

Part One

1981

CHAPTER ONE

THE MEN who wanted to kill Ahmet Yilmaz were serious people. They were exiled Turkish students living in Paris, and they had already murdered an attaché at the Turkish Embassy and firebombed the home of a senior executive of Turkish Airlines. They chose Yilmaz as their next target because he was a wealthy supporter of the military dictatorship and because he lived, conveniently, in Paris.

His home and office were well guarded and his Mercedes limousine was armoured, but every man has a weakness, the students believed, and that weakness is usually sex. In the case of Yilmaz they were right. A couple of weeks of casual surveillance revealed that Yilmaz would leave his house, on two or three evenings each week, driving the Renault station wagon his servants used for shopping, and go to a side street in the Fifteenth District to visit a beautiful young Turkish woman who was in love with him.

The students decided to put a bomb in the Renault while Yilmaz was getting laid.

They knew where to get the explosives: from Pepe Gozzi one of the many sons of the Corsican godfather Mémé Gozzi. Pepe was a weapons dealer. He would sell

to anyone, but he preferred political customers, for – as he cheerfully admitted – ‘Idealists pay higher prices.’ He had helped the Turkish students with both their previous outrages.

There was a snag in the car-bomb plan. Usually Yilmaz would leave the girl’s place alone in the Renault – but not always. Sometimes he took her out to dinner. Often she went off in the car and returned half an hour later laden with bread, fruit, cheese and wine, evidently for a cosy feast. Occasionally Yilmaz would go home in a taxi, and the girl would borrow the car for a day or two. The students were romantic, like all terrorists, and they were reluctant to risk killing a beautiful woman whose only crime was the readily pardonable one of loving a man unworthy of her.

They discussed this problem in a democratic fashion. They made all decisions by vote and acknowledged no leaders; but all the same there was one among them whose strength of personality made him dominant. His name was Rahmi Coskun, and he was a handsome, passionate young man with a bushy moustache and a certain bound-for-glory light in his eyes. It was his energy and determination which had pushed through the previous two projects despite the problems and the risks. Rahmi proposed consulting a bomb expert.

At first the others did not like this idea. Whom could they trust? they asked. Rahmi suggested Ellis Thaler. An American who called himself a poet but in fact made a living giving English lessons, he had learned about explosives as a conscript in Vietnam. Rahmi had known him for a year or so: they had both worked on a

short-lived revolutionary newspaper called *Chaos*, and together they had organised a poetry reading to raise funds for the Palestine Liberation Organisation. He seemed to understand Rahmi's rage at what was being done to Turkey and his hatred of the barbarians who were doing it. Some of the other students also knew Ellis slightly: he had been seen on several demonstrations, and they had assumed he was a graduate student or a young professor. Still they were reluctant to bring in a non-Turk; but Rahmi was insistent and in the end they consented.

Ellis came up with the solution to their problem immediately. The bomb should have a radio-controlled arming device, he said. Rahmi would sit at a window opposite the girl's apartment, or in a parked car along the street, watching the Renault. In his hand he would have a small radio transmitter the size of a pack of cigarettes – the kind of thing used to open automatic garage doors. If Yilmaz got into the car alone, as he most often did, then Rahmi would press the button on the transmitter, and a radio signal would activate a switch in the bomb, which would then be armed and would explode as soon as Yilmaz started the engine. But if it should be the girl who got into the car, Rahmi would not press the button, and she could drive away in blissful ignorance. The bomb would be quite safe until it was armed. 'No button, no bang,' said Ellis.

Rahmi liked the idea and asked Ellis if he would collaborate with Pepe Gozzi on making the bomb.

'Sure,' said Ellis.

Then there was one more snag.

‘I’ve got a friend,’ Rahmi said, ‘who wants to meet you both, Ellis and Pepe. To tell the truth, he *must* meet you, otherwise the whole deal is off; for this is the friend who gives us the money for explosives and cars and bribes and guns and everything.’

‘Why does he want to meet us?’ Ellis and Pepe wanted to know.

‘He needs to be sure that the bomb will work, and he wants to feel that he can trust you,’ Rahmi said apologetically. ‘All you have to do is bring the bomb to him and explain to him how it will work and shake his hand and let him look you in the eye, is that so much to ask, for the man who is making the whole thing possible?’

‘It’s all right with me,’ said Ellis.

Pepe hesitated. He wanted the money he would make on the deal – he always wanted money, as a pig always wants the trough – but he hated to meet new people.

Ellis reasoned with him. ‘Listen,’ he said, ‘these student groups bloom and die like mimosa in the spring, and Rahmi is sure to be blown away before long; but if you know his “friend” then you will be able to continue to do business after Rahmi is gone.’

‘You’re right,’ said Pepe, who was no genius but could grasp business principles if they were explained simply.

Ellis told Rahmi that Pepe had agreed, and Rahmi set up a rendezvous for the three of them on the following Sunday.

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That morning Ellis woke up in Jane's bed. He came awake suddenly, feeling frightened, as if he had had a nightmare. A moment later he remembered the reason why he was so tense.

He glanced at the clock. He was early. In his mind he ran over his plan. If all went well, today would be the triumphant conclusion to more than a year of patient, careful work. And he would be able to share that triumph with Jane, if he was still alive at the end of the day.

He turned his head to look at her, moving carefully to avoid waking her. His heart leaped, as it did every time he saw her face. She lay flat on her back, with her turned-up nose pointing at the ceiling and her dark hair spread across the pillow like a bird's unfolded wing. He looked at her wide mouth, the full lips that kissed him so often and so lusciously. Spring sunlight revealed the dense blonde down on her cheeks – her beard, he called it, when he wanted to tease her.

It was a rare delight to see her like this, in repose, her face relaxed and expressionless. Normally she was animated – laughing, frowning, grimacing, registering surprise or scepticism or compassion. Her commonest expression was a wicked grin, like that of a mischievous small boy who had just perpetrated a particularly fiendish practical joke. Only when she was sleeping or thinking very hard was she like this; yet this was how he loved her most, for now, when she was unguarded and unselfconscious, her appearance hinted at the languid sensuality that burned just beneath her surface like a

slow, hot, underground fire. When he saw her like this his hands almost itched to touch her.

This had surprised him. When he first met her, soon after he came to Paris, she had struck him as typical of the kind of busybody always found among the young and the radical in capital cities, chairing committees and organising campaigns against apartheid and for nuclear disarmament, leading protest marches about El Salvador and water pollution, raising money for starving people in Chad and trying to promote a talented young film-maker. People were drawn to her by her striking good looks, captivated by her charm, and energised by her enthusiasm. He had dated her a couple of times, just for the pleasure of watching a pretty girl demolish a steak; and then – he could never remember exactly how it happened – he had discovered that inside this excitable girl there lived a passionate woman, and he had fallen in love.

His gaze wandered around her little studio flat. He noted with pleasure the familiar personal possessions that marked the place as hers: a pretty lamp made of a small Chinese vase; a shelf of books on economics and world poverty; a big soft sofa you could drown in; a photograph of her father, a handsome man in a double-breasted coat, probably taken in the early sixties; a small silver cup won by her on her pony Dandelion and dated 1971, ten years ago. She was thirteen, Ellis thought, and I was twenty-three; and while she was winning pony trials in Hampshire I was in Laos, laying anti-personnel mines along the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

When he had first seen the flat, almost a year ago,

she had just moved here from the suburbs, and it had been rather bare: just a little attic room with a kitchen in an alcove, a shower in a closet, and a toilet down the hall. Gradually she had transformed it from a grimy garret into a cheerful nest. She earned a good salary as an interpreter, translating French and Russian into English, but her rent was also high – the apartment was near the Boulevard St Michel – so she had bought carefully, saving her money for just the right mahogany table, antique bedstead and Tabriz rug. She was what Ellis's father would call a classy dame. You're going to like her, Dad, thought Ellis. You're going to be just crazy about her.

He rolled on to his side, facing her, and the movement woke her, as he had known it would. Her large blue eyes stared at the ceiling for a fraction of a second, then she looked at him, smiled, and rolled over into his arms. 'Hello,' she whispered, and he kissed her.

He got hard immediately. They lay together for a while, half asleep, kissing now and again; then she draped one leg across his hips and they began to make love languorously, without speaking.

When they had first become lovers, and they had started to make love morning and night and often mid-afternoon too, Ellis had assumed that such horniness would not last, and that after a few days, or maybe a couple of weeks, the novelty would wear off and they would revert to the statistical average of two-and-a-half times a week, or whatever it was. He had been wrong. A year later they were still screwing like honeymooners.

She rolled on top of him, letting her full weight rest

on his body. Her damp skin clung to his. He wrapped his arms around her small body and hugged her as he thrust deep inside her. She sensed that his climax was coming, and she lifted her head and looked down at him, then kissed him with her mouth open while he was coming inside her. Immediately afterwards she gave a soft, low-pitched moan, and he felt her come with a long, gentle, wavy Sunday-morning orgasm. She stayed on top of him, half asleep still. He stroked her hair.

After a while she stirred. 'Do you know what day it is?' she mumbled.

'Sunday.'

'It's your Sunday to make lunch.'

'I hadn't forgotten.'

'Good.' There was a pause. 'What are you going to give me?'

'Steak, potatoes, snow peas, goat's cheese, strawberries and chantilly cream.'

She lifted her head, laughing. 'That's what you always make!'

'It is not. Last time we had French beans.'

'And the time before that you had forgotten, so we ate out. How about some variety in your cooking?'

'Hey, wait a minute. The deal was, each of us would make lunch on alternate Sundays. Nobody said anything about making a *different* lunch each time.'

She slumped on him again, feigning defeat.

His day's work had been at the back of his mind all along. He was going to need her unconscious help, and this was the moment to ask her. 'I have to see Rahmi this morning,' he began.

‘All right. I’ll meet you at your place later.’

‘There’s something you could do for me, if you wouldn’t mind getting there a little early.’

‘What?’

‘Cook the lunch. No! No! Just kidding. I want you to help me with a little conspiracy.’

‘Go on,’ she said.

‘Today is Rahmi’s birthday, and his brother Mustafa is in town, but Rahmi doesn’t know.’ If this works out, Ellis thought, I’ll never lie to you again. ‘I want Mustafa to turn up at Rahmi’s lunch party as a surprise. But I need an accomplice.’

‘I’m game,’ she said. She rolled off him and sat upright, crossing her legs. Her breasts were like apples, smooth and round and hard. The ends of her hair teased her nipples. ‘What do I have to do?’

‘The problem is simple. I have to tell Mustafa where to go, but Rahmi hasn’t yet made up his mind where he wants to eat. So I have to get the message to Mustafa at the last minute. And Rahmi will probably be beside me when I make the call.’

‘And the solution?’

‘I’ll call *you*. I’ll talk nonsense. Ignore everything except the address. Call Mustafa, give him the address and tell him how to get there.’ All this had sounded okay when Ellis dreamed it up, but now it seemed wildly implausible.

However, Jane did not seem suspicious. ‘It sounds simple enough,’ she said.

‘Good,’ Ellis said briskly, concealing his relief.

‘And after you call, how soon will you be home?’

‘Less than an hour. I want to wait and see the surprise, but I’ll get out of having lunch there.’

Jane looked thoughtful. ‘They invited you but not me.’

Ellis shrugged. ‘I presume it’s a masculine celebration.’ He reached for the notepad on the bedside table and wrote *Mustafa* and the phone number.

Jane got off the bed and crossed the room to the shower closet. She opened the door and turned on the tap. Her mood had changed. She was not smiling. Ellis said: ‘What are you mad about?’

‘I’m not mad,’ she said. ‘Sometimes I dislike the way your friends treat me.’

‘But you know how the Turks are about girls.’

‘Exactly – *girls*. They don’t mind respectable women, but I’m a *girl*.’

Ellis sighed. ‘It’s not like you to get needled by the prehistoric attitudes of a few chauvinists. What are you *really* trying to tell me?’

She considered for a moment, standing naked beside the shower, and she was so lovely that Ellis wanted to make love again. She said: ‘I suppose I’m saying that I don’t like my status. I’m committed to you, everyone knows that – I don’t sleep with anyone else, don’t even go out with other men – but you’re not committed to me. We don’t live together, I don’t know where you go or what you do a lot of the time, we’ve never met one another’s parents . . . and people know all this, so they treat me like a tart.’

‘I think you’re exaggerating.’

‘You always say that.’ She stepped into the shower

and banged the door. Ellis took his razor from the drawer where he kept his overnight kit and began to shave at the kitchen sink. They had had this argument before, at much greater length, and he knew what was at the bottom of it: Jane wanted them to live together.

He wanted it too, of course; he wanted to marry her and live with her for the rest of his life. But he had to wait until this assignment was over; and he could not tell her that, so he said things such as *I'm not ready* and *All I need is time*, and these vague evasions infuriated her. It seemed to her that a year was a long time to love a man without getting any kind of commitment from him. She was right, of course. But if all went well today he could make everything right.

He finished shaving, wrapped his razor in a towel and put it in his drawer. Jane got out of the shower and he took her place. We're not talking, he thought; this is silly.

While he was in the shower she made coffee. He dressed quickly in faded denim jeans and a black T-shirt and sat opposite her at the little mahogany table. She poured his coffee and said: 'I want to have a serious talk with you.'

'Okay,' he said quickly, 'let's do it at lunchtime.'

'Why not now?'

'I don't have time.'

'Is Rahmi's birthday more important than our relationship?'

'Of course not.' Ellis heard irritation in his tone, and a warning voice told him *Be gentle, you could lose her*. 'But I promised, and it's important that I keep my promises;

whereas it doesn't seem very important whether we have this conversation now or later.'

Jane's face took on a set, stubborn look that he knew: she wore it when she had made a decision and someone tried to deflect her from her path. 'It's important to *me* that we talk *now*.'

For a moment he was tempted to tell her the whole truth right away. But this was not the way he had planned it. He was short of time, his mind was on something else, and he was not prepared. It would be much better later, when they were both relaxed, and he would be able to tell her that his job in Paris was done. So he said: 'I think you're being silly, and I won't be bullied. Please let's talk later. I have to go now.' He stood up.

As he walked to the door she said: 'Jean-Pierre has asked me to go to Afghanistan with him.'

This was so completely unexpected that Ellis had to think for a moment before he could take it in. 'Are you *serious*?' he said incredulously.

'I'm serious.'

Ellis knew Jean-Pierre was in love with Jane. So were half a dozen other men: that kind of thing was inevitable with such a woman. None of the men were serious rivals, though; at least, he had thought not, until this moment. He began to recover his composure. He said: 'Why would you want to visit a war zone with a wimp?'

'It's not a joking matter!' she said fiercely. 'I'm talking about my *life*.'

He shook his head in disbelief. 'You can't go to Afghanistan.'

‘Why not?’

‘Because you love me.’

‘That doesn’t put me at your disposal.’

At least she had not said *No I don't*. He looked at his watch. This was ridiculous: in a few hours’ time he was going to tell her everything she wanted to hear. ‘I’m not willing to do this,’ he said. ‘We’re talking about our future, and it’s a discussion that can’t be rushed.’

‘I won’t wait forever,’ she said.

‘I’m not asking you to wait forever, I’m asking you to wait a few hours.’ He touched her cheek. ‘Let’s not fight about a few hours.’

She stood up and kissed his mouth hard.

He said: ‘You won’t go to Afghanistan, will you?’

‘I don’t know,’ she said levelly.

He tried a grin. ‘At least, not before lunch.’

She smiled back and nodded. ‘Not before lunch.’

He looked at her for a moment longer, then he went out.

The broad boulevards of the Champs Elysées were thronged with tourists and Parisians out for a morning stroll, milling about like sheep in a fold under the warm spring sun, and all the pavement cafés were full. Ellis stood near the appointed place, carrying a backpack he had bought in a cheap luggage store. He looked like an American on a hitch-hiking tour of Europe.

He wished Jane had not chosen this morning for a confrontation: she would be brooding now, and would be in a jagged mood by the time he arrived.

Well, he would just have to smooth her ruffled feathers for a while.

He put Jane out of his mind and concentrated on the task ahead of him.

There were two possibilities as to the identity of Rahmi's 'friend', the one who financed the little terrorist group. The first was that he was a wealthy freedom-loving Turk who had decided, for political or personal reasons, that violence was justified against the military dictatorship and its supporters. If this was the case then Ellis would be disappointed.

The second possibility was that he was Boris.

'Boris' was a legendary figure in the circle within which Ellis moved – among the revolutionary students, the exiled Palestinians, the part-time politics lecturers, the editors of badly-printed extremist newspapers, the anarchists and the Maoists and the Armenians and the militant vegetarians. He was said to be a Russian, a KGB man willing to fund any leftist act of violence in the West. Many people doubted his existence, especially those who had tried and failed to get funds out of the Russians. But Ellis had noticed, from time to time, that a group who for months had done nothing but complain that they could not afford a duplicating machine would suddenly stop talking about money and become very security-conscious; and then, a little later, there would be a kidnapping or a shooting or a bomb.

It was certain, Ellis thought, that the Russians gave money to such groups as the Turkish dissidents: they could hardly resist such a cheap and low-risk way of causing trouble. Besides, the US financed kidnappers

and murderers in Central America, and he could not imagine that the Soviet Union would be more scrupulous than his own country. And since in this line of work money was not kept in bank accounts or moved around by telex, somebody had to hand over the actual banknotes, so it followed that there had to be a Boris figure.

Ellis wanted very badly to meet him.

Rahmi walked by at exactly ten-thirty, wearing a pink Lacoste shirt and immaculately pressed tan trousers, looking edgy. He threw one burning glance at Ellis then turned his head away.

Ellis followed him, staying ten or fifteen yards behind, as they had previously arranged.

At the next pavement café sat the muscular, overweight form of Pepe Gozzi, in a black silk suit as if he had been to Mass, which he probably had. He held a large briefcase in his lap. He got up and fell in more or less alongside Ellis, in such a way that a casual observer would have been unsure whether they were together or not.

Rahmi headed up the hill towards the Arc de Triomphe.

Ellis watched Pepe out of the corner of his eye. The Corsican had an animal's instinct for self-preservation: unobtrusively, he checked whether he was being followed – once when he crossed the road, and could quite naturally glance back along the boulevard while he stood waiting for the lights to change, and again passing a corner shop where he could see the people behind him reflected in the diagonal window.

Ellis liked Rahmi but not Pepe. Rahmi was sincere and high-principled, and the people he killed probably deserved to die. Pepe was completely different. He did this for money, and because he was too coarse and stupid to survive in the world of legitimate business.

Three blocks east of the Arc de Triomphe, Rahmi turned into a side street. Ellis and Pepe followed. Rahmi led them across the road and turned into the Hotel Lancaster.

So this was the rendezvous. Ellis hoped the meeting was to take place in a bar or restaurant in the hotel: he would feel safer in a public room.

The marbled entrance hall was cool after the heat of the street. Ellis shivered. A waiter in a tuxedo looked askance at his jeans. Rahmi was getting into a tiny elevator at the far end of the L-shaped lobby. It was to be a hotel room, then. So be it. Ellis followed Rahmi into the elevator and Pepe squeezed in behind. Ellis's nerves were drawn wire-tight as they went up. They got off at the fourth floor and Rahmi led them to Room 41 and knocked.

Ellis tried to make his face calm and impassive.

The door opened slowly.

It was Boris. Ellis knew it as soon as he set eyes on the man, and he felt a thrill of triumph and at the same time a cold shiver of fear. Moscow was written all over the man, from his cheap haircut to his solidly practical shoes, and there was the unmistakable style of the KGB in his hard-eyed look of appraisal and the brutal set of his mouth. This man was not like Rahmi or Pepe; he was neither a hotheaded idealist nor a swinish mafioso.

Boris was a stone-hearted professional terrorist who would not hesitate to blow the head off any or all of the three men who now stood before him.

I've been looking for you for a long time, thought Ellis.

Boris held the door half open for a moment, partly shielding his body while he studied them, then he stepped back and said in French: 'Come in.'

They walked into the sitting-room of a suite. It was rather exquisitely decorated, and furnished with chairs, occasional tables and a cupboard which appeared to be eighteenth-century antiques. A carton of Marlboro cigarettes and a duty-free litre of brandy stood on a delicate bow-legged side table. In the far corner a half-opened door led to a bedroom.

Rahmi's introductions were nervously perfunctory. 'Pepe. Ellis. My friend.'

Boris was a broad-shouldered man wearing a white shirt with the sleeves rolled to show meaty, hair-covered forearms. His blue serge trousers were too heavy for this weather. Over the back of a chair was slung a black-and-tan check jacket which would look wrong with the blue trousers.

Ellis put his backpack on the rug and sat down.

Boris gestured at the brandy bottle. 'A drink?'

Ellis did not want brandy at eleven o'clock in the morning. He said: 'Yes, please – coffee.'

Boris gave him a hard, hostile look, then said: 'We'll all have coffee,' and went to the phone. He's used to everyone being afraid of him, Ellis thought; he doesn't like it that I treat him as an equal.

Rahmi was plainly in awe of Boris, and fidgeted anxiously, fastening and unfastening the top button of his pink polo shirt while the Russian called room service.

Boris hung up the phone and addressed Pepe. 'I'm glad to meet you,' he said in French. 'I think we can help each other.'

Pepe nodded without speaking. He sat forward in the velvet chair, his powerful bulk in the black suit looking oddly vulnerable against the pretty furniture, as if *it* might break *him*. Pepe has a lot in common with Boris, thought Ellis: they're both strong, cruel men without decency or compassion. If Pepe were Russian, he would be in the KGB; and if Boris were French he'd be in the Mafia.

'Show me the bomb,' said Boris.

Pepe opened his briefcase. It was packed with blocks, about a foot long and a couple of inches square, of a yellowish substance. Boris knelt on the rug beside the case and poked one of the blocks with a forefinger. The substance yielded like putty. Boris sniffed it. 'I presume this is C3,' he said to Pepe.

Pepe nodded.

'Where is the mechanism?'

Rahmi said: 'Ellis has it in his backpack.'

Ellis said: 'No, I don't.'

The room went very quiet for a moment. A look of panic came over Rahmi's handsome young face. 'What do you mean?' he said agitatedly. His frightened eyes switched from Ellis to Boris and back again. 'You said . . . I told him you would—'

‘Shut up,’ Boris said harshly. Rahmi fell silent. Boris looked expectantly at Ellis.

Ellis spoke with a casual indifference that he did not feel. ‘I was afraid this might be a trap, so I left the mechanism at home. It can be here in a few minutes. I just have to call my girl.’

Boris stared at him for several seconds. Ellis returned his look as coolly as he could. Finally Boris said: ‘Why did you think this might be a trap?’

Ellis decided that to try to justify himself would appear defensive. It was a dumb question, anyway. He shot an arrogant look at Boris, then shrugged and said nothing.

Boris continued to look searchingly at him. Finally the Russian said: ‘I shall make the call.’

A protest rose to Ellis’s lips and he choked it back. This was a development he had not expected. He carefully maintained his I-don’t-give-a-damn pose while thinking furiously. How would Jane react to the voice of a stranger? And what if she were not there, what if she had decided to break her promise? He regretted using her as a cut-out. But it was too late now.

‘You’re a careful man,’ he said to Boris.

‘You, too. What is your phone number?’

Ellis told him. Boris wrote the number on the message pad by the phone then began to dial.

The others waited in silence.

Boris said: ‘Hello? I am calling on behalf of Ellis.’

Perhaps the unknown voice would not throw her, Ellis thought: she had been expecting a somewhat

wacky call anyway. *Ignore everything except the address*, he had told her.

'What?' Boris said irritably, and Ellis thought: Oh, shit, what is she saying now? 'Yes, I am, but never mind that,' Boris said. 'Ellis wants you to bring the mechanism to Room 41 at the Hotel Lancaster in the rue de Berri.'

There was another pause.

Play the game, Jane, thought Ellis.

'Yes, it's a very nice hotel.'

Stop kidding around! Just tell the man you'll do it – please!

'Thank you,' Boris said, and he added sarcastically: 'You are most kind.' Then he hung up.

Ellis tried to look as if he had expected all along there would be no problem.

Boris said: 'She knew I was Russian. How did she find out?'

Ellis was puzzled for a moment, then realised. 'She's a linguist,' he said. 'She knows accents.'

Pepe spoke for the first time. 'While we're waiting for this cunt to arrive, let's see the money.'

'All right.' Boris went into the bedroom.

While he was out, Rahmi spoke to Ellis in a low hiss. 'I didn't know you were going to pull that trick!'

'Of course you didn't,' said Ellis in a feigned tone of boredom. 'If you had known what I was going to do, it wouldn't have worked as a safeguard, would it?'

Boris came back in with a large brown envelope and handed it to Pepe. Pepe opened it and began counting 100-franc notes.

Boris unwrapped the carton of Marlboro and lit a cigarette.

Ellis thought: I hope Jane doesn't *wait* before making the call to 'Mustafa'. I should have told her it was important to pass the message on immediately.

After a while Pepe said: 'It's all there.' He put the money back into the envelope, licked the flap, sealed it, and put it on a side table.

The four men sat in silence for several minutes.

Boris asked Ellis: 'How far away is your place?'

'Fifteen minutes on a motor scooter.'

There was a knock at the door. Ellis tensed.

'She drove fast,' Boris said. He opened the door. 'Coffee,' he said disgustedly, and returned to his seat.

Two white-jacketed waiters wheeled a trolley into the room. They straightened up and turned around, each holding in his hand a Model 'D' M.A.B. pistol, standard issue for French detectives. One of them said: 'Nobody move.'

Ellis felt Boris gather himself to spring. Why were there only two detectives? If Rahmi were to do something foolish, and get himself shot, it would create enough of a diversion for Pepe and Boris together to overpower the armed men—

The bedroom door flew open, and two more men in waiters' uniforms stood there, armed like their colleagues.

Boris relaxed, and a look of resignation came over his face.

Ellis realised he had been holding his breath. He let it out in a long sigh.

It was all over.

A uniformed police officer walked into the room.

‘A trap!’ Rahmi burst out. ‘This is a trap!’

‘Shut up,’ said Boris, and once again his harsh voice silenced Rahmi. He addressed the police officer. ‘I object most strongly to this outrage,’ he began. ‘Please take note that—’

The policeman punched him in the mouth with a leather-gloved fist.

Boris touched his lips then looked at the smear of blood on his hand. His manner changed completely as he realised this was far too serious for him to bluff his way out. ‘Remember my face,’ he told the police officer in a voice as cold as the grave. ‘You will see it again.’

‘But who is the traitor?’ cried Rahmi. ‘Who betrayed us?’

‘Him,’ said Boris, pointing at Ellis.

‘Ellis?’ Rahmi said incredulously.

‘The phone call,’ said Boris. ‘The address.’

Rahmi stared at Ellis. He looked wounded to the quick.

Several more uniformed policemen came in. The officer pointed at Pepe. ‘That’s Gozzi,’ he said. Two policemen handcuffed Pepe and led him away. The officer looked at Boris. ‘Who are you?’

Boris looked bored. ‘My name is Jan Hocht,’ he said. ‘I am a citizen of Argentina—’

‘Don’t bother,’ said the officer disgustedly. ‘Take him away.’ He turned to Rahmi. ‘Well?’

‘I have nothing to say!’ Rahmi said, managing to make it sound heroic.

The officer gave a jerk of his head and Rahmi, too, was handcuffed. He glared at Ellis until he was led out.

The prisoners were taken down in the elevator one at a time. Pepe's briefcase and the envelope full of 100-franc notes were shrouded in polythene. A police photographer came in and set up his tripod.

The officer said to Ellis: 'There is a black Citroën DS parked outside the hotel.' Hesitantly he added: 'Sir.'

I'm back on the side of the law, Ellis thought. A pity Rahmi is so much more attractive a man than this cop.

He went down in the elevator. In the hotel lobby the manager, in black coat and striped trousers, stood with a pained expression frozen to his face as more policemen marched in.

Ellis went out into the sunshine. The black Citroën was on the other side of the street. There was a driver in the front and a passenger in the back. Ellis got into the back. The car pulled away fast.

The passenger turned to Ellis and said: 'Hello, John.'

Ellis smiled. The use of his real name was strange after more than a year. He said: 'How are you, Bill?'

'Relieved!' said Bill. 'For thirteen months we hear nothing from you but demands for money. Then we get a peremptory phone call telling us we've got twenty-four hours to arrange a local arrest squad. Imagine what we had to do to persuade the French to do that without telling them why! The squad had to be ready in the vicinity of the Champs Elysées, but to get the exact address we had to wait for a phone call from an unknown woman asking for Mustafa. And that's all we know!'

'It was the only way,' Ellis said apologetically.

'Well, it took some doing – and I now owe some big favours in this town – but we did it. So tell me whether it was worth it. Who have we got in the bag?'

'The Russian is Boris,' said Ellis.

Bill's face broke into a broad grin. 'I'll be a son of a bitch,' he said. 'You brought in Boris. No kidding.'

'No kidding.'

'Jesus, I better get him back from the French before they figure out who he is.'

Ellis shrugged. 'Nobody's going to get much information out of him anyway. He's the dedicated type. The important thing is that we've taken him out of circulation. It will take them a couple of years to break in a replacement and for the new Boris to build his contacts. Meanwhile we've really slowed their operation down.'

'You just bet we have. This is sensational.'

'The Corsican is Pepe Gozzi, a weapons dealer,' Ellis went on. 'He supplied the hardware for just about every terrorist action in France in the last couple of years, and a lot more in other countries. He's the one to interrogate. Send a French detective to talk to his father, Mémé Gozzi, in Marseilles. I predict you'll find the old man never did like the idea of the family getting involved in political crimes. Offer him a deal: immunity for Pepe if Pepe will testify against all the political people he sold stuff to – none of the ordinary criminals. Mémé will go for that, because it won't count as betrayal of friends. And if Mémé goes for it, Pepe will do it. The French can prosecute for years.'

'Incredible.' Bill looked dazed. 'In one day you've

nailed probably the two biggest instigators of terrorism in the world.'

'One day?' Ellis smiled. 'It took a year.'

'It was worth it.'

'The young guy is Rahmi Coskun,' Ellis said. He was hurrying on because there was someone else to whom he wanted to tell all this. 'Rahmi and his group did the Turkish Airlines firebomb a couple of months ago and killed an Embassy attaché before that. If you round up the whole group you're sure to find some forensic evidence.'

'Or the French police will persuade them to confess.'

'Yes. Give me a pencil and I'll write down the names and addresses.'

'Save it,' said Bill. 'I'm going to debrief you completely back at the Embassy.'

'I'm not going back to the Embassy.'

'John, don't fight the programme.'

'I'll give you these names, then you'll have all the really essential information, even if I get run down by a mad French cab driver this afternoon. If I survive, I'll meet you tomorrow morning and give you the detail stuff.'

'Why wait?'

'I have a lunch date.'

Bill rolled his eyes up. 'I suppose we owe you this,' he said reluctantly.

'That's what I figured.'

'Who's your date?'

'Jane Lambert. Hers was one of the names you gave me when you originally briefed me.'

‘I remember. I told you that if you wormed your way into her affections she would introduce you to every mad leftist, Arab terrorist, Bader-Meinhof hanger-on and avant-garde poet in Paris.’

‘That’s how it worked, except I fell in love with her.’

Bill looked like a Connecticut banker being told that his son is going to marry the daughter of a black millionaire: he did not know whether to be thrilled or appalled. ‘Uh, what’s she really like?’

‘She’s not crazy, although she has some crazy friends. What can I tell you? She’s as pretty as a picture, bright as a pin, and horny as a jackass. She’s wonderful. She’s the woman I’ve been looking for all my life.’

‘Well, I can see why you’d rather celebrate with her than with me. What are you going to do?’

Ellis smiled. ‘I’m going to open a bottle of wine, fry a couple of steaks, tell her I catch terrorists for a living and ask her to marry me.’