying from his lower lip.

She slumped to the ground, whimpering, holding her cheek.

He strode towards her. “Do Jewish bitches not listen to their men anymore? Get up and take the clothes off,” he shouted, grabbed her arm and propped her against the wall.

She started crying.

“I’m waiting.”

Sarah Cohen stared at Perreira, her shoulders shaking with suppressed sobs. Then she unbuttoned her blouse.

Zachary Cohen drummed his steering wheel to the beat of Phil Collin's "In the Air Tonight." He took the turn to his home off Ben Gurion Road and rolled down the car window. This particular autumn evening was a balmy one, but the damp ocean breeze cooled him down. Dark storm clouds were forming in the distance; he made a mental note to remember the umbrella. He was looking forward to tonight.

Thursday date nights had become a tradition in the Cohen household, his father having started it. Zachary had never understood why the man was always chirpy on Thursdays, why his mom used to skip around the house with a twinkle in her eye. Now he did.

He noticed the black Chevy Impala in front of their gate when he drove past the house. He drew up in his driveway, slid out of his car, and jogged up the steps of his terraced lawn, humming the last octaves of the song.

He pulled open the door. Strange, it was unlocked. "Sarah, I'm home."

As he entered the living room, he was struck on his temple, hard. He struggled to retain his balance when someone blindsided him from behind and a fist slammed into his chin.

Shit, this couldn't be happening. How did they find him? Zachary Cohen went down for the count for the second time in his life.

Zachary Cohen recovered from the blow and shook his head, then he heard his wife groan. He tried to prop his head up and felt blood trickle from his scalp. He shifted to an upright position and grimaced, touching his head.

Sarah was lying on the couch, naked. A man stood next to her, caressing her shoulder with his fingertips.

Zach stood on shaky legs then stumbled towards his wife. “What the hell do you want?”

The man grabbed Sarah around the waist with one arm and lifted her effortlessly, like she was a rag doll. He stood behind her, holding her body upright, then pulled a knife from a sheath on his belt and held it to Sarah’s throat. Her head slumped forward and she moaned, barely conscious. Her face was swollen and puffy, and her nose was bleeding.

“I need to know everything about how you found us—the mole, where did you get your information—everything,” he said, tracing the tip of the knife over Sarah’s breast. It left a thin, red line on her exposed flesh.

“Who are you?” Zach asked, trundling forward, unable to control the quiver in his voice.

The man shrugged then licked his bottom lip. “I have personal interests in this case. You were the bastard behind the sting. So I’m taking a shortcut, straight to the master brain.”

“Screw you!” Zachary screamed, pursing his lips to stop them from trembling. He swallowed hard and closed his eyes, breathing deeply. “Let her go,” he said, clenching his fists.

The man tsk-tsked, shaking his head. He had a toothpick in his mouth and rolled it from side to side when he spoke. “Be a nice little man, Zachary. I know where

Rebecca is; grandmama has a cute place,” he said, resting his head on Sarah’s shoulder, fluttering his eyelids.

Zachary growled and charged. The man dropped Sarah and drove a fist straight into Zachary’s face. Zach stumbled and fell, moaning, holding his hands to his face.

Oh, dear God, was Sarah OK?

Crouching on his hands and knees, Zachary tried to shake off the dizziness. He stood up but slumped back to the ground. He crawled towards Sarah, pulling himself forward by his hands on their newly-varnished mahogany floor. He slipped, hitting his chin on the ground.

He watched in stunned silence as the man sauntered to Sarah. Zach lifted a hand. “Please wait, I’ll tell you everything.”

The man knelt beside her, if examining her, tangled a fistful of hair in his hand, and glanced at Zachary. He lifted his eyebrows.

“Please, please, I’m begging you. Don’t do—“

The man shrugged and lifted her head off the floor and slit her throat.

He turned to Zach and nodded, pleased with himself, then walked to the kitchen, whistling. The man opened and closed drawers and cupboards, searching for something.

Zach sobbed, slapping his palm onto the ground. “Oh God, no!” he screamed, sucking in shuddering breaths. “Please, God, don’t let this be happening.”

The man appeared from the kitchen, holding zip ties. He pushed his knee on Zachary’s back, pulled his arms behind him, then tied his hands. A cloth smelling of beeswax was stuffed into his mouth. The world spun around on its axis. The man picked him up with a soft grunt and hauled him over his shoulder. He was carried out

of the front door, the man not bothering to shut it. A trunk popped and Zachary was dumped inside. He groaned and blacked out again.

A minute later Zachary smashed into the side of the trunk as the car jarred over a pothole or something in the road. He spat the rag from his mouth and struggled to remove a tiny transmitter from his jeans pocket. He pushed a button on the side of the device then took a deep breath and shouted, "Get Becky!"

The car swayed and bounced beneath him and he blacked out again.

June 16, 1992

Jaffa, Israel

16:48

Bruce Bryden examined the Glock then worked the cotton patch attached to the cleaning rod into the barrel. The gun lay disassembled in thirty-odd pieces, neatly in their order of reassembly. He nodded, satisfied every part was spotless. He stood and fumbled for the GLD when it vibrated in his breast pocket. He fished it out, a blue light flashing at the base of the unit.

Code blue. Shit.

He held a button on the transmitter and listened to the barely-audible message. He replayed the recording and listened closely. Zach's voice was muffled, it sounded like he was driving. He strained to hear Zachary Cohen's panicked words. "Get Becky."

The GLD needed a computer and mapping software to locate the agent. And Bruce, who was not a strong believer in technology, had neither. He made up his mind and jumped into his Jeep; Zachary had a computer at home.

He arrived at Zachary's home a couple of minutes later. Something was wrong. The front door stood open, and splotches of blood were visible on the white pebbled pathway.

Bruce crouched next to the open door and peered inside. Sarah lay naked on the ground, a pool of blood spreading beneath her disheveled hair. He bolted inside and kneeled beside her. Her throat had been slit, and her breathing was labored and shallow.

He barged into the kitchen, filled a jug with water, and splashed it over the wound. The carotid artery had been severed. He gently lifted her head. Judging by the amount of blood, her throat had been cut a couple of minutes ago. He dialed 102. The operator answered. "This is Esra speaking, what is your emergency?"

"I have a woman with a fatal neck wound, I need an ambulance!" Bruce shouted, groping for the severed artery then pinching both ends with his thumb and forefinger.

"Certainly sir. We're in luck, I have a unit on standby at Ben Gurion."

Thank God. "Patch me through to the m."

He heard a click, and after a short silence, someone answered, a wailing siren in the background. "I need to speak to the medic. I'm with the patient," Bruce said.

"Hello, Seidmann here. You're with the patient right now?" the paramedic asked.

"Yes, severed carotid, two pints of blood lost. I have managed to stop the bleeding, but hypoxia will set in within a few minutes." Bruce held his ear to her mouth, clutching the phone to his shoulder. "She'll be brain-dead by the time a surgeon tends to her."

"Right, we're close to you. I'll radio Dr. Goldblum, our vascular specialist."

Within five minutes, the paramedics arrived. One guy was clutching a two-way radio to his ear. "Uh-huh. OK, OK, OK got it. We'll have her in ICU in ten minutes."

He nodded at Bruce and knelt next to Sarah. "I'm going to insert a stent to stabilize the blood flow. The doctor is waiting at the hospital." He looked up at Bruce with pursed lips. "You a doctor?"

Bruce ignored the question and shifted his focus to finding a computer. He ran upstairs to find Zach's office in a mess. Empty floppy disk boxes and CD cases lay scattered everywhere. Drawers had been pulled out and tossed to the ground; their contents lay strewn throughout the room.

Bruce wiped his bloodied hands on his trousers, picked up the phone, and dialed Zach's mom. It rang twice before Ruth Cohen answered.

"Hello?"

"Hi, Ruth, Bruce here. Is Rebecca with you?"

"Yes, why? What's—"

"Stay there, lock the doors. I'll see you soon."

He disconnected the call, then he pulled the PC towards him and plugged the GLD directly into the serial port at the back. He opened a command shell and launched the mapping application. A minute later a satellite image appeared, a blue blip flashing in the center of the map.

"Got you."

June 16, 1992

Jaffa, Israel

17:29

Zach squinted and opened his eyes. He was still in the car, speeding and rocking along. His head was pounding. He squeezed his eyes shut and sobbed. Sarah was dead. He lashed out, kicking the side of the car and screaming. He slammed the back of his head into the floor of the trunk and blacked out again. A minute later he came to and whimpered. It was his fault; he had screwed up. He swallowed, trying to control his breathing. How could this have happened?

Thursday date nights, that's how. Never, ever establish routine, the academy had taught him.

He grinded his teeth. "Shit, no!" he shouted, slamming his feet into the side of the trunk. "Someone, get me out of here."

This wasn't helping. He steadied his breathing, trying to swallow away the bile in his throat. He relaxed, remembering how it had all begun.

In his teens, his parents used to go out on Thursday nights. Every Thursday night, they never skipped a day. He remembered how it had disgusted him. He used to think they were too old for that crap; they were shirking their responsibility towards their kids.

Once he had mockingly asked his father about the Thursday night ritual. "You're too old for all this lovey-dovey crap, Dad," he had said, trying to get some sort of reaction from the older man. Any kind of reaction would have been good.

David Cohen had scowled at him for a long while and then looked away, staring at the horizon. "I guess it's a natural law."

“What?”

“Sons are put on this earth to trouble their fathers.”

Zach remembered it was a year later when he called his father outside. He had turned twenty-two, and he had wanted to ask his father a serious question. They settled on the porch, sipping a beer and enjoying the sunset.

“Do you remember Sarah?” he asked his father.

“The Rodberg girl? You brought her over during spring break.”

Zach nodded.

“Pretty girl. A good family,” his father said, looking at the horizon, as was his manner.

“Well, I’m finishing with school next year, and I was thinking of doing my military service here in Israel.”

David Cohen turned to face his son. “That’s good, Zachary. You have a moral responsibility,” his father said with a faint smile.

“Sarah and I are in love, and we want to get married before I join the army,” he blurted out.

David Cohen studied the label on his beer bottle, contemplating his answer. This was the moment Zach had dreaded; he wouldn’t be able to reconcile with his dad if he didn’t give him his blessing. After a long while, David Cohen looked at him, fixing his eyes on him. “You ready to become a man, Zachary?”

“What do you mean, Dad?” Zach asked. “I *am* a man.”

David Cohen narrowed his eyes. “You’re a man when I say you are.” The older man stood and placed his beer on the porch then disappeared into the house. A while later he came back holding two pairs of boxing gloves. “Here, put them on.” David pulled the gloves over his own fists and tightened the laces with his teeth.

“Why, Dad? Do you want to fight me?” Zach scoffed.

“Yes, son, I do. I want to beat the crap out of you.”

“You can try, old man.” Zach pulled the gloves on then danced around his dad, trying the fancy footsteps he had seen the boxers do on TV. “Float like a butterfly, sting like a bee.”

The punch was telegraphed and slow. David Cohen threw a whopping roundhouse right-hand that connected solidly to Zack's chin. While he had seen the punch coming from a mile away, he couldn't believe it. His dad was the most good-natured person he knew. Zachary slumped to his knees, the earth spinning. He tried to shake the blow off.

“What was that for?” he moaned, moving his jaw.

His father towered over him, poking his fist in his face. “For all the derogatory remarks I had to endure from a snot-nose kid like you. I'll tell you what happens on Thursday nights,” he said, clasping his son's arm and pulling him to his feet. “Your mom and I fall in love again. We talk about anything but kids or homework or work or you, you damn smart aleck.”

Zach stood groggily, shaking his head.

“Look at me.” David Cohen connected with an uppercut to the solar plexus.

Zach fell with a grunt, clutching his stomach.

“We remember what made us fall in love with each other in the first place. And now, thank God, you'll be moving out of the house, and we can go back to the way things were.” He roughly tapped the back of Zachary's head with a gloved hand. “We can fall in love again. Hopefully Sarah will be as good to you as your mom is to me, then you'll understand.”

David Cohen sucked in a deep breath and closed his eyes, then stuck out his hand. "Stand up; I feel better."

Zach allowed himself to be pulled up. "Geez, Dad, I didn't know you were upset about the things I said. Why didn't you tell me to shut up?"

"Because you were a child. Today, you're a man; it's different." He pulled the glove from his hand and placed his hand on Zach's shoulder. "Let me give you a piece of advice, boy. One day you will be wiser, and then you need to reach out to the person who cares about you. Your spouse. Not kids, not family. Your wife, she is all who matters in life."

"So I have your blessing?" Zach asked with a grimace, out of breath.

"You do. If the wedding is in Jaffa. And your mom gets to choose the dress."

The older man then turned around, shaking his head. "Hopefully they teach you some boxing skills in the army . . ."

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Zach was shaken awake from his daydream when the car swayed once more and slowed to a screeching halt. He swallowed at the lump in his throat. His dad had been right. A part of him was gone, like his heart had been ripped out. He didn't want to live anymore.

**June 16, 1992**

**Jaffa, Israel**

**19:15**

Zachary Cohen was tied to a chair with his head slumped, his chin resting on his chest. His eyes were puffy and swollen shut. It felt like he had been dragged around by his hair. Fresh blood streamed from a cut on his cheekbone, down his neck, and soaked his white shirt a crimson red.

Someone sloshed a bucket of icy water over Zachary's head. He spluttered and coughed, lifted his head, tried to focus through swollen eyes. He was in what looked like a hotel room, an ancient and ramshackle place. He panned around the room. No bed. Faded wallpaper hung in strips from the wall. A metal table stood in the center of the place.

His kidnapper casually sat on the table. He had one leg off the ground, the bucket on his lap. "Wake up, little man."

Whatever, Zachary thought. He wished they'd kill him already; he had no reason for living anymore. Zachary giggled. "Yes, sir, on the double, sir," he said, his shoulders shaking with laughter.

The man strode over and punched Zachary in the stomach. "I want the name for the agent who tried to kill my partner."

Zachary bent forward and coughed, spitting blood from his mouth. He glanced at the man with a grimace. "The reason I'm still alive is because I know the answers to your questions. Why is this important to you? Who are—"



A man sauntered into the room. He wore a black pinstripe suit and a silky blue cravat which covered his chest and throat, tucked into a crisply-pressed, light blue shirt. "My dear, *dear* Captain Zachary Cohen."

Zachary swallowed. "Callahan? You—you're alive?"

Callahan stood in front of him, his hands shoved into his pockets. "Your agent attacked me with a garrote and left me for dead." He spoke with a wheeze and stopped to swallow after every couple of sentences. Callahan nodded towards the ponytailed man. "Perreira managed to revive me. I couldn't swallow for a month, crushed trachea, you see?" He sauntered over and stood behind Zachary. "This has become personal." He squeezed Zachary's shoulders. "There was a mole, you have his name."

"Screw you."

Callahan sauntered to Zachary's front, then he grabbed the armrests of the chair and leaned forward, his face close to Zachary's, their noses touching. "Captain, we're counterintelligence operatives. Many people could die." The smell of stale tobacco smoke lingered on his breath. "If you have a mole, I need to know who it is. We're on the same team here."

Zachary snorted. "OK, go ahead, amuse me with your bullshit."

Callahan stood up and fiddled with his cuff links. "All right, here is the truth. The British employ me to spy on the Cubans. I have other, let us say, less official duties, as well." He stood straight and shoved his hands in his pockets, pacing the room. "They compensated me well. I had an open checkbook, and we had made a bit of money on the side by siphoning some of these funds to our personal accounts." He turned around to face Zach. "Someone must have known about this; why else would they have ordered a hit on me?"

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