

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 next 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!'