

## ***CHAPTER ONE***

Jet-lag was making the situation unreal for Kabruk, hazing his thoughts, magnifying the feeling of apprehension. Thirty six hours before, he had been in Washington. London's Heathrow airport was the tedious flight transfer somewhere between the USA and his arrival in Cairo. He had watched the million lights of the Egyptian city below the wingtip as the DC 10 circled before landing. The uncharacteristic misgivings had begun within the first few hours of receiving his assignment from the Director's bureau of the Defense Security Assistance Agency. The mission should have been the cream on the sundae; an interesting few months of work and an avenue to further promotion. Somehow, it hadn't felt right, but he was unable to identify the source of his diffidence. He wondered if there had been an error in the Director's briefing, which he had subconsciously noted; he rechecked facts and figures but there were no apparent faults. When he boarded the first aircraft in Washington, it was with the same feelings he had experienced as a child, forced by inexplicable curiosity to take nervous and reluctant steps into the darkness of the neighbourhood's haunted house.

The Cairo airport reception building was an oblong box, untidy with scaffolding and piled construction materials. Blank walls, stark concrete and glass, echoed a jumble of confused sound against a background of the aircraft engines on the