

My big brother and Silberstein were sitting at one of the side tables at Hotel Pasila, cups of coffee in front of them and looking sulky, even though I'd informed them I'd be at least fifteen minutes late. I was twenty minutes late.

I ordered myself a coffee, too.

Raoul Silberstein was the chair of the Helsinki Jewish congregation and usually the one to make media statements on any issue related to Jewishness, whether it was the situation in Israel and Palestine, circumcision or the ritual slaughter of animals, *shechita*. Silberstein was intelligent but a little narrow. I, for one, found it hard to imagine anything that would make him laugh.

Eli glanced at his watch and gave me a disapproving look.

"If you're in a hurry, let's get back to this at a better time," I said. "I've got my hands full, too."

Silberstein waved his hand dismissively. He was a thin, hook-nosed man with thick, dark hair. Rumour had it that he dyed it. He was dressed in a grey suit and a dark-blue tie, and a dark-blue poplin coat hung from his chair. Leaning forward as he sat, Silberstein looked somehow predatory.

"If the matter is important, the time must be found."

A cup of coffee appeared in front of me. I looked questioningly at Eli. He in turn looked at Silberstein, who instantly appeared to assume the lead.