

Chapter 1

At about a quarter past five pm Lieutenant Doron Seri was on his way to the base mess hall.

He was off duty that evening.

No night training once a week; no sudden emergency exercises thank God he thought relieved.

As he was walking on the narrow sidewalk along the camp main road he heard rushing footsteps behind his back, before he managed to look back a hand touched his shoulder.

'Howdy Seri?' it was the base adjutant, Major Yoel Barzive.

'I'm fine thank you,' he muttered surprised. He didn't expect such a friendly gesture from haughty Barby.

'On your way to paint the town in red, aren't you?' Barzive kept on chattering rather friendly, accompanying young Seri to the mess hall.

'Well I do hope I would but after supper.' Seri answered with humor and a surprised smile.

'I'd like to have a few words with you young man.' Barzive added with a slight cough.

The astounded Lieutenant Seri did not comment and not an additional word was exchanged between them till they entered the mess hall,

Haughty Barby was known for his subtle pranks, and that was exactly what young Seri believed was going to happen. He hoped to God that Barby won't come out with some news about some emergency case, which might mean replacing tonight's officer on duty, or some other sort of unexpected tasks.

Major Barzive chose the table and they sat down facing each other, without a word yet. The Major was waiting till the mess hall would fill up, and thus no one would disturb them or ask to join their table, seeing him sitting opposite a junior officer.

'Tell me Seri, have you ever thought of serving abroad?' He asked lieutenant Seri after a few moments of an embarrassing silence.

'No I haven't thought about it, why? I'm well off here.' Seri answered briskly, letting the major understand that he is satisfied and has no complaints what so ever, if that is what the Major is after.

'Well I'm glad to hear it,' the cunning major hastened to remark.

'You're one of the best young officers that we've, and that's why I bother to talk to you at all. But let's talk to the point, do you have any idea about the advantages that such a job has? Say salary increase, quick promotion, and a very pleasant working environment, which would broaden your horizons.'

'No but I'm willing to listen.' Seri answered smiling.

'Fine but you'll have to meet someone else to learn all the details, and that's his phone number.' The Major said while pulling out a small writing pad from his shirt's pocket. He tore a page out of it and handed it to Seri.

'When should I call him?' Seri wondered watching the Major's eyes with a quizzical look.

'Whenever you'll feel like it, eat up and I'll give you a lift to town.'

After a forty five minutes drive the Major dropped him at his home, and Seri thanked him and took the lift up to his small apartment; The first thing Seri did was to dial the number that Major Barzive gave him.

'Hello good evening,' he heard a young woman's voice.

'My name is Seri I was asked to call you by Major Barzive.' Seri muttered hesitantly, wondering whether it is not a very sophisticated hoax of haughty Barby repertoire.

'Be at the Eliot café next Thursday at seven pm sharp.' The young woman instructed him.

'But I'm on duty on Thursday...'

'You'll be off duty next Thursday, it's been settled.'

'Who am I supposed to meet, how do I recognize him?'

'Just be there wearing your uniform, we know who you're, bye.' She said and hung up.

Chapter 2

He sat down on one of the two old armchairs in his small one room apartment, opposite the twenty five inches second hand TV screen, quite perturbed and undecided.

A few moments passed and he left his seat and went over to the phone, and dialed the number of his current date.

'Hello Tami, I'll be down in half an hour, okay?'

'Okay it might take me a few more moments, but don't despair...' She added with a short laugh. They were going out over three months already; she had a rich daddy and her own car. A luxurious relationship it was, and a very convenient one from Seri's point of view; he was not in love with her, and he did not even know how long their relationship would last. That's why he refused to move to her spacious apartment, and asked her to be patient as his pretext was we've to know each other better first of all. He did not introduce her to his parents who live in the southern town of Beer Sheva, and he had no intention to meet her parents at this early stage of their relationship. He took a cold shower, checked his beard growth in the mirror, changed and went down to be there five minutes earlier. Cars were parked on both sides of the road, there was no free parking space, thus he had to be there and be ready to board her car at her arrival. She picked him up on time and exchanged a quick kiss with him and just a few words too, and they drove to a restaurant that she chose for them. 'What's wrong Dudi?' She asked him over the desert a bit worried, was he tired of her she wondered. She was not a dazzling beauty but she was wise, and he enjoyed her company. 'Oh nothing at all,' he hastened to answer. 'I won't have a leave again in two weeks time, it bothers me.' He did not lie to her; he did not want to meet her next Thursday. He could not know how long would take the meeting with them, and even if it won't last long he had better not see her after it. 'We'll go straight to my place then?' He nodded his head and a shade of a smile appeared on his pursed lips. That's exactly what I need so badly right now, to clear my head. He thought relieved. He summoned the waiter, paid and they left.

They undressed and made love in her darkened bedroom, she was still a bit prudish; he was her first one and with the few men that she dated before him, she just necked a bit and did nothing more. Seri was lying wide awake beside his sleeping current love, buried in his thoughts. If at the beginning of their relationship he pondered whether she will be willing to share her life with an army field officer, he knew that from now on if he will agree to their offer, that problem would be multiplied ten folds more. But it was too early yet to decide the future of his relationship with Tami, he will have to know whether this job fits him at all or rather whether he fits such a job; and that's up to them to decide, while he does not know a thing yet and who they really are?

Chapter 3

The next three days passed rather quickly. He was very busy in instructing and training his men, in day and night drill and on Thursday he had almost forgotten the meeting at Eliot Café. But at lunch time at the base mess hall, Major Barzive winked at him as he passed along Seri's table, and Seri suddenly remembered the appointed meeting. Right after supper Seri rushed out to the base headquarters where the base staff transportation van was parked, he knew he must not miss it, not at this evening.

He reached town and the Eliot Café street quite early, as he had no intention to sit and wait impatiently near one of the cafe's tables; he decided to go window shopping, to pass the extra time left up to his meeting. At five minutes to seven he entered the café chose a free table and sat down waiting with much expectancy. He had sense enough not to watch the entrance, and dedicated his attention to the Café's menu. A waitress approached his table and looked down at him with a quizzical look. 'I'm waiting for someone,' he told her and she left him in peace. I hope he'll be punctual whoever she or he may be. Seri thought nervously but right at that moment at six fifty nine pm according to his watch, a young man about Seri's age entered the café, and went straight to Seri's table.

The stranger pulled backwards the first free chair next to Seri's table, and sat down facing Seri.
'My name is Gad and I'll be your contact for the time being, now summon the waiter please.
As he was already used to that kind of parley right to the point, Seri raised his arm and summoned the waitress. She came right away and Seri glanced at his guest waiting for his order.
'A long espresso,' Gad told the waitress.
'I'll have the same please,' Seri said avoiding the waitress lovely features.
'Won't you have some pastry?' She asked.
'Well go ahead if you feel like it, you're my guest.' Gad encouraged him with a smile.
'No thanks just a long espresso.'
While the waitress was on her way, Gad pulled a small pad out of his breast pocket and a pen.
'I'll have your name, your I.D. number and your phone number, before she returns.
With this stage done with and over their coffee cups, Gad asked him a few general questions, where his parents live; does he have a girl friend, the state of his health and so on.
As Gad (if that was his real name) was a pleasant person a couple of years or more older than Seri, and had a well shaped body and was a charismatic type, Seri felt rather composed in Gad's company, and answered his questions without hesitation or doubts.
'Do you've any idea what's expected of you?' Gad asked him quite unexpectedly right after a short lull, while Seri was sure that the meeting reached its end.
'Not at all, but just the knowledge that it's a very different job, compared to what I'm doing now.'
Seri replied and watched Gad's eyes with expectancy.
'That's right it's different indeed, and it will demand from you much more efforts, mental efforts in particular compared to what you're used to up till now.' Gad added with much decisiveness, but that was all he said about it.
'Well think it over during the weekend, and if you won't change your mind call us again next Monday, and we'll talk. You may leave now.' Gad added and wrote a few words in his pad, to sum up that first meeting with their new candidate, which his friend the Major recommended him.

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