

## Chapter 1

*3:03 p.m., Tuesday, October 25, 1977*

The top security guard for Tel Aviv's Ben Gurion Airport had been warned of her arrival. He peered through his binoculars from inside the hectic terminal, scrutinizing her every move, oblivious to the deep blue skies that mirrored the nearby Mediterranean Sea.

Her honey-blond hair matched the description. So did her height—five foot six—and age—early twenties. His orders were to confirm her identity by passport number, and then detain her until the Israeli secret police, the Shin Bet, arrived.

The young American woman who disembarked the flight from Cyprus seemed unaware of the surveillance. Halfway down the airplane's steps, she fidgeted with something around her neck, most likely a necklace, and readjusted her backpack. She was sandwiched among jubilant, effusive tourists, many of whom were realizing a lifelong dream of visiting the Holy Land, and her glowing hair shone like a beacon next to their black and gray locks.

A bold, bright sun glinted across the plane's wings as she reached the bottom step, temporarily blinding the security guard. He lowered the binoculars to rub his eyes, losing sight of

her as she climbed aboard a bus that would transport her and the other passengers a quarter mile to the terminal.

When the bus chugged to a stop and the passengers began to unload, he scanned the group until he re-discovered her. Much closer now, he could see that she wore embroidered blue jeans, a T-shirt, no make-up. *O-mer! Unbelievable! She's so young.* At that moment he was distracted by the sight of another woman with long, sun-colored hair, this one wearing a business suit. *Is she the target?* He lowered the binoculars for a second time and blinked several times. A mistake would not be tolerated.

When he refocused, the blue jean-clad blonde was walking quickly toward him.

She entered the terminal, then hesitated, taking a moment to adjust to the darkened space after the bright sunshine. The guard saw her take a deep breath, shift her backpack from right shoulder to left, and move forward to the bank of windows for passport control.

He signaled to two of his subordinates and they advanced on the woman. The men pulled her from the bottlenecked line and seized her passport, checking the number: J-1041809. It was a match.

The top guard nodded and the other two confiscated her backpack and 668 American dollars from her worn billfold, almost one-tenth of the average American's annual salary.

The young woman's chest heaved and she gulped for breath.

“Hey, that’s my money! Who are you? What’re you doing?”

Passersby turned to stare. They watched the guards inspect her arms, then frisk her.

“Who are you?” they asked in rapid-fire succession. “Why are you in Israel? Is Lydia Sheperd your real name?”

“Of course that’s my real name. Who do you think I am? This is crazy. I’m just a college student.”

At that moment two Shin Bet officers strode up to the disruptive group. They ordered the security guards back to their post in the immigration line.

As the guards surrendered control to the officers, the girl managed to break free. She tried to run, but one of the officers grabbed a hank of her long hair and yanked her back. She cried out in pain and crumbled to the floor, sobbing, “Someone, please . . . help me.”