

I. Assassination

It sounded as though the last of the Old City's bazaars were coming to an end as Ehud finished reviewing his latest briefing papers. They had one of the hotel's more exotic suites. A sandstone staircase led down from the landing to a grand four-post bed, and to several other vestiges of the Ottoman aesthetic; although with the air of kitsch that often arises from attempts to imitate the style of others. Ehud looked down upon his wife from the oaken desk on the landing, and was promptly overcome with feelings of pride. Judith lay in a profound sleep on the bed, her silver hair draped majestically over its purple velvet pillows. She had been thoroughly exhausted by the dinner party in the hotel's Pasha Room, which had ended only thirty minutes earlier.

The dinner had been called to celebrate an announcement by the United States President that he would be relocating the US Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, in July – the US would be formally recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. The relocation had been demanded by the US Congress many years earlier, in 1995, but president after president had issued a 'National Security Wavier' to ensure that the Embassy remained in Tel Aviv, cautious at the time of an Arab backlash. Now, with flagging domestic support, the President was accused by some commentators of announcing the move purely in order to boost his support in the upcoming elections, given his popularity at home wasn't particularly affected by Arab-world opinion. For the moment, it was only the US that had announced plans to shift their embassy to Jerusalem, but as Ehud knew, that was enough; the rest of the world would eventually fall into line, left with little choice.

Having slowly made his way down to the bed, his gait made awkward by years of self-indulgence – a gait that required the full support of the wrought iron hand-railing alongside the stairs – Ehud began to disrobe. Although he could still hear some activity coming from Jerusalem's Old City, it had died down considerably by that hour, and he was sure that any remaining noise would not stand between him and sleep; especially given the generous helpings of wine he had consumed over dinner.

Suddenly, the sound of gunfire and smashing glass. Ehud's final musings for the evening were brought to an abrupt end by a bullet that had crashed through the southern window of his suite, piercing

his torso, and triggering an instant nausea. He fell to the ground clutching hold of the stabbing pains in his abdomen, looking down only reluctantly to observe the sanguinary deluge that poured through his fingers.

Immediately, the night sky outside his suite lit resplendently with brilliant yellows and reds. His assigned security entourage had fired scores of flares from the hotel roof, having heard the sound of gunfire come from the Old City walls in the south. A few retaliatory shots were then fired, but Ehud heard little else.