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Thirty-year-old Patricia Roksenburg was a junior secretary in the wills department of a big law firm in Montreal. She loved opera and hiking and it never occurred to her as she lived her calm and carefree life that her double would arise, who would adopt her name, her identity and even the vernacular peculiar to Canadians.

The original Patricia lived in a tiny apartment downtown where she raised Siamese cats. In the spring, she went to Niagara Falls with her Jewish spouse. They sat down in a café facing the splendid falls and her spouse asked her to lend him her passport.

“Why?” she was surprised.

“Friends of mine are looking for a Canadian passport,” he replied.

Patricia asked for an explanation, but he didn’t go into detail.

“I can only tell you that the State of Israel needs that passport for a very important purpose.”

She knew that the man she loved was an ardent supporter of Israel.

“How long do they need my passport?” she asked.

“A year or two, at most.”

Constructing a cover story for a Mossad agent is complicated. Before the fake identity is used, it is examined by Mossad experts to make sure it suits the agent who needs to adopt it. His

personal data have to match the details in his new passport. He has to master the language of the place where he's sent and know a great deal about that country.

Isaac, one of the old-timers at the Mossad, was assigned to build a new identity for Sylvia. After the complicated operations he had taken part in, Isaac didn't think the new mission was particularly difficult. The real burden was to fall on Sylvia. She had to have time, patience, the ability to adjust to the new environment, and mainly – a lot of motivation. For a change, that mission did not involve any danger. Isaac figured he could finish building Sylvia's new identity within a few months.

First, Mossad experts replaced Patricia's photo in the Canadian passport with a picture of Sylvia. All the data in the passport matched those of the agent, except for her age. Patricia was three years older than Sylvia, but the Mossad reworked the photo so Sylvia would look the same age as Patricia. Sylvia protested when she saw the change. "Why did you make me so old?" she grumbled when she was given the passport.

"If you want to lie move far away," Isaac quoted the familiar saying to her. He hinted that it had been decided to send her far away, where there weren't many chances that someone she knew would recognize her and blow her cover story.

After long discussions, the operations unit decided to send Sylvia to Vancouver, in western Canada. One was that, at that time, each province of Canada worked independently, and there was almost no fear that officials in Montreal would know that someone was using Patricia Roksenburg's passport in distant Vancouver.

From now on, Sylvia was supposed to appear as a newspaper photographer. That was her cover story and it suited her in many respects. She had a sharp eye, got along with people easily, and

knew a lot about photography. For the operations unit, there was some danger in that, because in general, Mossad agents didn't assume the cover of a journalist. Journalists are always liable to be suspect in a hostile Arab environment that keeps a close eye on any stranger who tries to infiltrate; but a newspaper photographer, on the other hand, can easily go anyplace, gather vital information, and easily get out. Sylvia was also good at photographing and the camera looked completely natural on her. So it was easy for her to adopt the disguise of a newspaper photographer.

Isaac sent her to shops in Vancouver where she could purchase sophisticated camera equipment. She purchased the equipment on her expense account. Both her expense account and her salary were very modest and required strict periodic reporting.

Sylvia was left alone in Vancouver, preparing for a long period of adjustment. She rented a furnished apartment in a six-storey building in one of the sidestreets going down to the bay. A window of her house overlooked the splendid yachts and the big boardwalks where travelers sailed to Alaska for a few days. The weather was usually cold and wet, but the temperature never dropped below zero and it rarely snowed. Vancouver was beautiful, not too crowded, calm and quiet, with excellent restaurants – Thai, Chinese, Vietnamese and Japanese. The fish restaurants of the city were justly famous all over the world.

Sylvia constructed a characteristic Canadian life style, paid her taxes on time and was careful not to run up any debts in the local supermarket. She was friendly with her neighbors. She told them she was a newspaper photographer, took pictures of the children in the building and gave the photos to their parents for free. It was important for her not to stand out and yet to leave

traces on the ground in case a foreign element checked her past. So she became a frequent guest with some of the neighbors and was welcome at birthdays and other family occasions. At every visit, she took care to bring a modest gift. Only years later did she learn that another spy had lived in that very building, shortly before she moved in – the Russian Colonel Oleg Vladimirovitch Pankovsky, who supplied military information to the west on the secret missiles of the Red Army, and met with British and American intelligence agents in various places in the world. When the KGB discovered his activity, he was tried, convicted of treason and executed in the presence of his friends and relations.

Sylvia fell into a routine. Every other day, she bought food in the nearby supermarket, became friendly with the workers there and devoted a lot of time to getting to know the city. She etched in her mind almost every street and central site, recited the locations of shopping centers and the conspicuous shops in them, learned the local idiom, acquired the popular Canadian-made Rocky Mountain bike, and rode outside the city on weekends. A few times a week, in the morning, she fed breadcrumbs to the birds in Stanley Park, painted the local landscape in gouache and oils, and reported her progress to Isaac. On Sunday afternoons, she drank English tea at the Vancouver Hotel. In the winter she photographed the bold swimmers at Kitsilano beach and managed to sell one of her photos to the daily *Vancouver Sun*. The name Patricia Roksenburg appeared under the photo, an obvious indication that she was a professional photographer. She got a hundred fifty dollars for the photo, and used it to buy classical music records, paints and an easel.

During all her time in Vancouver, Sylvia was careful not to meet Israelis or South Africans, or to read newspapers from Israel. She got her information about what was going on in Israel from local papers. At that time, Isaac guided her only from a distance.

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“Remember that man?” asked “David.” He showed Sylvia a photo of a man of about fifty.

The portrait looked familiar but she didn’t remember from where.

“He was at the opening of your exhibition at the Ritz Hotel,” her operator refreshed her memory.

Now she remembered. She had passed on the business card given her by Dr. Mahmoud Hamshari to the operations unit, along with the business cards of other Arab guests.

“What about him?” she asked.

“He’s one of the outstanding activists of Black September in Europe. Officially he teaches history and is a representative of PLO in Paris. In fact, he’s in constant touch with Ali Salameh, who organizes smuggling weapons and ammunition to the representatives of Black September in Europe and coordinates terrorist operations. We know he was involved in blowing up the Swissair plane on its way from Zurich to Tel Aviv in February 1970. Forty-seven passengers and crew members were killed in the attack. Hanshari was also apparently involved in an attempt on the life of Ben Gurion when he visited Copenhagen in May 1969. In addition, we also know that he’s hiding a big cache of weapons in his apartment in Paris.”

“Let me guess: he’s on our hit list.”

“Exactly.”

“And what’s my part in the mission?”

“We hope Hamshari remembers you from the exhibition. If not, remind him that you’re a journalist. Suggest an interview and photograph him. All we need is for you to make an appointment with him outside his apartment and sit with him for two hours.”

“Is he married?”

“Yes. His wife is French and named Marie Claude, and they have a daughter. His wife goes to work every morning and his daughter goes to school, so in the morning, the apartment is empty and we can work in it.”

“If he asks what newspaper I write for, what will I tell him?”

“Say you work for the Delmas Agency, which also syndicates articles and they’ve already sold the interview to various newspapers.”

“David” handed her a year-old issue of the weekly magazine, *Jeune Afrique* in which the editor, Bashir ben Yahmed, interviewed Hamshari. Sylvia knew enough French to read the article herself. In the interview, Hamshari talked about the rights of the Arabs of Palestine to rule Israel, criticized the way the Israelis treated the Arabs, stated his opinion that if the entire Arab world had united against Israel – Palestine would long ago have been established. In the interview, Hamshari denied any contact between himself and terrorist organizations.

“OK. When should I arrange with him?” asked Sylvia.

“Call today. Arrange with him for tomorrow or the day after in the morning and let me know when and where you’ve set it up.”

“Right.”

A thick voice answered the phone and Sylvia introduced herself. Hamshari remembered her.

“What are you up to now?” he asked. “Preparing for a new exhibition?”

“Of course.”

“What subject?”

“Mainly portraits. I was in Jordan. There I took pictures of dozens of interesting characters.”

“I’ll be happy if you send me an invitation too.”

“I won’t forget.”

She asked how he was and what he was up to.

“I’m fine,” he said. “Teaching a lot, writing...”

Sylvia suggested interviewing him.

“On what?”

“On your academic work and your political opinions.”

“I was already interviewed in *Jeune Afrique*.”

She assumed he would say that.

“That was a year ago, sir,” she quickly responded. “Since then there have been many developments in the world in general and in the Arab world in particular. Your opinion is very important.”

“Really?”

“Really.”

“You’ve convinced me.”

They arranged to meet the next day, December 8, 1972, in a café on the ground floor of Hamshari’s apartment building at rue Élysée 175.

“I’ll meet him at ten in the morning,” Sylvia informed her operator.

“I’ll be ready,” said “David.”

Hamshari was right on time. When he entered, he carefully surveyed the café. There were only a few customers there and none of them apparently made him suspicious, not even the elderly man absorbed in *Le Monde*. That was an operations unit agent in disguise, sent to protect Sylvia.

Hamshari made his way to the table in the back of the café where Sylvia was waiting for him and gave her a polite kiss on her cheek.

“You look splendid,” he complimented her. “How do you do that?”

They ordered coffee and the interview began. Sylvia asked his predictions for developments in the Arab world, about the influence of terrorist organizations on Arab countries and the world, about his concerns and his family. Hamshari expressed himself fluently, in brief, precise sentences. He spoke angrily about those Arab leaders who didn’t provide enough support in the

Palestinian struggle, supported the right of return of the Arab refugees, and declared that the struggle with Israel would continue until the Palestinians achieved their goal. Most of what he said was standard, but Sylvia went on asking questions. She had to pin down the interviewee for a certain period of time. A profusion of questions guaranteed that she'd carry out her mission. She wrote every word in her notebook, photographed Hamshari and promised to send him a copy of every newspaper that published the interview. When they said goodbye, it was 12:15. "Try to print everything I said," was his last wish.

Sylvia walked quickly into the maze of streets around the café. The sky was gray and the passersby didn't notice her. She was happy. She had managed to get Hamshari out of his house and he didn't suspect a thing. Even though she knew what was in store for him, she wasn't bothered by it. He was a criminal who plotted unbearable things. His punishment was inevitable.

When she was sure no one was following her, she hailed a cab and went to the Delmas Agency. Dr. Mohammed Hamshari went up to his apartment. His wife and daughter hadn't yet come home. He sat down at his desk. The phone rang. When he picked up the receiver he set off a detonator hidden in the base of the phone as he sat in the café with Sylvia.

Hamshari was badly wounded and died a while later in the hospital.

■ Translated from the Hebrew by Barbara Harshav