



## Le Long Voyage de Léna

(Lena's Long Journey)

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<http://comixinflux.com/influx/show/14>

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### Page 2

### Page 3

[3:1] I didn't know anything about this section of East Berlin, on the outskirts, hidden in the summer heat between woods and lakes. // [3:2] I'd only been told that there, in his former state-villa, lived a one-time administrator for the overthrown regime. // [3:3] And apart from the plaintive tinkle the small tram make every time it pulls in at each stop... // [3:4] ..everything seems silent and ignored, just like the carriage I'm sitting in, // [3:5] and just like the carriage running back. // [3:6] At the end of the line there's a café with large cream cakes in their window display. // [3:7] Over the lock...

### Page 4

[4:4] Here it is. // [4:5] Good Marnin' // [4:6] Com roight in. // [4:7] Did you foind the way arright? // Lena: Sorry? // [4:8] My wife was asking if you found the way here without any trouble. We live a little remotely here. // [4:9] No problem. I had all the necessary directions. // [4:10] You're Lena

### Page 5

[5:1] Lena: I recognise you from the photographs you're... // Man: I don't have a name anymore. Not since there's no longer a fatherland. // [5:2] Lena: As you wish. You do have what I'm here to collect? // Man: Yes, Lena // [5:3] Man: Is Lena your real name? Or did someone give it to you? // Lena: Whatever you'd like, sir. // [5:4] Lena: And the list? // Man: Here. // [5:5] Lena: I imagined it would have been written on a computer, on a disk, something modern. But I... // Man: Completely out of the question. // [5:6] Lena: I'll memorise them, and destroy it then. // Man: You can memorise all those names, addresses and telephone numbers? // [5:7] It's not that many, and I've had practice. // [5:8] Lena: I'll a need a few moments alone, though. // Woman: Coffee.

### Page 6

[6:1] Woman: With cream, missy? // Man: White coffee Lena? // Lena: Yes please. // [6:2] Man: Okay, we'll leave you to it. // Lena: Thank you.

### Page 7

[7:1] Man: A beautiful day, isn't it? // Woman: You fancy a swim, love? // [7:2] Man: My wife means you could take a dip in the lake if you have enough time. // Lena: I've not got a costume. // [7:3] During the week there's no-one there. // [7:4] Lena: And no towel. // Man: We could lend you one. // [7:5] Lena: You won't see me again. // Man: Then we'll give you one. // [7:6] Man: Pass on my best wishes to those that sent you. // Lena: I won't see them until it's all over. // [7:7] I'd hoped you might say that. // [7:8] You see. // [7:9] You can go through the woods. My wife will show you the way.

### Page 8

[8:1] Woman: Have noice trip Lena. // Lena: Thank you. // [8:6] There wasn't anyone there. // [8:7] And besides, skinny dipping on a glorious day... // [8:8] ...is allegedly a German tradition. // [8:9] So I took the opportunity to cool off.

### Page 9

[9:3] I had a good long swim. // [9:4] It was late afternoon before I made my way back... // [9:6] Always with the feeling... // [9:7] ...that around here the spirit of life had departed. // [9:8] The same uniform piping that you can see around the world. // [9:9] The tram filled up the nearer it came to the city centre.

### Page 10

[10:1] I got out at the end of the line. I still had time. // [10:2] I walked alongside the Spree. // [10:3] There, where the city was once split. // [10:4] I looked at the river. Smooth and without memory, just like me. // [10:5] When I walked by a section of ugly wall I could have lingered on the past. // [10:6] I didn't. // [10:7] I only collected my case... // [10:8] ...and took the 7pm train to Budapest as planned. // [10:10] I should arrive the following day at 11.23 via Vienna.

### Page 11

[11:1] I was on holiday with my parents in Budapest once. The only things I remember are the hotel on the Danube... // [11:2] ...in which I'm now staying again... // [11:3] ... and the bullet holes the Soviet tanks left behind as they put down the Hungarian revolution in 1956. // [11:4] That was the year my father gave up his party membership. // [11:5] Since then the streets have been refurbished in the bright colours they like in Middle Europe. // [11:6] That didn't apply to the street in which I had my meeting. // [11:7] Luckacs Utca, number 22 inner courtyard, first floor right. I'd arrived. // [11:8] And so had the person I was meeting.

[12:1] Lena: Imre Sambor? // Imre: I've been waiting for you. I've never seen you before. You're not one of us. // [12:2] Lena: I don't know who your people are. // Imre: And I have no idea who you are. // [12:3] That's exactly why I'm here Mr Sambor. We know nothing about each other, and that's the way it will stay. // [12:4] Imre: Perhaps you could tell me why you're here then? // Lena: Certainly. Could you clear up the table a little? // [12:5] Listen up. You're not here to nag me with your petty bourgeois standards of cleanliness. // [12:6] No, I'm here to deliver a present. // [12:7] Imre: A present? What's this shit? // Lena: Not a present for you, but one that you'll hand over according to your instructions. I presume... // [12:8] .. it would desirable that it's not covered in fatty spots. // [12:9] Lena: Hey, careful. // Imre: And what's in it?

[16:1] There was a long queue at the border between Hungary and Romania. I got off the bus and wandered past the market stalls in order to cross the border by foot as scheduled. // [16:2] The little luggage I had with me was of no interest to customs. That was also planned. // [16:3] Nevertheless I was relieved to cross to the other side, where the buses stood around. // [16:4] We passed through the landscapes that I remembered from childhood. It was like travelling in the past. // [16:5] I knew, however, that it was impossible to relive the past. Deserted factories from the communist era bordered the route, and it was unbelievable to consider they would ever be reactivated. // [16:6] There's nothing but the present? The future? It's difficult for me to think of the future. // [16:7] I got off the bus at the edge of a little university town in which I was to meet someone. Every time the miserable suburbs. // [16:8] I sat in Café Unrii as arranged. It was very warm. I ordered a coffee and a glass of water. // [16:9] I didn't have to wait long. I'd been told that Professor Danița spoke perfect French. Perhaps I'd like her better than my previous assignee.

[18:1] Danița: In recent times connections with our neighbours have been were unnecessarily complicated by political events. Their so-called Orange Revolution, their alleged fight against corruption. We had friends among them. Now... // [18:2] Danița: ... they're not there any more. // Lena: I was told about these... circumstances before I left. So, now? // [18:3] Danița: Now there's no border crossing in the country, just by water. Hardly ever used. On the Romanian side there's not even a street. Someone will take you carefully to the point where you can board a boat. // Lena: And how will we get there considering the mountains? // [18:4] Danița: By train. It'll be a long journey, and I should warn you trains aren't frequent in our country. // Lena: Better that way. I'm not keen on being obvious. Where's the station Professor Danița? // [18:5] Danița: This young man will take you there. His name's Ion. // Lena: Do you think I can ask him to take my case? // [18:6] Danița: But Ion isn't a... // Lena: I was only pulling your leg, Professor. It hardly weighs anything. I wish you success at the university. // [18:7] I hadn't reckoned on a pleasure trip, and I should have been warned of such delays. They were proving more strenuous than I'd have liked. And as ever, this woman... // [18:8] ..wasn't just carrying out harmless tests with her work.

[20:1] We floated gently through the green tunnel of a beautiful water world to which I was impervious. Laid over everything was the smothering rumble of the motor, sounding like an old washing machine. // [20:2] Pelicans flew alongside and beat of their wings sounded like rustling paper. // [20:3] Under the hull of our little boat I could make out the disturbing dark shadows. Sturgeons, occasionally huge, as Dimitru explained to me in his basic English. // [20:4] I'd understood that we'd anchor for the night when we arrived near Sulina, our destination at the upper end of the delta marking the border with Ukraine. // [20:5] It was sturgeon for supper. We tied up near a small village. There was no sound other than the lapping of the river waves against the boat. // [20:6] I spent another dreamless night. It was still very warm, but everything seemed peaceful. // [20:7] But what's peaceful is in danger, as I'd learned. In the greatest danger.

[13:1] Lena: Assorted flavours of Viennese marzipan. // Imre: Those dancers. Pathetic. // [13:2] And those hearts, grotesque. Like everything from Vienna. // [13:3] I'm not here to listen to your petty bigotry Mr Sambor. The colours aren't just decorative. // [13:4] Lena: Yellow is vanilla, red strawberry... // Imre: ... and brown for coffee. // [13:5] Enough. I'm not stupid. I've eaten marzipan before. // [13:6] and the green is pistachio Mr Sambor. // [13:7] When the time comes, you'll find what you need in the pistachio heart. // [13:8] Imre: In the pistachio. And that would be? // Lena: I don't know, and that's for the best. I'm leaving now. // [13:9] Imre: No time for a glass of Tokajer to toast the success of our mission? // Lena: Thanks, but I don't drink this early. // [13:10] Imre: You're not one of us. You're just petty bourgeois. // Lena: You're repeating yourself Mr Sambor... // [13:11] ...and you shouldn't overwork your old-fashioned vocabulary. // [pp;14] // [14:1] It had been a long time since someone labelled me petty bourgeois, and I wasn't a sympathetic towards comrade Sambor as I'd been then when the term was used during my student days. // [14:2] But perhaps he noticed something? I must be careful never to be provoked. Sambor's choice of words my have been outmoded, but his view wasn't entirely wrong. // [14:3] I went along the river back to my hotel. The humidity was clinging. To calm the thoughts rushing around my head I decided to wallow in the old-fashioned glory. // [14:4] I remembered the spa that I went into holding my mother's hand, impressed by its calmness. // [14:5] The warm water pool was occupied by a group of overweight women. A strong smell of hospital hung in the muggy air. // [14:6] I took advantage of the swimming pool with its impressive columns. The party faithful once crowded in here, but that time has passed. I swam a few lengths. // [14:8] Afterwards I returned to my room. It had all gone to plan, although I feared staying a moment longer amid Sambor's obvious distaste.

[15:1] I cleared the clothes from my case, stuff I'd picked up here and there. I don't have personal belongings anymore. // [15:2] No, nothing personal anymore. Only a couple of keepsakes. // [15:3] I dozed off. Probably the lengths in the swimming pool, or fourteen hours on a train. // [15:4] I didn't dream. // [15:6] My meeting was scheduled for the next morning.

[17:1] Mineral water please. // [17:2] I presume you have something for me? // [17:3] Her French was perfect, actually. But I didn't get the impression that I particularly appealed to her. // Lena: Here. // [17:4] She didn't appeal to me either. // Lena: Men's aftershave. // Danița: I can see that. Very expensive. A good choice. // [17:5] Lena: Perhaps a little smalltown? // Danița: Why do you say that? You don't know what it's for, right? // Lena: Right // [17:6] Danița: Good. Where's the active ingredient? // Lena: Thinned in the contents. I presume you can analyse it with your university's facilities. // [17:7] Danița: I can. Where's the powder that dissolves to activate it? // Lena: I handed it over to your contact. // [17:8] Danița: Good. You can go if you want. // Lena: You're the person who's supposed to let me know how I can leave the country Professor. // [17:9] Why don't you take the flight from Bucharest? You don't belong to our organisation, so there's no reason for anyone to stop you. // [17:10] My instructions were never to travel by plane. Airports are too closely watched. Small border crossings in the country are far less risk, particularly when one seems to be just a tourist.

[19:1] Don't think about it, just carry on like the old heroes of the working class did, if one believes the statues that have survived. // [19:2] Go where I must, even if... // [19:3] ...it's going to take longer than I thought. It's more complicated and harder than I expected. These people... // [19:4] Ion's not one of them. He's just a young guy trying to earn a little money in a country where goods aren't scarce anymore. He didn't speak a foreign language, but if you knew how to communicate with him he was very helpful. // [19:5] Dimitru was also like that. He was the captain of a boat berthed in the inland port of Tulcea waiting to take us through the Danube delta. His lucrative clientele were usually birdwatchers and anglers. // [19:6] It wasn't a pleasure cruise, although it appeared that way. Both men presumed I was a tourist with some peculiar hobby, not as strange as birdwatching or fishing, but even more obscure. // [19:8] I strengthened their belief and dashed off a few pieces in a sketchbook that I'd brought along specifically in case someone should take an interest in it.

[21:1] Lena // [21:2] What's going on Dimitru? // [21:3] Problem, Miss Lena. // [21:4] Problem with us? With me? // [21:5] No, no.. // [21:6] Problem between // [21:7] Ecologists // [21:8] and police.

*[22:2] Stop your engines. // [22:3] Stop. // [22:5] Finished. We go other side. // [22:7] Not an hour later the green paradise was behind us. The fog had lifted and Dimitru told me obscure stories of his days on building sites that struck me as rather lonely.*

*[23:1] Shortly afterwards Ion helped with my case one last time as a simple ferry carried us over to another canal. // [23:2] My expertly forged passport attracted no particular attention at the Ukrainian border compared with the exotic nationality of the car behind. // [23:3] At my arrival in Kiev I understood for the first time why things hadn't remained as peaceful as they should. // Juri: Lena. // [23:4] I should explain at once that Juri Repitski, articulate polyglot, had answers to all my questions however obscure they were, and in the language of my choice. // Juri: Dear Lena. // [23:5] In the same way that was I irritated during my previous meetings at the hostile reception, however understandable, it was difficult not to like this small cultured man. // Juri: Ah, the little incident on the canal. Let me take your case and I'll explain it to you Lena. // [23:6] You chanced on one of these absurd confrontations that have engulfed our planet. Does the survival of a beaver family or a particular species of water fowl have a bearing on the continued existence of humanity? // [23:7] Despite counting himself a defender of humanity, for the individual there was no protection. // [23:8] The Ukrainians plan to build a canal for larger ships leading direct to the Black Sea. It threatens the ecosystem of the entire delta. // [23:9] From UNESCO as protectors of natural inheritance of mankind to the NGOs concerned about little animals, the entire politically correct community is against it. Should it be any other way dear Lena? // [23:10] Juri: Personally I'm for the good and against the bad. // Lena: An outstanding theoretician this Juri Repitski, how all his points have the end justifying the means. But this end will never arrive, and the means... one should never lose sight of them.*

*[24:1] Unfortunately mankind is often forced to act negatively to ensure a positive outcome. We know that because we impose safeguards on conflict. This little cops and robbers game you witnessed is of absolutely no consequence. It would have been for real, had it compromised your mission. // [24:2] Lena: As he continued without pause I kept my mission in mind. // Juri: Alternatively on the other hand, this media friendly childishness for those wanting simple-minded delights, directs attention away from our enterprise. The strong, more secret actions are based in mysteries that your arrangements encompass and the thunderous acclaim when they're cut loose... // [24:3] Juri: Some people call it subversive activity, terrorism in effect. Always big words, always morality. // Lena: He didn't need prompting to speak about the plan that his people set in action. He was casual and lacking any great shame. // [24:4] assorted foreign languages // [24:5] In whatever language I, Lena, was no terrorist. // [24:6] We're fighting imperialism with the only weapons remaining. We've a historical mission. // [24:7] But what came of him, this former Ukrainian chief of the Soviet intelligence services in the Middle-East? // Juri: These things would be easier if this town was still the centre of revolutionary uprising that it once was. // Lena: At the time these paintings by Lemonovitch represent? // [24:8] Juri: You recognise the artist? // Lena: I know the picture - Starlin and the two children. I studied art history in a previous life, Mr Repitski. I didn't know there was a copy of this painting here, though. // [24:9] Juri: You know of the controversy, then. // Lena: Yes, there's the original and a fake painting, but no-one can differentiate between them. // [24:10] This one was presented to the city of Kiev as proof of the unbreakable friendship of two sister parties. The other hangs in Moscow's Tretjakov Gallery. No-one knows which is the original, but I'm not an art historian like you Lena, yet this uncertainty fascinates me.*

*[25:1] There should be nothing else but the accomplishment of our small group's ideas. We going to fashion a work whose authorship no-one will be able to determine, but the consequences will be appreciated. // [25:2] Lena: Are we safe from prying ears here Mr Repitski? // Juri: As if in the grave! See for yourself Lena! For a starvation wage and my neutrality they appointed me security guard charged with conservation. Until these halls are privatised like everything else. // [25:3] Lena: Good, then I'll give you what's yours. // Juri: What a lovely idea. A pretty travel accessory for a sick person. // [25:4] Lena: So it seems, but it conceals a small syringe like those diabetics use. // Juri: A syringe. A really good idea. Classic, discrete and quick. // [25:5] If necessary, here are papers in your name explaining you're dependent on insulin. A Swiss laboratory will confirm this if required. // [25:6] It's brilliant planning, Lena, dear. And the other part of the equipment? // [25:7] I'm only authorised to deliver the components Mr Repitski. I don't know what the end product will be, and I haven't anything more to do or say about that. // [25:8] Juri: It's sad that you've no time to experience our city. // Lena: Is my continuation as boring and complicated as my arrival? // [25:9] Boring, yes, as it's by sea, but sadly that's the price for lacking complication and leaving not the slightest trace behind you. // [25:10] The shipping routes across the Black Sea are rarely disturbed on the practical grounds that no-one's really interested in what goods are transported there. And what does concern them, you'll see is irrelevant.*

*[26:1] Lena: Is the car to take me there? // Juri: When I was still in official service Boris was my chauffeur in Vietnam, Angola and Afghanistan. You're in safe hands with him. // [26:2] By listing his career postings Juri Repitski provided an explanation for his garrulous nature. // [26:3] I think our old master in Berlin made a wise choice by allocating this mission to you. You confound expectations as to what people would be looking for in a courier, an adventurer without belief or principle, greedy and uncultivated. You're a trump card for our enterprise, I'm convinced of that. // [26:4] It would be preferable to be a worthwhile trump for the matter under discussion than petty bourgeois not belonging. // [26:5] Juri: I'm very pleased to have met you. // The pleasure was not mutual. // [26:6] And I couldn't resist a secret pleasure in faced with the careless analysis of babblers. // [26:7] As it was in the good old days, the car had curtains, so the party worthies and intelligence services possessed the anonymity of power. // [26:8] In preference to the legitimacy of democracy. // [26:9] At a nameless dock in Odessa's harbour a small freighter was waiting. I couldn't make out the name. // [26:10] The conversation on board was even less cultured than those during operational journeys at the height of the cold war. // [26:11] The flag was Panamanian, the charter was Lithuanian, the Captain Indonesian, the crew Sri Lankan, the cargo Czech, the articles Georgian and everyone was silent. There was predominantly sleazy stench to it all.*

*[27:1] I was allocated the ship's only single cabin and we cruised across the Black Seawith diminishing speed, as if the engines were as exhausted as I was. // [27:2] In order to forget the tiredness I played the cassette that belonged to them together. Sadly, the one that made them laugh. // [27:3] Why did I let that back in? I'm uncertain if I know it anymore. // [27:4] The destination in Turkey was Trabzon, the former Trebizond. Aname I dreamed of as a child. // [27:5] The was little sense of the old magic, and the pier was populated by container lorries idling their engines. // [27:6] Customs displayed little interest in the content of the freighters, and still less in my case. // [27:8] As noted, I had no claim to flight tickets or a mobile phone, a credit card or comfortable hotel room. // [27:9] So I sat myself on a stretch of hardly clean beach next to the harbour, in the shade of a grounded freighter resembling a rusty whale. // [27:10] Shortly a small bus arrived, exactly as planned. There are thousands of them in Turkey. The driver knew where to deliver me. It would take some time.*

*[28:1] I began to get used to it. // [28:2] I didn't know if Mehmet was sticking to his route. At first I thought I was the only passenger for the long trip across the Anatolian hills. // [28:3] I listened to the same cassette. Their cassette. Nino Ferrer, Les Rita Misouko and suchlike. All that was far away. Far away... // [28:4] We went past Afyonkarahisar, the black opium castle, a name I'd once discovered on a map and which raised assorted fears. However, the town was backwards, impoverished and peaceful. // [28:5] Mehmet's business side had won the upper hand. A single passenger, even one considered a worthwhile trump, was for a Turkish bus driver a lavish extravagance. // [28:6] He let on a small group that waved him down in the middle of a poppy field. // [28:7] There was a mother with a headscarf and her daughter in a miniskirt, builders carrying cheese sandwiches, and two young executives with their laptops. It was a colourful mixture. // [28:8] After the continuous solitude any development was dense and colourful. // [28:9] By the time we passed along the Aegean to Izmir I was again the only passenger. It was still hot, but the breeze from the open sea made it tolerable.*

*[29:1] The copperplate on his business about to close read Adnan Beyamoglu. An importer and exporter of goodness knows what. But that was of no concern. // [29:2] The only thing that counted was what I was importing. // Adnan: Welcome Miss Lena. // [29:3] We sat beneath a portrait of Atatürk, the type seen all over Turkey regardless of political persuasion. // Adnan: Please sit down. // [29:4] A boy surfaced accompanied by a slight clink of glass. // Adnan: A tea to forget the journey? // Lena: Thank you. // [29:5] Lena: What's his name? // Adnan: What's your name? // [29:6] Bülent // [29:7] Adnan: Do you know him? // Lena: No. // [29:8] Adnan: Perhaps he reminds you of someone? // Lena: No, no. // [29:9] Adnan: Shall we get to business? // Lena: Yes. I'm instructed... // [29:10] Lena: To give you this plan of a town to find the action stations. // Adnan: Can I see it?*

[30:1] Lena: It's yours now. // Adnan: Did you draw it? // [30:2] No. I don't know where that is. I did produce some sketches in order that it resembled a tourist's sketchbook. // [30:4] Adnan: Another tea while I look at this more closely? // Lena: Why not? // [30:5] You're very talented. // [30:6] You like birds the best. // [30:7] Ah no, who's this bearded? He's not one of us. // [30:8] Lena: I drew people and things that I saw on the way. There's no significance. I thought about pulling the pages out, but it's more believable this way. // Adnan: That's exactly the right way to have done it. // [30:9] Ah, that's Mehmet. Very well captured. // [pp:31] // [31:1] Tea madame? // [31:3] Tea Lena? // [31:4] Yes please. // [31:5] Thank you Bulent. // [31:6] Did you have to leave your family for this mission? // [31:7] Lena: No. I live alone. // Adnan: How did they recruit you? // [31:8] Lena I'm not allowed to talk about that Mr Beyamoglu. // Adnan: This is your first mission of this type, isn't it? // [31:9] Lena: That's right. I specialised as a cultural attache, but I've travelled a lot. // Adnan: It's just occurred to me. Are you going any further? // [31:10] Lena: I've got a meeting at the Syrian border in four days, but until then... // Adnan: Until then I think I've got something for you. // [31:11] A family house lying back in a cove on the Karaburan Island, about a hundred kilometres from here. You'll be absolutely safe there. Someone will look after you, and there are all types of birds. // [31:12] Lena: I've finished drawing. In any case, I haven't got a sketchbook anymore. // Adnan: Stay in the sun, the sea, the solitude. If you accept, Mehmet can take you there and collect you in three days time. What do you say?

[32:1] Everything was amicable. Old Zeynep looked after the vegetable plot that lay between the sea and Adnan Beyamoglu's family house. // [32:2] I swam far into the open sea, kept afloat by the salty water. Too far for the old lady, as she made clear to me. // [32:3] I didn't ever consider not doing it again. // [32:4] Never. I only tried to be like the water that encompassed me, so slippery, so fresh, with no memories. // [32:5] And when the wind came, every day at the same time, it carried me back to shore. // [32:6] Zeynep showed me how they prepare vegetables in Turkey. // [32:7] When night arrived I sometimes took a walk to the property's small jetty. There wasn't the slightest puff of breeze, or swell of waves. Everything was peaceful. // [32:8] Everything was in danger.

[34:1] The final destination I learned by heart on the banks of a Berlin lake was an international courier office. // [34:2] There I had to collect a package that my mother had sent from Melbourne in Australia. My mother didn't live in Melbourne, she lay in the Montparnasse cemetery in Paris. // [34:3] Under the official portrait of Assad (senior) I checked the contents of the envelope that someone unknown to me had sent. As planned, it contained a flight ticket. // [34:4] The carbon copy revealed that I'd arrived in Damascus five days ago on a Qantas-British Airways flight. The ticket for the onward flight to London was made out for the next day. // [34:5] There was also a book that I'd allegedly left on my writing desk in Melbourne, a mistake that came with maternal admonishment to tidy it up considering the cost of sending the book on. // [34:6] The white envelope instructed me to call a number that I'd continuously prompted myself to remember, and that would lead me to the final stage of my journey. // [34:7] The barman seemed trustworthy and would certainly look after my case for a small tip. // [34:8] A voice named a place in the market and gave me directions there. It wasn't particularly complicated, a caravanserai, a khan as they say in Aleppo. A russet horse with a cart would be standing outside.

[36:1] They spoke to me in Arabic, presumably to test me. They'd certainly been told that my talents as a worthwhile trump (or my petty bourgeois eccentricities) included familiarity with Arabic. // [36:2] Omar: Open the envelope. // Lena: it's a letter from my mother. // [36:3] Omar: a letter from your mother. What's that about? // The Al-Azmeh brothers seemed suspicious. // [36:4] For long-serving members of the Syrian Baath Party such suspicion was a second nature. // Lena: It's intended to keep the curious at arms length, but you're allowed to know that there is another meaning. // [36:5] I'd been warned about the possibility of such hostile questioning, but faced with such suspicion the documents I'd been provided with were of dubious advantage. // Omar: We'll check that immediately. Tewfiq, get going. // [36:6] A long silence ensued. I heard everything. The horse, pawing the hot plaster of the alley with its hooves, and the sounds from the office as Tewfiq worked on the letter. // [36:7] Omar: And? // Tewfiq: It's all there. The entire mission down to the last detail. It seems it's going to be poison. There are six of us, each arriving separately. // [36:8] Omar: We should establish the time of the operation ourselves when we consider it advisable? // Tewfiq: It's here in black and white.

[38:1] I'm not Lena Muybridge, born in Melbourne as my perfectly forged passport claims. // [38:2] My true destination is Buenos Aires, not London, where an electronic payment awaits me. // [38:3] My name is Helen Desrosières, born in the 14th arrondissement of Paris. My father is a high-ranked civil servant, my mother illustrates nature topics. // [38:4] I really studied economics and spent periods in assorted capital cities as a devoted cultural attache, all of them following my husband Antoine, First Minister of Business. // [38:5] Above all else I looked after our son Sylvain, ensuring he wasn't upset by our frequent postings. // [38:6] Antoine and Sylvain died with seventeen other people in a random bomb attack in Khartoum. It destroyed the entire quarter where the French embassy stood, while I was in France....burying my mother. // [38:7] The perpetrators never claimed credit, and all our personal belongings were casualties of the fire following the explosion. // [38:8] Nothing remained of my previous life other than two photos and three cassettes. // [38:9] Together with a walkman that crackles and screeches they were in the glove box of our car, which I'd parked at Khartoum airport.

[33:1] Mehmet's little bus came to pick me up as arranged. Zeynep poured water on the ground as is the custom there... // [33:2] ..to wish one a good trip. // [33:3] Because I was no longer carrying anything dangerous I had no concerns about crossing the quiet border between Gaziantep and Aleppo. // [33:4] Despite my vigin passport the border police asked if I'd ever been in the 'occupied territory', as it's referred to in Palestine, meaning Israel, meaning the arch-enemy. // [33:5] I'd been told what to answer, so I lied without batting an eye. Soon after a group dressed in black passed me. // [33:6] I followed them to an archaeological site. Not far from there a taxi should be waiting for me. // [33:7] It was there. // [33:8] Only plastic bags, fluttering like sick birds, indicated the presence of mankind. // [33:9] We arrived in Aleppo, the final and trickiest stage of my mission. I was tired from the trip and the heat, but I had to follow it to the end.

[35:1] The extensive maze around the citadel was deserted. I noticed that during my trip I'd lost sense of time a little. It was Friday, prayer day. // [35:2] The echo of my footsteps under the dismal arches was reassuring, and I realised the Al-Azmeh brothers had selected this particular time to hear me coming. // [35:3] I had the feeling I was completely alone, but my every footstep was monitored. My every hesitation was interrupted by a stranger who, coincidentally, knew the way. // [35:4] There it was. // [35:5] Omar and Tewfiq Al-Azmeh dealt in olives, spices and dried fruit. Tempting aromas wafted from their warehouse, but there was nothing inviting about them. // [35:6] I tried not to seem keener than any other business contact. Whether it was apparent I didn't belong to them, I don't know. // [35:7] It wasn't just the cool of the building that made me shiver, but also an element of fear. Everything had run smoothly to this point, but I knew dangers lurked everywhere.

[37:1] I've been told to verbally repeat what's on there. When the time comes to inform your people... // [37:2] They must follow the same rules as I followed. No letters, no telephone whether mobile or landline, no electronic transmission that can be intercepted, no financial transactions by cheque or credit card... // [37:3] Our products arrive all over the world without problems, madam, at the most prodigious businesses and feasts. // [37:4] The products of the Al-Azmeh brothers know no borders and tolerate no delays. Do you understand madam? // [37:5] I understood. // [37:6] It was done. // [37:7] I could return to the normal world. // [37:8] But was there still a normal world for me?

[39:1] Antoine often called me Lena. // [39:2] They were returned to France in coffins, what little remained of them. // [39:3] I moved back with my father in Montparnasse. I didn't want to see anyone, and often cried. // [39:4] Then someone called up, someone my husband got to know in some far-off posting: Paul-Marie De Calluire. // [39:5] He put a shocking suggestion to me that I all-but dismissed, before relenting. // [39:6] Not proper revenge to write over past events, but you can help by throwing a future if you've got a mind to take this on. // [39:7] Paul-Marie was waiting for me at Ezeiza airport. Here winter ruled. // [39:8] We drove to Buenos Aires without saying a word. Words.. // [39:9] There would be enough of those at the debriefing once I arrived.

[40:1] Paul-Marie: Overall the business went well, right Helene? // Lena: No-one I met was a monster. // [40:2] Lena: Some were mistrustful, others hostile, but everything ran to plan, yes. // Paul-Marie: Apart from the events in the Danube delta, I take it. // [40:3] How do you know about that? // [40:4] It's for another reason. One of us in the birds and fishes team saw your boat concealed between the trees and told us. // [40:5] Your office truly has eyes everywhere. // [40:6] Don't be fooled Helene, international terrorism is a nebulous apparition, rarely grasped. That's why we need new people to latch on to their outlines, people like that girl... // [40:7] Paul-Marie: ... people like you. // Lena: I need to know one thing Paul-Marie. These people I met, were they all involved in the assault that murdered my husband and son in Khartoum? // [40:8] We've had new evidence transmitted to us recently. Photos from a Moroccan agent that passed by the scene. Do you want to see them? // [40:9] You see? They're all there. Salaried agents of the old communist network that sell their know-how of assassination techniques to the new anti-imperialists. But I told you that before you left from Paris. // [40:10] Paul-Marie: Only my old... um, fiend or friend, whichever you prefer. It's been a long time since he left his house in East Berlin to take part in an operation. // Lena: My contacts were overjoyed that the plan in which they're participating came from him.

[42:1] Imre Sambor's flight from Budapest via Cairo should have just landed in Dubai. // [42:2] Professor Danița should already be waiting in the Burj Al Arab hotel where they're all going to meet. // [42:3] As far as I know, I'd say that the polyglot former master spy Juri Repitski is walking around the harbour polishing up his excellent Arabic and taking a look at a particular ship. // [42:4] Adnan Beyamoglu has been sighted in the Pharaoh Bar of the hotel. He really enjoys his swimming. // [42:5] Paul-Marie: As you seem to as well Helene. // Lena: In this weather I've no desire to talk about swimming. And the brothers from Aleppo? // [42:6] They're visiting customers at the bazaar. They never forget their business, and it gives them cover. // [42:7] Lena: You've not told me what's going to happen. // Paul-Marie: The less you know, Helene, the better for you. // [42:8] I'm listening. // [42:9] However you like.

[44:1] Sambor and Beyamoglu? // [44:2] They worked with him in Afghanistan when he lived there during the Soviet occupation. // [44:3] The Emirate authorities are unaware that these people know each other, and that that the Sheikh is grateful to each of them. // [44:4] From old loyalties he's agreed to receive them moments before the crowning moment of his career. They're bringing him a small present. That you know. // [44:5] A little bus driven by a Malaysian immigrant will pick them up from the hotel. // [44:6] It'll take them to the clinic where the Sheikh is staying. // [44:7] And the Sheikh will never arrive at the conference because he'll have been poisoned by these people. // [44:8] And the peace agreement will never be signed because of poisoners like them. // [44:9] What have I done for you, you shit? You shitty spy, You manipulative pigs have made me believe your sympathy for my husband, who was honesty personified. // [pp:45] // [45:1] Please don't make a scene here Helene. What I've had you do is the opposite of what you believe. // [45:2] Sheikh Mohammed Al-Fahim will participate in the conference because we've threaded everything together... // [45:3] ...through their old boss and ex-Stasi agent who lives by a nice lake in Berlin, under whose control you pretended to be acting. // [45:4] The little bus carrying them would have been thoroughly checked, but by us. They'll never reach the Sheikh, and you don't need to know any more. // [45:5] Paul-Marie: And I'm not going to tell you any more. // Lena: And what about me now Paul-Marie? // [45:6] You can't stay in Argentina. You must go further away, somewhere that the inferno in the middle-East rates no more than a few lines in the local paper. // [45:7] Here's tickets to Sydney. Also details of an account with a bank in Adelaide of which you have complete control. // [45:8] And finally, you should be aware that a whole load of countries would erect a statue of you if they knew what you'd done. // [45:9] Have a good life, Helene. Your flight leaves in three hours.

[41:1] Right! He found the target, initiated the plan, provided the meetings and unlocked the arrangements. // [41:2] Lena: And you? // Paul-Marie: Because he's a little isolated I've done him a favour or two and left him in no doubt that I'm active in the same circles. // [41:3] Lena: Do I belong to these favours? // Paul-Marie: If you want to see it that way. // [41:4] Shall we go outside, where the air's a little clearer. I'd prefer to talk to you without being overheard. // [41:5] Lena: Brrr. It was warm the entire time. So hot, that I'm not used to the cold anymore. So, what happens next? // Paul-Marie: Everything will run as planned to the end. Well, almost everything. // [41:6] Lena: What do you mean? // Paul-Marie: At present all your contacts are arriving in Dubai in the United Arab Emirates. // [41:7] It's currently a much-loved holiday destination with a stable political regime and outstanding private clinics. At the moment it's hosting a conference that's initiated a solution to the Israeli and Palestinian conflict.

[43:1] After a second heart attack three weeks ago Sheikh Mohammed Al-Fahim was hospitalised in Dubai. He's guarded around the clock in a sterile room. // [43:2] Paul-Marie: Perhaps you've heard of him? // Lena: Antoine met him when he was posted to Ethiopia. He held him in high regard. // [43:3] Perhaps he also mentioned that the Sheikh once coveted a relationship with the Soviets? // [43:4] Arabic socialists, the club of mosques and farm collectives and so on. The Sheikh later gave up these illusions and acquired the stature of a wise old man. // [43:5] In his old age he's become the one person trusted by all sides who're going to sign the agreement in Dubai tomorrow. // [43:6] Despite his poor health, he's given plenty of audiences in the meeting room of his clinic. // [43:7] Based on a friendly call from Berlin, the small group we're interested in has also arranged a meeting to talk with Al-Fahim. One of the brothers Omar or Tewfiq from Syria belong to an old political federation. // [43:8] Furthermore Professor Danița once provided a rare medicine for the Sheikh when he lived incognito in Kiev under Repitski's protection. I suggest we get a move on. the hotel's not far.

[47:1] Omar: The helicopter that's going to hauls us out is leaving Schardscha right now. // Tewfiq: It'll drop us at Fudschaira harbour in the Gulf of Oman where a ship's waiting for us. // [47:2] I saw it yesterday. No-one took the slightest notice. // [47:3] It's an old dhow going to Tanzania, a country... // [47:4] ...in which we still have friends. // [47:5] Very good, comrades. // [47:6] And what will we do in the meantime? // [47:7] For the moment, nothing.

[48:1] We'll soon be at the clinic. It's at the edge of the desert. // [48:2] Look at those Bedouins. They still believe they're living in another century. It's very peaceful there, you'll see. // [48:3] Nevertheless, we've still got to go through the checkpoint. // [48:4] Juri: Has everyone got their passports? // Daniṭça: We're not beginners any more Juri. // [48:5] Our bus will eventually arrive at the guest car park of the central hospital. // [48:6] There we'll wait until the personal guard comes and leads us to the guest room. We'll meet Mohammed there as we're not allowed in the clinic. // [48:7] Don't call him Mohammed. The Sheik betrayed our ideals. When I heard it was him that I'd rip into my piece of Viennese marzipan for I was overjoyed, believe me. // [48:8] Imre, keep quiet. // [48:9] Always so impulsive, that bloke Sambor. // [pp:49] // [49:1] Shit. You know as well as I do that this driver with his feminine grin is nothing but a mute slave of the parasitic provincial princes. He only speaks his archaic crab-fisherman gibberish and hasn't heard anything on principle. // [49:2] Omar: But he's not blind or deaf. // Tewfiq: So keep quiet. // [49:3] Adnan: We'll prepare everything while we're waiting in the car park. // Daniṭça: By my reckoning we'll not have more than a minute. // [49:4] And it could be much less. As soon as Al-Fahim steps in the room inject his shoulder while I greet him with an orderly proletarian embrace. // [49:5] It will seem like another heart attack. // [49:6] Imre: And if necessary Tewfiq and I will deal with the bodyguards. // Tewfiq: No problem. // [49:7] The trickiest moment will be the body check before he arrives in the room. // [49:8] Why? The present packaging stays in the bus, and as you've remarked, all traces are eliminated. // [49:9] No weapons, nothing. // [49:10] Dead on arrival, nothing more. // [49:11] Will you keep quiet for Christ's sake.

[50:1] Passports, please. // [50:3] Gifts? // [50:4] What's he moaning about under his checked cooking cloth. // [50:5] He's asking if we have presents. // [50:6] Perfume. // [50:7] Imre: Marzipan. // Juri: Medicine for me. I have diabetes. // [50:8] Guard 1: One of them's ill. // Guard 2: With what? // Guard 1: Diabetes. // Guard 2: That's okay. // [50:9] Other gifts?

[52:1] ...

[54:1] ...

[56:1] Don't you want to swim? // [56:2] C'mon Lena.

[49:1] ...

[51:1] Nothing. // [51:2] Drawings. // [51:3] It's okay.

[53:1] Now my friends we only need to...

[55:5] Pardon Me, may I take my ball. // [55:7] Boy: My ball? // Lena: Your... Oh yes, of course. // [55:8] Boy: You're alone? // Lena: Yes. // [55:9] Boy: My dad is over there. // Lena: And your mum? // [55:10] Boy: She's Dead, she was very sick. // Lena: Your mother is dead?

[57:1] ...