 A Journey.

                                                         By Patrick Harris.

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She picked up the jeans from the bed, feeling the softness and holding them to her nose smelled the fabric conditioner. They had told her that her underwear would be new and it proved to be so. She had removed the bra and panties from cellophane packets and put them on. The white trainer socks were embossed with the “Snoopy” logo and were new too. The girl pulled the jeans up her long legs and buttoned the fly and waist fastener. She looked into the ancient and faded full length mirror and admired her figure.

For so many long years, since she was thirteen, her religious leaders had decreed she would be swathed in a voluminous black Burka and Hijab. Her face covered at all times in public, only exposed when she was in the company of her adoptive mother, step-sisters or aunts.

Her hair would normally be tied in a high pony tail and covered by her Hijab, but today she wore it long down her back, washed, conditioned and brushed out after her shower earlier. She had also shaved her armpits and legs. Afterwards the girl applied a liberal amount of Lynx body spray. All these actions would have been seen as pride and vanity, the actions of a prostitute, a fallen woman to her immediate family. She pulled on a white T shirt then sat on the bed and laced up the Nike fashion shoes.

 These were in good condition, but worn in, the stiffness gone, just like the 501s. She thought of the youth, as she was sure it would have been a boy, who owned them before being coerced into relinquishing them. Brand new replacements had undoubtedly been dropped off to his mother by an anonymous caller. He would not be unhappy.

No, these definitely would have come from one of the young lads who regularly tried to stone the Israeli Defence Force, whose daily incursions into their portion of Gaza City had caused such violent responses. The soldiers were looking for the illusive tunnels that volunteers used as a conduit, either to sneak guns or bombing materials into Israel, or sections of rockets to be brought into Gaza. These would be returned by air, bringing terror to the streets of Tel Aviv and other major Israeli cities.

The youths, dressed as she indeed was in jeans and trainers, but they with colourful football shirts that showed their supposed allegiance to English or European soccer teams.  The IDF forces, hugging the edges of the streets, ever watchful, taking their chance to return the gunfire from any of the young volunteers entrusted with an AK47 and a clip of bullets.

For a young gunman to take down one of the Jewish soldiers was to be elevated into the hierarchy of the al–Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, the military wing of Fatah, sworn enemies of the state of Israel and the rest of the world, chiefly the United States of America.

They had approached her two years ago. Checked her fidelity, her study of, and knowledge of the Koran. They accepted her for training showing her their intended targets. These were cafes, shopping arcades, cinemas, bus stations and the like. Anywhere that Jews or Europeans congregated. She went to a camp learning how to strip, assemble and fire various weapons.

 She was moved to this apartment with her crouching down in the rear seat of a battered Mercedes as it powered through the back streets and into the city. The girl had earlier that day scuttled through a tunnel into Israel from Gaza. The well-constructed excavation had electric lighting and was apparently made from oblong concrete drainage sections stood upright. It was obvious to her it was a permanent structure and was well camouflaged on both sides.

After the car journey other volunteers guided her. She was still clad in her flowing Burka and Hijab, her well-worn brown sandals with thick black woollen socks were hot on her feet as she trudged through a series of dusty interconnected basements, to the sparsely furnished apartment she now sat in.

 She had spent the previous evening in Gaza with her mentors reading and discussing the sacred texts of the Koran. They had told her the master bomb maker himself would personally fit her with the webbing harness. It was tailored to her slim torso and he would also arm the bomb. It was a high profile target they had said and it must go seamlessly. In the past few weeks a high number of volunteers and their mentors had died when their bombs went off prematurely.

 Ever suspicious that Mossad had infiltrated the bomb factories and supplied faulty detonators or wiring, the shady figure who normally prepared the explosive vests had surfaced to ensure success.

She took a blue light-weight cotton jacket from a clothes hanger hung from a large nail in the wall. She slipped it on once again admiring her looks for so long hidden under the burka. The jacket was a loose fit but hung nicely from her shoulders.

She was ready. She tapped on the door and waited. She knew the target would close by. They did not allow martyrs to travel too far in case of detection from the ever vigilant police or army. She heard the key turn in the lock and the shabby door opened. It was Mustapha one of her mentors.

‘Are you ready sister?’ He asked.

She nodded unable to speak at first. She licked her lips noticing how he dropped his eyes from her gaze.

‘Yes,’ she whispered, ‘I’m ready.’

‘Follow me sister.’ Mustapha said quietly.

They descended the stone steps on to another level. Mustapha walked to the window motioning her to follow. The glass was stained and dirty but a small area had been cleaned allowing observations.

‘Look sister.’ He pointed across the main street. At a modern café-bar with outside seating, she could see that a children’s party was in full swing. Black coated men with large homburgs, their long beards and plaited hair were assisting women with the party, a Bar Mitzvah. She could also see in their number a Rabbi. They were attending to dozens of children who wore colourful clothing, the boys with elaborate copples pinned into place on their lush black hair. The girls, smiling and giggling as food and soft drinks were handed around.

Mustapha said. ‘That is your target sister. But when you cross the road be sure to use the pedestrian crossing.’

She nodded slowly. ‘OK, no problems.’

They went to the ground floor, a passage led to the main door. From here it would be a short walk to the café. Mustapha however opened a door off the passage, it revealed a well lit room. She observed a slim, good looking man. He was in his mid-twenties she guessed. He was wearing faded denim jeans and a black Ben-Sherman shirt, accentuating his narrow waist. He did not catch her gaze but said.

‘Come over here sister. You’ve been shown the target?’

She answered in a hushed voice, ‘Yes.’

He picked up the harness and held it. She took off her jacket, then turned away from him, raising her hands so he could slip it over her shoulders. She faced him again and he bent forward to clip the webbing closed. He tugged it down and stood back to check its fit. While he was close to her she could smell his cologne. He was freshly shaved and so could easily have passed for an Israeli.

His eyes briefly met hers. She thought they were the kindest and warmest she had ever seen. He looked away quickly and busied himself picking up pre-made packages and began to slide them into to the webbing pouches. She saw outlines of nails in the plastic tape that covered the explosive, although she knew from experience there would also be ball-bearings, nuts and bolts. Anything to tear apart flesh and bone. He clipped the top of each pouch with a steel split pin, each was pried open. One of the containers was gasoline mixed with a petroleum based jelly, the type used for babies with nappy-rash. Homemade Napalm, to burn and scar those who survived.

He taped a wire to her arm so the trigger switch was cupped in her left palm. He motioned to her to slip the cotton jacket on and button it up. Still without making eye contact he straightened it by gently pulling the slightly padded shoulders up and letting them drop. The webbing harness could not be seen.

‘Perfect sister.’ He said.

She undid the jacket’s buttons again. He took a battery and slid it into the last of the sewn pockets on the webbing vest and connected the wires to the contacts, making sure they were a tight fit.

The bomb-maker seemed pleased. ‘Now hold the trigger firmly in. I want you to wait until you are amongst them, and then release it. Allah will be waiting for you in person sister. You will attain paradise. Milk and honey and riches will be yours.’ He moved the master switch to the “on” position.

This man that Mossadhad sought for so long had attained a university doctorate, a brilliant mind, he could have been anything to his people. Instead he brought death and destruction to the land and people of Israel.

The girl was in fact a Katsa, literally in Hebrew, a helper. She had been since she the age of twelve. For the past eight years she had been infiltrated into a family in Gaza. She was passed off to them by a local undercover Katsa,as his cousin orphaned by an Israeli air strike.

In the café across the road the men in black coats were dancing, the fiddle players were reaching a crescendo when a gigantic explosion blew the front wall of one of the buildings opposite out, sending glass and brickwork into the street, which was mercifully quiet on this baking hot day in Tel Aviv. The roof also collapsed in a shower of dust and debris that covered nearby cars and shop fronts. The resulting cloud slowly drifted away in the light afternoon breeze away from the café. The music had stopped abruptly and protective parents rushed to the gaily laid tables hugging their children.

A telephone in an anonymous office block in a northern suburb of Tel Aviv rang. The head of Mossad, the most ruthless secret service in the world, picked up the receiver. He was looking towards the centre of the city where the cloud of dust was beginning to disperse. He said nothing as a Katsa checked in. He did not need to. The mission was over. Her name would appear on the memorial with the recent Katsas who had gone before her. Fatah would be in disarray.

The memorial was never seen by any others apart from Mossad staff. The training area was in a place so secret it was not marked on any known map.

Author’s note; I’ve studied “Gideon’s spies” a book on MOSSAD. Incredibly this word just means “The Institute” in Hebrew. Katsa as I’ve said means helper. Until his murder by MossadRobert Maxwell was the top Katsain London, until he proved to be too much of an embarrassment. Well worth the read.