SKYJACK!

When people use guns to take what they want, how do you stop them? If you give them what they want, they will be happy – and they will use their guns again, and again. If you don't give them what they want, then they will be angry – and they will kill. It is not easy to decide what to do.

In this story, the person who has to decide is the Prime Minister, the head of the government. But the Prime Minister is also an ordinary person, just like the rest of us – a person with a family and children.

How can you think clearly, if someone is pointing a gun at your family? What do you do? You take advice, you talk to the hijackers, you find out what they want, you keep everybody calm, you try to move slowly. But terrorists don't like waiting, and sooner or later, you to decide what to do…

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Thriller & Adventure

Skyjack!

Stage 3 (1000 headwords)

Series Editor: Jennifer Bassett
Founder Editor: Tricia Hedge
Activities Editors: Jennifer Bassett and Alison Baxter

Tim Vicary

Skyjack!

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1

The air hostess smiled: ‘Welcome aboard, sir. Would you like a newspaper?’

‘Yes, please.’ Carl took the newspaper and looked at the ticket. ‘I’m in seat 5F. Where’s that?’

‘It’s near the front of the plane, sir. On the left, there. By the window.’

‘I see. Thank you very much.’ Carl smiled back at the air hostess. She has young and pretty. Just like my daughter, he thought.

He put his bag under his seat and sat down. His friend Harald sat beside him. They watch the older passengers coming onto the plane. Harald looked at his watch.

‘9.30 p.m.,’ he said. ‘Good. We’re on time.’

Carl agreed. ‘And in three hours we’ll be home,’ he said. ‘That’s good. We’ve been away for a long time. You’ll be pleased to see your family, won’t you, Harald?’

Harald smiled. ‘Yes, I will. Have you seen this, sir?’ he opened his bag and took out two small planes. ‘These are for my sons. I always something back for them.’

‘How old are your sons?’ Carl asked.

‘Five and almost seven. The older one has a birthday tomorrow.’

‘He’ll be very excited tonight then.’

‘Yes. I hope he gets some sleep.’

The plane took off. Carl watched the lights of the airport grow smaller below them. Then the plane flew above the clouds and he could see the moon and the stars in the night sky. He lay back in this seat and closed his eyes.

2

Later, he woke up. Harald was asleep. Carl looked at his watch. It was midnight. He called the air hostess.

‘Excuse me. What time to do arrive?’

’11.30 p.m. local time, sir. That’s about half an hour from now.’

‘Thank you.’ Carl changed the time on his watch.

‘Anything else, sir?’

‘No, I don’t think so. Oh, wait a minute – could I have a cup of coffee, please?’

‘Yes, of course, sir.’ He watched her bring the coffee.

‘She walks like my daughter, too,’ he thought. ‘And she is *very* young. She look nervous, not sure what to do.’

‘How long have you been an air hostess?’ he asked.

She smiled. ‘Three months, sir,’ she said.

‘Do you like it?’

‘Yes, I love it. It’s very exciting.’ She smiled nervously, ‘Will that be all, sir?’

‘Yes, thank you’

‘Have a nice flight.’

He drank the coffee and started to read his newspaper. When Harald woke up, Carl showed him a page in the paper.



'Welcome aboard, sir.'

‘Look. There you are,’ he said. He pointed to a picture. In the middle of the picture stood Carl himself – a short thin man with grey hair, wearing a suit. Behind him, on the left, was Harald – a tall, strong young man, like a sportsman. Both men were smiling. ‘That’s you and me, outside the Embassy,’ said Carl. ‘We’re in the news again. You can show it to your cons. You’re a famous man, Harald!’

Harald laughed. ‘You’re the famous man, sir, not me,’ he said. ‘I’m just a police officer. It’s my job to take care of you. That’s photo of you, not me.’



‘I’m just a police officer.’

‘Perhaps. But your children think that you’re a famous man, I’m sure. Here, take it, and show it to them.’

‘OK. Thamks.’ Harald smiled, and put the newspaper in his coat pocket. ‘I think I’ll have a cup of coffee too.’ He called for the air hostess, but she didn’t come. Harald looked surprised.

‘What’s the matter?’ Carl asked.

‘The air hostess,’ Harald said. ‘She’s sitting down talking to those two men.’

Carl looked up and saw the young air hostess. She was sitting in a seat at the front of the plane with two young men. They looked worried and nervous. Suddenly, one of the young men picked up a bag and *walked into the pilot’s cabin*! The other man and the air hostess followed him.

‘That’s strange,’ said Carl. ‘What are they doing?’

‘I don’t know. It’s very strange,’ said Harald. ‘I don’t like it at all.’ He began to get out of his seat, but then stopped and sat down again.

For one or two minutes nothing happened. None of the other passengers moved or spoke. They had seen the young men too. It became very quiet in the plane.

A bell rang, and for a moment they could hear two voices arguing. Then the pilot spoke.

‘Ladies and gentlemen, this is the Captain speaking. Please do not be afraid. There is a change of plan. We have to land at another airport before we finish our journey. There’s no danger. We will land in fifteen minutes. Please stay in your seats and keep calm. Thank you.’

Then the air hostess came out of the cabin. She looked very different now because she had a machine gun in her hand. She stood at the front of the plane and watched the passengers carefully.



The air hostess had a machine gun in her hand.

3

‘Here we are, madam.’ The big black car stopped and a police officer opened the black door.

‘Thank you.’ Helen Sandberg smiled at him as she got out. Another police officer opened the front door of her house.

Inside the house it was quiet. Her daughter was reading. She put the book down.

‘Hello, Mummy. You’re late. You said you’d be home by ten o’clock. I wanted to talk to you about my homework, remember?’

Helen sat down. ‘I’m sorry, Sarah. I did remember, really. But I had very busy day. Anyway, I’m home now. What’s the problem?’

‘it’s this book,’ said Sarah. ‘I have to write about it at school on Friday, and I don’t understand it.’

‘All right,’ said Helen. ‘Bring the book into the kitchen and I’ll look at while you make me a cup of coffee.’

They sat in the kitchen and talked for nearly half an hour. Then Helen looked at her watch. ‘OK, Sarah, that’s enough for now. It’s nearly midnight, and I must be up at six tomorrow. I’m going to bed. Goodnight.’

Alone in her bedroom, she undressed and got into the big empty bed. She was very tired, she closed her eyes and three minutes she was asleep.

The phone rang at 12.15 a.m.

Helen groaned, and picked it up.

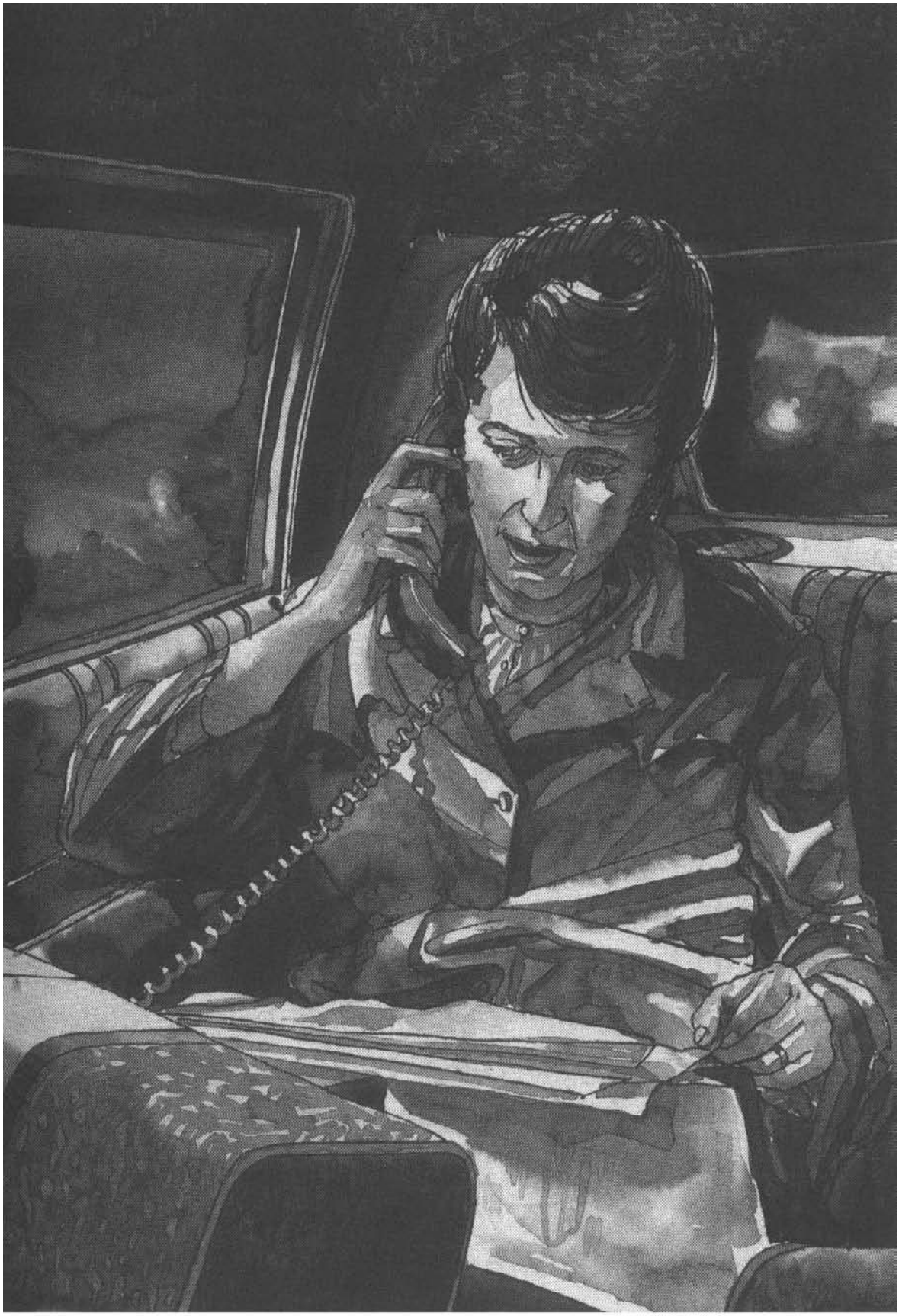
‘Hello… What?… Who?… Do you know what time is it?’

She ran her hand through her hair and turned the light on. ‘What, *now*? I don’t believe it. Are you sure?’

The voice on the telephone explained carefully. Helen groaned again, and sat up. ‘I hope it *is* serious. If it isn’t, somebody is going to be in big trouble… yes… All right… Send the car in fifteen minutes, then. And bring me some coffee! Goodbye.’

She put the phone down and got out of bed. Outside the tomorrow she could hear a strong wind blowing.

Twenty minutes later she was sitting in the back of her big black car, drinking a cup of coffee and talking to the Chief of Airport Police on the car telephone. It was raining heavily.



Helen was talking to the Airport Police on the telephone.

4

Carl looked out of the plane window. It was very dark and rainy. It was a small airport with only one or two other planes. But there were three police cars near the airport building.

'I don't understand,' said quietly in Harald's ear. 'Why are we here?'

Harald looked worried. 'Don't ask me,' he whispered back. 'Ask them.'

'No thanks,' Carl looked at the hijackers. The young air hostess was still standing at the front of the plane with her machine gun. One of the young men, also with machine gun, was standing at the back of the plane. The other hijacker was in the Captain's cabin. All the passengers sat very quietly in their seats.

A bell rang and man's voice spoke.

'Ladies and Gentelmen, listen to me. This is the People's Liberation Army. This plane is ours now, and are you our prisoners. We do not want to hurt you, but as you can see, we have our guns and we know how to shoot. So please, sit quietly in yours seats and do what we say. We will be here for one or two hours. The Government of this country has two of our brothers in a prison near this airport. We are asking the Government to bring our two brothers to this plane. When our brothers are free, you will be free. We think this will take one of two hours, but not very long. As you know, the Prime Minister of this country is only a woman. She will do what we say. So do not worry. Just sit very still and wait a little while. Goodnight.'

Carl looked at Harald. 'Oh dear,' he whispered. 'I think we're in trouble, my young friend. Big trouble.'

Harald agreed. 'We certainly are. The Government won't set two men free. They tried to put a bomb on a plane last year, didn't they, sir? They're in prison for thirty years!'

'I know,' Carl whispered. 'No one could set them free. So what about us?'

'What about you, you mean,' whispered Harald. 'I'm not important. Look, sir, you'd better give your passport.'

'What? Why?'

'Ssh!' Harald put his hand on the older man's arm and stopped talking. Carl looked up and saw the young air hostess starting at them. Her machine gun was pointing at them too. He stopped talking and looked out of the window.

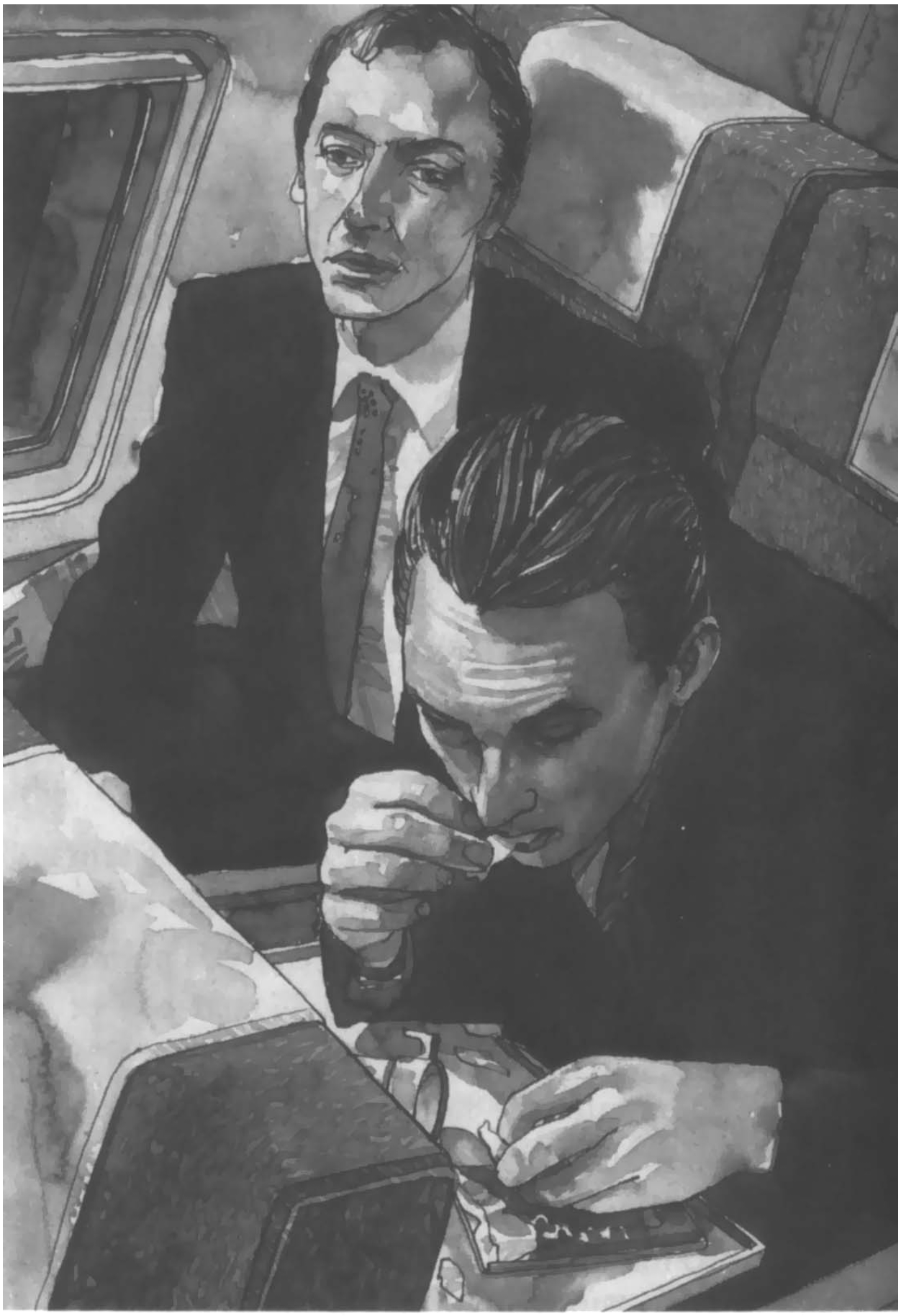
After a few minutes she stopped watching them. 'Give me the passport, sir!' Harald whispered, very quietly. Very slow and carefully, Carl took it our of this pocket and gave it to him.

There was still come coffee in Carl's cup. Very carefully, Harald put the passport on his tray and poured the coffee onto it. When passport was very wet, he tore it slowly into little pieces. He was a strong young man and because the passport was wet, it did not make a sound. Then, one by one, he out the pieces of wet paper into his mouth and ate them. In ten minutes, the passport had disappered.

'I don't understand,' whispered Carl. 'Why did you do that?'

'You'll see,' whispered Harald. 'But when they ask questions, let me answer, sir. OK? You say nothing.'

'OK.' Carl looked away, out of the window. A large black car was just driving up to airport building.



Harald tore the passport into pieces. Then he ate them!

5

The black car stopped outside the airport building and a police officer opened the door.

Helen Sandberg got out and went quickly inside. Upstairs, in the control room, the Chief of Airport Police, Inspector Holm, was waiting with a soldier. Helen's secretary, Michael, was there too.

'Good evening, Prime Minister,' said Inspector Holm. 'This is Colonel Carter, of the Special Commando Section.'

'Good evening, Colonel.' Helen shook hands with the soldier and looked at him. He was a thin, tough-looking man, about forty years old, with a brown face. His hand was hard and strong. 'I hope you know your job,' she thought. 'I may need you.'

She looked out of the window. There was a large plane on the tarmac about two hundred meters away. All its lights were on. 'Is that the plane?' she asked.

'That's it, Prime Minister.'

'Right, give me the facts. How many people are on it?'

Inspector Holm answered. 'One hundred and eight passengers, five crew.'

'What nationalities are they?'

'There are twenty-nine Americans, fifteen British, two Brazilian, and one Chinese. The others are from this country.'

'I see. There are a lot of Americans and British, then,' said Helen quietly. 'That means trouble.'

'Yes, Prime Minister,' answered Michael. 'I'm afraid their Ambassadors are on their way here now.'

Helen smiled at him quickly. He was a good secretary; he usually knew what she was thinking. Both the American Ambassador and the British Ambassador were difficult people.

She turned back to Inspector Holm. 'Tell me about the hijackers. What do they want?'

'We don't know how many hijackers there are, Prime Minister. But they have guns, we know that. They say they are from the People's Liberation Army. And they want three things.' Inspector Holm paused and looked down at her. He was a very tall man and he looked very important in his uniform. Helen didn't like him much.

'Yes, well. What three things?' she asked quickly.

'Firstly, they say we must set free their two brothers from prison. You remember, Prime Minister – two men tried to put a bomb on a plane last year. They are in prison near here.'

'I remember,' Helen answered softly. 'They're in prison for thirty years, aren't they?'

'I think so. Something like that.' The man paused. 'Secondly, they say we must refuel the plane because they want to fly to another country. Thirdly, they say we must put this in all our newspapers. It says they are fighting for freedom for their people. They are freedom fighters. They want to liberate their people.'

He gave her a sheet of paper. Helen put in on the table. She did not read it. 'And what about the passengers?' she asked. 'When will the hijackers set them free?'

'They say they will set most of the passengers free when their brothers to fly away with them. They will set them free when they arrive.'

'I see.'

'There's one other thing, Prime Minister,' Colonel Carter spoke for the first time. His voice was very almost gentle. 'They say we must bring the prisoners to the airport in two hours. If not, they will kill a passenger. They said his one hour ago.'

'So we have one hour left?'

'That's right, Prime Minister. Just one hour. Then they will kill the first passenger.'

‘I see.’ Helen walked slowly to the window and stared out at the plane. It was still raining and a strong wind was blowing. She turned round. ‘Thank you, gentlemen. I will have to talk to them. But first I need a few minutes to room. Colonel Carter, Inspector, please go to the other room. Tell the hijackers I will talk to them in five minutes. Michael, stay here.’

‘But… yes, madam.’ Inspector Holm looked unhappy, but he went out, slowly, with the Colonel. Michael sat quietly, looking at her. He knew what she was thinking.

‘Have you got the passenger list, Michael?’

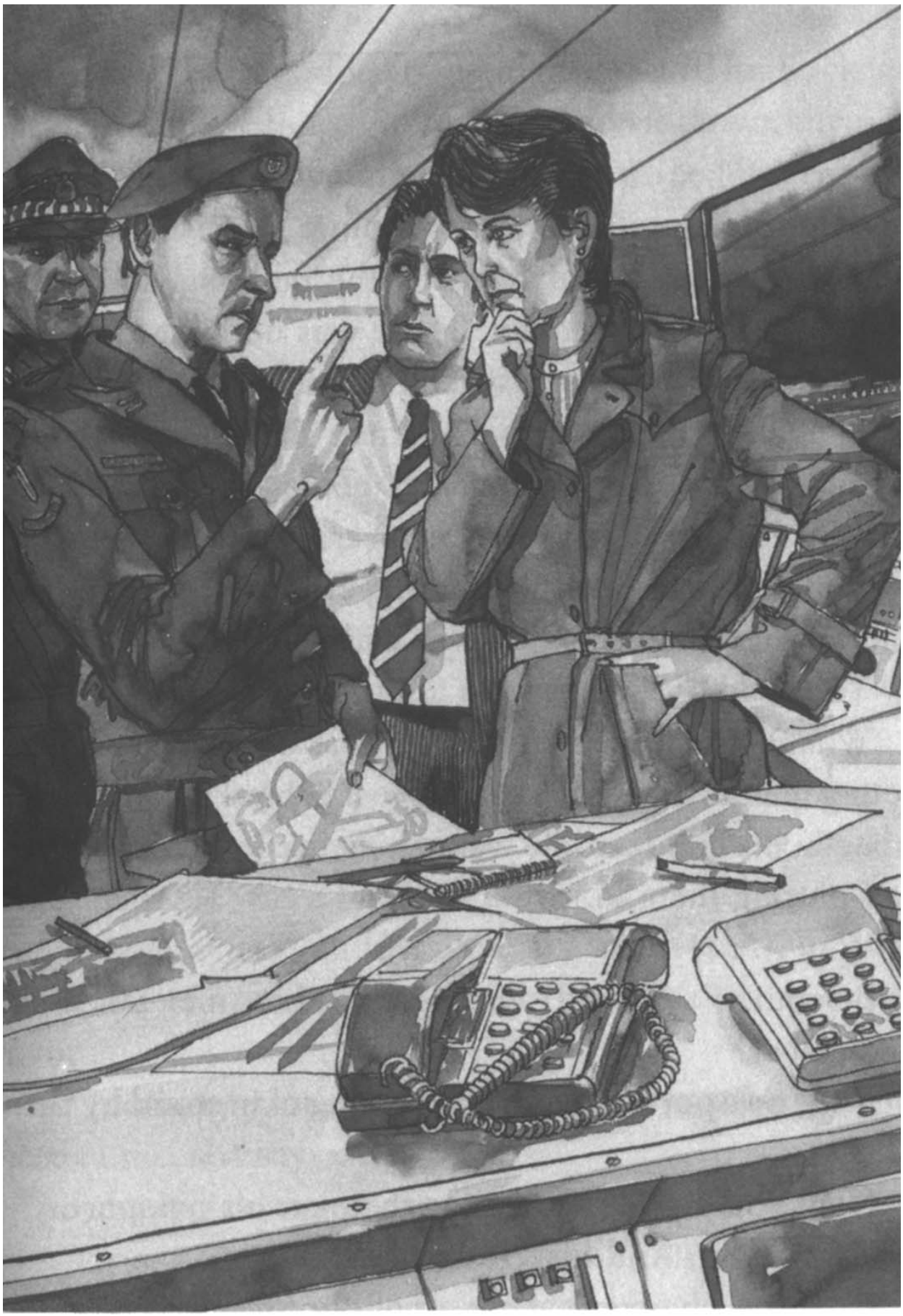
‘Yes, Prime Minister. Here you are.’

She picked up the list of names and looked at it carefully. ‘Oh, my God!’ His name was near the beginning. She dropped the list, sat down at the table, and ran her hands through the hair. For a long minute she said nothing. Then she looked up.

‘This is going to be very difficult, isn’t it, Michael?’

‘I’m afraid so, Prime Minister. Very difficult indeed.’

Helen stood up and walked to the window, thinking hard. Outside in the rain, the American Ambassador’s car stopped by the door.



'Just one hour. Then they'll kill the first passenger.'

6

Carl looked through the window and watched the cars arrive at the airport building. There were a lot of cars now and a lot of lights in the building. Inside the plane it was hot and quiet. There was nothing to do. He remembered other times when he had been in a plane at night with wife and daughter. That was been fun because they were excited and going on holiday. His daughter had always asked lots questions in the plane. Now no one said anything at all. Carl sat, and thought, and felt his face becoming wet with sweat.

'Your passport, please!'

'What?' He turned suddenly. One of the hijackers, a young man in a black shirt, was just behind them. He had a bag in his hand and he was taking everyone's passports and putting them in it.

'Why…?'

'Be quiet!' Harald whispered. 'Let me talk, sir. Remember?'

'Your passport, please.' The young man stood by their seats.

'Here you are.' Harald gave the man his passport.

'Thank you. And his?'

'He has no passport. I am a police officer and he is my prisoner. I am taking him to prison in my country.'

'I see.' The young man looked at them both in surprise. 'Stand up, you!'

Carl stood up and the young man searched his pockets, but he found nothing. He told Carl to sit down, then he opened Harald's passport and looked inside. 'Police pig!' he said. 'Now you are our prisoner!' Then he hit Harald in the face, looked at Carl, and laughed. 'And perhaps we will set him free!'

Harald said nothing. The hijacker was about the same age as him, but not so big. The young hijacker laughed again and moved on to the nest seat.

'Thank you, Harald,' Carl whispered, when the man was at the front of the plane. 'That was very brave. But I won't let you die for me, you know.'

'Be quiet, sir! Carl whispered, when the man was standing in the door of the Captain's cabin. He was talking to the other two. He was a strong man, with a black beard. He looked angry and waved his arms. Carl listened carefully. He could hear one or two words, but not many.

'…nothing! Nothing at all!… stupid woman!… she needs time, she says…'

All the hijackers were angry now. They looked at the passport and then started to walk down the aisle, pointing their guns at the passengers. Harald sat very still in his seat.

'Don't look at them, Carl,' he whispered. 'Sit very still and don't look at them.'

Suddenly the big hijacker pulled a passenger out of his seat. The passenger was a short fat man in a grey suit. He shouted angrily in a voice that sounded American, but the hijacker hit him and then pushed him to the front of the plane with his machine gun.

'Turn towards the door!' he shouted. 'Put your hands on the door! Above your head! Higher! That's it!'

The air hostess pointed her gun at the American's back. The hijacker in the black shirt stood at the front of the plane and pointed his gun at the passengers.

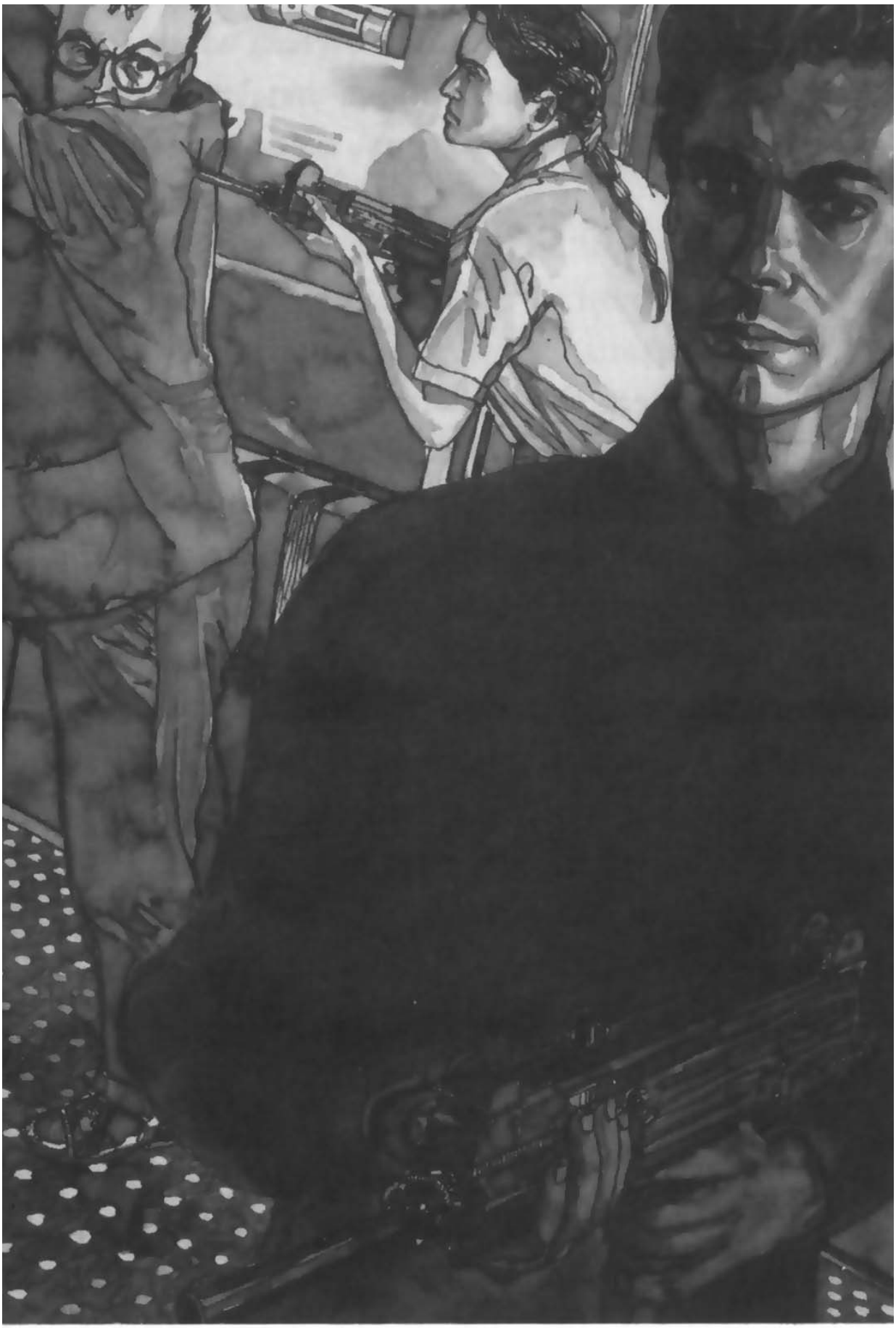
'Don't move!' he shouted. 'Stay in your seats and don't look back!' Then the big bearded hijacker went back into the Captain's cabin.

The bell rang. The hijacker's voice spoke.

'Passengers! Listen to me! You know we are here to set our brothers free. I have spoken to the Prime Minister of this country. I told her she must bring our brothers here by two o'clock. That is plenty of time because the prison is only ten kilometres from here. She says she needs more time, but we know she is lying. We have no time. The passenger at

the front of the plane is an American spy who lives in our country. All Americans who live in our country are spies. If our brothers are not at two o'clock, he will die. If you try to help him, you will die too.'

'Jesus,' Carl said quietly. He looked at his watch. The time was 1.50 a.m. He looked out of the window across the rainy tarmac to the airport building. In one of those rooms was the Prime Minister. What would she do? What *could* she do? 'Come on, honey,' he said softly. 'Start thinking. Think fast, honey. And think hard!'



The air hostess pointed her gun at the American's back.

7

Helen Sandberg sat at radio in the control room. Michael, Inspector Holm, and Colonel Carter sat behind her. They could all see the plane, two hundred meters away, and they could all hear the voice of the hijacker on the radio. It was loud, excited.

'Our brothers have done nothing wrong. They are innocent! They are fighters for the freedom of our people! We need them with us on this plane, now!'

Helen kept her voice low and calm. 'Look, I understand what you say. But those men are criminals; they're in prison. I can't bring them here. And remember. The passengers on the plane are innocent people too, with families and children. Please set them free. We will not hurt you. We…'

The voice on the radio interrupted her. *'Mrs. Sandberg! I do not want to talk any more. It is now 1.59 a.m. Do you have our brothers here, at the airport?'*

'No. I told you …'

'Then watch the front door of the plane. You can see it well, I hope?'

'Yes.' Helen's voice was quiet now, almost a whisper.

'Then watch. There is an American spy behind it. And remember, we have many American spies, and many important business people on this plane. In half an hour I will ask you again about my brothers.'

Helen stared out at the plane. Its front door was very small and far away. Colonel Carter touched her arm.

'Here are some binoculars, Prime Minister. You will be able to see clearly with these.'

She did not want to look, but she had to. She had decided not to free the prisoners, so now she had to see what happened to the passengers. She picked up the binoculars and stared at the front door of the plane.

The door opened slowly. There were no steps outside the door, so it was four meters above the ground. Standing in the door was a short fat man, his hands above his head. His face was white and he looked very frightened. Then he jumped. But as he jumped, a girl came to the door and shot him. Some bullets hit him in the air and more bullets hit him as he lay on the ground. One of his arms moved a little and blood ran out of the side of his arms onto tarmac. The girl continued shooting him for ten, maybe fifteen seconds. Then someone pulled her back into the plane and door closed.

For a long time everyone was silent. Then Colonel Carter spoke. 'Inspector, why didn't your men shoot? That girl was in the doorway fir nearly fifteen seconds! Why isn't she dead?'

'We… are police officers, not soldiers. I… ' But the Colonel interrupted him.

'Prime Minister, let my men deal with this problem. They have killed a man now and they'll kill another one in half an hour. We must attack that plane! We are commandos; we know how to do it!'

Helen was still watching the dead body of the man on the tarmac. She thought a hand moved, for a moment; but no, he must be dead by now. There was a pool of blood on the tarmac now, around his head. He could not possibly be alive. For a moment she did not hear the voices around her. In half an hour…

'Prime Minister…?'

'Yes.' She turned towards them. 'Yes. Colonel Carter, bring your men here, immediately. Meet me in ten minutes with your plan. But I warn you, it must be a good one. I don't want any more dead passengers.'

'Yes, Prime Minister. At once.' The Colonel turned to go.

'Inspector.'

'Yes, madam.'



There was a pool of blood on the tarmac, around his head.

‘I want those two prisoners brought here from the prison. At once. You have twenty-five minutes, no more. Do you understand?’

‘But Prime Minister! You can’t do that!’ The Inspector and the Colonel stared at her in surprise.

‘I can and I will.’

‘But these men are dangerous criminals – terrorist! They tried to put a bomb on a plane! They are in prison for…’

‘For thirty years. Colonel. I know. But they are only two men, and there are over a hundred innocent people on that plane. My job is to save their lives, and I need time to do it.’

The Inspector stood up very tall and straight in his uniform. ‘Prime Minister, I strongly advise you not to do this. You don’t understand…’

Helen interrupted him, her voice ice-cold and angry. ‘I understand very well indeed, Inspector. And I thank you for your advice. But I think I must make the decisions, and you must obey my oders. You now have only twenty-four minutes. Bring those prisoners here, please.’

‘Yes, madam.’ The Inspector and the Colonel left the room. Looking very unhappy.

‘Prime Minister?’

‘Yes, Michael?’ She turned, and saw that Michael was smiling quietly.

‘The American and British Ambassadors are here. Do you want to see them?’

She groaned, and sat down suddenly. ‘Do I want to? Of course I don’t! But I must talk to them because that man was an American. Send them in. They can have five minutes with me, that’s all.’

‘Yes, Prime Minister.’ Michael picked up a telephone.

8

When the girl came back into the cabin she was shaking. Her hands were shaking and she was crying and smoke was coming out of her gun. One of the passengers, an American, stood up and shouted at her.

‘You’re a murderer!’ he shouted. ‘You’re a dirty, murdering, b…’

She turned and pointed the gun at him and fired. The man sat down in his seat and the bullets went above the seats, all along the plane, and out through the roof. After ten seconds the girl stopped firing and shouted.

‘You’re shut up! You shut up and sit down or I’ll kill you all! I am a soldier of the People’s Liberation Army and I’ll kill you, all of you!’ but she was crying too, and the young man in the black shirt put his arm around her and held her. She leaned against him, crying, and he whispered something in her ear.

It was then that Harald moved. He got out of his seat, bent low, and ran very fast along the aisle towards the front of the plane. The young man and the girl did not see him coming and he caught them both around their legs and knocked them onto the floor. Harald fell on top of them and he tried to take one of the guns, but girl pulled his hair and the young man held his arms. Then the bearded man came out of the Captain’s cabin and hit Harald hard on the head with his gun. Harald fell on the floor and lay still. The bearded man pointed his gun at the passengers and shouted ‘SIT STILL!’ very loud indeed.



Harald ran very fast along the aisle.

None of the passengers had moved except Carl, and he was too slow. He stood very still in the middle of the aisle five metres away from the bearded man's gun. The other two hijackers were still on the floor, and Carl saw the Captain move in the cabin behind the bearded man. But the young man I the black shirt saw him too, and stood up and pointed his gun at the Captain. Both Carl and the Captain were too late.

'I am getting old,' Carl thought. 'When I was young, I could move as fast as Harald. But not now.' Carl sat down in his seat, very slowly. The bearded man watched him all the time. He pushed Harald with his foot.

'Search him,' he said to the girl. 'Then handcuff him to the door. He will be the next one.'

The girl pulled Harald to the door. She found some handcuffs in his pocket and handcuffed him to the door. Then she searched his other pockets.

In one of his pockets she found a newspaper. She looked at it and saw the photo of Harald and Carl. She stood up slowly and showed it to the bearded man. He looked at the photo, and then he looked at Carl carefully and for a long time. Very slowly appeared on the faces of the two hijackers and they began to laugh.



The hijacker looked at the photo, and then at Carl.

9

Helen Sandberg stood up to welcome the American and British Ambassadors. The two men were very different. The American ambassador was a short round man with a loud voice which Helen disliked very much. He often wore open-necked shirts, and he had a very hairy chest. She disliked that too. The British Ambassador – a tall thin Scotsman from Edinburgh - was always quiet, polite and well-dressed, but she did not always believe what he said. Once – a year ago – he had lied to her and she could never forget that.

But most of all, she disliked them because they went were both military men and their countries were much bigger than hers. They wanted military bases for their soldiers in her country and she did not want them.

'So, gentlemen, what can I do for you?'

The American spoke first. 'Well, ma'am, an American passenger is dead …'

'Yes, I know. I am very sorry about that. I hope no more will die.'

'I hope so too, ma'am. There are twenty-eight US passengers on that plane and my Government wants them all alive,' Helen answered quietly. But the Ambassador did not listen.

'So the US Government is going to help you, ma'am. We have fifty US Marines at the US Embassy, and they can be here in one hour from now. Then they'll just take that goddam plane apart.'

The Scotsman smiled. 'Excuse me, Ambassador, but perhaps one hour from now will be too late. One man is already dead. But, er… perhaps you don't know this. Prime Minister, but this week six SAS soldier are visiting the British Embassy, and they're waiting outside in my car now. These men know a lot about hijacks; much more than the US Marines or, probably, your own soldiers, Prime Minister. They know exactly what to do. So…'

'Now just a moment!' The American interrupted. 'The US Marines are…'

'Gentlemen!' Helen's clear, hard voice stopped them. 'There's no time to argue. Firstly, I didn't know about SAS soldier in the British Embassy, and I am very surprised about it. Very surprise indeed, Ambassador. Secondly, I do not think it is a good idea to attack a plane with a hundred and seven in it, and "take in apart" as you say. I want these people to live, not die. So I thank you for your ideas, but remember that this small country is ours, not yours. We will manage this problem in our own way, with our own people, thank you very much. Now you must excuse me. I am busy.'

At the door, the Scotsman turned back. 'Prime Minister, I know you want to save lives,' he said. 'I understand that. But these hijackers must not go free. My Government does not want that. No Government in the world wants that.'

'I know that, Ambassador,' Helen answered quietly. 'I know that very well.'

As they went out, the phone rang. Michael picked it up. Helen sat down at the table and watched him. His face was very serious. He wrote on a piece of paper and then put the phone down. For a moment, he did not look at her.

'What is it, Michael? Tell me.'

'It was a radio message from the plane, Prime Minister.'

'Well? What did they say? Didn't they want to talk to me?'

'No, Prime Minister. Just the message. It says: *"We love our brothers, we hope the Prime Minister loves her husband. He is on the plane, just behind the door."* '

For a long moment she stared at Michael, but she did not speak. A picture of the American passenger appeared in her head. She saw him jumping out of the door and the girl shooting him. Shooting him for ten, maybe fifteen seconds.

'I'm sorry, Prime Minister,' said Michael softly.

'What? Yes, so am I. I thought perhaps… perhaps the hijackers didn't know Carl was my husband. But they do know.'

She ran her hand trough her hair and then looked at her watch. But her hand was shaking so much that she could not tell the time.

The phone rang again. Michael picked it up.

'Colonel Carter is outside, Prime Minister.' He watched her, waiting for an answer. 'I'll tell him to wait, shall I?'

She put her hands flat on the table and stood up. 'Yes. Yes, Michael. Tell him to wait two minutes, that's all.' She walked to the window and stared out at the plane. She

pressed her forehead against the cool glass and for two minutes she did not move. Then she turned round and smiled at Michael.

‘Let’s just hope Colonel Carter’s plan is a good one, shall we? Show him in.’



'We hope the Prime Minister loves her husband.'

10

In the plane, Carl and Harald sat on the floor by the door. They were handcuffed together with Harald's handcuffs. The girl hijacker stood watching them with her gun. The bearded man in the Captain's cabin, and the young man in the black shirt was watching the other passengers.

Harald touched his head with his hand. There was blood in his hair.

'How do you feel, my young friend?' Carl asked.

'It hurts,' Harald answered. 'And I can't see well.'

'This man needs a doctor,' Carl said to the girl, angrily.

She laughed. 'That is your wife's problem, not mine,' she said. 'If our brothers come, he will get a doctor. If they don't come, he won't need one.' She pointed her gun at Harald's head and laughed again. She wasn't at all nervous now.

Carl felt angry. He was angry with the hijackers and he was angry with himself because he had not moved fast enough to help Harald. It was good to be angry; when he was angry he did not feel so afraid.

'How old are you?' he asked the girl.

'I asked you a question!' he said. 'How old are you? Eighteen, nineteen? You're not very old, really, are you? You're just a child!'

The girl's face went red. 'I'm twenty,' she said angrily. 'I'm not a child!'

'You look like a child,' Carl said. 'You're only two years older than my daughter. Why are you doing this?'

The girl laughed. She didn't look at his eyes. 'Why? You wouldn't understand.'

'I don't think you understand what you're doing,' Carl said. 'None of the people in this plane has hurt you. We are all innocent. That man you killed – he wasn't a spy, he was just an American businessman. You've never seen any of us before. Why do you want to kill us?'

The girl looked worried and angry. She pointed the gun straight at Carl's head. 'I don't want to kill you,' she said. 'I want your government – your wife – to set our brothers free.

'Yes, I know,' said Carl, carefully. He watched the gun and the girl's face, but he was not really afraid because he was still angry. He argued with the girl as trough he was arguing with his daughter. 'But remember what your brothers did. They tried to put a bomb on a plane. They wanted to kill innocent people like us. Why?'

'You are not innocent!' said the girl. 'No on is innocent! People like you, and your wife, and that American – you have money and power and you take it from my people, from us! Do you know now I lived when I was a child? Ten people in one room, with no bath, no water, nothing! My parents had no jobs, no passports, no country, nothing! We lived I a town with ten thousand others. But ten kilometres away there were rich people like you, with big beautiful house, fine cars, fine clothes – and they were all *innocent* people, like you! I tell you no one is innocent.'

She was shouting now, and nearly crying – there were tears in her eyes. Carl and Harald watched the gun carefully. 'Poor girl,' Carl thought. 'Poor little murderess.'

The bearded man came out of the Captain's cabin and put his hand on the girl's arm. 'Stop it, little flower,' he said. 'Don't talk to them. That's not your job.' Then he hit Carl in the face. 'Keep your mouth shut!' he said. 'Think about your wife instead. Do you see the time? I think she has forgotten you!'

Carl groaned and held his mouth with his hand. There was blood in his mouth and one of his teeth was broken. Then he looked at his watch. It was 2.23. Seven minutes left; then the half hour was over.



'I want your government to set our brothers free.'

‘I’m sorry, my friend,’ he whispered to Harald. ‘You tried fighting, and I tried talking. But it didn’t work. I think this may be our last journey.’

11

Helen Sandberg decided she liked Colonel Carter. He spoke clearly, he explained his ideas carefully, and he listened to what she said. He did not try to be difficult because she was a woman. Best of all, they had made a plan together. A good plan, she thought; it could really work. Perhaps.

She looked at her watch: 2.23. ‘Right, Colonel, get your men ready. I’ll send the first prisoner down to you when they arrive yet?’

‘No, Prime Minister. Not yet.’

‘Then where the hell are they? Can you get Inspector Holm on the car radio?’

‘They’re truing, Prime Minister.’ Michael spoke into the telephone. Colonel Carter left the room and Helen walked up and down slowly, watching the clock. 2.24. 2.25. 2.26.

‘They’ve got him, Prime Minister! He says… he says one of the cars has had an accident in the rain. He thinks he can be here in ten minutes.’ Michael looked up. There was no smile on his face at all now.

‘Ten minutes! What’s he driving – a police car, or a bicycle?’ Helen banged her fist on the table. ‘We’re got four minutes left. OK. I want to talk to the hijackers. Get them on the radio.’

She sat down at the table while Michael called the plane. Colonel Carter came in and stood behind her. A voice came on the radio.

‘Well, Mrs Sandberg. Where are our brothers?’

‘They’re coming,’ said Helen. ‘They’ll be here in ten minutes.’

‘That is too late. I gave you half an hour. Your husband will die in four minutes.’

Helen pressed her hands flat on the table, so hard that the ends of her fingers went white. ‘Please don’t to that,’ she said.

‘I am sorry, Mrs Sandberg. But if my brothers are not here in four minutes, your husband will die.’

‘Don’t you want to see your brothers?’ she asked quickly. ‘I promise you, if you kill my husband, you’ll never see them again.’

There was a pause while no one spoke. Then the radio answered. *‘Four minutes, Mrs Sandberg.’*

Helen spoke clearly, slowly, and loudly. She filled her voice with all the anger she had in her body. ‘Listen, you murderer. I need just ten minutes to get your brothers to this airport. Then I will send them to the plane. But if you kill my husband, or anyone else, then I promise you that your brothers will die, on the tarmac in front of that plane. Is that what you want? Or will you wait ten minutes?’

There was another, longer pause. Helen started out into the night. She did not see anything.

‘All right. Ten more minutes.’

‘Thank you. Now, there is one more thing. The passengers.’

‘What about them?’

‘You must set them free before I send your brothers to the plane.’



'If my brothers are not here in four minutes, your husband will die.'

The voice on the radio laughed. *'Because you are a woman, do you think all men are stupid, like your husband? Send me our brothers, then refuel the plane, and then I will send you the passengers.'*

'No,' answered Helen. She looked at Colonel Carter. 'This is how we will do it. I will send you one of our brothers and then you must send me the passengers. When we have all the passengers, then we will refuel the plane and send you your other brothers.'

The voice laughed again. *'Do you think you are buying cheap fish from a child in the market? Send us one brother, then, and we will send you one hundred passengers. Refuel the plane and send us the other brother, and we will send you the other passenger. But the pilot and your husband must come with us to another country. We will set them free later.'*

Helen looked at Colonel Carter. There was the beginning of a smile on her face. She could see that he agreed with her. She waited for a moment longer, to worry the hijacker.

'Is it agreed, woman? Or do I kill your husband now?'

'I agree. I will send your first brother to you in ten minutes.'

12

Carl felt his broken tooth with his tongue. The door of the Captain's cabin was open and he could see the bearded hijacker sitting inside. He had a long nose and dark hair and his eyes looked green from the light of the instruments in the dark cabin. He held his gun near his mouth and touched it gently with his lips as he waited.

Carl had heard half of the conversation. Eight of the ten minutes had gone. Now that he could do nothing he felt afraid. He could feel his hand in the handcuffs shaking. Harald felt it too and held Carl's hand with his own.

'Don't worry, Mr Sandberg,' Harald whispered. 'We'll get out of here.'

'Perhaps,' Carl answered. 'And perhaps not. But I don't want these murderers to go free.'

'Ssh!' Harald whispered. Carl looked up and saw the girl watching them. Then, suddenly, the bearded man shouted, 'They're coming! Look! Get ready!'

The girl went into the Captain's cabin. Harald and Carl stood up and looked through a window. They saw three men pushing some steps across the tarmac. The men put the steps outside the plane door and then went back again. Then two more men came out of the building. They were wearing bright yellow coats because of the rain. One man walked towards the plane.

'Come away from the door! Quick!' The girl unlocked the handcuffs and pushed Harald and Carl back to their seats. Then she started to open the door.

'Wait! Turn the lights out and stand back from the door!' said the bearded man. 'They will try to shoot us in the light room from the door.'

The door opened and the man in the yellow coat came into the plane. He was thin, with very short hair. The girl shut the door, the lights came on, and the man shut his eyes in the bright light. The girl and the bearded man put their arms around him, laughing.

'Free! You are free now, brother! And the other one, is he safe? Come into the cabin, let's talk!'

Carl and Harald watched sadly. 'So now she will give them what they want, because of me,' said Carl quietly. 'We will be safe, but they will go free to bomb another plane, because of me.' He held his head in his hands.

'Wait, Mr Sandberg,' said Harald. 'Your wife isn't stupid, you know. This game has not ended yet. Sit still, and be ready.'

The other passengers sat quietly, waiting to be free.



Carl could see the bearded hijacker from the light of the instruments.

13

Helen Sandberg stood by the control room window, staring at the plane. ‘Come on,’ she said. ‘Why is that door shut? Where are the passengers?’

‘The hijackers won’t set them free,’ said Inspector Holm. ‘I told you, Prime Minister, this is serious mistake.’

‘Be quiet, man,’ said Colonel Carter. ‘I think we’ve got something on the radio.’

Beside him, a soldier was turning the controls of a small army radio. Suddenly, the voice of one of the hijackers and the prisoner came into the room.

‘So how many soldiers are there in the airport building, my brother?’

‘I didn’t see any soldiers, only police.’

‘That’s strange! No soldiers at all?’

‘I did not see any, brother.’

‘Very strange. But these are not military people. They do not have many soldiers. Perhaps the woman do what she says, then.’

‘What happening, Colonel?’ Helen asked. ‘Those are the hijackers voices. How can we hear them?’

The Colonel laughed. ‘Well, madam, you can see it’s raining, can’t you? We didn’t want our poor prisoner to get wet, so we gave him a nice yellow raincoat, you see. But it was an expensive raincoat, because one of its buttons is a small transmitter. So now we can hear everything they say and we know where are on the plane!’

Helen smiled. ‘Good idea, Colonel. I hope it helps.’

‘Prime Minister,’ Michael interrupted. ‘They’re coming!’

Helen looked through the window. The door of the plane was open and people were coming down the steps one after another. Some of them started to run towards the airport building, and few knelt down on the wet tarmac.

‘What are they doing?’ Helen asked.

‘Praying, perhaps?’ said Michael. ‘To thank God that they’re alive?’

Police and doctors came out of the building to help the passengers. Helen stood and watched through binoculars. She did not see Carl.

‘Ninety-nine, a hundred. That’s it, then,’ said Colonel Carter. The plane door closed. ‘Now we move on to the next step of our plan. Goodbye, Prime Minister.’

Helen turned and saw that the Colonel was putting on white clothes on top of his army uniform. He put several grenades in the coat pocket, and a machine gun into a long pocket inside the coat. He smiled at her. ‘I must help my men refuel the plane.’

‘May God go with you, Colonel,’ she said.



'Free! You are free now, brother!'

14

The lights in the plane went out again. There were only eleven of them let now: Carl Sandberg and Harald, four crew, and five Americans. They sat together in the middle of the plane. The girl and the young man in the black shirt watched them.

Through the window, Carl saw the fuel tanker drive towards the plane. It stopped, and five men in white clothes got out. The pilot went to the front of the plane to work the controls, and the men starred to refuel the plane.

The he saw another man in a yellow raincoat come out of the airport building.

The bearded hijacker starred to talk very excitedly. ‘Is it him? Yes, it is! Our leader! My brother and sister, we have done it! Now, I must welcome him at the door. You, brother, watch the pilot in the cabin, and sister, watch the passengers.’

Carl Sandberg watched the man in the yellow coat walk nearer. He could only see one man at the back of the plane, refuelling it. He thought the others were under the plane somewhere, but he did not know where.

Harald put his hand on Carl’s arm. Carl looked at him. Harald did not speak, but he was looking at the girl, very carefully.

As the door opened, and the man with the yellow coat came in, the girl turned to look. Through the window, Carl saw a man in a white coat run out from under the plane with something that looked like a grenade in his hand. Two other men in white ran out behind him.

The man’s arm went up and he threw the grenade through the open door. There was a very loud *BANG*! at the front of the plane, and a flash of white light that burned Carl’s eyes.

Almost immediately there was an even louder *BANG*! *BANG*! and two more flashes of white light.

Carl could not move. The noise was so loud and the light so bright that he sat still as a stone. He saw the girl hijacker and the bearded man standing quiet still too, with their guns in their hands and their mouths open. Then a man in white ran through the door with a gun in his hand. He shot the girl and the bearded man before they could move. The hijacker in the black shirt came out of the Captain’s cabin behind the man in white came through the door and shot him too. The two prisoners, in their yellow raincoats, tried to get the door, but the men in white knocked them to the floor and handcuffed their behind their backs.

Carl looked down. The girl was lying on the floor of the aisle beside him. He though he saw her hand move towards her machine gun, but then one of the soldiers in white ran down the aisle and shot her again through the head. Another soldier pulled her away by her legs and her long hair left blood along the floor.



The Colonel put some grenades in the coat pocket.

15

Helen Sandberg heard the bangs too, and when she saw the white light, she thought the plane was burning. For about half a minute there was nothing but loud bangs and white flashes, and then there was nothing. There were no lights at all in the plane and no sounds either.

She turned to Michael. ‘Can’t you get them on the radio?’

‘I’m trying, Prime Minister. But I think it’s broken.’

She walked to the door. ‘I’m going out.’

Inspector Holm stood in front of her. ‘You must not do that, Prime Minister. We don’t know what’s happens to me.’

He was a big man but he was afraid of her. She walked straight past him and down the steps. In the departure lounge there was a crowd of passengers waiting to get on other planes, and also a lot of doctors, police, and newspaper journalists. She walked straight past them all and out onto the tarmac. It was dark and cold, and the wind blew rain into her face. When she was about fifty metres away from the building she heard some people behind her, but she did not stop.

The door of the plane opened and a man in white came out. He had a gun in his hand and he came backwards down the steps. After him came two men in yellow raincoats with their hands their backs, and then two other men in white with guns.

Two police officers came after her.

‘Wait, Prime Minister,’ they said. ‘Please stop, it’s dangerous.’

‘Not now,’ she said. ‘It’s a dangerous any more.’ She walked on through the rain without stopping, and the young police officers walked beside her. They were afraid to touch her and they did not know what to do. Some journalist ran after them.

Two men in blue came out of the plane – the pilot and co-pilot. Then some men in suits. She was quiet near the plane now and there were quiet a lot of newspaper photographers around her, bur she did not stop walking.

A big young man came out of the plane with a short, thin, grey-haired one – Harald and Carl. Helen could see that Carl’s face was very white and there was blood in his mouth, but he could walk all right.

Carl saw her coming, a small strong figure walking through the rain, with a crowd of police and photographers around her. ‘Harald, my friend,’ he said. ‘I think we’re in the news again. You’re going to have another photo to show your little son in his birthday.’

Carl and Helen Sandberg met at the bottom of the steps in the darkness and the rain. And Carl was right; there was a photo of it in every newspaper in the world the next day.



'I'm going to find out. I don't care what happens to me.'

GLOSSARY

aboard	on a plane of a ship
advise	to tell someone what they should do
aisle	a place between lines of seats (e.g. on a plane, in a theatre) where you can walk
ambassador	a person sent to a foreign country to speak for his own country's government
attack (*v*)	to try to hurt someone or something
bend (past tense bent)	to turn the top half of the body downwards
binoculars	very strong glasses used to see things far away
cabin	a room on a plane or a ship
chest	the front part of the body between the neck and stomach
colonel	an important officer in the army
commando section	a group of soldiers specially trained for making quick attacks
control room	the building in an airport where people control air traffic by radio
crew	the pilot and all the people who work on a plane
deal with	to do something that needs dosing
decision	what you have decided
departure lounge	a room in an airport where passengers wait
embassy	the building where an ambassador lives and works
fire (*v*)	to shoot a gun
fist	a closed hand with fingers turned inwards
flash (*n*)	a sudden, very bright light for a very short time
flight	a journey on a plane
forehead	the part of the face above the eyes
freedom	being free; able to do what you want to do
fuel tanker	a large vehicle for carrying petrol
gentleman	a polite word for a man
goddam (*adj, slang*)	a word used to show you feel strongly about something (e.g. goddam plane)
government	the group of people who control a country
groan (*v*)	to make a deep, sad sound
handcuff (*v*)	to lock someone's hands together with handcuffs (metal rings around the wrists)
hell	A word used with question-words (e.g. Where the hell…) to show anger or surprise
hijacker	a person who takes control of a plane and makes the pilot fly to a different place
homework	schoolwork which you do at home
honey	a word someone you love very much
hostess	a woman who takes care of passengers on a plane
innocent	an 'innocent' person has done nothing bad or wrong
inspector	an important police officer
instruments	in a plane, instruments tell the pilot how high the plane is, how much fuel there is, etc.
interrupt	to stop somebody talking by speaking yourself
journalist	a person who writes for newspapers, television, etc.

kneel (past tense knelt)	To go down or stay with your knees on the ground
liberation	freedom
list (*n*)	a piece of paper with names written on it
local time	the time in the place you are talking about
ma'am	madam; a polite way of speaking to a woman
machine gun	a gun that fires a lot of bullets on land or sea
military base	a place where soldiers live and work
military men	men from an army; soldiers
nervous	afraid
on time	neither late nor early; at the agreed or correct time
open-necked	with the top buttons of a shirt undone
pause (*v*)	to stop for a moment
pause (*n*)	a short stop
pig	a farm animal; in this story, a word for a very bad person
point (*v*)	to show with your hand or finger where something is
pool	some liquid (water, blood, etc.) on the ground
pour	to put liquids (water, tea, coffee, etc.) into something
power	people like prime minister, president, etc. have power; they can tell other people what to do
pray	to talk to God
press (*v*)	to push hard
prime minister	the most important person in a government
refuel	to bring more fuel to a plane, ship, etc.
SAS	Special Air Service; specially trained British soldiers who are used for difficult kinds of fighting, e.g. against terrorist
set free	to make someone free, e.g. from a prison, from a hijack
skyjack	a hijack in the air
sweat	water that comes out of the skin when you are hot or afraid
take apart	to destroy; to win a battle in a very violent way
tarmac	a hard material used for roads, airports, etc.
tear (*n*)	water that comes from your eyes when you cry
tear (past tense tore)	to pull something to pieces
Terrorists	very violent people who kill, or promise to kill, other people if they don't get what they want
throw (past tense threw)	to make something move through the air
tough (of a person)	strong, hard, brave
transmitter	a radio that sends message
tray	a piece of wood (or plastic, etc.) for carrying food and drink

Skyjack!

ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITIES

Before Reading

1 Read the story introduction on the first page of the book, and the back cover. How much do you know now about the story? Choose Y (Yes) or N (No) for each sentence.

1 People who hijack a plane are terrorists. Y/N
2 The hijackers are using bombs to kill the passengers. Y/N
3 The Prime Minster is on the plane. Y/N
4 Someone from the Prime Minister's family is on the plane. Y/N
5 The hijackers know who this person is. Y/N
6 The hijackers will wait for hours if they have to. Y/N

2 What should you do if you are a passenger on a hijacked plane? Look at these ideas and decide which are sensible and which are not sensible. Explain why you think this.

If your plane is hijacked you should…

1 . . . stay in your seat and be very quiet.
2 . . . argue with the hijackers and tell them they are stupid.
3 . . . tell jokes and try to make the hijackers laugh.
4 . . . talk loudly to show you are not afraid
5 . . . try to remember what the hijackers look like.
6 . . . draw a picture of the hijackers to show to the police.
7 . . . try to attack the hijackers and get their guns.
8 . . . pretend to feel very ill and ask for a doctor.

ACTIVITIES

While Reading

Read Chapters 1 to 7. Choose the best question-word for these questions, and them answer them.

Who / What / How / Why

Carl's story – Chapters 1, 2, 4, 6

1 . . . was Harald's job?
2 . . . was the air hostess holding when she came out of the pilot's cabin?
3 . . . many hijackers were there?
4 . . . group did the hijackers belong to?
5 . . . long were the two prisoners in prison for?
6 . . . did Harald put coffee on Carl's passport and eat it?
7 . . . did Harald say to the hijacker about Carl?
8 . . . did the hijackers take to the front of the plane?
9 . . . do you think Carl is?

Helen's story – Chapters 3, 5, 7

1 . . . did Helen Sandberg groan at 12.15 a.m.
2 . . . many people were there on the plane?
3 . . . three things did the hijackers want?
4 . . . did the hijackers say they would do in one hour's time?
5 . . . did the short fat man die?
6 . . . did Colonel Carter want to do?
7 . . . was Helen angry with Inspector Holm?
8 . . . arrived at the airport to see Helen?

Read Chapters 8 to 11. Are these sentences true (T) of false (F)? Rewrite the false ones with the correct information.

Carl's story – Chapters 8, 10

1 The girl fired her gun in the plane because an American passenger hit her.
2 Harald knocked two of the terrorists to the ground.
3 Nobody tried to help Harald when he attacked.
4 The hijackers handcuffed Harald to the door.
5 The hijackers learnt who Carl was from the newspaper photograph in Harald's pocket.
6 Carl argued with the girl because he was afraid.
7 Carl told her that the man who died was a spy.
8 When the girl was young, her family were very poor.
9 Carl felt sorry for the girl and Harald.

Helen's story – Chapters 9, 11

1 Helen liked both the ambassadors.
2 Both ambassadors wanted to use their own soldiers to attack the plane.
3 Helen thought it was a good idea to attack the plane and 'take it apart'.
4 The hijackers knew that Carl was the Prime Minister's husband.
5 Helen and the Colonel made a plan together.
6 Helen told the hijackers that she needed another twenty minutes to get the prisoners.
7 The hijackers said they would wait for the minutes.
8 The hijackers wanted Carl and Harald to go with them to another country.

Before you read Chapters 12 to 15, can you guess the answers to these questions?

1 Will Inspector Holm arrive with the prisoners in time?
2 Will Colonel Carter take the plane from the hijackers?
3 Will Carl or Harald be hurt in the attack?
4 Will any of the other passengers or crew be killed?
5 Will the three hijackers be killed or put in prison?
6 Will the two prisoners be killed or taken back to prison?

Read Chapters 12 to 15. Then put these sentences in the right order, to make a summary.

1 He and his men drove the fuel tanker to the plane, and began to refuel it.
2 A few minutes later one hundred passengers left the plane.
3 The two prisoners were knocked down and handcuffed.
4 She met her husband at the bottom of the plane steps.
5 The two prisoners, both wearing yellow raincoats, came out of the airport building.
6 As he entered the plane, one of the soldiers threw a grenade through the open door.
7 The first prisoner crossed the tarmac and went into the plane.
8 More grenades exploded, and then the soldiers ran in and shot the three hijackers.
9 When the plane door closed again, the Colonel got ready.
10 Then the second prisoner crossed the tarmac to the plane.
11 When the noise of grenades and guns stopped, Helen began to walk across the tarmac to the plane.

ACTIVITIES

After Reading

1 What did Colonel Carter tell Helen about his plane? Put their conversation in the right order, and write in the speakers' names. Helen speaks first (number 5).

1 _____ 'That's the plan, Prime Minister. We'll wear white coats, like mechanics, and drive the fuel tanker up to the plane.'
2 _____ 'Right. And when he's on the plane, they must let one hundred passengers out, as they agreed.'
3 _____ 'When they open the door for the second prisoner, we'll throw in grenades, and attack at once.'
4 _____ 'They'll be all right. For a few seconds, during the grenade attack, the hijackers won't be able to move. A few seconds is all we need.'
5 _____ 'We haven't got much time, Colonel. What are we going to do?'
6 _____ 'Ah, the refuelling. So you and your men-?'
7 _____ 'The most important thing for the terrorists is the prisoners. So when they arrive, we'll send one to the plane at once.'
8 _____ 'But what about the passengers still inside?'
9 _____ 'Yes. We wait until those hundred passengers are on the tarmac. Then we must refuel the plane.'
10 _____ 'Well, good luck. Colonel.'
11 _____ 'Excellent! And how will you get inside the plane?'

2 Perhaps one of the passengers who was on the plane at the end wrote to a friend about the hijack. Complete the letter with these words from the story. (Use one word in each gap.)

aisle, ambassador, attack, bang, before, bullets, commandos, die, fired, flash, fuel, grenades, handcuffed, hijack, hijackers, machine, nervous, seconds, ship, shot, shouted, tarmac, worst

Dear Sam

I'm staying in the US _____'s house here, with the other four Americans that were in the _____ with me. I'm fine, but all of us still get very _____ when we hear a sudden _____ or there's a _____ of bright light. It'll take time, I suppose.

It was a terrible thing, Sam. I think the _____ moment was when they _____ poor Bill. It was the girl who did it, too. I stood up and _____at her, and she _____ her _____ gun at me. I left the _____ going through my hair.

There was one brave man who ran up the _____ and tried to _____ the _____. He didn't win, of course. They _____ him to the door and told him he'd be the next to _____.

When I saw the _____ tanker coming, I knew what was going to happen. Those _____ were good, Sam. They came straight in after the _____ and got the hijackers _____ they could move. It was all over in _____.

But when we got out of the plane, there was poor Bill's body, just lying on the _____. I'll never forget that.

I'll see you in a few weeks – I'm coming home by _____!

Best wishes,

Jim

3 Perhaps this is what some of the characters in the story were thinking. Which five characters were they, and what was happening it the story at that moment?

1 Poor Prime Minister! She looks so worried. Now that the hijackers know that Carl is her husband, it's even worse for her. Giving her that message the most unpleasant thing I've ever had to do…
2 Maybe this is my chance to do something… That girl is very young and nervous, and she's crying. She's probably never fired a gun and killed someone before. Nobody's looking at us the moment. If I run quickly, perhaps I can get of the guns…
3 That stupid woman has no idea how to deal with terrorists. They really need a man to make these decisions. Well, I've got the prisoners, and I'm not in a hurry. If anyone asks, I'll say … there's been an accident.
4 I hope she's going to listen to me this time. She's an intelligent woman, but she's quite difficult moments. I'm sure our SAS men could deal with this – better than her own soldiers. Ah, they're calling us in to see her now…
5 I feel so nervous. It's easy for the others – they just have to sit and be passengers. I'm the one who has to talk to people and do things. They must do it soon, surely. Or we'll – yes! He's waving to me! At last! Now the PLA can begin its work, and soon our brothers will be free…

4 Here are some titles for the fifteen chapters of Skyjack. Write the number of each chapter next to its title and write them out in the correct order.

_____ The girl's story
_____ Blood on the tarmac
_____ Welcome aboard!
_____ A change of plan
_____ Helen, Carl and Harald
_____ The PLA choose a passenger
_____ One brother in a yellow coat
_____ Helen agrees with the hijackers

_____ The Colonel, the Inspector, and the Prime Minister
_____ Meeting the ambassadors
_____ Mummy is late
_____ The passengers leave
_____ Bang, flash – death
_____ Harald is brave
_____ Coffee and – a passport

5 What do you think about hijacking? Do you agree (A) or disagree (D) with these sentences? Explain why.

1 Helen was wrong to bring the prisoners to the airport.
2 The girl hijacker had good reasons to be a terrorist.
3 The soldiers were wrong to kill the hijackers.
4 Harald was stupid to try and take the hijackers' guns.
5 It is always wrong to give hijackers what they want.
6 If you are fighting to win your freedom, sometimes it is necessary to do things like hijacking.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tim Vicary is an experience teacher and writer, and has written several stories for the Oxford Bookworms Library. Many of these are in the Thriller & Adventure series, such as *Chemical Secret* (at Stage 3), or in the True Stories series, such as *The Brontë Story* (also at Stage 3), which is about the lives of the famous novelist, Charlotte, Emily, and Anne Brontë.

Tim Vicary has two children, and keeps dogs, cats, and horses. He lives and works in York, in the north of England, and has also published two long novels, *The Blood upon the rose* and *Cat and Mouse*.



SKYJACK!

When a large plane is hijacked, the Prime Minister looks at the list of passengers and suddenly becomes very, very frightened.

There is a name on the list that the Prime Minister knows very well – too well. There is someone on that plane who will soon be dead – if the hijackers can find out who he is!

And there isn't much time. One man lies dead on the runway. In a few minutes the hijackers will use their guns again. And the Prime Minister knows who they are going to kill.

CASSETTE AVAILABLE

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