

Prologue  
(Two Years Ago)

*Somewhere in the Middle East*

"Please explain the meaning of this report you sent me."

"Yes, Minister. I have received disturbing information from both the Ministry of Economy and the Ministry of Petroleum Resources. Several scientists working in these ministries have noted an increase in research on cold fusion in the United States."

"And why is research in this area of concern to us?"

"If the problem is ever solved, a new type of nuclear reactor could be designed for the production of electricity. The use of such reactors would almost certainly become world-wide and virtually eliminate all the current nuclear power plants based on fission as well as all oil-burning plants."

"Eliminate oil-burning power plants?"

"Yes, Minister, almost definitely."

The Minister of Defense pondered the gravity of that statement. "And what do you propose we do about this?"

"We have a plan fully developed, Minister. We have hand-picked a group of men trained in nuclear physics. They can be sent to the various academic centers in the United States where this research is being conducted. In many cases, they could even become personally involved with the projects. They would then be in place to take the necessary steps if and when it became necessary. However, since this is a covert operation, it requires your approval and the use of some of your resources."

"Your report suggested that this research represents an issue of national importance to us." It was more a statement than a question.

"Yes, Minister. We believe so."

His moment of indecision was brief. "Put your plan into operation."

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*FBI Headquarters, Washington, D.C.*

The Executive Assistant Director of the National Security Branch of the FBI finished reading the memo and laid it on his desk. In his considered opinion, the potential threat outlined in it seemed overestimated.

This branch of the FBI was established in 2005 in response to a presidential directive. It brought together under one head three different divisions of the FBI: the Weapons of Mass Destruction Division, the Counterterrorism Division, and the Counterintelligence Division. The memo before the EAD was written by an analyst in the Counterintelligence Division. In fact, he had summoned the analyst to his

office to discuss it personally.

"You've done a thorough job, Mr. Evans."

"Thank you, Sir."

"So there are a number of universities working on the problem of cold fusion, and you think the problem might be nearing a solution. You have a background in physics?"

"Yes, Sir, my master's degree is in physics. And yes, I think several researchers might be very close to a solution."

"And you think other nations might be interested in launching an intelligence operation to obtain this research?"

"Yes, Sir, there are small indications here and there that several nations might be planning such an operation. I've investigated each one and believe we have a legitimate concern here."

"But Mr. Evans, this research hasn't been classified. The researchers have been publishing their theories so far, and if the problem is ever solved, they'll publish the solution. Why would a nation have to launch an intelligence operation to get it?"

"That's a valid question, and I've given it considerable thought. Unfortunately, all I have is a conjecture. It could be that one or more of these nations might not simply want the theory and technology for their own use but for their exclusive use. These operations, therefore, may have a twofold purpose: to obtain the research and keep it from being published."

"But how could that be done? So some spy steals some papers. The author simply rewrites them."

"There is a way to prevent that, Sir."

"You mean kill whoever discovers the solution to cold fusion?"

"That's exactly what I mean. In fact, about a month ago, Dr. Donald Fitzgerald, a physicist from IIT in Chicago was killed at an "L" station. The police are calling it a random mugging. But his field was low energy nuclear reactions, the official name for cold fusion."

"And you think it was a covert execution?"

"Yes, Sir. That's what I think. There are nations that would stop at very little to have exclusive possession of cold fusion."

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