

**STEPHEN
COONTS'
DEEP
BLACK:
JIHAD**

**Written by Stephen Coonts
and Jim DeFelice**



St. Martin's Paperbacks

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STEPHEN COONTS' DEEP BLACK: JIHAD

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AUTHORS' NOTE:

In this work of fiction all of the characters, organizations and events portrayed are either products of the authors' imagination or are used fictitiously. In particular, the National Security Agency, Central Intelligence Agency, Space Agency, Federal Bureau of Investigation, National Security Council, and Marines are, of course, real. While based on an actual organization affiliated with the NSA and CIA, Desk Three and all of the people associated with it in this book are fiction. The technology depicted here either exists or is being developed.

Some liberties have been taken in describing actual places and procedures to facilitate the telling of the tale. Details of some security procedures and apparatus at actual places have been omitted or recast as a matter of the public interest.

CHAPTER I

THE LIGHT BLUE Mercedes came around the corner a bit too fast, tires squealing as the driver tucked around a tour bus parked near Istanbul's Grand Bazaar. Just then a cab sputtered from the curb directly into the Mercedes' path. The Mercedes veered to the left, but the way was blocked by another bus; before the driver could veer back, two of his tires blew. The car plowed into the side of a small panel truck, striking it so hard that the truck's gas tank exploded with a gush of flames.

Or so it appeared from the Mercedes.

Most of the tourists and others nearby were too stunned to react, even to run away. But one devout woman who happened to be passing nearby saw the accident and rushed toward the flames, her long dress and chador fluttering in the wind as she ran. Dodging a vehicle that just slammed on its brakes, she ran to the Mercedes. As she reached it, a fireball rose from the tour bus, exploding above with a boom that shook the entire block.

"So far, so good," said Jeff Rockman, watching the disaster unfold on the large screen at the front of Desk Three's op center, commonly known as the Art Room.

"We have a considerable distance to go, Mr. Rockman," replied William Rubens, who as the number two man in the National Security Agency ran Desk Three, colloquially known as Deep Black. "Please direct your attention to Ms. DeFrancesca and keep your color commentary to yourself."

CHAPTER 2

LIA DEFRANCESCA THREW her hand against the window of the Mercedes, slamming what looked like a large cookie into the corner of the glass near the driver. She twisted her palm against the device and let go, jerking back as flames from the nearby bus erupted above her. The heat from the fireball drove her to her knees. There, she reached her right hand into her left sleeve and pulled out what looked like a fabric eye-glass case with a metallic nipple at the top. She rammed the nipple into the center of the cookie, which by then had drilled a hole through the glass window. Black smoke furled around her, so thick that Lia had trouble seeing the brown swatch at the side of the case she had to press. She worked her fingers across the canvas exterior, feeling for the button; when she found it, she pressed twice without feeling the click of the spring beneath her thumb. Finally a third touch solicited a loud *swoosh*, as the compressed gas in the canister inside the bag was released into the car through a hole drilled by the cookie. Still on her knees, Lia reached into her right sleeve and took a cell phone from its elastic holding spot. She flipped the phone open and punched the green button; rather than dialing a number, the phone sent a code to the car's master computer, unlocking the doors. By the time she got up, the device she'd placed on the window had already done its job: all four of the car's occupants were unconscious.

"The security team is out of the vehicles," said a voice in Lia's head. It belonged to Rockman, the runner back in the Art Room monitoring the mission. "You have thirty seconds."

Lia pulled the gas device from the window and kicked it under the car. Opening the rear passenger door, she removed a switchblade from her sleeve and hacked through the seatbelt of the passenger nearest her, then tucked her shoulder down and lifted him from the car. She'd just gotten him to the ground when a beefy set of fingers grabbed her right arm and threw her to the pavement.