

## CHAPTER 1

*Paris — August 31, 1997 — 12:23 am*

André Dominelli had five days to live.

Unaware of his approaching fate, the French software engineer eased his aging Fiat Uno through the late evening Parisian traffic en route to the most important meeting of his predictable and structured life.

He felt anxious. A recent decision to improve his circumstances had forced him down a one-way path with no clear exit. Two months earlier, he'd manufactured a singular opportunity to sell classified information to a secretive organization with significant cash reserves. These people had pledged to make André a rich man and later tonight they would make good on that promise.

He looked down at the leather briefcase on the passenger seat. The item inside was about to change his life and he couldn't stop himself from glancing at it every few minutes.

He'd left his rue De Bercy office at 12:15 to rendezvous with a person he knew only as the Finn. Although he'd had two previous meetings with this man, he knew next to nothing about him apart from his physical bearing—he was tall and powerfully built—and his curiously accentless Parisian French.

As with their previous encounters, the Finn had selected an out-of-the-way tavern just off the Bois de Boulogne and tonight's meeting was scheduled for 12:30 am. The Fiat backfired lustily as it made its way along the Cours Albert, eliciting a grimace from its driver. He'd need to get that broken tailpipe repaired soon.

Cresting a small rise just before the Pont D'Alma tunnel, Dominelli noted another vehicle looming in his rear-view mirror. *Merde*, but this one was flying! It was a large passenger car and it was eating up the distance to the Fiat at an alarming rate. The approaching automobile must have been moving at well over 150 kph.

The Frenchman stared transfixed as the dark vehicle bore down on him. He wasn't a terribly gifted driver and his preoccupation with the trailing car had grown so complete that he failed to notice his front wheel cross over the road's centerline—edging him into the left lane as the Fiat descended toward the Alma tunnel.

The dark Mercedes—an S-280 as it turned out—closed to within fifty meters and, if anything, was now moving even faster than before. Dominelli began to panic. Had he been discovered? Was this the Sureté? The DGSE?

He gripped the steering wheel hard with visibly dampening hands—his eyes locked to the mirror—as he tried to make out the faces of the pursuing car's occupants. The Fiat continued crossing over into the second lane.

The Mercedes Benz closed on the slower moving Uno at over 90 kph. As both vehicles swept down the shallow gradient toward the tunnel entrance, the Fiat strayed a full meter into the left lane. Had the road remained straight there would likely be enough room for the Mercedes to squeeze by on the driver's side but the tunnel entrance curved to the left and, at its current speed of just over 140 kph,

the large German car couldn't manage the turn and the diminishing gap at the same time.

The Mercedes grazed the Fiat's left rear corner as it sped by. Because of the high velocity the contact was forceful enough to shatter the Uno's rear taillight and pitch the speeding S-280 into an unexpected slide.

He's trying to *kill* me! Dominelli stamped on the brakes and fought to steer the slow moving Fiat clear of his out-of-control nemesis.

The Mercedes driver attempted to correct the developing slide by countersteering to the right, but the big car was already too far gone. It swerved violently to the left before angling toward a series of pillars in the middle of the tunnel.

His own car now stationary, Dominelli watched in fascination as the black sedan careened wildly toward the center of the tunnel. A banshee shriek of tortured rubber filled the air as the Mercedes driver locked the tires in a desperate attempt to slow the heavy vehicle. The S-280's anti-lock braking system proved largely ineffective and the car lost little of its forward momentum before climbing the inner curb and slamming head first into one of the tunnel's support pillars.

The Mercedes nosed directly into the reinforced concrete column at over 100 kph. The force of the impact was enormous, instantly slicing the car down the middle, driving the engine through the firewall and collapsing the center passenger compartment to half its original size. This massive deceleration quickly converted into a reverse kinetic energy that propelled the car away from the pillar and flung it like some discarded child's toy toward the tunnel's far wall. With all its tremendous forward energy and momentum spent in a matter of seconds, the Mercedes reared briefly into the air and came to a final stop.

As if in some pervasive display of agony the Mercedes' horn came to life, echoing loudly in the tight confines of the tunnel. Dominelli's pulse raced like a jackhammer. He didn't know who was inside the destroyed luxury car but they surely had to be dead after an accident of this magnitude.

Just as quickly, he realized they couldn't have been after him. This wasn't a police or intelligence operation, and the man behind the wheel of the Mercedes—car thief or drunk—clearly wasn't a government agent.

Headlights flickered in his mirror, shaking Dominelli from his reverie as a familiar sense of panic took hold. He had to get out of here! He shifted the Uno into gear and accelerated forward.

He gingerly picked his way past the mangled wreckage of the S-280. The side windows were blown out by the crash, offering an unobstructed view of the car's interior. Slumped forward against the steering column was the driver, his chest triggering the blaring horn and the unnatural angle of his neck and upper body leaving little doubt he hadn't survived the crash. Another man occupied the front passenger seat but exhibited no discernable movement.

Dominelli's eyes moved to the rear of the vehicle and a shock of blonde hair caught his attention. Through the Mercedes' misshapen passenger compartment, he could make out the face of a woman in the back seat. Thinking her dead as well, he started to turn away when, out of the corner of his eye, he detected movement. The blonde woman had stirred. She was alive.

From across the five-meter gap, their eyes locked. The woman had a look of bewilderment on her face as she stared at him. Her mouth moved as if to say something but then just as quickly stopped. She continued gazing at him but Dominelli couldn't tell if it was an accusing look or one of confusion. Her eyes were a very deep blue.

A flash of light in his mirror broke him from his trance as another vehicle neared the tunnel entrance. The Fiat backfired through its broken tailpipe as André Dominelli accelerated toward the western exit. Seconds later he tore out of the Alma tunnel and into the cool Parisian night air. By the time the exit faded in his rear-view mirror he was traveling at over 100 kph.

Panicked, he realized that he was catching the traffic ahead. A rearward glance confirmed there were no trailing headlights so he reduced his speed. Whoever entered the tunnel behind him must have stopped to offer aid. As the Fiat slowed to a sedate 60 kph, Dominelli's body began shivering uncontrollably. He took the first available exit to the right and pulled to the curb.

It took five minutes before the trembling subsided sufficiently for him to restart the Fiat and continue driving. Still shaken from the accident, his meeting with the Finn was too important to miss. As he merged with the traffic along the Chaussée de la Muette, he couldn't tear the image of the blonde woman from his mind.

There'd been something damnably familiar about her.

Peterson sipped an orange juice and shifted his glance to the wall clock above the bar. 12:45. Dominelli wasn't the sort to be late for a meeting of this importance, which caused him concern. Had the little weasel compromised himself? Was he sitting in an interrogation room right now singing his heart out to some swarthy, Gitanes-smoking government hack?

Why did these turncoats always have to be such cowardly little fuckers? For professionals like Peterson it was agonizing to deal with such people. But for the valuable information and secrets they traded in, these pathetic lightweights weren't worth the cost of a 9mm hollow-point bullet to end their miserable lives.

Henrik Peterson was, in fact, no more a Finn than he was a compassionate caregiver. Originally from Gothenburg, Sweden, he'd spent most of his forty-eight years living in a variety of European countries far removed from Scandinavian borders. A gifted linguist, he also spoke eight languages—six fluently and four of those like a native.

Most would have found it difficult to decipher the thoughts of the tall man in the back booth. His pale, almost colorless blue eyes were expressionless, his gaze fixed and neutral. He never glanced at his wristwatch and rarely looked toward the front door. The glass of orange juice in front of him was still half full even though he'd ordered and paid for it twenty minutes earlier.

At ten minutes before the hour, 'the Finn' looked at his wristwatch for the first time since entering the bar. The digital display of the TAG Heuer confirmed the tavern clock was thirty seconds fast. Peterson would give Dominelli until one before leaving the bar and informing his contact the meeting was blown.

André Dominelli walked through the front doors two minutes later and, from his location at the back of the room, Peterson knew immediately that something was wrong. The Frenchman looked agitated, physically ill even. Before Dominelli's eyes could adjust to the gloom, Peterson stood up abruptly and walked to the rear exit. Moving quietly, he stepped into the tavern's back hallway and, peeling away the tape he'd left earlier to prevent it from latching, closed the door soundlessly behind him.

Peterson stopped to let his senses adjust to the new environment and listened for any unusual sounds. He remained motionless for thirty seconds, scanning the area for anything out of place. Satisfied, he walked to the end of the alley and out onto the street.

Peterson's vehicle was an Audi A8 Quattro he'd hired the day before from a high-performance car rental agency near Orly airport. A seemingly nondescript machine, the A8 sported a 300 horsepower 4.2 liter engine capable of propelling the 1800-kilo vehicle to over 250 kph. By availing himself of a fast car that ensured quick egress from any compromised situation, the Swede was simply following through on his own tradecraft guidelines. Even if that meant driving an expensive *Gran Turismo* machine that might draw some unwanted attention.

After scrutinizing the street for a few minutes, he decided Dominelli hadn't been followed. Whatever had caused the Frenchman's unusual behavior, it wasn't because of some outside sting operation. Peterson felt no regret over his decision to abort the meeting. He'd survived in this business for three decades by following his instincts, and tonight's actions merely served as punctuation to that philosophy. Still, Dominelli was flustered for some reason and that made him uncomfortable. Until he was satisfied the operation wasn't compromised, he would observe the Frenchman's actions from the periphery.

He pulled a small folding mobile phone from his jacket pocket and dialed a thirteen-digit long distance number from memory, waiting two rings for a familiar gruff voice to answer.

"Hallo?"

"There is a delay." Peterson responded in English.

A brief hesitation at the other end of the line. "What sort of delay?"

"Not certain. I am just taking precautions at the moment. I will call back once everything is clear."

"I will be here."

"*Sehr gut.*"

The Swede hit the disconnect button, placed the phone back in his pocket and settled in to wait.

Fifteen minutes later, he watched Dominelli exit the tavern. The Frenchman exhibited an almost forced level of sobriety as he crossed the deserted street toward his white Fiat. He may not have been drunk but he'd clearly been drinking.

The Fiat pulled out of its stall and headed southeast along the Avenue de l'Hippodrome on its way back to central Paris. Peterson waited until the white car was almost out of sight before executing a sharp U-turn, switching on his headlights, and accelerating to close within 100 meters of the smaller car. As he

followed, he noted the left-rear brake light of the Uno wasn't working. The lens and bulb were both broken.

Dominelli drove methodically through the quiet streets. He could still feel the effects of the two brandies and was taking every precaution to make the Fiat as invisible and unobtrusive as possible. Staying below the posted speed limit, he took twenty-five minutes to reach his apartment on Rue des Abbesses in the 9th Arrondissement. He located a curbside spot a few hundred meters from his building and, after a brief struggle to maneuver the Uno into the tight space, exited the car and walked toward his apartment. It was 1:47.

He'd advanced just a few dozen meters when he passed a dark Audi with its motor running. He started to glance inside when, with a swiftness that made his heart jump, the vehicle's passenger door swung open directly in front of him. It was the Finn.

"Get in." No preamble and no explanation from the Audi driver.

"Wh-where *were* you?" Sputtered Dominelli. It was all he could think to say.

The 'Finn' didn't answer. He looked directly at the smaller man and repeated his earlier command. "Get... in."

Dominelli clutched his briefcase and scanned the deserted street before awkwardly lowering himself into the passenger seat. He'd scarcely closed the door when the Audi leapt from the curb and accelerated quickly down the narrow street.

"You weren't *there!*" The Frenchman spoke first. "I waited for over half an hour."

"You were late," came the stone-faced reply. "Why?"

Dominelli's mind raced. "I wasn't that late. Only a few minutes."

The Audi was moving quickly now through the narrow residential streets. The Finn gazed straight ahead as he replied. "Twenty-two minutes."

Dominelli struggled for an appropriate response before finally deciding on the truth. "I had an accident."

Well clear of his passenger's neighborhood by now, and with the reassuring knowledge there was no surveillance in place, Peterson pulled abruptly to the side of the road and cut the engine.

He turned and looked directly at the smaller man. "Tell me about it."

## CHAPTER 2

*Vancouver, B.C. — August 30, 1997 — 4:50 pm (1:50 am Paris Time)*

As André Dominelli described his accident in the Alma tunnel to the man he knew as the Finn, Jack Wright had his Nomex-shod hands full with a rapidly disintegrating gearbox.

The Ralt RT-41 Formula Atlantic machine Wright piloted was one of the world's more advanced open-wheel racing cars. The sleek, high-tech carbon-fiber formula car possessed such an enormous level of aerodynamic downforce and mechanical grip, in fact, that its cornering and braking capabilities matched those of the considerably more sophisticated and expensive CART Champ Cars headlining the weekend's events. Not that this meant much to Wright at the moment. A race car is as strong as its weakest link and that Achilles heel currently resided inside the five-speed transaxle mated to the 240-horsepower Toyota racing engine. Two of those gears were now irretrievably lost in a pile of broken metal shavings while a third was showing every sign of failing in the next few minutes. With ten laps remaining in the race, it didn't look as though Wright would make it to the checkered flag.

The Molson Indy Vancouver was one of the most popular events on the 18-race CART-PPG racing calendar. The obscenely powerful Champ Cars—or IndyCars as they were known to the 160,000 Canadian race fans attending the annual Labor Day weekend event—were terribly unsuited to the narrow 1.7-mile street course. However, in the hands of the gifted drivers that danced these thousand-horsepower ground missiles over the manhole covers and between the unforgiving concrete barriers at speeds approaching 180 mph—names like Andretti, Tracy, Rahal, and Unser—the spectacle was truly astonishing.

As with most major motorsport events, the Vancouver Indy also featured a slate of supporting races to entertain the large crowds when the CART machines weren't running. The most prestigious of these warm-up events was the Formula Atlantic class. A 'spec' formula car that had served as the chief training ground for aspiring North American IndyCar and Formula One drivers for twenty-five years, Formula Atlantic was one of the most competitive open-wheeled racing classes in professional motorsports. For the drivers that plied their trade in this hotly contested series, lucrative sponsorship backing was a necessity—as the cost of competing had spiraled to over three-quarters of a million dollars for the full twelve-race Toyota Atlantic Championship. Even the \$20,000 payouts that individual race winners could earn from the series' well-funded purse weren't enough to keep a driver running at the sharp end of the grid without significant subsidy from outside sources.

Jack Wright had bucked this trend. Going up against the combined might of the well-heeled Links and Porteau teams, he'd posted a hard fought fourth place finish at Montreal earlier in the season followed by podiums at Toronto and Trois Rivières. What made these results noteworthy was Wright's miniscule \$30,000 sponsorship deal.

He'd convinced a second-tier California-based team to rent its back-up car for ten thousand dollars per race, and the ensuing prize money earnings had nearly

doubled his original sponsorship backing from a Toronto-based sportswear manufacturer. The team absorbed most of the cash to pay for engine maintenance and travel expenses but there was enough in the kitty to put Wright in the seat for a fourth race at his home track in Vancouver.

Wright had qualified his car fourth and, after a blistering standing start, elbowed his way past the third place car of Patrick LaSalle at the first turn. Once established in the top three, Wright began reeling in the leaders. The Vancouver track was a notoriously uncooperative place for passing and it would often take an act of sheer bravado just to feint a move to the inside, let alone make one stick. Comprised of regular city streets through a section of town in the midst of major urban renovation, the Concorde Pacific Place circuit was a study in compromise and claustrophobia. Impossibly narrow, horrendously bumpy, and ringed with hundreds of massive concrete barriers, the circuitous layout was loathed by most of the top-flight Champ Car drivers.

The Atlantic drivers didn't indulge in such public censure. Today's race was a crown jewel in their twelve-race North American schedule and every driver in the twenty-nine-car field was here to put on a good show for the key CART teams. Jack Wright more desperately than most.

By lap four he'd reeled in the second place car of Dominic Hobert and pulled out a two second lead on his immediate pursuers. As the two machines swept across the start-finish line, an uncharacteristically sloppy gear change from Hobert produced a split-second loss of forward acceleration. Wright seized the opportunity, diving his car to the inside for the upcoming left-hander and jinking to the right at the last second in anticipation of Hobert's blocking attempt. Both machines funneled on to the long front straight with Hobert's factory Porteau car ahead by half a car length.

Their speed piled up through the Plaza of Nations straight and Wright's superior momentum moved him ahead another few feet as they swept through the high-speed curve that preceded the hairpin's braking zone. Locked side-by-side at over 150 mph as they flew out of the concrete-lined bend, both drivers stamped on their brake pedals in unison.

Hobert's car held the advantage of a clean outside racing line while Wright battled for traction on the dirtier inside path. The Ralt bled off 100 mph of forward velocity in a less than a hundred feet, pitching his body forcefully into the harness. ABS brakes are prohibited in Formula Atlantic racing—as they are in most professional motorsports—but this was largely immaterial to drivers of Wright and Hobert's caliber. All top-flight racing drivers have the innate ability to feel the individual hydraulic brake pulses from each wheel through the ball of their right foot. This enables them to modulate the brake pedal pressure and prevent adhesion-destroying lockups. The technique is called threshold—or cadence—braking and, when practiced by a skilled racing artisan, it can decelerate a car with greater efficiency than any computer-controlled anti-lock braking system.

Tortured rubber chirps and wisps of smoke rose from Wright's tires as he fought to stave off an extended brake lockup. Both cars reached the turn-in point and Hobert had to yield the corner to Wright's barely-on-the-edge-of-control RT-41 because there was no longer an empty space for him to point his car. Once

clear of the turn, Wright punched the gas pedal home and executed an enthusiastic tail-swinging exclamation point to his textbook passing maneuver. He was now in second place.

For the next twenty laps Wright remained closely in touch with the race leader as Hobert and the remainder of the field faded in his mirrors. He didn't have enough straightline speed to launch a serious attack on Andy Tribiani's first place Links machine but he was determined to stay locked to the Californian's rear wing until an opportunity presented itself.

Two-thirds of the way into the 38-lap event, his race strategy encountered a jolt—figuratively and literally. As he accelerated out of the final turn, Wright's high-revving gearbox violently rejected his upshift into third. Two frantic yet unsuccessful attempts followed before he was forced to snatch fourth and dejectedly watch the RPMs plummet as the taller gear lugged the car out of the corner. Tribiani's machine leapt ahead by six car-lengths.

Before the lap ended, he would lose second gear to the same insidious transmission Gremlins. With only three forward gears left, his lap times slowed commensurately and his mirrors filled with Hobert's sky-blue Ralt and a trio of closely pursuing cars two tours later.

Wright fought valiantly to protect his runner-up spot from the cars behind. On lap thirty-two, he successfully fended off another of Hobert's tire-smoking passing attempts into the hairpin when, while accelerating out of the corner, he was greeted with a boxful of neutrals. Something had finally imploded inside the transmission and he was forced to wave his pursuers by as he coasted his broken car toward the B.C. Place chicane.

Pulling down the escape road and killing the ignition, he punched the release lever for his six-point harness and brought the car to rest behind a five-deep section of banded-together tires. He removed the quick-release steering wheel, hoisted himself clear of the Ralt's narrow cockpit, and stepped out into the warm late-summer air.

Shit! This was the closest he'd come to winning a race all year and if the damned gearbox had held out for just ten more laps he would have been spraying Moet and Chandon in full view of the CART elite. One of the older drivers in the series, Wright knew he didn't have many more opportunities to shine in front of the IndyCar bosses. Hell, after this, any chance of racing at Laguna next week was shot all to hell.

As the race's final laps wound down, Jack Wright slung his helmet strap through his forearm and began hiking back to the pits. He looked up at one of the nearby Diamond Vision screens and saw that the TV cameras were tracking him as he walked the short distance back to the paddock. It was strange to see his twenty-foot high image moving across the huge screen. The picture also caught the attention of the spectators in the closest grandstand, who stood and cheered as he passed.

He waved back.



Peterson listened to Dominelli's rambling description of the accident in the tunnel without interruption.

"You're certain that nobody saw you or took down your license?"

"Yes, I'm positive."

The Swede looked at the Audi's dash-mounted clock—2:01 am. It could be worse. Dominelli had wisely vacated the scene before anyone could identify him. Judging from his breathless narrative, the incident involved a drunk driver who simply got what he deserved while speeding from one bar to another. The drunk's passengers had paid a high price for his alcohol-fuelled bravado but Peterson could care less about them. Dominelli was in the clear and that was all that mattered.

"Do you have the disc?" He shifted his gaze to the little man's briefcase.

"Yes."

"Good. We will return to your car now."

The Swede started the engine and swung out of his parking spot. Accelerating quickly, he circled the block and navigated Dominelli back to his street. Once they reached the Fiat, he stopped alongside and turned to his passenger.

"Get in your car and follow me."

The Frenchman stepped into the white Uno and gracelessly maneuvered his way out of the tight parking space with spirited yet unnecessary bursts of throttle. Peterson winced at the noise from the broken exhaust.

Once the Fiat was rolling, the Audi driver accelerated ahead and allowed the slower vehicle to slot in behind. As they traveled west, he reached for his cell phone. His eyes didn't leave the road as he punched in thirteen characters on the keypad from feel alone.

"*Hallo?*" The familiar voice answered after two rings.

"We're back on schedule. ETA is fifteen minutes."

"I will inform them." The connection ended.

The streets were quiet at this hour and Dominelli had little trouble staying with the Audi. It took the tandem twelve minutes to reach the outskirts of Neuilly Sur Seine and, a short time after that, Peterson led them to a small riverfront building on the rue Soyer.

The Swede opened a gated garage at the end of the block with a small remote control on the Audi's visor. He turned sharply into the entrance and drove into an empty parking garage with Dominelli following. He stepped out of his car and motioned to the Frenchman to park his Fiat beside the Audi.

After closing and locking the Uno, Dominelli stood awkwardly clutching his briefcase.

"This way." The larger man directed his companion toward a stairwell entrance in the corner of the building. The pair climbed three stories to a brightly lit hallway with a large oak door at the end. Peterson walked up to it and knocked sharply.

A deadbolt unlatched and the door swung open. A swarthy looking man with a shaved head nodded imperceptibly to the 'Finn' before stepping into the hall and motioning them both inside. Once everyone had entered the room, he closed and bolted the door behind them.

The room was large and airy. With its ten-meter ceiling and dark hardwood floors it looked like a trendy and overpriced loft apartment yet, apart from a few tables and folding chairs, there were no furnishings to suggest it was anything more than an abandoned commercial space. A photographer's studio perhaps. All the windows were blinded and curtained for privacy, and a small television monitor near the front door relayed grainy black and white images from a trio of security cameras in the hallway, stairwell, and parking garage.

Peterson directed Dominelli to the middle of the room where a fourth man was seated at a card table with two laptop computers in front of him. Smaller in stature and considerably stouter than his door-tending companion, the computer man brusquely extended his arm when Dominelli approached. It wasn't an offer to shake hands.

"You have the disc?"

"Yes, in here." Dominelli patted the briefcase. Kneeling awkwardly, he unlatched the clasp and reached inside to extract a single unmarked CD-ROM in a plastic jewel case. "You will need a copy of WinZip to decompress the files."

The technician nodded. "This will take some time," he said as he placed the disc into one of the laptop's open CD-ROM drives. "Take a seat over there." He indicated a pair of folding chairs in the far corner of the room. A thick German accent was evident behind the man's conversational French.

In fact, it would take more than three hours of close examination before the technician was satisfied with the contents of Dominelli's disc. During this time, the portly German wrote down copious notes and double-checked figures frequently on a portable scientific calculator.

The Finn had left the room shortly after ushering Dominelli in. The security camera monitor was angled away from the Frenchman's view so he wasn't sure if he'd left the building or simply stepped outside the suite. The swarthy doorman, who spoke with a Corsican accent, sat near the front entrance reading a football magazine and occasionally scanning the TV monitor beside him. The fat technician worked fastidiously on his keyboards, oblivious to anyone else's presence.

There was a plastic cooler against the wall and his hosts brusquely told Dominelli to help himself when he requested a drink. Fetching a Coke out of the ice-filled container—as much for the caffeine as the refreshment value—he slumped back into the uncomfortable folding chair and sipped slowly from the ice-cold can.

After twenty-five years of faithful government service, André Dominelli was going into business for himself. Although not a scientist, he was a highly proficient software engineer whose security clearance occasionally provided access to some sophisticated defense technologies.

Six months earlier, his superiors assigned him to a technical team tasked with archiving all of France's ballistic missile data on a bank of mainframe computers beneath the Ministry of Defense headquarters at the Hotel de Brienne at 14 rue Saint-Dominique. While much of the material consisted of dry and technically

redundant documentation on theoretical and historical aspects of French missile research, a small portion was culled directly from classified Ministry documents.

During his first few months on the project, Dominelli was astonished at the sensitivity of the documents crossing his workstation. The data included full working schematics and detailed technical descriptions of France's 18-silo IRBM launch site at Plateau d'Albion as well as step-by-step instructions on the development, construction and programming of Intermediate Range Ballistic Missiles—devices capable of targeting an enemy over five-thousand kilometers away. The value of this information on the open market was incalculable.

Recent inductees into the international nuclear “club”—countries like India, Pakistan, and North Korea—were ineffectual saber rattlers on the modern global scene, but only because they didn't possess the means to deliver nuclear payloads beyond their own borders. The missile technology Dominelli processed at his workstation each day—if conveyed to the appropriate sources—could change that balance of power overnight.

However, he'd need someone to make the pitch for him. Government computer techs like André Dominelli didn't operate in such circles.

He did have an opening, however. Six months earlier Dominelli had cultivated a valuable connection at the Ministry's yearly Christmas party when an outside group approached him expressing interest in information from the Grade 3 Software Engineer. A friendly older man claiming to be a retired Police Nationale officer had struck up a conversation and quietly informed him that his income could be tripled and even quadrupled should he deliver certain documents into their possession. Dominelli didn't report the illegal contact to his superiors and still had the man's phone number on a typewritten card back in his apartment.

With constant and intrusive security checks greeting him every time he entered and left the Ministry, Dominelli knew that getting the ballistic missile data out wouldn't be easy. Sophisticated X-ray devices and metal detectors were located at the main entrance to the mainframe complex and all bags and personal possessions were regularly swept for unauthorized material.

He spent the next two weeks struggling to figure a way to transport the data through the security screens when, while relaxing with a CD-ROM based computer game on his home PC one night, he hit on a plan.

Dominelli stopped in at a computer and video game store the next afternoon and browsed its selection of PC racing simulations. The clerk pointed out several boxes but the one that caught his eye was a title called *Formule Un Champion* by Franco Software, a French gaming publisher headquartered just a few kilometers from his apartment. Coincidentally, an old friend from his university days had tried to recruit him for the very same company a year ago. Naturally, Dominelli had refused. Programming game code for the unwashed masses was quite beneath him.

He purchased three copies of the Formula One racing game and left the store. Once back in his apartment, he opened one of the boxes and extracted the game CD from its plastic jewel case. The disc was a nondescript piece of vinyl decorated on one side with the publisher's logo, the game title, and a line drawing of a racing car—all in black against a white background. Excellent. He had a friend who could duplicate this artwork with ease.

After examining the disc for a few minutes, he placed it into his computer's CD-ROM drive and was gratified to learn the basic game code usurped just 450 megabytes of the disc's 650-megabyte storage capacity. If he deleted a few unnecessary files and folders, there would be plenty of room for the material he needed to copy.

Two days later, he arranged for his friend at the CD duplication shop to reproduce the CD-ROM artwork on two blank, rewritable discs. Once home, he formatted both CD-RW discs and copied all of the core *Formule Un Champion* game files. He then substituted one of the duplicates for the original game disc in the open *Formule Un Champion* box, reapplying the thin acetate seal to make it appear unopened. Now he simply had to wait.

Dominelli came to work thirty minutes early on the day before his shift supervisor Pierre Rothschild was due to leave on vacation. He carried the racing game in his leather briefcase, and willingly handed it over for examination at the downstairs security desk. The Corporal on duty looked at him quizzically as he retrieved the case from the X-Ray machine's conveyor belt. He opened it and removed the colorfully illustrated box.

"What's this André?"

"It's for Pierre." He replied as calmly as he could. "He's such a racing nut I thought I would give him a going away present before he leaves for Le Mans tomorrow."

The Corporal examined the seal on the outside of the box. "You know I'm going to have to open it?"

"Really? The cheap bastard will think I'm giving him a used game if you do that."

"Rules are rules André."

"*Putain*. Do what you must." Dominelli feigned disappointment.

The guard sliced through the acetate seal with a letter opener from his desk drawer and tipped the contents of the box into a metal examination tray. In addition to the CD jewel case there was also a thin game manual and a mail-in warranty card. The Corporal removed the CD from its case, examined it, and placed it into the CD-ROM drive of a computer just out of Dominelli's sight below the desk. He studied the screen for a few moments before removing the CD from the drive. Placing the disc back into its plastic case, he slid everything back into the box.

He handed the package back to Dominelli with a wry smile, "I hear this is a good game. Too bad my PC isn't fast enough to play it."

Thank God for *youth*, the relieved software engineer thought quietly.

"I may be able to help you out there. There are several departments around here that are dumping obsolete bits of hardware. The hard drives are off-limits but I can probably get you a line on a good CPU and motherboard."

The Corporal's eyes lit up. "You could? That would be great."

"I'll check and get back to you."

"You know where to find me. Have a good day André."

"You too Serge." Dominelli buckled the latch on his briefcase and walked down the hall to his office. He had to swipe his personal security card at three

additional locations before arriving at his cubicle in the building's cavernous mainframe room.

He worked away industriously at his station for the remainder of the morning. When the room began to empty at lunchtime, he removed the racing game disc from its box and placed it into his computer's CD burner tray. Transferring the information was anticlimactic because he'd sourced the files he needed weeks ago and saved them to an obscure password-protected location on one of the network server's hard drives. Retrieving them took just forty-five minutes. Once finished, he deleted all of the temporary files and folders from the server and performed a Scandisk and Defrag operation to ensure no remnants remained. He then placed the freshly appended CD back into its box and headed to the cafeteria.

Pierre Rothschild was eating alone at a corner table. Dominelli walked over to him and, smiling broadly, placed the Formula One game beside his plate.

"Thought you might enjoy this."

Rothschild looked up from his Quiche Lorraine.

"What's this?"

"A friend of mine works for this company," Dominelli explained, pointing at the Franco logo on the front of the box. "He sent me some free copies and, well, I'm not much of a racing fan but I figured you might have some fun with it."

"Thank you." Rothschild had never cared much for Dominelli. The man was an obsequious little toad but it would be rude not to express some sort of gratitude for the unexpected gift. "That's nice of you."

"*Pas du tout*. Sorry about the open package but you know those Nazis at the security desk. I think they wanted to make sure it wasn't a bomb."

"Yes, they're very thorough."

"They certainly are. Well, *ciao*." Dominelli excused himself and walked to the food counter for a bowl of soup and a coffee. He paid for his meal and sat down at a table in the far corner of the room. He examined a copy of *Le Monde* and pointedly avoided any further eye contact with his supervisor. Half an hour later he was back at his desk.

Anticipating that Rothschild would want to leave early to prepare for his Le Mans journey, Dominelli paid close attention to his movements for the balance of the afternoon. At 4:00 he noticed him closing down his computer terminal and clearing his desk of paperwork. He was getting ready to leave.

Swiftly logging off his own terminal, Dominelli grabbed his coat and rushed over to Rothschild's office.

"I'm afraid I'm going to have to leave early today." He tried to look appropriately flustered and ill. "I think there was something in my lunch that didn't agree with me."

Preoccupied with his own plans, Rothschild barely even heard him. "What? Oh, sure, fine."

"Thanks. I'll be sure to come in early on Monday to make up for it."

"*D'accord*." Rothschild didn't give a damn. He'd be on holiday in a couple of hours.

Dominelli exited the mainframe room and moved swiftly through the hallway toward the security desk. With his empty briefcase, it took him less than thirty seconds to pass through the X-Ray machine and metal detector. He bounded up

the staircase to the building's main foyer and headed for the small, unmanned security desk beside the main elevators. From here he could see the full bank of security monitors for the building, including one that was trained on the downstairs security station he'd just passed through.

Using a newspaper for cover, he stared intently at the black and white monitor. After an interminable four-minute wait Rothschild approached the gate. A security pass was handed over and returned after it had been swiped through the electronic reader. Rothschild had the game box under his arm, which he also handed to the Sergeant on duty. The guard placed it on the X-Ray conveyor belt.

Dominelli couldn't make out what was being discussed but it must have been along the same lines as his conversation with the morning duty guard. The Sergeant dumped the contents of the box into the metal examination tray and removed the CD from its plastic case. He placed it into the drive bay of the security station's computer and studied his monitor.

The procedure took longer than expected. Rothschild was a senior official in the Ministry and Dominelli had assumed he'd receive kid-glove treatment from the building's security personnel. He'd also waited until the final day before Rothschild's vacation to present him with the gift because he knew his supervisor wouldn't leave it in his desk drawer for a fortnight. Workstations were searched and inventoried on a regular basis and Rothschild certainly wouldn't want anyone finding a computer game in his desk while he was away.

Slipping the game into the building had been tricky but it was clear nothing was going to leave this facility without a comprehensive examination—no matter who carried it. The guard must be studying the directory and file structure on the disc to see if anything looked inappropriate. Dominelli had taken pains to rename all the copied files and folders to match with the game's default filenames. He'd even altered the creation dates. As long as the guard didn't actually try to *play* the game—Dominelli had removed everything but the game's opening video intro and splash menu—there should be nothing on the disc to tip anyone off.

He'd preceded his supervisor out of the building in case his plan caved in, and had even packed his suitcase and passport into his car in case he was compelled to leave the city in a hurry. If Rothschild was detained, it would take less than ten minutes for an alert to go out for his own arrest.

After three more excruciating minutes, the desk Sergeant handed the disc and its box back to Rothschild. Dominelli folded and replaced the newspaper on the counter and moved quickly toward the building's rear entrance. There was a large parking area at the back of the complex and he wanted to get to his car before Rothschild reached his. Once behind the wheel of the Fiat, he waited only thirty seconds before his supervisor exited the building and strode toward to his silver BMW.

The end phase of the operation came together with surprising ease. Dominelli's original, somewhat sketchy plan was to tail his supervisor to the neighborhood bar he frequented every night, wait for him to go inside, then break into his car and recover the disc. Yet, when Rothschild pulled into a self-service fuel station less than a kilometer from the Ministry, an alternative solution presented itself.

He stopped at the pump island opposite his supervisor and fidgeted with the Fiat's gear lever as he waited the BMW owner to finish fueling. When Rothschild walked to the cashier's office to pay, Dominelli grabbed an undoctored copy of the racing game from his glovebox and, glancing around furtively—quite needlessly as no other patrons were in a position to witness his actions—made the switch through the BMW's open passenger window. Rothschild had left it on the front seat in plain view. He then jumped back in his car and accelerated away from the station, his body crouched low in the driver's seat. Twenty minutes of erratic and circuitous driving followed—punctuated by constant rear-view mirror checks—before Dominelli's racing heart slowed sufficiently for him to accept that the grab had been a success.

Once back at his apartment, he retrieved a bottle of wine from his refrigerator and downed half a liter of the cold Pinot Gris over the next thirty minutes. Every so often he would hold the freshly burned CD up to light and stare at it as though it were a rare gem. He'd done it! He now possessed a commodity more valuable than diamonds. A commodity that could fetch him a king's ransom from the right sources.

Draining the rest of his wine, Dominelli stood up and walked to his computer desk. There was still a great deal to do.

Dominelli sipped his Coca Cola in silence as the German technician examined the files on the CD he'd created ten weeks earlier and realized just how close he was to cashing in on his bold gamble. His heart rate was elevated at the moment but he wasn't sure if that was because of the caffeine or the prospect of the enormous sum of money he'd shortly be leaving with.

## CHAPTER 3

*Vancouver, B.C. — August 30, 1997 — 8:30 pm*

Jack Wright tossed back his fourth CC and ginger ale of the evening and contemplated ordering another.

He sat alone on the outdoor patio of the Yaletown Brewery—a trendy brewpub restaurant only a few minutes from the Concorde Pacific circuit—after arriving an hour and a half earlier to have dinner and drinks with Chuck Edwards. Chuck was the owner of Wright’s Formula Atlantic team and the two old racing buddies had concocted a plan to get stinking drunk tonight after the impossibly cruel turn of events in that afternoon’s race.

Thirty minutes after they arrived, however, Edwards received a call on his cell phone that dictated his return to the race paddock, apparently to deal with some missing customs paperwork for the team’s trailer and equipment.

Given Chuck’s early departure, the two hadn’t had much time to discuss Wright’s future with the team. Edwards Motorsports wasn’t a charity operation however and Wright knew there’d be no ride at Laguna next weekend unless he could scrape together some serious money. Unfortunately, the sportswear company that sponsored his earlier races didn’t market outside of Canada and wouldn’t be interested in an event in Northern California.

He swirled his drink absent-mindedly. The ice cubes clinked quietly against the glass, thirsty for more liquid. Wright was an honest man but his burning career ambitions were beginning to eat away at his ethics. If someone offered him a guarantee he wouldn’t be caught—and that no one would get hurt—he wouldn’t hesitate to *steal* the money he needed. A few hundred grand... it was all he needed.

That Wright had the talent to earn a ride with one of the Champ Car teams was something he never questioned. He understood his own strengths and weaknesses and one thing was clear to him—he was already a better driver than half the field in tomorrow’s feature CART race. Time, however, was his enemy. He’d need a sponsorship package for next year’s Formula Atlantic series that not only allowed him to compete at every event, but also gave him the equipment to dominate the championship. Anything less and the IndyCar bosses would just pick from that seemingly bottomless pool of up and coming teenagers from the Atlantic and Indy Light ranks. A graybeard in his early thirties would have to accomplish twice as much to make any impression with these guys.

Catching his reflection in the restaurant window, Wright certainly didn’t see himself as a graybeard. His thick black hair was devoid of any premature silvering and his lean 5’11” frame, while a bit on the tall side for formula car racing, was hard and fit from years of physical training. He’d received a late start in racing after a ten-year hitch in the armed forces but, since his discharge from the Canadian Airborne Regiment in 1993, he’d ascended the ranks of amateur and professional motorsports with phenomenal speed.

Shortly after leaving the army, he signed up for a three-day racing school in Mt. Tremblant, Quebec and impressed his instructors so much that the school awarded him its top prize of a sponsored Formula Ford 1600 ride the following



year. When he won eight of ten races in the 1994 school championship, his destiny was carved in stone.

Leaving the relative obscurity of the school series in 1995, Wright returned to his hometown of Vancouver on Canada's west coast, secured \$40,000 in sponsorship from a burgeoning Internet brokerage service company, and dove headlong into his first professional racing series. He won three of ten races in the newly established U.S. Formula 2000 National Championship and ended the season as a close runner-up to a nineteen-year old publishing heir who'd spent over \$300,000 on his title bid. The following year, the now thirty-one-year old Wright re-entered the F2000 series with almost \$80,000 in sponsorship money. A shoestring budget by pro racing standards, Wright still took ten of twelve races and won the prestigious national championship with more than double the points of his nearest rival.

But for his age, Wright's ticket to an eventual Champ Car ride would have been assured. Yet, when no Formula Atlantic or Indy Light teams came calling for his services in 1997, he was forced to seek his own backing. His off-season U.S. sponsorship hunt had come up dry but he continued persevering until he struck a deal with Portage Sportswear of Toronto to fly their colors for three eastern Canadian events in the Toyota Atlantic championship.

The \$30,000 they provided wouldn't have gone far if it hadn't been for Chuck Edwards. Wright had met the Californian while serving with the UN peacekeeping forces in Somalia in the early 90s. The boisterous American Sergeant and the quiet Canadian Master Corporal had become fast friends during their tour of duty in the impoverished east African nation. Edwards left the army in 1993 to take over his family's racing shop and, within two years, turned Edwards Motorsport into one of Northern California's most successful regional Formula Atlantic teams. When a well-to-do Japanese businessman infused over half a million dollars in rental income into the operation, Chuck's team went national in 1996 and 1997 with the professional Toyota Atlantic Series.

Wright convinced Edwards to rent the team's second car to him at three eastern Canadian events for only \$10,000 per race. This spare car was earmarked for use by the team's principal customer, Toshio Matsuki, should he damage his primary car, and Wright accepted the possibility he could be evicted from his seat at a moment's notice. That this never happened was more due to Matsuki's extraordinarily cautious and timid driving style than anything else. In fact, the twenty-four-year old Japanese driver was terrified of the Atlantic car's speed and could never fully explore its cornering and braking capabilities. His participation in the series was largely to please his wealthy father who'd bankrolled his fledgling racing career in Japan and North America since Toshio was a teenager. The youngster was already regretting his career choice.

Stretching three races into four had taken every dollar Wright could scrape together but the afternoon's broken gearbox had flatlined any remaining life signs for this season.

The waitress stopped by his table and asked if he was ready to order dinner. He looked at his watch and then at his unfilled glass. What the hell was taking Chuck so long?

“Not yet,” he said as he handed her the offensively empty highball glass. “But I’ll take another one of these.”

Peterson felt the familiar mild pulsation of his cell phone and fished the small device out of his coat.

“Yes.”

“We’re done,” came the short reply.

“Very well. I’ll be there presently.”

Replacing the phone in his pocket, he spun the Audi’s 4.2 liter engine to life and rolled out of the parking lot. He’d left the safe house shortly after admitting Dominelli and driven to a nearby curbside parking spot. Peterson was a firm believer in mobility and, knowing the verification procedure with Dominelli’s disc would take some time, had relocated himself to a neutral location where he could monitor the building while ensuring unhampered egress.

The Audi was back in the garage in less than a minute and Peterson re-entered the third-floor safe house ninety seconds after that. The German technician—whose name was Ralf Kolb—was packing away his equipment while the Corsican guard watched from the doorway. Dominelli remained seated in the far corner. The software engineer still looked nervous but there was an added element of exhaustion to his appearance. He’d had a long evening.

“Well?” Peterson spoke directly to Kolb.

“*Ist gut.*” The German didn’t attempt to disguise his native language.

Peterson nodded before turning toward Dominelli. He produced a passport-sized booklet with a bright red cover from his jacket pocket.

“This is for you.”

The booklet was an Austrian *Sparbuch* that, literally translated, meant ‘savings book’. One of the best kept secrets of the international banking community, the Sparbuch was the only truly anonymous bank account in the world for those who preferred to keep both their assets and their identities hidden. Although the storied Swiss bank account has traditionally been associated with this practice, sweeping new banking laws appeared in 1991 that mandated detailed credit references from all prospective Swiss banking clients. This entailed a verification of identity, a proof of residence and two independent bank references. What’s more, in cases where criminal activity is suspected, numbered Swiss accounts can be frozen, seized or worse—peeled open like a ripe onion to reveal every detail of the account holder’s financial history.

Austria currently has the tightest bank secrecy laws in the world and, as a consequence, the Sparbuch is the most secure way to ferret away funds in total anonymity. No identification is required to open the account, no statements are ever mailed out, and no paper trail is created. The passbook holder, or *Ueberbringer*, is presumed to be the rightful owner of the account and it’s legal to transfer a Sparbuch from one party to another without notifying the bank officers. Passing the savings book and its accompanying *logungswort*—or password—over to someone else creates a new account holder with no questions asked.

The passbook that Peterson handed to André Dominelli controlled an account at the Oesterreichische Nationalbank with a balance of just over twenty-five million schillings—or two million U.S. dollars. Staped to the inside front cover of the booklet was a small card with the account's ten-digit password written in black ink. Dominelli rose up swiftly from his chair and accepted the passbook with a weary yet genuine smile. He was now a millionaire.

He flipped through the pages of the red booklet to confirm its contents before looking back at the man he knew as the Finn.

“Do you need me to stay any longer?”

Peterson shook his head. “No, you can leave. Expect to hear from me again in two days.” Despite the size of the transaction that had just taken place, it was only the first of a two-stage arrangement between the Frenchman and the clandestine organization Henrik Peterson represented. A second, and final meeting would take place in three day's time.

With this dismissal, Dominelli was ushered downstairs to his car by the Corsican doorman and into the early morning sunlight of an awakening city. It was 5:56.

After seeing to the departure of his German colleague and the CD-ROM disc, Peterson got into his car and once again dialed the thirteen-digit number from memory. Although the expensive digital Nokia handset could store dozens of speed dial numbers, Peterson chose not to employ this feature for security reasons. Should it fall into the wrong hands, the police could produce a printout of all the phone's incoming and outgoing calls, but the Swede wasn't going to make their job easier by committing these numbers to the device's memory chip. An hour or two's delay in sourcing the phone's calling history through regular channels could mean the difference between arrest and flight for those at the other end of the line. In this case, that was a small office building in Hamburg, Germany.

Peterson also made it a practice to carry at least three fully charged batteries with him at all times. He used his cell phone a lot.

“*Hallo?*” The familiar gruff voice answered after two rings.

“Everything is complete. You should expect to see Herr K. arriving sometime this afternoon. I will follow him later tonight.”

“*Gut.*” The connection ended without additional fanfare. The conversation had lasted less than eight seconds.

Peterson pocketed the phone and stepped into the waiting Audi. He drove out of the garage and turned right on rue Soyer to head back into the city. The dashboard clock read a few minutes after six so, with luck, he could catch three or four hours sleep at his hotel before he'd have to check out and return the car to the airport rental agency. He would need it. He'd been awake for twenty-four consecutive hours and his reflexes were starting to dull from the lack of REM sleep.

As he drove east along the Avenue de Villiers, he switched on the radio to listen for any traffic tie-ups. What he heard instead over the stereo speakers startled the taciturn Swede.

The news—as delivered by a distraught announcer—was terse and shocking. England's Princess Diana and her companion Dodi al Fayed had both been killed

in a high-speed automobile crash earlier that morning in the Pont d'Alma tunnel. Their Mercedes had been chased at high speed from the Ritz hotel by a group of paparazzi in cars and motorcycles and it crashed heavily into a support pillar in the middle of the tunnel a short time later. The driver of the Mercedes and al Fayed died instantly while the former Princess of Wales was pronounced dead at 4:00 am after extensive but ultimately unsuccessful efforts to revive her. A fourth man—the couple's bodyguard—was currently alive and in critical condition at the same hospital.

Peterson pulled off the road and braked the Audi to a stop at the first open spot. He fished out the cell phone and pressed the redial button; mildly annoyed at himself for not clearing the phone's memory before he left the safe house.

It took four rings before the line was picked up this time.

*"Hallo?"*

"We have a problem."

Chuck Edwards made it back to the restaurant a few minutes before nine o'clock. Wright had nursed his fifth drink of the night for the better part of thirty minutes but it was again down to ice cubes when his AWOL drinking buddy returned.

"So where the hell have you been?" Wright demanded.

"Shut up and order us a couple of drinks," said Edwards. "I'm your best fucking friend in the world right now Jacko. You're gonna want to be very nice to me the rest of the night."

"What are you talking about?" Wright caught the waitress's eye and signaled for two more drinks. Another CC and ginger ale for himself and a pint of Indian Arm Pale Ale for Edwards.

"How d'ya like to run Laguna next week?" Edwards wore a grin that threatened to split open his weathered brown face from ear to ear.

"Are you shitting me?" The alcohol must have been having an effect because Wright wasn't sure he'd heard correctly.

"Negatory good buddy." Wright hated it when Chuck used dead languages like 1970s CB radio lingo to communicate important information, but didn't interrupt him.

At the bidding of one of the series key PR people, Edwards had stopped in at the Toyota Atlantic hospitality tent. There, he was introduced to a man called Jean Palin, a Senior Vice President for a large video game publisher in California's Silicon Valley. He was invited to the Vancouver event as the guest of a Canadian distributor and had been impressed by the marketing potential of the Formula Atlantic series. So impressed, in fact, that he wanted to get his own company involved in the Laguna Seca race—due to be run in their own backyard next weekend.

The race team owner spent the next hour educating the software seller on the dynamics of his sport, after which the two men worked out details and logistics. They exchanged business cards and a handshake at the end of their talk and

Edwards made the ten-minute walk back to the restaurant to tell Wright he had a ride for next week.

“And don’t think for one second that I’m gonna pull out my wallet tonight buddy-boy. I hope you’ve got lots of that Canuck Monopoly money on you ’cause you’re buying every fucking beer tonight!” An ape-like grin was now permanently etched into Edwards’ face.

“So what company is he with? Anybody I’ve heard of?” Wright found it difficult not to grin himself.

Taking a long pull on his newly arrived pint glass, Edwards fished into his shirt pocket and passed a business card across the table.

“Beats the shit out of me. They make computer games.”

Wright examined the card closely. Jean Palin, M.A., Vice President of West Coast Operations for Franco Software in San Mateo, California. The company also had branches in New York and Paris.

A loud crash sounded from inside the restaurant and Wright looked up to see a large group of diners huddled around the TV screen at the bar. The young waitress who’d just dropped her tray had her face in her hands, sobbing openly.

Wright caught the eye of the busboy delivering cutlery to the empty table next to them and motioned toward the bar. “What’s going on?”

“Princess Di was killed in a car crash tonight,” came the shocking response. “It’s all over the news.”

Wright and Edwards exchanged looks before getting up to follow the flow of outdoor diners moving inside. The volume on all three televisions above the bar had been turned up. It was one of those surreal moments where the conscious mind refuses to believe what it’s being told. For most, the news generated one of those indelible JFK-assassination moments. Indeed, few will ever forget where they were, and what they were doing, the night of Princess Diana’s death.

Jack Wright and Chuck Edwards watched the television report closely for the next few minutes as a somber-voiced newscaster delivered breaking news about the tragedy. When they did turn to look at one another once again, neither man was smiling.

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