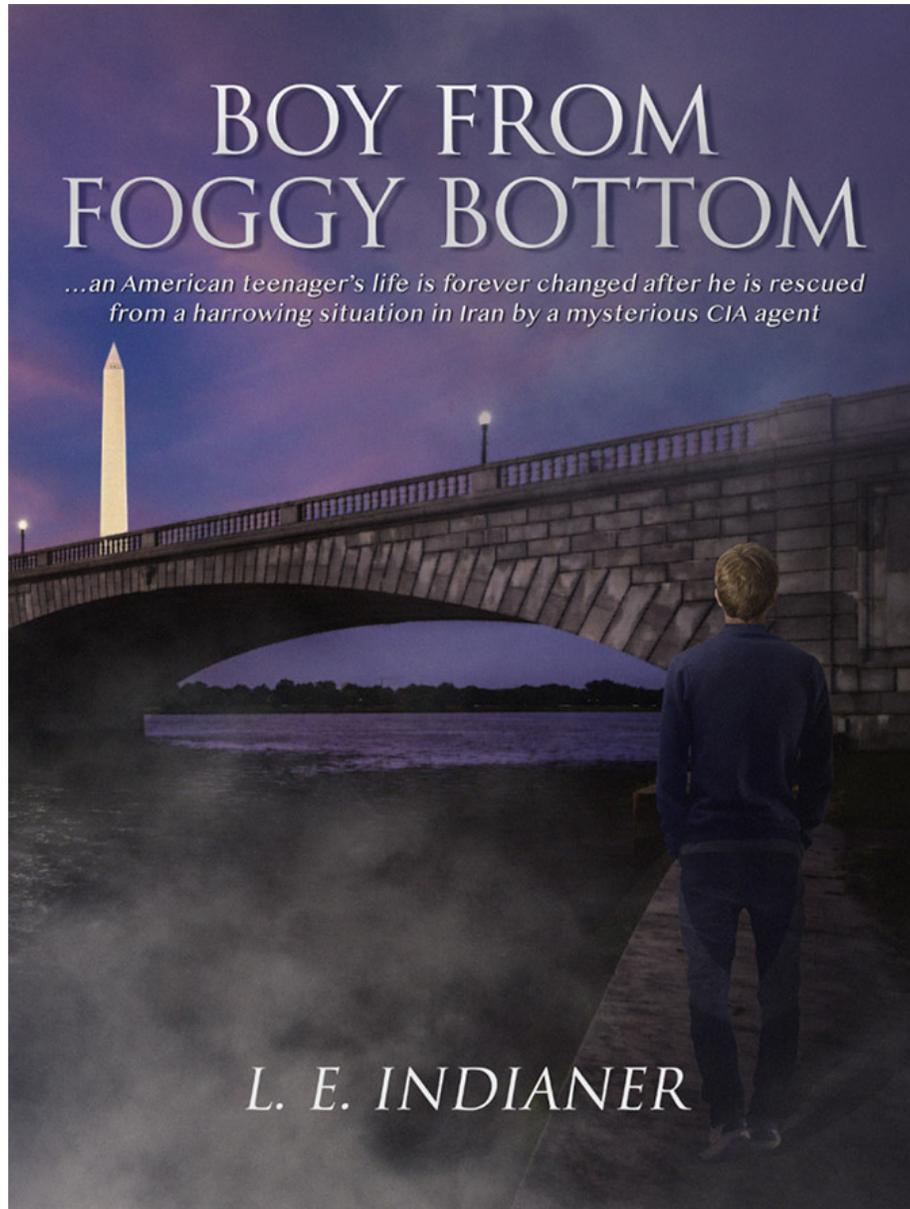


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## Prologue

### Winter 1985

In the afternoon, Jon checked into the Bella Vista Hotel in Zermatt, Switzerland... too late to take a couple of runs, although the snow looked inviting. He could try tomorrow before embarking on his “Agency” assignment.

Next morning at the top of the mountain, looking over the Matterhorn, he dropped off the peak for a short distance, and then skied to his left on a slope that led to a village above Cervinia, Italy. At the bottom of the slope, he took off his skis, checked them into a corral in front of a ski shop, and then walked toward the Saint Hubertus Ristorante.

With his face still hidden behind a black neck-up, goggles and cap, he passed through the dining room and into the men’s room. From there another door led to a locker room where he spotted Stall #5. As instructed, he entered the combination on the locker and checked to ensure a sealed manila folder remained in the black backpack. Reassured, he then removed and reversed his ski suit so now he wore all black, from head to toe.

Jon acted as a courier on this trip for the only man he worked with in the Agency. He could never turn Rafi down. Jon knew nothing of what the envelope contained—nor did he realize that it had vital information of Soviet weapons systems projections, or trends, that the CIA made over the last ten years.

With a slight slope going down the hill, Jon started walking back to the ski shop. His backpack hung loosely over his left shoulder. A stranger behind him, in a white outfit, came racing down, grabbed the pack and continued down the hill toward another area of Cervinia.

His heart pounding, Jon reacted quickly, grabbed his skis and poles out of the corral and proceeded on the downward slope.

He spotted the assailant making wide turns on a double-blue hill and thought *this is not an expert*. He got into a racing tuck and went straight down the middle of the slope. Suddenly, White-suit veered sharply right into the glades, with very narrow spaces between the trees.

Since he didn’t know the terrain as well as the enemy, Jon didn’t follow him. He went slowly and parallel along the trees, until he saw White-suit exiting onto the slope below him.

White-suit spotted him, pulled over near the right side of the hill, dropped his poles, and zipped down his jacket. He reached inside a shoulder holster to draw out his .45 caliber revolver.

Too late to get his own weapon, Jon did a fast hockey stop directly into White-suit, and slid over his body and face.

Without releasing his bindings, Jon side-stepped with his skis, lifted the man's shoulders slightly, shoved White-suit's .45 caliber back into its holster, and removed his stolen backpack. He saw no blood on the pack, only some on his skis, so he quickly donned the backpack and skied away. When he reached some soft deeper powder, he went through a patch for ten seconds to remove the blood and then returned to the hard-packed snow.

He spotted a high-speed quad lift with a direction sign pointing directly to the top of Zermatt. On the way up, he marveled at the beautiful view of the Matterhorn. He'd been lucky the assailant hadn't shot him in Cervinia, before taking his pack.

When Jon reached the top, he skied to Zermatt village without stopping, turned in his ski gear and went back to the Bella Vista. He didn't lose stride as he got on the elevator and went up to his room. He showered and changed. Then he sent for a porter to carry his bag to the large gondola, which he took down to the bottom of the mountain. His backpack stayed close to him for the remainder of the trip.

At the base of the mountain, a private car took Jon to Geneva. On a direct flight back to Baltimore, before he dozed off, his thoughts drifted to his mysterious friend, Rafi Chavoshian, the man who saved his life not once, but many times.

Only six years ago, they first made contact in Shiraz, Iran. Jon was sixteen years old and felt there was something different about Rafi. He thought he was unique and secretive. Rafi became his friend and cohort...a mentor he could always confide in.

*I trusted him completely. Looking back, I see my mission in life would have been so different, had I not met Rafi.*

## **PART ONE**

### **Chapter 1**

***HOLLYWOOD, FLORIDA – SEPTEMBER 16, 1979***

“Jonathan,” Nesie Roth yelled out to her son, now shooting hoops in the back yard with his brother, Warren. “Come inside. I just received the papers from New York.” They had been waiting for these since the beginning of the summer.

His mother rarely called him “Jonathan” unless something very important happened.

Jon ran in through the back door. “Mom, did we hear from the High School in Israel Program?”

“Yes, at last.” She reached into the large manila envelope and dragged out some papers. She handed them to Jon, and he looked them over very quickly.

“Wow!” he said. “This is terrific. We knew that I would get a whole semester’s credit for high school, but now I’m seeing I’ll be able to pick up some college credits, too. I can’t wait to go. All the seniors I’ve talked to, who have been to Israel on this program, just loved it!”

It thrilled Nesie that he seemed so enthusiastic. It took her and Jerry awhile to convince Jon to think about this great opportunity, even though he must leave his family and friends for a few months. He would have to give up his Tae Kwon Do, tennis and track at the independent college-preparatory University School of Nova which he attended.

She and her husband couldn’t dream about this when they grew up. They worked very hard to send their three children, Jon, soon to be 16, Warren, twelve years old and Whitney, nine, to the best schools they could afford. She taught music at elementary school three days a week, and Jerry worked in the accounting department of the Miami Dolphins football organization.

“I know you’ll love it, too,” Nesie said. “Maybe I’ll tag along as a chaperone.”

“No way, Mom.” They both laughed. Jon got all the papers together and started walking toward the staircase. He looked back and said, “I’m going to start filling out all these and get them in the mail by this afternoon. They can take only so many students, and I don’t want to be left out.

“Thanks, Mom,” he said. “And thanks for everything you and Dad have done for us.

One of these days, you can count on getting everything back, and more. I promise you that.”

A few days later, Jon and his best friend at school, Adam Shirazi, finished track practice and were anxious to discuss their upcoming trip with both sets of their parents. Adam also accepted the program’s offer, and his mother and father invited all the Roths to dinner in North Miami Beach.

The two couples had become friends shortly after Binyamin and Chanah emigrated from Iran to the United States in 1962. Ben got his medical degree in Tehran. He came to the University of Miami to do his residency. She and Nesie first met when both their boys attended pre-school at the same Temple. Chanah, a very innovative cook, served a tasty Persian dinner, appropriate for the discussion of the boys’ upcoming trip.

“Does anybody know the exact dates Adam and Jon are leaving for and coming back from Israel?” Ben asked.

“I know, Dr. Shirazi,” Jon answered. “As of now, we’ll be flying from Miami at the beginning of next year on January 5<sup>th</sup>, and arriving in Tel Aviv the next day, January 6<sup>th</sup>. I think it’s about an eleven-hour flight.”

“Maybe twelve,” Adam added. “We’ll definitely be coming back home on May 10<sup>th</sup>.”

Everyone sat in silence for five seconds, before Jerry spoke. “Hold on a minute.” He paused, looked up and squinted. “Jon, when you said ‘as of now,’ and Adam said ‘definitely’...tell me if I’m wrong, but are we all missing something in the translation?”

“Well, Dad,” Jon said, “Adam came up with a very interesting idea, which we wanted to talk to all of you about tonight.” He pointed to Adam, sitting across the table and said, “Why don’t you go ahead and let everyone know what this concerns?”

“Ah...Adam,” Ben said as slow as he could in his Persian accent. “Let us hear what you two geniuses have been cooking up...we cannot wait.”

“*Pedar*, you and *Madar* have always talked about taking us back to Iran, to ancient Persia...your homeland. I’ve looked forward to that since I was a little boy, but we’ve never had a chance to go. Well now, I do have a chance before Jon and I go to Israel.”

His father started to say something, but Adam held up his hand, and continued. “This is a perfect opportunity to really spend some time with relatives, whom I’ve only seen a few times when they came to visit us in the U.S. In Shiraz, there are my grandparents; and, in Tehran and Tabriz, we could be with my two uncles, your brothers, and my cousins. We could travel throughout the country.”

Nesie and Jerry both looked stunned, with their mouths wide open.

“We?” Nesie asked. She looked over at Jon. “Surely, you’re not thinking of doing this too, are you Jonathan?”

Jon nodded. “Well, actually I am. I’d love to go and see an ancient country like this...that is if you two approve.”

“How would you feel in an Arab country that isn’t that fond of Jews, which you know

absolutely nothing about, and can't speak the language?" Jerry asked rather loudly.

"First of all, Dad, the people in Iran are not Arabs, they're Persian...a big difference," Jon replied. "They're been Jews living there for over two thousand years. Secondly, I've studied about Iran, and it always seemed fascinating. You're right, I can't speak the language, but Adam speaks *Farsi* fluently, and that should be enough to get us by. And he can teach me a few phrases before we go."

Chanah lifted her head, "Now wait a minute, boys. If you're going to be traveling, you have no idea how rough the countryside is in that area..."

"And the cities have become very dangerous lately," Ben interrupted. "Especially since the Shah's harsh rule last year sparked all the demonstrations and riots. This caused martial law, especially after all the riots against the Shah. He went into exile in Egypt earlier this year."

"So, isn't that a good thing?" Adam asked.

"I don't think it is any better now," his father replied. "In fact, it may be even worse since the Ayatollah Khomeini came back this past February to lead the country. I wish he would have continued his exile in France."

"What's wrong with this guy, as opposed to a dictator like the Shah?" Jon asked.

"That is a good question, Jon," Ben said. "Before long, Iran will be a theocracy, which is a government in which God is recognized as the supreme ruler. The religious authorities, like the Ayatollah, rule the state."

"In this case, it is Islamic fundamentalism at its worst...no tolerance for anyone that criticizes or does not believe what they do." He took a sip of wine and then continued. "So, as a result of this, laws are very stringent, and it makes minorities at risk for persecution and harassment at any time."

Nesie looked across the table, and then asked, "Ben, Chanah, what do you think about this bombshell the boys dropped on us? Is it doable?"

"Sure, it can be done," Chanah sighed, "but we need a lot more information before we can make this important decision."

"I should say so," Jerry said with some force. "First of all, and I don't even know why I'm asking this, because the two of you have probably figured it out already...when exactly do you think you'll be able to do this? This first semester isn't done until December 21<sup>st</sup>, and then you leave for Israel...uh, what, two weeks later?"

"We've thought of all this, Dad," Jon said, "and you're exactly right...there isn't enough time before going to Israel." He paused and looked around the room. "So, Adam and I started working on a backup plan."

Chanah smiled. "And to think that all this started with the two of them in pre-school."

Nesie, in a gesture, threw out her arms toward the boys, "OK, guys, let us have your *coup de grace*, which I'm sure is a doozy and will knock us over."

"After school yesterday, Adam and I had a very good conference with Mr. Loeb. We told him exactly what our plans were regarding Israel and Iran, and our lack of time."

“Yeah,” Adam continued, “he really felt it would be a great opportunity; especially for me since my parents came from there, and if the State Department okayed our going to Iran.”

“The big question that I asked Mr. Loeb,” Jon said, “is what Adam and I can do to finish this semester before October 25<sup>th</sup>...the day we want to leave. That’s about thirty-five days from now. So, he’s going to check with our teachers, and see if we can get all our future assignments ASAP. Then, we can take our finals whenever we’re ready. He felt confident that we could do it with just a little more extra work over the next month.”

“And you know,” Chanah interrupted, “the boys could stay with Ben’s family also.”

“Right, my brother Eli is in Tehran and Hadar is in Tabriz. Of course, *Pedar and Madar*, my parents whom you met here a few years ago, are in Shiraz,” he said.

“Ben, you’re going a little too fast,” Jerry said. “I still don’t think that Nesie and I are sure that this is what we want our son to do. We don’t want to rush this. This is absolutely un-be-liev-able.”

## CHAPTER 2

### ***SHIRAZ, IRAN – OCTOBER 26, 1979***

Jon and Adam convinced their parents, after a few scrimmages, to let them go to Iran for an “educational experience,” and visit Adam’s family for a month or so. The flight from Miami International Airport took almost seventeen hours, including the layovers and airline changes.

Mordechai and Aryana, Adam’s grandparents, met the boys at the Shiraz airport. They both spoke a reasonable amount of English. The Shirazis cried when they embraced their grandson. They saw him a half-dozen times when they visited in the States—but never in Iran. They couldn’t get over how much he grew, and how he looked like their son, Binyamin.

As soon as their duffle bags turned up, Mordecai drove everyone back to their home. They lived in a predominately affluent, Jewish suburb of Shiraz, in a classical Iranian house—a white three-story building, with a red-tiled roof, arched in the center, and a magnificent garden and pond in the back yard.

It emphasized to the boys that Adam’s family did very well in Iran. While eating dinner, Mordechai and Aryana told them a brief history of the country and that things were changing rapidly since the outset of the Islamic Revolution the previous year.

In the late sixth century B.C.E. (Before the Common Era), after the [Babylonian Exile](#), a well-established and influential Jewish community in Persia emerged. Jews had comprised, at one time, as much as twenty percent of the population.

“Baba,” as Jon began calling Mordechai, “tell us all about Shiraz and how it began.”

“Well, on a few occasions, it was the capital of Persia. The earliest reference to Shiraz dated back to 2000 BCE. The oldest sample of wine ever recovered here goes back approximately seven thousand years.”

Aryana added, “Iranians are very proud of their five thousand years of history. I cannot tell you how many times I have heard people say that the history and sites in Iran are equal to Rome and Greece. We have a treasure-trove of Persian culture.”

Adam looked over at his grandfather and asked, “Baba, I always thought that you were in the wine business?”

“Yes, our family has been in the wine business for hundreds of years. This is when our family was named Shirazi, after the village. Unfortunately, over the last year, the new government made us give up our commercial wine business, as everyone did. But, thank God, we still have our fertilizer and cement businesses.

“It wasn’t long after the Shah went into exile that the Ayatollah arrived and began instituting *Sharia* Law early this year. There can be no more alcohol of any kind manufactured in Iran, including wine. Only recognized religious minorities are free to perform their rites and ceremonies, such as tasting wine but not overdoing it.

“Since the Islamic Republic of Iran was born last April, it is based on their interpretations of *Sharia*, or Islamic law, which favors men much more than before. Mima and other women are not too happy about all this, since they are not equal under this new constitution.”

“Yes, it is terrible, terrible,” Aryana moaned. “The revolution overhauled the entire legal system. And now, education for girls and young women has been cut back almost to nothing. This is the worst kind of theocracy you can imagine.”

“In Iran,” Mordechai said, “all females, of puberty age and older, must have a male guardian who oversees what they do, and where and when they can go.”

Aryana threw her hands up in the air. “Aaah! Being a possession of someone, like a goat.”

“What do you think is the worst thing happening here, Mima?” Adam asked.

“Adam, it all boils down to this. The Ayatollah and his people are trying to erase six decades of modernization of Iran's judicial system.”

Jon and Adam didn’t wake up until 2:30 in the afternoon. That evening, they continued to glean even more information from Baba and Mima.

Uppermost, the Shirazis occasional thoughts drifted to immigrating to the United States or Israel. These thoughts recently became an everyday occurrence.

## CHAPTER 3

### **SHIRAZ – OCTOBER 28, 1979**

Over the next few days, the weather stayed in the high 50's-F. Mordechai and Aryana took Adam and Jon to as many interesting historic and exciting places they could think of. Shiraz delivered a treasure trove of Persian culture, such as the universally acknowledged City of Poets and Saints and the City of Roses.

On the second day, in the historic *Bagh-e Eram*, the Garden of Paradise and beautiful Palace, Adam began feeling a little dizzy. Mima gave him a bottle of water and told him it was due to the altitude. Mima said, "Jon, wait until Adam feels better before walking again."

The Shirazis planned to take a casual stroll through the gardens and the palace in the center of the property. "We will meet you in two hours, at the main gate, at 3:00 P.M.," Baba said.

While the boys sat in the shade, Jon felt someone observing him. A man with a dark complexion and in his early thirties kept staring from a path that lay perpendicular to theirs. Jon tried not to be alarmed, but casually gazed over a few times. He noted how well-dressed the man was in casual pants, sport shirt and loafers. *I don't know why I'm reacting this way, but there's something going on, I just know it.*

He mentioned his feelings to Adam and got nothing but a weird stare. "You getting paranoid, Roth? Maybe *you* got too much sun or it's the altitude. I don't see anything strange about him."

"Oh, maybe you're right. It's just this crazy thing about him. I don't know."

"Well, I feel OK now. Let's walk around the garden for a little bit. It's really beautiful the way the whole thing is set up. One day--"

"One day you're gonna be this great architect. I bet you'll pick up a lot of ideas on this trip, for sure." As they began walking, Jon turned, but the man was no longer there. *I guess I'm just imagining things.*

"Jon, you still haven't decided what you want to do yet, have you? With your brains, you could probably do anything you want...a doctor, a scientist, an engineer. Me? I have to study hard for everything."

"But you make all A's too and know what you really want...which is great. I know that I wouldn't want any of the things you mentioned. I do want something exciting and adventurous. I want to see the world and make a lot of money, so I can do these things."

He put his arm around Adam's shoulder for a second as they walked a little further.

"I'm really glad that you asked me to come with you to Iran. Really unbelievable...And your grandparents have been great."

"Thanks, they really like you too. I can't wait to call our parents tonight and tell them everything. I know they're anxious to hear from us."

"You're right. It seems like we've been gone a lot longer than we have. They'll be happy to hear that we made the right decision after all."

"Uh huh, especially your parents. I didn't think they would really let you come with me. Although, I probably wouldn't have come by myself. It's much more fun this way."

They stopped along an isolated trail to look at an exotic and rare large, tropical shrub. Its huge star-shaped flowers looked violet and purple with a gold center. Jon took out the small camera in his pocket to take a picture of this rare species.

Just then, someone behind him said, "Do you want me to take a picture of the two of you?"

Jon faced the same handsome man he saw looking at him. Taken aback for a few seconds, he realized he never heard the man approach them. He noted right away that he spoke almost perfect English. Like he thought, the man seemed friendly enough. "Sure," Jon said in the best voice he could muster. "Thanks." He handed him the camera.

"OK, guys, why not go around the small railing, in back of the plant, and face me? This way you will not have the sun at your back."

After taking the picture, the man held up his hand as to stop them from moving. "Let me take one more vertically. I think it will be even better, especially with the most beautiful plant in the Gardens." He took the picture and then said, "Feel the texture of the leaves. It is quite different."

"Wow," Adam said. "You're right. They feel sorta' like grapes. What is it?"

The man replied, "It's called the *Calatropic Gigantea*. Because of its crown flowers, it's a symbol of royalty...considered sacred by some people, like the Hindus.

"My name is Rafi Chavoshian." He extended his hand to each of the boys. "Are you from the States or Canada?"

"We're from South Florida," Jon said and introduced himself and Adam.

"I'm quite familiar with the Miami area...spend time there occasionally." He paused, as if thinking out his next response. "I've been living around the D.C. area for quite a few years. Right now, I'm in College Park, Maryland."

"Oh, that's where the University of Maryland is, right?" Adam asked. "That's one of the schools my parents and I are going to visit next spring."

"Yes, it is a very good school, Adam. I know you will like the campus."

"Do you teach there, Rafi?" Jon asked.

"Yes, I am a guest lecturer in International Studies, and at the Robert H. Smith School of Business." He paused, and then added, "I'm over here on some UM research for about ten days and visiting my family that I haven't seen for a few years. How about

you, boys?”

“Well,” Adam said, “we’ll be in Iran for a month, or so, visiting my family and seeing the sights.”

“Oh, really, that sounds interesting. Is this your first trip, and where does your family live?”

“My grandparents live here in Shiraz; one uncle is in Tehran, and the other in Tabriz.” Then he remembered, “Oh, yes, this is our first trip, but all of my family have been to see us several times.”

“That’s wonderful. I know that you will have a great time.” He looked at his watch. “It looks like I have to be going. I’m meeting someone in forty minutes across town.”

Rafi shook hands with the boys, and then said, “It was very nice meeting you. One thing I’ll say before I leave—don’t miss seeing Persepolis while you’re here.”

“Yeah,” Jon said, “Baba told us that Persepolis was very important, and we’re going there tomorrow morning.”

“Fantastic,” Rafi said enthusiastically. “I’ll be there myself, so hopefully we’ll run into each other again.” He turned and walked toward the back entrance where he had parked his car.

After Rafi left, they sat on a bench for a while.

Jon became a little introspective ...looking down at the ground, as if in deep thought.

Knowing him for so long, this didn’t seem unusual to Adam. Finally, he said, “Jon, what’s roaming around in that brain of yours?”

Jon waited for several seconds before responding. “I...I don’t know, really. It’s hard to describe.” He waited a little longer before adding, “It’s Rafi. I don’t think he was truthfully telling us everything about himself.”

“What do you expect? We only spoke to him for...maybe five minutes? Do you want his whole life history?”

“That’s not it, Adam. He’s not exactly what, or who, we think he is. There’s something more mysterious about him...something...I don’t know, maybe concealing something.” He shook his head and bit his upper lip. Suddenly he burst out, “Unique. That’s it, very secretive. I don’t know how to describe it any better than that.”

“You’re thinking too much, buddy. We’ll probably never see him again, so let’s just relax and go see the palace. Okay?”

“Yeah, I guess.” He let out a deep breath. “But I think you’re wrong.”

## CHAPTER 4

### ***PERSEPOLIS – OCTOBER 29, 1979***

Instead of taking Adam and Jon out for the day, Mordechai and Aryana thought they'd give them a little time on their own. They hired a driver, who they knew for a long while, and after breakfast he picked the boys up in his black sedan. He spoke English quite well, and told them they could call him "Humphrey" after his favorite actor Humphrey Bogart. Well-versed in the history of Persia, he explained the topography to the boys, and then he asked about the United States. To visit there had been his lifelong dream.

Their first destination was Persepolis, one of the best known archaeological ruins in the world. Humphrey began by telling them, "It is still one of the remaining mysteries of ancient civilization because unlike the Greeks who kept meticulous records, Persia failed to do so."

"Where does Iran stand in oil producing countries in the Middle East?" Jon asked.

"We number two. Saudi Arabia is leader. Of course, it is a much bigger country. I hope you boys know that we are not Arabs. Whatever you do, never, ever, call a Persian an Arab. That is a *BIG* insult. Understand?"

Adam said, "I've heard that the Arabs say the same things about the Persians."

Humphrey gave a long, hearty laugh. "Oh, but we are much, much better."

The boys liked to be with Humphrey, and seeing this down-to-earth working man enjoying his day. Down the road, the ancient ruins of Persepolis came into view.

"This used to be the heart and capital of ancient civilization," Humphrey said. "The Persian Empire began in 550 B.C.E and became the largest ever in the ancient world."

They walked up a small embankment, climbed a wide, double staircase and went through what they called the '*Gate of All Nations*.' On each side stood two pairs of colossal, human-headed, winged bulls. "This represented the strength of the dynasty," Humphrey said, "but most of it was destroyed by Alexander the Great in 330 B.C.E. The Dynasty ended here. Imagine all this, even after twenty-five hundred years."

"This is really amazing," Jon said.

"Now, boys, take your time and walk around, and be sure to see the 'Harem.'"

They found the "Harem" to really be the "Queen's Quarters". It disappointed the boys to learn that unlike the Ottoman Empire, Persian harems never existed.

"That's a bummer." Jon exclaimed as they entered the museum. "I was looking for something more exotic." He glanced in the next room for a second.

When Adam gazed in that direction, his eyes lit up and he smiled as he noticed two pretty girls. "Let's go meet them."

They moved closer to the girls, who were discussing a stone bust of King Cyrus sitting on a small, inlaid shelf. "It's amazing how true-to-life his face is, even the eyes," the brown-haired one said.

Jon commented, "His curly hair looks just like yours." The girls turned around as Jon continued his remarks, "Hmm, you must be related to King Cy."

The girls and Adam laughed. "Hi...I'm Adam. You must excuse my friend, Jon, here. He has a weird sense of humor, but he means well."

The blonde put out her hand and shook Adam's first, and then Jon's. "I'm Polly, and this is my friend, Ina."

"Hey, guys," Ina said. "It sounds like you're Americans, too."

"Yeah," Jon replied. "We come from Florida. How about you two...it sounds Midwest?"

Polly tilted her head slightly. "Hmm, almost. Our homes are in D.C., but we've been living here in Iran, two and a half years for me...almost two years for Ina now."

"Where's here," Jon asked, "in Shiraz?"

"No, we live in Tehran. Our fathers work at the American Embassy."

"Gosh," Jon said, "you must be having quite an experience? I envy you."

"Well..." she hesitated for a few moments, before motioning the boys to come closer, and then continued in a whisper. "It was a lot better under the Shah. When we go out now, we really have to watch what we do and say."

Ina said, "You can just see and feel how the Ayatollah is becoming more and more extreme. I'm sure that one day we'll be wearing a head scarf and give up everything that even comes close to being western. They've begun censoring our American High School curriculum, especially world history. They're changing things we know are absolutely true."

"How do your parents feel about your staying here?" Adam inquired. "They must have a lot of concerns."

"Oh, they have plenty, alright," Polly raised her voice, before she caught herself doing so. "Both our dads have one more year here, but they've already considered sending their families home at the end of this school year. It could be sooner...I don't know. We planned to finish our senior year in D.C."

"So. you're both juniors, like us," Adam said. "That's great." He glanced at his watch. "Listen, my grandfather hired a car for us for the day. We're supposed to meet his driver now, go to lunch, and then visit some tombs. Would you like to come along?"

"Adam, did you say your grandfather?" Ina frowned.

"Yes. My grandparents live in Shiraz. Our family goes back hundreds of years. In fact, my last name is Shirazi."

"Ooops," Polly exclaimed, looking at her friend, "maybe we shouldn't say anything about the Shah and Ayatollah."

"Well," Jon shrugged, "you don't need worry about us. We're both Jewish and never

did like this new Islamic regime.”

Both girls laughed, and in unison said, “We’re Jewish, also.”

“By the way, my full name is Jonathan Roth.”

“I’m Paula Levin. Everyone calls me Polly.”

“And my last name is Bamberg,” Ina said. “And, of course, we’ve all known Adam Shirazi for years.” This got a good laugh, and everyone seemed to lighten up.

They all walked outside. Jon introduced the girls to Humphrey and then spoke to the girls. “So, do you think you can come with us?”

“We’d like to, Jon,” Polly said, “but I don’t think that our parents would approve, especially going out to the tombs.” She glanced over to a tour bus and pointed in that direction. “Let’s all walk over there. I’ll find out from the escort-guide where we’re having lunch, and then you guys and Humphrey can come with us.”

“That sounds good,” Jon said enthusiastically.

Everyone walked across the desert sand toward the bus. In a couple of minutes, Humphrey and their guide arranged to meet at a restaurant near Persepolis called the *Takht-e Jamshid*, Throne of Jamshid, an Iranian mythological figure.

The restaurant had an outdoor roof supported by Grecian-like pillars. Under this, people could sit on plush chairs and sofas, eat their meal on low mahogany tables and enjoy the desert scenery. Humphrey and the guide sat together in a separate section inside the building.

The teenagers split into two couples, as if it was meant to be...Jon and Polly, and Adam and Ina. They sat on sofas across from each other, everything appearing copasetic. The conversation flowed from one topic to another, as if they had known each other for years.

When the boys spotted Humphrey coming toward them, they knew it was time to go. The girls told them they must catch the 3:30 train with their escort. They exchanged addresses and phone numbers in the States and in Tehran...the boys using Adam’s Uncle Eli’s number. Now, they all felt something to look forward to in the capital. They promised to get together after they arrived in a few days.

They held hands on their way back to the bus and kissed good bye on the cheeks. Before they got on their small tour bus, the girls turned and waved goodbye.

Humphrey started the car and pulled out of the sandy parking lot. “So, we must go and see the tombs. It will give you Persian luck.”

“It will not take long to drive the eight miles to the Rock Tombs of Naqsh-e Rostam, believed to be a mystical hero,” Humphrey said. “As you can see, it is built on the side of this mountain, and the tombs range in height from two to three stories. Some are even cube-shaped, carved out of rock, very high above the ground.”

“Some of them look like Christian symbols,” Adam commented.

“Yes, you are right, Mr. Shirazi. They are known locally as ‘Persian crosses’”,

When they walked into the chamber, a sarcophagus lay in the center of the room. "This, boys, is the king's tomb. He's been entombed here for 2500 years." He looked at his watch. "We need to start back by 4:00. I'll be in the little coffee shop. Okay?"

"That's fine, Humphrey," Adam said. "We'd like to walk around."

Adam put his hand on Jon's shoulder. "Don't turn around too fast, but I think I just spotted Rafi. It looks like he's in a very heated discussion a little way down the hill, with a man in a suit."

"Maybe we better not disturb him, so let's stay up here a little longer."

They spent five more minutes taking pictures inside and out. When they started to walk, they didn't see him at first. As they turned around the last curve on the path, Rafi came in their direction.

"Hi, Rafi," Jon called out. "How are 'ya?"

When he saw them, he put his hands up in greeting. He gave them both a warm handshake. "I never expected to see you here, but I am glad I did. Let us go to a more private, shadier place. I need to tell you a few things. Okay?"

The boys followed him down the hill, not knowing what to expect. He found a bench under a low desert date palm. He asked them to sit down, and he took a seat at the end of the bench, facing them.

"Tell me if I'm wrong, but I am sure you are curious as to why I asked to speak to you, right?"

The boys nodded their heads several times.

"Truthfully, I do not blame you, but understand that this is for your benefit."

"Is there something going on in the country that we should know about, Rafi?" Jon asked, thinking about the man with whom Rafi spoke.

"Actually, there is, or...there may be soon; and, I stress the words *'may be.'*"

"Gosh," Adam said, "I hope it's nothing serious. It doesn't have anything to do with my grandparents, does it?"

"Oh, no...nothing like that. It is more of a political issue, which happens from time to time. Something that I feel both of you *should* know about." He paused, and then folded his hands, before he began to speak. "I have just been told that for the last two days, there have been a few small student demonstrations around the country. They were directed against non-Muslim countries, in Europe, yes, but mainly against the United States because the U.S. had the Shah's back."

"So, why have things flared up again?" Jon asked.

"Because, the hatred for America has become a rallying point for radical Islam. If this hatred keeps building up, you have to be very careful not to get involved in any way. Do you both understand me?"

"Yes, we do," Adam said. "We'll be going to Tehran in a couple days, so who should we get in touch with if there are problems?"

Rafi took out a pocket notepad, wrote out a page full of information, which he tore

off and handed to Jon, who was sitting next to him. "Take this and contact me if things get worse, or if you are having any trouble. I know how to get you help. I will be in Tehran for one more week. Hopefully, things will be fine."

That night at dinner, the boys told Baba and Mima about Rafi, and what transpired over the last couple of days. They looked happy that the boys met two very nice girls while they visited Persepolis. But, they worried about this man who knew so much regarding the demonstrations.

"My first concern is," Mordechai began, "do you know if this man is a Muslim, and do you think there is a chance he might be trying to lead you in some direction?"

"I'm pretty sure he's not a Muslim," Jon said. "Today, when he walked up the hill towards us, I saw him wearing a chain around his neck with a funny-shaped gold crucifix. And I really don't think he's up to anything devious. He's just a nice man."

"Hmm, from what you describe, I would guess that he is an Armenian Christian."

Adam looked over at Mima, who shrugged, and seemed not too happy about the meeting with Rafi. "Mima, everything will be fine. He's nice enough to give us his contact numbers in case we might need them. So, you have nothing to worry about."

## CHAPTER 5

### **SHIRAZ – OCTOBER 31, 1979**

On the day before Jon and Adam left Shiraz, Mordechai and Aryana took the boys on a visit to the Tomb of Hafez, Iran's most famous poet and the Tomb of Cyrus the Great, who is celebrated in the Bible as the "anointed one" for freeing the Jews from Babylonian captivity.

The Vakil Bazaar, located in the historical center of the city, became their final stop for the day.

"This is like something out of an adventure movie," Jon exclaimed.

They walked admiring the wide corridors and high ceilings, which allowed air circulation and rays of light to beam through. Jon bought a small Persian rug for his mother, who requested that before he left for Iran.

The scattered, tiled courtyards added a good reprieve to sit and talk for a while before continuing through this maze of wonderment. "Where you are sitting now," Mordechai said, "is part of a *caravanserais*."

"What is that, Baba?" Adam asked.

"It acted like an ancient roadside inn to shelter the drivers, their animals and their goods. These routes linked with the Silk Roads. This is the way commerce was done for thousands of years—goods from one country were traded for goods from another, and that is how the word 'trader' came to be."

"Mordechai," Aryana said, "take the boys to see the baths. That would be interesting to them."

"Oh, yes." Jon exclaimed. "That would be great. I didn't realize that they actually had things like this anymore."

"The tradition never stopped. Come with me and we will see if they are in use."

They reached an unattached stone building. Above the entrance, on a plaque of white stone, this word stood out in Persian, حمام. "This is it boys. We will go inside, so first leave your shoes and socks outside next to the wall."

Mordechai opened the door of the bathhouse to let the boys in. When he closed it, he turned around and saw a plaque hammered into the wall. "Oh, my God," he said.

"What does it say, Baba?" Adam asked.

Without saying a word, he reopened the door, put on his shoes and socks, and motioned for the boys to follow him back outside. He walked back to the bench where Aryana sat, and began speaking quickly in Farsi. She seemed taken aback, also.

Adam could make out some of the words, and asked, "Baba, Mima, what is going

on about the Jews?”

Neither one of them spoke for a while, until Aryana slowly began. “A sign in the baths...they read...‘Jews are not allowed in public baths used by Muslims.’”

“That’s terrible,” Jon exclaimed. “Has it always been like this?”

“I have never seen it in my lifetime,” Mordechai replied.

Aryana added, “This may be just the beginning of things to come, and I really think that we should seriously consider moving to Israel or the United States, Mordechai.”

## CHAPTER 6

### ***ISFAHAN – NOVEMBER 1, 1979***

Not to take any unnecessary chances, even though Adam and Jon wanted to take the train by themselves to Tehran, via Isfahan, Mordechai insisted that Humphrey drive them to their final destination. After an early breakfast and farewells to Baba and Mima, the boys and Humphrey set out in his sedan for the 300-mile drive to Isfahan.

When they arrived, after their six-hour drive, Humphrey took them to the hotel that Mordechai reserved for the night. They stayed close to the *Naqsh-e Jahan*, one of the largest squares in the world.

The next day, the boys went to the bazaar. Passing by a stand in the food market making *shish-kabobs*, they couldn't resist the aroma. The proprietor wrapped them each a pieta sandwich filled with lamb, peppers and onions. They enjoyed eating this exotic treat that neither had ever tasted. They felt right at home with Coca Colas.

While they headed toward the main exit of the Bazaar, loud voices could be heard outside. As they got closer, they could see and hear enough to understand what was going on.

All the protestors appeared to be the age of college students. They marched down the wide sidewalks inside the Square, carrying placards defaming Israel and the United States. They shouted slogans in their rhythmic way. Jon estimated the procession to be larger than one hundred people and voiced his displeasure.

Adam took Jon by the arm and led him back to a private corner. "This might get violent."

Humphrey approached and said, "I think it best to go back to our hotel so you can relax. And then we will meet for dinner in the dining room at 1900 hours. Tomorrow, we will start early, see a couple of interesting things here in Isfahan, and continue our journey to Tehran. Sound okay?"

## CHAPTER 7

### **ISFAHAN / TEHRAN – NOVEMBER 2, 1979**

At breakfast, Jon asked Humphrey if they could see a synagogue and church that morning and then drive to Tehran. Humphrey knew exactly where to take them. He understood, without anything being said, that they wouldn't want to visit any Muslim points of interest because of their encounter the day before.

"Of course. That would be my pleasure."

Shortly after 09:00, they began their day. Within minutes, the Six hundred-year-old Isfahan Synagogue came into view. This large two-storied structure presented definite Persian and Moorish influences, especially the two cupola-like towers and a big arch between them above the wooden doors. A prominent Star of David hung behind the arch.

"I just thought of something," Humphrey said. "This is Friday and I am not sure if the synagogue will be open."

At the top of a stairway, they saw the announcements in three languages - Hebrew, Farsi and English. In bold letters, it read...FRIDAY, 2 NOVEMBER, OPENS AT 1630 HRS / SERVICES AT SUNDOWN.

"Oh," Jon said, "that's a disappointment. Let me try the door." He did, and it was locked, so he knocked a few times, but nothing happened. "I doubt if anyone could hear that through those thick, heavy doors."

Just then, a man with a white shirt and skull cap appeared from a smaller building to the north of the temple and walked toward them. "בוקר טוב. אפשר לעזור לך? Good morning. May I help you?" he asked in Hebrew.

"*Boker tov*, good morning," Jon said. "Do you speak English?"

"Ah, yes." He shook hands with everyone and asked, "How can I be of help?"

Humphrey asked, "Rabbi, I see from the notice on the board that you are closed until later, but is it possible that you show these young American men the sanctuary? We are just passing through and only here for a short time today before we continue to Tehran."

"*Ken* yes, but I cannot open the front doors, only the door on the side of the office building. Come with me and I will let you take a quick peek, as I must prepare for the service this evening."

"Very well, Rabbi," Humphrey said. "I will wait outside in the courtyard."

Adam and Jon followed him until he opened his private door into the huge, magnificent sanctuary. A bema alter stood in the center, as is common in a Sephardic

temple where the rabbi stands facing the alter which houses the Torahs, the sacred scrolls. All the men and boys sit on the main floor, and the women and girls sit upstairs in the large balcony.

“Rabbi,” Jon asked “would you mind if I took a picture inside the *schul*? I’d love for my parents to see how beautiful this is. It’s so different than any Jewish temple I’ve ever seen in the States.”

“*Ken*, of course. I am so happy that you think so highly of it. People coming to Iran are astonished at how lovely and cultured our country is. Throughout the centuries, Jewish people played a big part in helping the Persians develop this advanced civilization.

“The Muslims have been more-or-less tolerant of the Jews over the years. Of course, there were periods that we had our problems with them, and others, but that has happened all through our history.” He clasped his hands together and nodded his head, saying, “So...what else is new?”

The boys laughed, knowing exactly what he meant. They were both feeling a little more cautious the last day or two since they first arrived. But now, after seeing this Isfahan Synagogue and meeting its rabbi, it put them more at ease.

“Rabbi,” Adam said, “yesterday, we saw an anti-American, anti-Israeli demonstration by a bunch of students at the *Naqsh-e Jahan* Square. We heard about another one in Tehran a couple days ago. Should we be concerned by this, or do you think all this is normal?”

“My son...normal...abnormal...what is the difference when you are a Jew? It is all the same, and somehow we have survived over 5700 years through good times, and bad times.” He laughed, saying, “After all, we are the chosen people, are we not? What should we fear?” The Rabbi paused and put his arms around the boys’ shoulders. “We can laugh about all of this, but nevertheless, be cautious when you are here in our country. As of late I feel a wave of Islamic fundamentalism slowly beginning.”

“What do you mean by fundamentalism, Rabbi?” Jon asked. “Does that mean more radical, or more religious?”

“Radical? Hmm, maybe by western thinking, but not by them.” He paused. “More religious? *Ken*, in that they believe in a literal, strict interpretation of the *Quran*...their bible. And, they expect, even demand, all Muslims to adhere to the basic principles taught in this book, even if they must do so by force.

“You have to understand that we are in the Middle East, and in many ways the people living here are still tribal, less than one generation from being in the desert. Their thoughts and culture go back much further than the Middle Ages. *Ken*, the Shah tried to make it more western and antagonized the more religious population.

“Yes, it is very complicated. I am sure that it will never make much sense to most westerners. As the saying goes, there is no logic in the Middle East.”

After they learned from Mordechai that Rafi was probably an Armenian Christian, they were motivated to see the *Vank* Cathedral, the Armenian Church which was the most visited cathedral in Isfahan.

“What does ‘*Vank*’ mean, Humphrey?” Adam asked.

“It is an Armenian word that simply means *cathedral*. The Armenian Georgian community has a long history here in Iran. In 1604, they became an influential minority because the Shah at the time hired them for their expertise in the silk trade and granted them religious freedom and their own small government.”

When they approached the church, there in the center sat several unusual buildings, some with sharp edges, arches and a large dome. Humphrey went ahead to see if he could find a caretaker to let them in. The boys found a stone bench in a small garden area.

They sat there for a while before Adam spoke. “I can’t explain it, but there’s something different about this place.”

“I know what you mean,” Jon said. “I don’t know why, but I feel a lot better this morning, having visited the synagogue and now this church. Strange, huh?”

Adam laughed. “No, not strange. I guess we just feel more at home. Humphrey approached them. “Sorry, boys, but all the doors are locked. I wish I could have shown you the inside of the cathedral. *Special* can’t do it justice.”

The drive of 450 kilometers to Tehran took almost five hours. The boys caught up on some sleep most of the way there. Adam’s uncle, Eli Shirazi, gave his nephew a big hug after he came outside from his unusual, two-storied, English Tudor home.

Adam turned around and, with his open hand, gestured to his friend, “*Amoo* Uncle Eli, this is Jon Roth. He and I go to the same high school in Florida, and after we leave Iran, we’ll be going for a semester to Israel.”

Eli spoke almost flawless English, which he learned in four years at Oxford and the first two years of law school at Cambridge. He returned to the University of Tehran Faculty of Law, where he finished his degree to understand the complexities of the Iranian courts. However, Shari’ah law now dominated legal education, a fact that Eli found detestable.

“Going to Israel...Wonderful. Welcome to our home, Jon,” he said, as he shook his hand and ruffled his curly hair. “While you are here, consider yourself as my other nephew. Understand?”

“I do. Thank you very much.”

Humphrey unloaded the car. Eli walked toward him with his arms out wide. “Humphrey, you never change, do you?”

They gave each other a man’s style embrace, slapping each other on the back. “Lawyer Eli, you never looked better,” Humphrey replied. “I know you will enjoy having the boys with you. They are very smart and want to see everything.”

“Yes, my wife Adi, our son Daniel and I looked forward to their arrival. We are hoping that they will have a good time. As you know, there is some unrest in the city, and we pray that there won’t be any disturbances during their visit.”

Once inside, Adam, Jon and Daniel went straight for the kitchen, made a snack, and talked to Adi while she prepared dinner.

At dinner, the discussion went on about the disturbances and Adi’s interpretation of the new regime.

“Yes,” Daniel agreed, “Madar has a right to be scared, especially since November fourth...two days from now marks two important anniversaries in our history. The Shah, precisely on that day in 1964, drove the Ayatollah Khomeini into exile in Turkey, and then later moved to Iraq. A year ago, on November 4, 1978, at the University of Tehran, a group of students gathered for a rally demanding more freedoms from the government. It didn’t take long before SAVAK, the Shah’s secret police organization, attacked the students and killed many of them, even an eleven-year-old boy.”

“Absolutely terrible,” Eli exclaimed. “SAVAK acted like Nazi storm troopers, and this ignited the final stage of the Shah’s rule in Iran. What little respect he had from the Iranian people was now gone.”

“*Ameh* Aunt Adi, have any major demonstrations happened here in Tehran since this Revolution?” Jon asked.

“You may not have heard this, but on February 14<sup>th</sup> this year, a mob of people, including many students, stormed the U.S. Embassy. Fortunately, that ended very quickly, with the mob expelled by the secret police from the U.S. compound. Since then—no further uprisings.”

“You never know what is going to happen or is being planned here in Iran,” Eli added. “We only hear news reports that the theocracy wants us to hear. Daniel sends the real news to us from England, when he calls home from college.”

## CHAPTER 8

### **TEHRAN – NOVEMBER 3, 1979**

When Adam suggested that he and Jonathan wanted to travel in Iran before going to Israel, it thrilled his uncle Ben that his son could see where he and his mother grew up. After all, it was the home of his ancestors and the foundation of the culture of Persian Jews for centuries. Adam started to feel this connection each day, and knew that Jon felt as enthusiastic, but in a different way.

They got a late start that morning. Before leaving the house, Jon called Polly and they arranged to meet for lunch. He put Daniel on the phone to get the details, and he knew exactly where to go. When Jon got the phone back, he told Polly that Adam planned to call Ina to come also, but Polly gave him the bad news.

“Ina left earlier this morning for the States with her mother, sister and father. He was concerned with the situation here and didn’t want to take chances with his family.” Polly said that she’d tell him more at lunch and had looked forward to seeing him.

Daniel headed toward the center of the city. Tehran, the capital, political and intellectual heart of the country, was a metropolis of almost five million.

“This is *Azadi* Street,” Daniel said, “one of our main streets. For many years, it was called Eisenhower Street after your president, Dwight D. Eisenhower, but after the Revolution, the name was changed. Straight ahead of us, in that big open area, is Azadi Square, although it is actually a circle. Azadi is the Persian word for ‘Freedom.’”

“Wow. What is that awesome structure in the center?” Adam exclaimed.

“Well, that is what I am taking you to see—the Azadi Tower.”

Then the three boys walked across a huge plaza. “This is the second largest square in Iran. You have already seen the first in Isfahan.”

As they got close enough to see its fountains at the base, the monument became more and more impressive. It was shaped like a rocket ship in its takeoff position with four legs forming a gigantic arch, holding up a massive rectangular dome reaching for the sky. Small windows on all four sides appeared at the top.

Once under the arch, Daniel showed them the entrance to the museum below the ground. Here they spent half-an-hour looking at the Persian artifacts collected over the centuries. When they emerged, a demonstration of sixty or more young people marched around the paved circular area of the Tower. They too, as before, carried placards with anti-American slogans and shouted horrible Israeli obscenities as well. A few held wooden poles with plastic reproductions of the head and face of President Jimmy Carter.

Daniel said. “No telling what a mob like this is capable of doing. *Azadi* Square has been the site of some of the largest political rallies in the country.” He looked at his watch. “We better get going, if we need to meet your friend on time at the restaurant. It is quite a way from here.”

They drove through the downtown part of the city, and like any other, it bustled with people, buildings and traffic. Tehran’s altitude ranged from 3,900 to 6,470 feet in a beautiful location, surrounded by snow-capped mountains. Everything revolved around Tehran—the politics, the style trends and the progressive changes, from clothes to architecture—all evolved here.

Daniel pointed toward the foothills. “We won’t go all the way to the northern Tehran mountains that you see in the distance. You’ll get a good view of the city, though, when we get to the Darband Hotel Restaurant in fifteen minutes.”

Polly waited outside the hotel. When Jon got out of the car, she gave him a big smile, hurried down the stairs and hugged him.

“It’s so good to see you also, Adam. I’m so sorry that Ina had to go back to the States. She didn’t expect anything like this to happen and wanted you to please call her when you get back from Israel.”

“Yes, of course I’ll call her.”

“She and I became very good friends while we were here...our parents’ also.” She glanced behind Adam, and said, “Hi, I’m Polly. You must be Daniel.”

He stuck out his hand and shook hers. “Yes, I am Adam’s cousin, Daniel Shirazi. So nice to meet you. I do hope that there will be no problems in Tehran.”

She grinned. “Oh, what a nice British accent. Is that where you’re from?”

“I’m in my second year at Oxford University, plus my father spent about seven years at university in England, so I grew up speaking Farsi, as well as English.”

“How interesting,” Polly said. “I’ve learned a little Farsi, so I can get by. I think we better go inside. Our reservation is for 1:30 P.M.”

The food at the Darband was legendary and popular with both foreigners and Iranians. The table Polly reserved oversaw a splendid view of Tehran and the valley below. After being seated, the bus boys brought menus and bottled water to the table.

“What a super place, Polly,” Jon said. “I can’t remember ever eating anywhere nicer than this. It’s so elegant...what do you suggest, Polly?”

“The most popular and famous Persian dish is the Chelo-Kebab,” Polly said. “*Chelo* is Persian for steamed, white rice, which everyone goes crazy for.”

“That’s it?” Adam exclaimed.

Polly smiled, saying, “Adam, it’s much more than that. Chelo starts as a plain rice pilaf, but it’s very buttery, and it’s made so that a crunchy, golden crust forms on the bottom of the pot, and—“

“And,” Daniel interjected, “If you serve this at home, everyone wants a bite of the crust. But it is traditional in Iran to offer the crust to your guest.”

Polly said, “Everyone who orders this does get part of the crust.”

A cheerful portly waiter came to the table, and a consensus for the Chelo-Kebab prevailed. He smiled and wrote down the order. “I’ll make sure you get a little extra crust, too,” he whispered.

Daniel stood, put out his hand, and said, “ShAya, it is good to see you.”

At first the waiter drew a blank, but then it came to him, and he shook his hand. “Daniel, I did not recognize you. You have gotten so tall. Your parents were here recently and told me that you were studying in England. That is marvelous. I wish you well.”

“*Shnorhaka lut ‘yun* thank you. I would like you to meet my friends from America...Polly, Jon, and my cousin, Adam...also a Shirazi.”

They all smiled, nodded their heads and said, “Hello, ShAya.”

“Hel-lo,” he said in his best English. “I go America one time...to New York and Chicago to be with family. Ah, magnifique! One day I return for longer time.”

“What a nice man,” Polly remarked. “Sorry, Daniel, but I wish that all Iranians felt like he does.”

“Yes, I understand. I lived with these people all my life and tried to ignore all their prejudices. I have many Persian friends, and for the most part they welcome Jews into their communities and their homes. But, they don’t like Israel, because it is too western and too much like the United States.”

Jon asked, “Daniel, I’m still curious about why your country is so anti-American? Is there a way to rationalize this?”

“In a way, yes, but it is not really rationalizing, because that’s almost impossible to do with people from the Middle East. What I can tell you is their reasoning, which is as close to logical as I can get.”

“I’m dying to hear this,” Polly exclaimed, “because, I’ve thought of exactly the same questions that Jon mentioned, but my father wouldn’t answer these, because of his position at the Embassy.”

“I can understand the frustrations all of you have,” Daniel said, “so bear with me.” He paused for a few moments. “Earlier this year, after the Shah went to the United States for medical help, Khomeini called for street demonstrations. What you are seeing now is a result. Couple this with a fear that the U.S. will again try, as they did in 1953, to back a coup against their new popular revolution. It is feared American intelligence agencies are occupying the Embassy as spies and receiving intelligence information from Iranians working there.”

Jon developed a real respect for Daniel, and said, “Thanks for enlightening us. The Muslims are more structured and complicated than I ever thought they would be.”

Just then, ShAya appeared with two helpers to serve the luncheon. Afterwards,

everyone raved about the experience.

“Who would have thought anything like this existed?” Jon added.

ShAya headed for their table, and carried a plateful of *Baklava* with almonds, and other Persian sweets. One of his helpers brought a tray of tall, multi-colored glasses with a dessert drink called *Sharbat-Portagal*, a sherbet, mixing orange peel and orange juice boiled in thin sugar syrup, and mixed with rose water.

“See, the Shirazi party must have some desserts to top off that wonderful meal. *Baleh Yes?*” ShAya said.

“And now, Daniel, I must go to the other side of the restaurant, so I will say *bedrood* goodbye and *mammon* thank you very much to you and your American friends.”

Daniel translated, and the others came over, shook ShAya’s hand and said *mammon*, also.

“Before you leave,” said Daniel, “may I have the check, ShAya?”

“*Nakheyr, nakheyr* no, no, Daniel. Today, you and your American friends are our guests of the Darband.” He then gave Daniel a big hug, said goodbye, and walked away.

Polly said, “It was a fabulous lunch, and now I wonder if you would mind if I steal Jon away from you for the rest of the afternoon? I promise I’ll bring him home by 5:00 P.M. I want to take him by my house to meet my parents.”

“Go ahead, Jon,” Adam urged with his hands.

“Daniel, can you write out your address and phone number for me and Polly?”

“Sure. Come out with me to the hotel lobby.” Jon followed Daniel.

Polly and Adam walked outside on the porch. They talked for a while about Ina, and Polly handed him a sealed letter from her. “She was very upset that she couldn’t stay for another week, but her father was insistent that they go immediately. At the last minute, Mr. Bamberg was able to take a short leave for ten days and went back too.”

“I have to give your father and Mr. Bamberg credit. They’re both very patriotic Americans. It wouldn’t surprise me if Jon didn’t wind up in government or something that involves intelligence and travel...if there is such a combination?”

“I can tell that he’s smart, and at the same time, just down to earth. Would you say that he’s within an ace of being brilliant?”

“You hit the nail on the head, Polly, which tells me that you probably are no slouch in that department either.”

She laughed, and blushed. “I get by OK, Adam, and I’m sure you do, also. But, Jon might be what you say he is. I just don’t know him well enough yet.”

“He lets all his good intensions just fall into place.”

“And what if they don’t?”

“Well, in that case, he’s smart enough to realize that he can’t bat 1,000. So, you can be assured that once he files away an idea in his head, he’ll have backup upon backup for that idea. Hope all this doesn’t confuse you?”

“Actually, I’m happy that you told me because I find it fascinating.” She saw Jon and Daniel coming out the door.

Jon held a letter-size piece of paper as he approached Polly and put his left arm around her. “So, did you miss me?”

He showed her the directions. “Daniel has written out everything we need to get from your house to his, plus his phone number.”

“This is fine, but I think I’ll give you mine also, Daniel.” She took the paper from Jon, tore off a small piece at the bottom, wrote out her number and handed it to Daniel.

“Thanks,” he said. “Hope you two have a good time. This would be a good day to show Adam my father’s office. Polly, if you’re free tomorrow, could you show Adam and Jon some of the sights? With one day left, I have a list of things to do.”

“Sure, I’d be glad to. I’ll work it out with Jon today...no problem, Daniel.” She gave him and Adam a hug. “We’ll see you later at your house.”

Jon and Polly walked back to her Impala holding hands. Before Polly started the engine, they stared at each other until Jon moved toward her and opened his arms. She came to him with her arms opened wide. They held each other for a long while. With the same feelings, nothing needed to be said.

She started the car, backed out and drove to the exit of the parking lot. She made a right turn and headed up the hill on the curvy highway before she went left onto a dirt road. This came to a clear opening after 500 feet. “Come, let me show you something.”

They both opened their doors and got out. A forest of tall trees surrounded the area. She led him by his hand down a narrow path. After a short time, they reached a small grassy park, two picnic tables and a bench facing the mountain range. In the middle of all this, the city appeared, sitting in a beautiful valley, with no one else in sight.

“Oh my God,” Jon exclaimed, as he put his arm around her. “This is really astonishing.” He felt a little chill in the air and held her tighter. They sat on the metal settee. Jon leaned forward and folded his arms while Polly rested her head on his shoulder and rubbed his back.

“Hmm, that feels good,” he said. “I can’t get over this view.” He looked through his camera and snapped a photo and then walked around the back of the bench and asked Polly to look back at him with her arm on the back of the seat. “That’s a great shot! Now I’ll have a picture of you with this scene—our place.”

“I told you it was something special,” she said.

“How did you find this?”

“My family likes to hike. So, when we start from the bottom of the mountain, this is where we usually wind up. Then after a picnic lunch, we’ll hike back down.”

He kissed her on her forehead, as they sat on the bench just looking out at the beautiful view for several minutes.

Polly looked at her watch, took Jon’s arm off her shoulder, stood and reached for

his hand. "Come. I think we should go now. My father has a short day at the Embassy and will be home in about an hour. I want to be there before he arrives, so we can spend a little time with my mom first."

Not meaning to be quizzical, he asked, "Why is that? You don't think I can handle them both at the same time?"

"Huh?" she laughed. "No, it's not that at all...but once my father gets hold of you and starts talking, the two of you will be deep in conversation until I have to take you back to Daniel's house."

"Oh, I guess you read my mind, too. Actually, I'm really interested about what he does. I've never met anyone who worked in an embassy."

"I guessed that you would be, but with so many things being classified, I'm sure Dad won't be able to discuss anything important."

They reached her car, and Polly drove back toward Tehran.

Jon said, "When we were visiting Adam's grandparents in Shiraz, Mima was very upset with the Islamic regime. She said that women couldn't drive without the permission of a man, or he had to be with her in the car. Are you under these restrictions?"

"I may be violating the age limit, because legally you have to be eighteen to drive in Iran. But Dad said that our family is under diplomatic immunity, and he feels that fortunately I got my license a few months ago in the States, and I have no problem.

"As far as what I wear, there's no legal restriction either. But, to be on the safe side and not offend anyone, I always keep my knees and arms covered. Occasionally, if I'm in a big crowd, I'll wear a scarf over my head."

She paused for a moment, and she said, "You must know the saying--"

"'When in Rome'—"

"What an adventure this is becoming!" Jon exclaimed. "You must have traveled a lot already, with your father being in the diplomatic corps."

"I was very young when we were in Tokyo for a couple years. This was during the war in Vietnam. I don't remember very much about it, but I do know that we didn't see my father very much. He was always so busy with the war going on, and finally my mother took my brother Paul and me back to D.C. We didn't see Dad for another year. When he got back, he worked in the State Department. A few years later, we all moved to Europe and then down to Buenos Aires, and those tours were wonderful. It was the last time we were out of the country until we came here in '77."

"I didn't know that you have a brother, already lived in exotic places before you got here, and probably speak Spanish. Tell me more."

She laughed. "Well, Paul is four years older than I am, is attending the University of Florida and will be applying to medical school next year." She thought for a moment. "Yes, I spoke Spanish fluently by the time we left Argentina. I'd love to go back one day. It's a beautiful country, and we still have friends that live there." Polly turned her head,

and smiled at Jon.

“Last year,” Jon remarked, “we were supposed to go with the Florida Ski Council to Las Leñas, Argentina. We got as far as the Miami International Airport, when we were told that the trip was cancelled due to too much snow at the mountain...almost 12 feet in two days...and there was no way to fly in from Buenos Aires.

“So, where do you think you may go to college?”

“I’m not sure yet, but my parents and I have seriously been thinking about Radcliffe or U Penn Wharton. Since my father is with the government, and we live outside the country, I was able to take the prelim tests for both ahead of schedule. I did pretty well and have a good chance of being accepted...if I officially apply by next September.”

“Does that mean that you would also be taking some classes at Harvard?”

“Yes, because I think they recently had what they call a ‘non-merger merger’ between the two schools. And, when you graduate you receive a joint Radcliffe-Harvard diploma. Anyway, it all depends on whether I receive any scholarships, because the tuition is awfully high. I’d hate to see my parents have this expense, along with Paul’s at medical school.”

“I know what you mean. I’m hoping to get some scholarships, also, once I decide what I want to do. Have you thought about applying to any other colleges?”

“Well, I do have a list of a couple...Heavener at Florida, and the Kelley School of Business at Indiana. These have very good business schools, especially in the fields of marketing and management, which is my interest. How about you?”

“You must be kidding! You’re way ahead of me in thinking about colleges, and already having taken the exams for two of the most prestigious schools in the country.” He shook his head, looked up, raised his arms to the sky, and said, “God, how did I deserve this? You picked me, of all people, to find this wonderful, intelligent and beautiful person. God bless you.

“Oh, wait a minute,” he exclaimed, as he put his arms down, “you can’t bless yourself. So, thank you for everything, and when we have children, we’ll give them good Jewish names. Amen.”

Polly laughed so hard, she pulled over to the side of the road to compose herself. She turned towards him, put her arms around his neck, and managed to say, “You may be crazy, Jon Roth, but I think I’m really falling for you.” She leaned over and kissed him.

Larry Levin, a distinguished looking man with a moustache and dark hair, met them at the door when they arrived. “Jon, so nice to meet you. Welcome to our home and to Iran. This must be quite an adventure for you?”

“Yes, sir. It’s been amazing so far, and meeting Polly in the middle of nowhere was unbelievable.” Out of the corner of his eye, he saw Polly’s mother, Beverly, a slim, attractive woman with light brown hair, approach. He turned and before she could say

anything, Jon greeted her, "Hi, Mrs. Levin, I'm Jon Roth. You look so much like Polly, I recognized you right away."

"Well, thank you Jon. That's very nice of you to say. Just call me Bev. Polly has been talking about you since she went down to *Persepolis*."

"MOM..." Polly admonished her mother.

"I'm happy to hear that," Jon said, "because she's all I've been thinking about."

Then Jon sat down in the living room with Larry. Polly and Bev went to the kitchen to prepare a tray of tea and sweets.

Beautifully furnished, the Persian-style house that the Levin's rented sat in a nice section of Tehran. "Do most of the Embassy staff live in this area?" Jon asked.

"No, they now live in apartments near the Embassy and a few scattered throughout the city. You see, about a year ago, the Department of State suggested that all families of the staff go back home. The only families that stayed were ours and Ina's, the Bambergs. So, we're the only ones left. Maybe, between you and me, I should have done the same." He paused, "Anyway, I'm hopeful things will calm down."

"Larry," Jon said, after he was asked to call him that, "I love all the unusual pieces you have on your shelves."

"Oh, thanks, Jon. These are things Bev and I have accumulated over the years. We've been stationed in some wonderful places and have been able to travel to many other countries. We've been very fortunate, for sure."

"Well, that's what I've wanted to do ever since I can remember. Coming to Iran with my friend, Adam, has been such an education that I never expected. It has just encouraged me to travel more and more."

"Listen, son, you have to get a good education first. Have you decided what you're planning on studying in college?"

"Hmm," he said, as he rubbed his curly, light brown hair. "You know, I want to do so many things, and I just haven't narrowed it down completely. For sure, though, I want to eventually get an MBA and have a business of my own one day, which hopefully will have some international connections." He pursed his lips and continued. "I'll probably start out majoring in finance and economics, with some special practical courses in entrepreneurship."

"Well, Larry, I think you just forced me to make a decision on my future. I think that sounds pretty good, huh?"

"It sounds very good. One thing I would add, is a good knowledge of world history, ancient and present. It'll give you a broad spectrum of what is being called now the 'global market.' The world is shrinking faster than you think."

"Thanks, that's good advice. I'm planning on taking some electives, such as political science and a few languages, also."

"Well, it looks like you're on the right track and have plenty of time to think about it. Don't ever lock yourself in on anything, because the world is changing so rapidly. Jon,

before I forget, Polly has mentioned that Adam's last name is Shirazi, and you're both staying with his uncle here in Tehran. Is his first name Eli, by any chance?"

"Yes, it is...Amoo Eli. Do you know him?"

"Not very well, but I have met him a couple times at parties. He seems very cordial, and from what I understand, he's a very well thought of attorney here in Tehran. I didn't realize that he was Jewish."

Jon told Larry what he learned about the family when they were in Shiraz with Adam's grandparents, and about how many generations they go back in Iran. "In fact, would you and Bev like to join us at Eli's office tomorrow, and then go out to lunch?"

"Thank you, Jon, however, it's been pretty hectic, and I have a meeting with the whole staff that may last all day." He sighed as if he was concerned about something. "If you, Polly and Adam want to come by early tomorrow morning, around 9:00, I can take a break and show you around the Embassy. I'm sure you'd like that."

"Oh, wow, that would be a great experience. Just what do you do at the Embassy, or is that classified information?"

Larry chuckled, and then said, "A lot of things are classified, but this is not one of them. My title, now, is Press Attaché for the U.S. Embassy in Iran. I must admit that I do other things, but I really can't discuss those."

Bev and Polly came back into the room carrying two trays.

"Okay," Bev said, "it's 'Tea Time,' so help yourself." Then she asked Jon, "Are you sure you can't stay for dinner tonight? We can take you back to the Shirazis."

"I'd love to, but Adam's aunt is expecting me." He took Polly's hand and held it. "I would have asked Polly to come with me, but I wouldn't want her to drive home alone. Can we make it another time?"

"Of course," Beverly said.

"That was very thoughtful of you, Jon," Larry remarked. "I don't like my little girl out at night by herself."

"Dad, I'm not a baby," Polly said, "I can take care of myself."

Jon shook his head. "Sorry, but I agree with your dad. You know, under these circumstances, I don't think any of us should be out at night, especially women."

She nodded a few times, and then said, "Okay, I guess you're both right."

"I always like getting a different perspective of those outside the walls I work in. Do you mind telling us what you were all talking about today?" Larry asked.

For the next thirty minutes, Jon told them about all the demonstrations they saw.

"Personally," Larry said, "I feel that the Embassy needs more security, and have requested it. But, going through the bureaucracy can be quite slow."

## CHAPTER 9

### **TEHRAN – NOVEMBER 4, 1979**

The ringleaders, led by Ebrahim Asgharzadeh, gathered 400 chosen students, known as the “Muslim Student Followers of the Imam's Line”, at 6:30 A.M. and briefed them on their plan of attack. Handed a pair of metal cutters, a female student's job was to break the chains locking the U.S. Embassy gates. She promptly hid these under her *chador*, a combination head covering, veil and shawl.

The opportunity to seize the embassy was initially planned in early September 1979 by Asgharzadeh, a student at that time. He consulted with the heads of the Islamic associations of Tehran's main universities. He inspired the idea that by announcing their objections from *within* the occupied compound, they could send their message to the world much more effectively and with greater force.

Their aim, to protest the U.S. government's actions of the past, came from their fear of another American backed coup against their popular revolution. They planned to only make a symbolic occupation, release statements to the press, and leave when government security forces came to restore order.

For the last two months, the Islamist students had done their homework. From nearby rooftops, they observed the security procedures of the Marine guards. Learning from their experiences in the revolution, they enlisted the support of police in charge of guarding the embassy, thereby gaining whatever information they could. Khomeini did not know of this plan beforehand because the student leaders feared the government could use police to expel them, as they had done to the occupiers in February.

After President Carter learned that the Shah's health had turned much worse, he allowed him to be treated in the United States. The administration knew that there was a chance of repercussions by the Ayatollah and alerted the U.S. Embassy on October 22, 1979. However, Carter didn't send any further protection.

On Sunday, November 4<sup>th</sup>, Levin suggested that his security driver pick him and Polly up at 9:00 A.M., and then Jon and Adam. They could spend several hours at the U.S. Embassy, and Bev could meet them at a nice restaurant for lunch. Polly knew almost everyone, so she would introduce Jon and Adam to the staff. And, they could learn how an embassy normally functions.

The drive from the Shirazi home took a little less than thirty minutes. When they approached the Embassy on Takht-e Jamshid Avenue, the boys could see that the grounds covered more than a city block and were surrounded by a brick wall. It took two

years to build and was completed in 1951.

“We call it ‘Henderson High’,” Larry laughed, “because the whole staff in the Embassy thinks that it looks like an American high school built in the 30s or 40s. Loy Henderson was the first ambassador to occupy it, and hence its name.”

“I think,” Adam added, “that it looks like a fraternity house that I saw recently at the University of Florida.”

“Yeah, it could be that, too,” Larry said. “We should call it ‘Upsilon Sigma Alpha’ ...USA.” He smiled, as his driver let them off at the front gate.

Everyone got out of the car and followed him into the compound. They entered through a Marine check point to the left of the front door, also guarded by two Marines with automatic rifles. In the foyer, Polly, Jon and Adam filled out a quick questionnaire and then received a visitor’s badge. Larry excused himself to go to a morning meeting and assigned Polly the honor of showing the boys around.

Polly walked down the corridor, on the right side of the building, with the boys trailing behind her. Halfway down the hall stood a Marine E-7 Gunnery Sergeant, with combat medals on his blue jacket. On the strap around his waist, he holstered a semi-automatic M9 Beretta pistol. He stood next to a sign that read:

### **United States of America Ambassador to Iran**

As Polly approached, she greeted him. “Hi Sergeant Walker. How are you?”

He smiled. “Polly, I’m fine. Who are these two young men you have with you?”

“These are two new friends from Florida, whom Ina and I met while we were visiting Persepolis.”

They stepped forward, introduced themselves, and answered some questions the sergeant asked about the States. When they found out he lived in Boulder, Colorado, they shared a great time talking about skiing.

Finally, Polly looked at her watch and saw the time, 10:00 A.M. “I think we better start our little tour.” She turned and looked at the sergeant. “Do you mind if I show Jon and Adam the Ambassador’s office?”

“Sure...no problem. Let me escort you through the reception area.” He smiled at her and said, “Be sure to say hello to your Dad...haven’t seen him for a while. Tell him we’ll have to get together soon.”

“I will, Sergeant Walker. Thank you.”

The boys appeared in awe of the office. It was spacious, with cherry-wood paneling, parquet floors with a large Persian rug covering most of it, a large desk made of both leather and wood, a small conference table for eight people, and two leather sofas facing each other in front of a giant fireplace.

Adam said. “Except for the two pictures of Presidents Carter and Lincoln, there isn’t

anything on his desk, or the walls, but empty hooks.”

“You’re right, Adam,” Polly replied. “This is one of the things I was planning on telling you and Jon when we were in this office.”

“Is there something unusual going on?” Jon asked.

“Hmm, a little unusual, but temporary. Let me start out by saying that there is no American ambassador to Iran at the present time. Extremists took over the Embassy on February 14<sup>th</sup>. They left after several hours, but our ambassador, William H. Sullivan, returned to America.

“Instead of appointing a new ambassador, the State Department chose Bruce Laingen, the *Chargé d’Affairs*, to take over temporarily. He is the second highest ranking person here. In this case, now he’s called the Active Chief of Mission. He’ll remain in this office until the President appoints a new ambassador.”

Jon asked, “So, where is Mr. Laingen now?”

“While we were driving to pick you up this morning, my dad told me that he is in a meeting at the Iranian Foreign Ministry today. He’s very nice, so I’m sorry you won’t get to meet him. Maybe we’ll come back another day?”

“This is where Mr. Laingen holds daily meetings with all the chiefs and some *attachés* here in the building.” She pointed outside through the windows. “You can see that we’re in the back of the Embassy, which sits on about twenty-five acres of land. There are a few smaller buildings. One is for the Marines, and the larger one to the right, near that side street, is the Consular Office.”

After a few seconds, she said, “Why don’t we sit over here on the couches, so I can tell you a little more about the Embassy and answer any questions you have.”

“Polly, before I ask you a question, I’ve gotta tell you, from Adam and I, that you’ve really done a super job, at lunch yesterday and showing us around today.”

“Thank you, guys. I’ve had just as much fun as you. Now, any questions?”

Jon asked, “Can you tell us about some of the higher Embassy positions the people have here?”

“First, of course, there’s the Ambassador, who’s in charge of everything of American interest in the country. He works for the U.S. Secretary of State, but can, on occasion, communicate directly to the President.

“Then there’s his *Attaché*, who, in reality, works with the DIA, the Defense Intelligence Agency.”

She leaned a little closer and whispered, “One of the most secretive parts of the Embassy is Political Affairs. This is the office of the Station Chief, who is with the CIA, the Central Intelligence Agency, and occasionally there are FBI agents assigned here.”

“What about your father’s position here?” Jon asked.

“Dad’s job, as the Press *Attaché*, is to handle all communications that leave this building. He’s the spokesperson for the Ambassador. He tracks the Iranian press, works with the international press, publishes a Farsi language magazine, and is in constant

touch with the editors of Farsi language newspapers. Mostly, all his work is important because it's cabled to the State Department in Washington for 'analysis'.

"Dad's office is near the library in one of the buildings outside...about fifty yards from the gate. We'll stop by to say hello before we visit one of the most interesting places of all—the Consular Office, which I showed you before from the window." Polly looked at her watch...it was now 10:30 A.M. "Let's go outside and see these buildings."

The three of them went out the back exit and walked over to the Library.

Larry sat in on a security briefing in the conference room with two non-commissioned officers of the Marine detail. He excused himself when his secretary informed him that his daughter and two friends awaited him in his private office.

Trying to seem cheerful, Larry came into the office. "Well, boys, how are you enjoying Polly's tour?"

"It couldn't be better, sir," Adam said.

Abruptly, he said, "You were lucky that we could get passes to bring you in." Larry seemed a bit uptight when he walked up to his daughter and put his arm around her. "Honey, what are your plans right now?"

"Well, I was planning to take Jon and Adam to see the Consular Office. Dad, is there something wrong? What do you want me to do?"

"Just listen to me a minute and do exactly as I say. I can't come with you to lunch, so continue into the Consular Office. Keep an eye out for my security driver to pick you all up, and then take you home. I'll call him right after you leave. I can't answer any of your questions, so please just do as I say, and I'll explain later.

"I love you very much, Polly. Now go, and boys, keep an eye on her."

"We will, Larry," Jon said, "and you can be sure that I won't let her out of my sight."

They left, Larry closed the door and called his driver.

Jon put his arm around Polly as they headed across the yard. Polly never imagined that it would be 450 days before she saw her father again.

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