

## Chapter 3

As the youngest of the three men working at the evening explosive assembly site, Syed was frequently sent out to pick up food and drinks for the others. One such night proved to be both a blessing and a nightmare. Syed left the house to get a pizza and beer. For Syed and his coworkers, pizza was perhaps the best commodity devised by the western world. The walk back to the house was a short one, and he noticed with concern that the area around the house was cordoned off by armed Israeli guards. A small, growing crowd of Arab residents had formed. As Syed stood in the crowd, he could see snipers on the building rooftops in the front and rear of the house. Another group of Israelis gathered about fifty yards to the side, and a smaller force of three officers was positioned at the rear. This was a Mossad operation. Syed knew his friends in the house were in grave danger.

He sent a text to one of his friends with a simple message. "Mossad agents surround the house. Surrender without a fight if necessary. Hide items if possible."

Syed did not expect a reply, and there wasn't one. He watched in astonishment as one of his friends raced out of the back door in a panic to escape. Before the surrounding agents could apprehend the young man, two high-powered sniper bullets hit him directly in the chest. Blood spurted

from his wounds as he dropped and rolled down the last few steps of the stairway. He was dead before he hit the ground. Within seconds of the attempted escape, the remaining coworker came out of the front door with his hands held high in the air. Israeli agents were everywhere. They cuffed Syed's friend and rushed him into a guarded vehicle. The dead young man on the ground was promptly zipped into a body bag and loaded into one of the vehicles. Meanwhile, other agents moved into the house and retrieved the explosives, detonation devices, and suicide vests. The crowd of citizens held back by armed Israelis grew restless while sporadic anti-Semitic outcries filled the air. Then, as quickly and quietly as they had come, the agents and their team left the area. No sirens sounded, and the vacating military force was silent as well. Flashing lights on their vehicles and the convoy-like exit pattern were the only signs of their presence.

Syed stood motionless in the crowd, visibly shaken by what had taken place. The Israelis had obviously been informed of the ongoing household activities and responded predictably and forcefully. The sight of his friend, shot in the chest and tumbling down the stairway like a sack of potatoes, was shocking and obscene. He knew he needed to leave the scene for a safer location, unencumbered by food and drink, so he nudged the middle-aged man next to him and passed off the pizza and beer as a gift. Syed collected his thoughts. His primary concern was the Israeli surveillance of the house. Syed

## Conflicted Identity

assumed it would not take long for their interrogation of the man they captured to reveal Syed's name and the address of his uncle's home.

As he wandered through the neighborhood, he used his cell phone to call his uncle. After a short, honest explanation of the incident, his uncle told him not to return to the house. In terse language, his uncle told Syed that he had abused his visit and jeopardized the safety and security of the family. "Do not come here!" His uncle demanded. "You are no longer welcome." Syed swallowed hard, knowing that he could not return.

Syed's second concern was his brother, Walid. While he felt nothing for his father and only mild concern for his mother, he did have affectionate feelings for his brother. A year prior, he had convinced him to attend a six-month anti-Israeli training camp. Walid rejected the Islamic ideologies and left after completing his instructional program. Syed was now concerned that once the Israelis had his name, they would follow the family ties to Cairo and investigate Walid's past. They would call it radical Islamic terrorist training, and anyone the least bit connected to it would be considered a hostile enemy.

Syed called Walid. In a few words, he advised him to leave the country for a while. Syed said that he planned to move around and become a lost soul in the local Arabic community. He wished Walid well and ended his conversation with a traditional and meaningful Islamic blessing.