

# **Warning Order**

**Grant Stevens, #2**

**by Jamie Fredric,**

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This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictionally. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.



## Chapter 1

**East Berlin – November 1977**

**Day 1**

Without missing a step, a tall, lanky jogger, dressed in a heavy blue sweatsuit, put a gloved hand to his forehead as he shielded his eyes from a glaring searchlight. He waved to the men aboard the patrol boat, consciously making an effort to look directly at them. Over the sound of the idling engine he could faintly hear muffled voices speaking in Russian.

A silhouetted figure, standing on the bow, held a boat hook in one hand as he stared suspiciously at the jogger. He raised his other hand then gave a downward turn. The boat coxswain responded by slowly pulling back the throttle to slow ahead. He cautiously maneuvered the boat closer to the riverbank, relying on the lookout to spot any hazards. The blue-white beam of the searchlight swung from port to starboard across the bow of the Russian harbor craft, lighting up the shoreline. The beacon served as an intimidating prelude to death for those who dared attempt a desperate dash to freedom. As the boat drifted closer to the shoreline, one of the Russian's onboard came more clearly into the jogger's view. It was then he spotted the AK47, menacingly pointing directly at him. All he could hope for was that the Russian wasn't trigger happy.

For several long seconds the glaring light lingered on the lone figure as steadfastly as a magnet adheres to metal. A soldier standing at the bow grunted to the coxswain, "Nyet!" as he moved the light forward, surveying each of the beam's resting places. He continued directing the spotlight along the embankment, while he occasionally issued steering orders to the coxswain. He moved the light in a long arc, searching the riverbank, straining his eyes to focus on each and every detail. The coxswain gradually changed course as he increased speed and steered the boat with its passengers back toward the middle of the Spree River. It didn't take long before it had drifted into the inky blackness beneath the bridge overpass and eventually disappeared from sight.

Passing under a dimly lit street lamp, the jogger raised his arm closer to his face, squinting to read the time on his watch. He lengthened his stride and continued making his way along the path. The sound of his sneakers slapping

against the wet pavement temporarily drowned out the pounding of his heart. He continued along the eight foot wide path, running through the slight hillocks of the public grounds near the riverbank.

The sputter of the boat engine and lapping water against muddy shoreline were sounds that made him reflect back on his family's summer home on the lake. He'd spent so many hours during the quiet summer days and nights contemplating his future, a future he knew would eventually lead him to East Berlin. The training, intelligence briefs, and weapons' classes were all designed to allow him to succeed and survive. But now that all seemed like eons ago.

Living in East Germany he knew that even ordinary sounds or circumstances could suggest danger, betrayal, or even death. The repeated warnings by his instructors to keep a constant vigil echoed in his mind. They pounded home their credo: *Don't let your guard down*. With that, his mind snapped back to the present. He'd made this same jog, along this same path, every night for the past three weeks, whether or not he'd had a long day, whether or not he was dogged tired, no matter what the weather. He never varied his routine. By doing so he'd gone against every grain of what he'd been taught. But as crazy as it had sounded, those were his specific orders, with no other explanation provided. Inwardly, he questioned the orders, but, nonetheless, he obeyed, knowing they were designed to ensure his survival—and too many people were depending on his surviving.

Suddenly, a bone-chilling shiver raced down his spine, commanding his full attention. He gradually pulled up and jogged in place, turning slowly, making a quick scan down the path he'd just traveled. He turned his head slightly, straining to explore his surroundings with his peripheral vision. The noise he had heard wasn't anything he could specifically put his finger on, but it seemed to emanate from the water. As he raised his arms overhead faking a stretch, he refocused on the surface of the river, trying to pick up anything unusual. The Spree, once green in color and clear, was now murky and sullen, carrying on it all manner of leaves, twigs, and other nameless floating debris. The telltale froth of pollution lay in each small, protected eddy.

A sharp crack sent his heart pounding, and, instinctively, he ducked. Cautious about standing up too quickly, he glanced up, immediately breathing a sigh of relief, seeing a rotted tree limb swinging precariously from an aged birch tree. Jesus! You've gotta stop this shit! Keep your head on straight and get your ass back in gear! With a gloved hand, he brushed away rain droplets from his steel-rimmed glasses. But he was still wary, and he shifted his gaze, staring into the deserted, darkened park where he focused on a stand of large birch trees. Only a scattering of golden yellow leaves hung from the branches, valiantly resisting an endless assault by the swirling wind. His natural instinct was telling him to get the hell out of there. But he couldn't. He dared not deviate from the very specific instructions he'd been given.

He resumed his pace, finally reaching the top of a small mound. From there he could see the Monbijou Brucke, a completely unremarkable, stone bridge. The dome shape of its underpass encircled the river like an ominous black hole. Fifty feet of deserted tunnel loomed threateningly ahead of him against the backdrop of a dark gray knoll. Shadows began toying with his imagination. Calm down! He

pulled the hood of his sweatshirt over his knitted wool cap, as he noticed two guards approaching the bridge, staring in his direction.

Thick, black fumes escaping from the twin chimneys of the Dorchmeyer coal factory mingled with the raw night air. An occasional strong gust of wind blew the acrid smell directly into his face. Not completely over his bout with a mild case of the flu, his throat was especially sensitive and every breath felt like he was swallowing a wad of fine grade sandpaper. Paranoia was in full control of him now. He momentarily glanced at a ragged dirt trail strewn with bottle caps and scattered pieces of broken glass bottles. It led up the embankment and through the park to the lighted security of Oranienburger Strasse, which ran parallel to his route. Fighting off an increasing panic attack, he proceeded toward the darkened underpass, trying to keep his senses on full alert and his gait steady.

As usual, pedestrian traffic was practically nil at this end of the city. Patrols were frequent because the area was close to the border separating East from West. Within sight was the foreboding Berlin Wall, made up of two foot thick concrete blocks and built to a height of four meters. An illuminated control area, known as the "death area," ran along the eastern side of the wall. Anyone attempting to escape to the West and caught in this area was shot without question, without warning.

For the jogger, though, most of the time it wasn't the patrols he feared. If anything, they should have given him some sense of comfort, for lack of a better word. This area was a dangerous place for anyone because of the high concentration of drug trafficking. There was always the threat of drug-related crimes. Addicts would kill solely for drug money—and the underpass was a perfect hiding place for them.

Shaking his head, he desperately tried to dislodge the unsettling thoughts crowding his mind, his eyes becoming transfixed on the dark tunnel ahead. The entrance of the tunnel looked like a black void with no way out. He tried to reassure himself that it wasn't any safer up on street level. If that can be called reassurance, he grimly thought. And to top it off, he wasn't armed, making him all the more defenseless, but that was also a specific element of his orders. "You're sure in one bitchin' situation," he gruffly mumbled under his breath.

Another sound disrupted his thoughts, but this was a familiar one. He shot a quick glance in the direction of the vast, windswept space of Alexanderplatz and the clock tower of Rotes Rathaus (Red Town Hall), so named because of the red brick and the current municipal headquarters of East Berlin. Ten o'clock! That one stupid delay, when he stopped to check his surroundings, had thrown off his timing by nearly two minutes. He swore under his breath, *Damn! I'm late*. Up to that point he'd passed each landmark along his route at the precise time, just as instructed.

East German and Russian soldiers always made it a point to keep a wary eye on his movements but otherwise left him to his jogging. This evening was no exception. He reasoned that he'd become something of an oddity to them over the past few weeks, especially after he changed his jogging routine. His original orders stated that he was to be at this location an earlier time, but then those orders were changed, bringing him here at this later hour. The time may have changed, but not his routine. He was to always go just beyond the bridge, almost as far as

Friedrich Strasse, then turn around and head back to the security of his flat. But in the back of his mind stood the irrefutable fact of why he was watched and followed. Did the guards have any clue as to who he really was? Whether or not they knew, they also had their orders—stay close to the subject and report anything unusual. They were told that he, like the others, was too valuable a commodity to lose. With their AK47s slung over their shoulders, two Russians on the bridge peered over the side, observing the jogger moments before he disappeared beneath them.

On the north side of the intersection an electric tram slowed to pick up a passenger, its clanging bell sounding like a small hammer rhythmically striking an anvil. Distracted for just an instant as he approached the darkest section of the underpass, he glanced over his shoulder. His original instinct to make a beeline up to street level had been correct—but it was too late. Before he had time to react, a powerful arm was around his neck. Water trickled down the inside of his sweatshirt. Pressure against a key nerve caused partial paralysis of his throat, preventing him from crying out. His knees started to buckle. He tried struggling against his unknown attacker but was rendered powerless as he was dragged the short distance down the sloping embankment. He was totally off balance when they hit the water. In what seemed like milliseconds, he was completely underwater, feeling the unmistakable power of his assailant. As if being caught in a violent whirlpool, he was being pulled deeper into the depths of the cold Spree River.

CIA operative Rick Lampson, alias Erik Brennar and code named "Badger" had no doubt he was going to die.

## Chapter 2

The Russian guards leaned over the opposite side of the bridge waiting impatiently for Erik Brennar to appear. "Where is he?" First Officer Sokov shouted, as he turned and raced across the road to the other side of the bridge.

"I still don't see him!" First Officer Brosovich yelled, a hint of panic rising in the young officer's voice. Without hesitation, he raced along the sidewalk, jumping down onto the sloping ground, his boots splashing in pools of rainwater and mud holes as he half ran, half slid down the bank. Once at the bottom, he pointed his flashlight toward the tunnel, its beam splitting the night's blackness. "Nothing!" the young Russian yelled. He spun around and let the beam settle on the swirling current. "Look! Here!" he blurted out as he slid further down the muddy incline, stopping himself just before tumbling into the water. His heels sunk into the muck as he counterbalanced his weight and stretched out his AK47 toward the dark object sinking beneath the water. He slid the front sight of the rifle under it, snatching the object from the water. He held up the dripping wool cap for Sokov to see, and then hastily started making a search under the bridge. Something reflected off the flashlight's beam and he ran toward it. "There's no sign of him, only this!" he shouted. The young first officer felt his heart sink deeper into his

5'8" frame. His brown eyes almost began to tear, as he realized he had failed his assignment.

Sukov rushed up to him, his once spit-shined black boots now splattered with mud. He reached for the steel-rimmed glasses Brosovich was holding. One lens had shattered and resembled a spider's web.

Beads of sweat started forming across Sukov's brow. He knew the consequences for letting anyone escape. His shoulders slouched. "This will surely mean a posting to Siberia," he muttered. He glanced over at Brosovich who was nodding in the affirmative while he stared in disbelief at the wool cap.

Almost in unison, the two guards turned their heads toward the Spree. Both of them were stunned by the swiftness of what had happened. Sukov suddenly realized he was wasting time. He immediately sounded the alarm, blowing short bursts into his police whistle. Its high-pitched tone shrieked like a wild banshee.

A puff of white smoke escaped from the stern of the patrol boat as the coxswain gunned the engine. A shower of water erupted from the river as the craft abruptly turned to port and headed back downstream toward the sound of whistles. Its searchlight furiously sliced through the darkness, sweeping back and forth at every noise close to the water. Two soldiers took their positions on port and starboard sides, with their rifles pointed toward the surface of the river. Cold water rushed against the bow, spraying their heavy winter uniforms. They released the safeties on their automatic weapons, seeing the dark tunnel only fifty meters ahead.

Guards began streaming from their posts in various buildings. Others jumped from the back of a passing military truck and lined up along the riverbank. The routine was all too familiar for soldiers assigned to East Berlin. Nearly forty-five East Berliners had already been killed trying to flee the city by one means or other. The Spree River was the second most likely choice for escapees and it continued to be guarded closely.

"Move! Move!" Sukov shouted, frantically motioning soldiers down to the water, some disappearing into the tunnel, as others formed a line on each side along the bank.

### **Beneath the Spree River**

The shock from the cold water made Lampson feel as if he'd been hit by a hammer. Suddenly, a jolt sent tremors up his legs as his heels struck the river bottom. His lungs burned for oxygen. His mind began to slip into unconsciousness. Flailing his arms around him, he frantically tried to grab onto his assailant. A mental picture flashed before his eyes, picturing himself clamped in the steel-like jaws of an alligator that was taking its prey to the muddy bottom, waiting for him to drown.

With a swift motion, his attacker reached around him and shoved something against his mouth. Lampson jerked his head to the side, fearing an attempt to force gas or poison into him. What the hell was the difference? Poison, gas, or drowning—none of the choices seemed to be an acceptable means of dying. But survival finally took hold and he again thrashed about, trying to grab any part of

the menacing force, but he was unsuccessful and his body started growing weaker. Without warning he was spun around and the object was rudely shoved against his mouth again. Tasting the rank river water nearly made him gag, but then his brain began to register. Instinctively, he sucked in air from a scuba mouthpiece. Air! Compressed air!

Suddenly, a face mask was pushed against his face and Lampson finally opened his eyes and blinked through the water-filled mask, trying to reorient himself. He immediately leaned his head back and pressed the top of the face plate with his palm, blowing air through his nose, clearing his mask. At least he managed to remember that much from his training. Within seconds his vision cleared and he found himself looking through hazy visibility into the face of a total stranger.

### **Twenty-one hours earlier**

At 28,000 feet, the youngest full captain in the U.S. Navy, Grant Stevens, stepped out of a Navy Learjet. With his oxygen mask strapped in place, he fell into the nearly airless, minus fifty degree temperature. Reaching down, he pulled a ring that released his RAM air chute as he began a HAHO (High Altitude High Open) jump over West Berlin. He turned himself to the northeast and began guiding his silent descent toward his target ten miles away, east of the Iron Curtain. His LZ was a small farmhouse located about 30 minutes from downtown East Berlin. As he steered the "black cloud" into the wind and passed through twenty thousand feet, he focused on the city lights of Berlin. U-shaped lights ringed the road on the western side of the Brandenburg Gate. He continued in an easterly direction. The cold air numbed his cheeks below his goggles. He released the toggles several different times and shook his hands to return the blood flow to his fingertips. He had to talk to somebody about the damn, worthless gloves.

At thirteen thousand feet he steered more to the left as he began picking up lights from houses that he knew were near his LZ. He'd studied the pictures of previous recon flights that had photographed this area to help him become familiar with it. Three more miles; GPS was right on. He turned off the O2, and removed his face mask, letting it hang from around his neck. Checking to his right, he noticed that the blinking red light on the tail of the Learjet had all but disappeared. He looked at the ground again and noticed a long fence line stretching down the gray-colored, moonlit road. The lights of Berlin were nearly out of view as he lost altitude. He checked his altimeter. Forty-five hundred. Christ! Where the hell were the lights?

As he passed over the top of a small rise at only one thousand feet above the trees, he spotted three parallel lights with a yellow light at the end: the house light, barn light, and the shed. Drifting a little left, he jerked down on the left toggle and the canopy banked accordingly.

Two hundred feet above the ground he spotted two haystacks and a barn that were his targets. Estimating fifty feet to touchdown, he pulled down on both toggles and the air chute began to stall. He put his knees together, slightly bent, pulled down on the toggle a little more, and at ten feet, pulled down hard on both

toggles. While facing into the wind, the "black cloud" above him stalled and he touched down.

He had almost finished gathering in the shroud lines from his chute when someone appeared from behind the shed. Although he wasn't able to distinguish the face clearly in the pitch black night, Grant focused on a very pronounced limp as the man began walking quickly toward him.

"Captain!" Manfred Kronauer said with an outstretched arm. The seventy-three year old impressed Grant with his athletic build. His white shock of thick hair was held down by his boater's cap that was so familiar in this part of Europe. He had a jolly face, one that belied an inner sadness because only a few years before, his son, Hans, had been shot by the Russians as he attempted to escape to the West. Ever since then, Manfred had been known to the West as a "friendly" who operated this safe house.

He pumped Grant's hand feverishly. Grant held tight to the old man's leathery hand as he challenged him with a password. Instantly, Manfred rattled off the response, adding, "You think someone else would dare look like this?"

Grant's face broke out in a grin. "Nah, just like to keep you on your toes."

The old man's hearty laugh sliced through an uncanny silence. He turned and began plodding toward the shed, his big boots leaving imprints in the soil. "Now, come. I have some food waiting for you."

Grant followed, as he thought it was good to see the old man again. Instinctively, he swiveled his head left and right, checking his surroundings.

Manfred pushed open the wooden door made of vertical planks with three support boards forming a Z on the inside. Grant preceded him into the shed, while Manfred checked the barnyard and fence line before entering behind him. The lower edge of the door scraped across soft, dark soil as he closed it.

Cobwebs clung to the upper corners of the shed's pitched roof timbers. Rakes, shovels, and other farming implements leaned against one corner of the room. A large, heavy grinding wheel rested in the middle of the barely eight foot square room. The old German struck a match and lit a kerosene lamp sitting on a workbench scattered with tools. Even though an old canvas drop cloth had been hung over the window to prevent light from escaping, he adjusted the lamp's flame till the wick barely glowed.

Grant piled the nylon chute on the workbench before dragging the grinding wheel across the dirt. He bent down on one knee and brushed away some of the dirt, revealing a small rusted O-ring embedded in the slat of wood. He pulled up on the trapdoor. The room below not only served as a safe place, but also contained basic communication equipment, the German's means for 'talking' to his Western contacts.

Manfred, carrying the kerosene lamp, watched as Grant stared down into a ghostly murkiness. "Do you wish for me to go down first?"

"Did you make a sweep for any unfriendlies that might be lurking about?" Grant responded with a smile as he reached for the lamp.

"Swept clean, my young friend!"

Backing down the narrow, flat rungs of the wooden ladder, Grant hung the lamp from a hook suspended from a beam. "Come on down, Manfred. I'll get my gear."



For nearly eighteen hours Grant stayed in the makeshift room. The two discussed plans for getting him to his departure point before he would even consider taking a few hours rest. As they talked, Grant snacked on some fresh bread and churned butter, and a few links of bratwurst. Times were tough in the East but Manfred always provided the essentials.

As soon as it was dark, the two men drove along a deserted country road. Manfred dropped Grant off at a secluded spot. It was at the edge of a pine tree forest within sight of the Spree River. Already wearing his wetsuit, Grant slid off the truck seat then closed the door as quietly as he could. He swept the surrounding area with eagle eyes. The only sounds he heard were the soft rustling of the pines, and behind him, towards the south, was the faint whistle of a freight train.

Manfred rolled down the window and leaned his arm on the edge as Grant approached. His cheerful attitude hid the genuine concern that he felt for this young man and his sensitivity to his position here in the East. "I wish I could help further, Captain, but I'm afraid you are on your own from here."

"You've done enough, my friend. I hope you know that. Now, you'd better get outta here." Grant squeezed the old man's arm with a strong, friendly grip, his appreciation and regard for Manfred unmistakable. The old German's smile broadened and an eruption of facial wrinkles almost obliterated his eyes as he waved then drove off.

### **East Berlin – Beneath the Spree River**

Creases formed at the corners of Grant's brown eyes, a smile hidden behind the black rubber mouthpiece. He winked, then held his hand in front of Lampson's face mask, giving him a thumb's up. Lampson was torn between throwing his arms around this stranger—his rescuer—or smashing in his face for scaring the living shit out of him. Weak and still trembling, he opted for replying with an *okay* sign.

For five weeks "Badger" had waited for the Company to extract him from East Berlin, never knowing how or exactly when it would happen because security was the driving force. Stevens had designed a way that made Lampson's rear end pucker to the extent that he knew it would take weeks before he'd ever find the seat of his sweatpants. But Grant Stevens was an expert in this type of operation, whenever the strategy called for inflicting complete, instant helplessness, facilitating this kind of snatch.

Realizing that the cold water would soon become a factor since Lampson wasn't wearing a wetsuit, Grant worked quickly in securing the extra Draeger rig's straps around the agent's chest. The bubbleless Draeger (a rebreathing apparatus) would make it impossible for the East Germans or Russians to track them from the surface. But the Navy SEAL was fully aware that there'd be unfriendly divers hitting the water any time—if they hadn't already.

Grant motioned for Lampson to follow him and both Americans began stroking hard, staying close to the bottom. They had nearly 500 yards of swimming ahead of them. For Grant, that wouldn't be a problem... Lampson was another matter.

And, they still had to navigate through barbed wire strung above and below the river. But this was the fastest and shortest way for them to reach the West, and Grant knew he could count on his partner waiting on the other side. He could only hope they'd be able to reach the border before any hostile welcoming committee blocked their escape.

Lampson's arms and legs ached. His bout with the flu had sapped more of his strength than he realized. His swimming ability wasn't anywhere near Grant's and Grant wasn't about to let up. The Navy SEAL's powerful legs propelled him effortlessly through the water like a barracuda pursuing its prey, almost as if he were born to it.

Now, Lampson started to panic again as Grant's black, wetsuited form began to disappear into the darkness. Then he felt the jerk of the buddy line that was attached to his shoulder strap. He kicked as hard as he could, but there wasn't any doubt he was running out of steam. The strain on the buddy line was constant. Being dragged through the water was making him feel guilty for having to let Grant do the lion's share of the swimming. His life was completely in Grant's hands.

Totally disoriented, he had no idea where they were heading or what was in store. He only knew that it was impossible for them to surface, considering the guards were undoubtedly swarming both sides of the riverbank and overpasses, waiting for them with their firearms locked and loaded.

Lampson's breathing was heavy, making him consume too much of the precious oxygen. He wanted to scream out to Grant as he felt a growing fear tying knots in his stomach. He reminded himself to breathe slower! Slower! His natural negative buoyancy wasn't helping matters either, as his belly kept brushing against debris on the bottom. Suddenly, a heavy tree limb on the river bottom and directly in his path caught on his air hose, ripping the mouthpiece away. He pulled back, jerking the buddy line. Definitely out of his element, Lampson looked upward, knowing he wouldn't have a prayer on the surface.

Grant immediately felt the jerking on the line and swam back. Grabbing hold of Lampson's shoulder, he crammed the mouthpiece back into Lampson's mouth and motioned for him to settle down. Lampson responded with a nod just as Grant grabbed the line and immediately started stroking through the water. The agent felt like a defenseless, squirming fish being unceremoniously reeled in by an expert fisherman.

After what seemed like hours to Lampson, Grant finally stopped, got his attention, and pointed ahead of them as he quickly undid the buddy line. The extent of their visibility was barely ten feet. Lampson had to squint to make his eyes focus on a labyrinth of hazardous barbed wire strung across the river. Rusted and nearly invisible in the darkness, it completely blocked their path from the surface all the way to the riverbed. Lampson glanced down, focusing on the wire embedded into the river bottom, shaking his head in disbelief, wondering how the hell they were going to swim through the tangled mess.

Grant signaled for him to stay where he was, then pointed up to the surface at a dim glow filtering across their vision. Beams from flashlights and search lights circled in a kaleidoscope fashion. Grant knew they didn't have much time so he had to act fast. The East Germans and Russians were certainly going to send

down their own divers or start throwing concussion grenades, and his bet was on divers—they wanted Lampson back in one piece—and he'd just end up being an added bonus.

He shot a quick glance down river, then swam up close to the wire, pulled a small flashlight from his belt and began signaling. Instantly, a faint light on the other side began blinking back in response. He glanced at his diving watch then immediately swam back to Lampson.

Grabbing hold of the agent's shoulder, he pulled him down, rudely shoving him face first into the muddy bottom. Lampson went as limp as a rag doll, nearly losing the mouthpiece. He didn't have a clue what the hell was going on. And from what had happened so far, he really didn't want to know.

Grant took one last, quick look to make sure they still weren't being followed. Then, he shielded Lampson's body with his own, as his mind thought, Come on, Joe! Hit it!

A muffled crack carried across the riverbed. Silt and debris shot over them in what seemed like slow motion. Lampson's eyes went to the size of saucers, staring into nothing but mud. His mind screamed, None of this shit was in my contract!

The two Americans were tossed about slightly by the shock waves in the churned up water. Bits and pieces of rotted leaves and debris stuck in the band of Lampson's face mask. Not even hesitating long enough for the water to clear, Grant grabbed Lampson by the arm and hauled him up toward the mangled section of barbed wire.

A familiar sound of escaping bubbles from scuba rigs caught Grant's attention. As he had feared, coming straight at them were two divers. No second guesses here—they were, without a doubt, very unfriendly divers, intent on preventing this attempted escape. Russkie divers! Grant yanked a knife from his leg strap. The knife, a Navy MK1, had seen him through many CQB's (close quarter battles). Keeping his body between Lampson and the Russians, he gave the agent a shove forward toward a hole in the barbed wire conveniently made by Joe Adler with a wrap of det cord. The core of detonating cord, about the size of pencil lead, is a very high explosive called PETN. Wrapped around the explosive are layers of cotton fabric, rayon, and asphalt with a dark green, polyethylene cover. Det cord, only one quarter inch in diameter, burns at a rate of nearly twenty-six thousand feet per second.

Pointing rapidly toward the opening, Grant gestured for Lampson to swim through and gave him one last, forceful shove before turning around, preparing to meet the approaching divers head-on.

Lampson's sleeve caught on the jagged barbed wire, but this time he wouldn't let anything stop him. There wasn't anything he could do to help this Navy diver sent to rescue him. It was imperative that he get himself to the West. He knew his rescuer was aware of that, too.

A wetsuited figure, appearing out of the darkness, swam up to Lampson, grabbed him and pulled him the few remaining feet through the obtrusive wire to safety and freedom.

Joe Adler, Grant's long-time friend, gave Lampson the okay sign, checking to see if he was all right, then gestured for him to surface and swim toward the distant riverbank.

Once Lampson was out of sight, Adler ripped his diving knife from his ankle scabbard then turned around and swam through the opening in the barbed wire and into Communist territory. The hell with orders! Adler wasn't one to normally sit back and let Grant have all the fun... and he wasn't about to start now.

### **West Berlin – Embankment of the Spree**

Rain started falling steadily, the large droplets sounding like rubber bands snapping against paper as they bounced off fallen leaves. The temperature continued slipping, already closing in on thirty-seven degrees.

The American Embassy's attaché, Pete Bradley, tried desperately to keep Lampson shielded with an umbrella after draping a wool blanket across his shoulders. Water dripped from the brim of Bradley's hounds tooth hat as he held the black umbrella high above, stretching to cover the 6'3" Lampson. "Mr. Lampson, you sure you wouldn't want to wait in the car?" Lampson didn't answer. He was too busy concentrating on the water, waiting for the two divers. "Sir, there's nothing you can do for..."

"Shut the hell up! Just leave me alone. If you can't handle the weather, maybe you'd better go wait in the damn car!"

"Sure... whatever you say. Let me know if you want anything." Somewhat befuddled by the outburst, Bradley backed away. He tramped across the grass, mumbling, "Screw you."

Several moments passed. Lampson continued staring into the Spree River, then diverted his gaze toward East Berlin. Military jeeps and canvas covered trucks were strung out along the roadway. German shepherd guard dogs, caught up in the frenzy, strained against their leashes, dragging their handlers. Chills ran up and down his spine as he listened to the fierce barking of the agitated animals. Bright searchlights, moving in criss-crossing patterns, were aimed on the river. An occasional whistle blared, voices echoed, orders shouted. But the main action wasn't happening along the shoreline. A battle for life or death was taking place underwater.

Lampson shook his head, amazed he was on friendly soil again, but a nagging feeling in his stomach wouldn't quit. As he waited, his thoughts strayed to a flashback of years and circumstances that brought him to this very moment.

\* \* \* \* \*

He spent the first twelve years of his life as an Army brat. In 1951 his father was assigned to the Naval Communications Station at Bremerhaven, Germany, as the Army Security Company's liaison officer. Instead of living in base housing, Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Lampson opted to live in town, thereby exposing his eight-year old son to the culture and language of his ancestors. As is usually the case with children, Rick picked up the language quickly, speaking it almost fluently within a matter of months. For most of the local people it was easy to forget the blond, blue eyed child was an American.

Colonel Lampson retired after his tour with the Naval Security Group. Upon returning to the United States, the family settled in the western part of Virginia in

the Shenandoah Valley. The Colonel humored himself as a freelance consultant with the National Security Agency.

Family summers were spent at Cave Mountain Lake. Those were special days and nights for Rick. He would listen to his father's fictional tales of intrigue and secret goings-on. With every new story, Rick swore eternal silence if his father would just tell him of his exploits behind the high electric fences and vaulted rooms.

The Colonel would spin tales for Rick that were composed of partial facts, but for the most part were large doses of imagination. Rick would hang on every word and later, as he lay in bed, he would daydream about his father's exploits and place himself into the glamorous spy adventures. He knew what his destiny would be even at his young age. He would be his father's son.

Immediately after graduating college with a masters' degree in biochemistry, Lampson was recruited by the CIA. Besides his expertise in biochemistry, he was an expert chess player, able to remember sixty moves.

The Company was branching out in all directions during those years. They needed bright, young people to fill hundreds of real and imagined vacancies with the Langley, Virginia, field office and headquarters in Washington, D.C.

During the early days of his employment, Rick worked in the secret labs hidden away in the hills surrounding Camp A.P. Hill and Camp Perry in Virginia. Poisons, antidotes and a cornucopia of other half-baked ideas were his daily fare. The Cold War paranoia poured millions of dollars into any project the *Alphabet Soup* groups could dream up.

During 1974, which proved to be a banner year for Rick and his employer, reliable intelligence sources started coming out of East Germany that gave strong evidence the Germans were experimenting with new types of drugs and biological warfare. In particular, a list of lethal virus strains and other equally potent extracts of Monkey Virus "B", anthrax, and nerve agents were all known to be a part of their experiments. Agents had penetrated the production sites with amazing results. Recruiting East German spies became an easy task. Being aware of the treachery of the ruling class within their own country, East Germans were ready to assist the other side at the drop of a hat. Knowing where and whom to recruit kept the U.S. intelligence community out of hot water.

Rick's personal background could not have been any more perfect. He found himself a part of a plan to steal—or at least analyze—the materials the Company was concerned about. He had the credentials and soon found himself on his way to Camp Perry, known as "The Farm" to the CIA, and the field agents' training course. He'd join other students, known as "career trainees" for the eighteen-week course.

Lampson's cover was identified as a NOC, non-official cover, meaning he wouldn't have the benefit of diplomatic immunity should he be discovered. He was supplied with precise, fake identity papers, and items such as receipts and ticket stubs, known as pocket litter. Then, during the winter of 1975, Lampson, carrying only one suitcase, was smuggled into East Germany, thereby officially becoming Professor Eric Brennar.

\* \* \* \* \*

Instantly refocusing his thoughts, Lampson resumed his search up and down the embankment, trying to penetrate the night's blackness. Shaking uncontrollably, he pulled the wet, thin woolen blanket tighter around him, for all the good it was doing. He waited anxiously by the river's edge, ignoring the water lapping against his soggy sneakers. His body was chilled through to the bone. He trembled mostly from the cold, but a contributing factor was definitely from one helluva rough evening. Now he could only imagine what was happening beneath the surface of the river on the side of East Berlin.

Then something caught his eye and he began walking quickly along the riverbank. The sparse brown grass was slick and flattened, making him nearly lose his balance as he tried maneuvering down the slope. His eyes fixed on what appeared to be two black, unearthly objects rising languidly from the depths. Two human forms emerged, making their way up the embankment.

Lampson rushed up to both divers, first grabbing Grant's hand and then Adler's, shaking them vigorously. A shit-eating grin covered his face and he finally let out a relieved laugh. "Christ, I don't know who the hell you two are, but all I can say is thanks! I owe you big time!"

Grant and Adler pulled off their face masks, both of them grinning. Grant spoke up first. "We're Navy, Mr. Lampson. I'm Grant Stevens, and this is Joe Adler. Glad we could help."

"You're SEALs, right?" Lampson nodded his head, as if answering his own question.

"Something like that, sir," Grant responded.

Lampson seemed to be on a high now. "Damn! That was great! Just great! But I've gotta tell you, Grant, you sure as hell have a knack for scaring the living shit out of somebody!"

"Sorry, sir, but it was nec..."

"No, no. No need to apologize, believe me. You got me out like you were supposed to, didn't you? And in one piece!"

"That's why we get paid the big bucks," Adler replied, as he snapped his swim fins into his thigh straps. He looked sideways at Grant who had pulled off his wetsuit hood. "You okay, Skipper?" he asked, seeing a wince cross Grant's face.

"Not a problem, Joe." A knife wielded by one of the Russian's had sliced through his wetsuit, leaving a two-inch gash in his left forearm, just above his wrist. Blood trickled down the back of his hand.

Joe voiced his concern. "Hey, Skipper, we need to get you to sickbay. That water was pretty nasty."

"Yeah, might need a stitch or two. You want to sew me up?"

"No sweat. I brought a medical kit. It's in the trunk of the limo. I've got some saline but don't have enough sterile dressing."

"Maybe a couple of butterflies and some antiseptic will hold me till we can get back to the Embassy."

Adler nodded. "Roger that, sir."

Grant smoothed back some wet strands of brown hair from his forehead, then with face mask and swim fins in tow, he started up the knoll toward the black limo. "You can do it while we're underway. We've gotta get our special delivery

package to the Embassy." He turned to Lampson and winked. "Expect Matt Wharton's real anxious to talk to you."

Lampson followed close behind, hardly hearing Grant, as he thought, Christ! What a night! What a night!

He shot a glance over his shoulder, trying to take a quick count of the Eastern Block guards who continued to stare at him under the perimeter lights above the barbed wire.

Grant and Adler tossed their gear into the trunk, then Adler grabbed the medical kit. Grant smiled as he turned to his good friend. "Are you going to make it your mission in life to keep pulling my *bacon* out of the fire?"

"Why hell, Captain, I don't have any idea what you're talking about."

As Grant was getting into the car, he looked back at the river and remembered his SEAL training days when Chief Mallory said often, "It's your job to make sure the other poor bastards die for their country." Another mission accomplished! he smiled to himself.

## Chapter 3

### West Berlin – U.S. Embassy

The CIA's stocky-framed bureau chief had been pacing back and forth in front of his office window for at least fifteen minutes. His eyes were constantly being drawn to the clock hanging above his door, as he waited and anticipated the exact minute when a Navy diver was scheduled to make his move. Cigarette smoke drifted upward as he nervously rolled the Marlboro between his fingers, a half inch long gray ash hanging precariously from the tip. He did an about-face and took long, slow strides across worn, gray vinyl tiles to the opposite side of the room. Wisps of steam leaked from the spout of a percolator coffeepot sitting on the top of a stainless steel credenza. The coffee smell was strong. He lifted the pot and shook it around hearing only a splatter and decided to pull the plug from the wall socket. Just as well. With five cups in him, he'd have to sleep standing up in front of the head. He chuckled to himself.

He flicked the cigarette ash into his palm, then walked over to his desk and dumped it into the ashtray, trying to ignore an array of papers strewn across the green blotter. A folded copy of the military's newspaper Stars and Stripes laid at an angle across his nameplate, where gold letters spelled out "Matt Wharton." The in and out plastic desk trays contained sizable stacks of manila folders. He was turning into a goddamn paper pusher. Time to retire, Matt old boy, he told himself.

A combined thirty-five years with the Justice Department and the CIA had taken him on assignments around the world. There'd been good assignments and not-so-good assignments. They'd cost him two marriages, but he'd be the first to admit that he wasn't an easy person to live with. His ex-wives and three kids could attest to that.

He'd just made up his mind to make a quick dash to the men's room when the sound of a car engine distracted him. He stepped close to the window, and using the edge of one hand, rubbed away condensation from one of the panes. A black Lincoln Continental was just coming to a stop in front of the security fence. The driver, Pete Bradley, got out and walked up to the gate. The bureau chief watched the proceedings from his bird's eye view from two stories above. Earlier in the day he had personally talked with the Embassy's Marine Sergeant Major and explained that four men would be returning later that night, one of whom would not have any identification papers.

The Marine guard on duty unlocked the gate and came around for a one-on-one inspection. Satisfied, he pushed open the iron gate and waved the Lincoln through. Bradley parked parallel to the marble steps leading to the Embassy's main entrance. All four car doors opened as if on cue and four men emerged. After shaking hands all around, they entered the building.

Wharton flicked an ash into the ceramic ashtray on the edge of his desk. He took a final deep drag, then crushed the butt into the bottom of the stained ashtray. There was a solid rapping on the heavy wooden door and he responded, "Come in! Come in!"

Lampson entered alone, his blond hair disheveled from being towel dried. He smiled broadly. "Hi, Matt!"

"Rick! Jesus, it's good to have you back!" He rushed toward Lampson with an outstretched arm.

With a warm, dry blanket now draping his shoulders, Lampson reached for Wharton's hand. "Thanks, Matt. After two years, this'll take some getting used to. Just smack me, though, if I start automatically conversing in German!"

"Don't worry about that," Wharton smiled and patted Lampson's shoulder. He backed up and reached for his pack of cigarettes, extending them toward Lampson, then handed him a matchbook. "We're very anxious to hear what you've got to say, Rick, but you've been through hell tonight. Take some time to shower and change into dry clothes. There's a fresh set of sweats waiting for you at the Hotel Berliner. I personally reserved a room for you."

"That hot shower sure as hell sounds good." Lampson glanced down momentarily, noticing bits of mud that had fallen from his shoes. He looked up into Wharton's face, his voice still sounding bewildered. "If it wasn't for Stevens and Adler, we wouldn't be talking now. But you already know that."

Wharton nodded several times, smiling. "They're just about the best we've got in the *snatch* business. Both of them are stationed at NIS (Naval Investigative Service), working for Admiral Torrinson." He puffed on the cigarette, exhaling a steady stream of white smoke. "I'm just sorry we didn't make this happen sooner, Rick."

"Hey, the extra time gave me a chance to whip myself into shape. The daily exercise did me good. As it was, I had a helluva time trying to keep up with Stevens." Lampson smiled weakly, completely exhausted.

Wharton walked behind his desk, then reached underneath, pressing a black button. Within seconds, Bradley walked in. "Pete, see that Rick gets over to the hotel, then make arrangements to pick him up after he's had some time to unwind. Oh, the room's registered in my name." He shook Lampson's hand again.



"Go ahead, Rick." He had second thoughts about dragging Lampson back that night and grabbed the agent's arm. "Look, I really need you back here as soon as possible. We've got some serious discussions ahead of us, and Washington's ready to shit cows. But how about you come in, let's say, at ten o'clock tomorrow morning. You've had a rough night. Okay?"

Lampson nodded. "Sounds good to me." He left with Bradley.

## **Hotel Berliner**

Located around the corner from Kurfursten Strasse and across from Wittenbergplatz stood the stately Hotel Berliner. The six-story structure had been built shortly after World War II in the Gothic style. It had remained a frequent meeting place for diplomats and dignitaries.

The need for security went beyond the ordinary during the time of the Cold War. Every room was swept for hidden devices on a daily basis, sometimes more often. Security cameras were placed throughout the lobby, around the outside perimeter of the building, and always activated just before and during meetings. Paranoia was the driving force that made fools of many on both sides of the Iron Curtain.

The last thing on Rick Lampson's mind was hidden devices as he dragged his fatigued, aching body into the shower. Twenty minutes later, he emerged from behind the white, rubberized shower curtain. The entire bathroom had been turned into a sauna by the hot steam. He wrapped the thick, white bath towel around his waist then grabbed a face towel from a towel ring and rubbed off the haze that coated the mirror. A pale, tired face looked into the mirror through ice blue eyes. He ran his hand across the dark blond stubble on his chin. He was feeling shitty and look like death warmed over. He rested both hands on the curved rim of the white china pedestal sink.

Staring at himself in the mirror, he reviewed a complicated formula for a new, and potentially deadly, mind-altering drug, something he'd done for what seemed like every waking moment over the past several months. Every calculation was inscribed on his brain, giving him the ability to see it word for word as if reading directly from a technical journal, his own private journal.

Breathing a long, heavy sigh, he opened the cabinet, hoping to find some Listerine. An unpleasant taste of river water lingered in his mouth. Wharton usually saw to it that a military-type ditty bag, fondly known as a "douche kit," was provided to the agents. Lampson smiled with the thought, but that smile was quickly replaced by a sullen, quizzical stare. His eyes focused on a slip of plain white note paper hanging by a piece of tape from the middle shelf. Curious, he leaned closer, reading the words hand printed in German: "*Their lives are in your hands, Herr Brennar.*"

He ripped the paper from the shelf with a trembling hand, feeling the smooth surface of a photograph taped behind it. He turned the paper over. The black and white photo seemed to come alive in his hand. Staring straight into the camera lens were the frightened faces of twin two-year old boys, his illegitimate sons. He squeezed his eyes shut. "Oh, Christ! No!"

## Chapter 4

### Hotel Berliner – Day 2

Lampson had been totally immersed in his work and assignment, ignorant for thinking they wouldn't somehow find out sooner or later about the children, Franz and Josef. He never expected this... but he should have, knowing full well the extent of the powers that were in control and what was at stake. His arms hung by his sides, the photo gripped in his hand.

Walking somewhat unsteadily, he wandered into the bedroom and slumped down on the edge of the bed. His mind slowly cleared and he glanced again at the photo as he wondered, Where's Greta?

Perspiration formed at his brow, as he feared the worst. He stared at the close-up of the twins with their tousled blond hair and smudged faces. But then he finally noticed someone standing behind them with a hand resting on each of the boys' small shoulders. The tip of the man's right index finger was missing. So who had kidnapped his sons? And who would be looking for him? As he stood, his thirty-five year old body seemed to react like one consumed with pain. He took hesitant steps toward the middle of the bedroom. His temples throbbed. The room felt as if it were closing in around him. He ran a sweating hand over the top of his hair. "What the hell am I gonna do?"

Here was Rick Lampson, holding the life of thousands of Russian strangers in his hands, with the threat of causing all out war. But the overlying factor suddenly had to do with two little boys.

\* \* \* \* \*

The rain had finally let up. Breaking clouds passed in front of a brilliant moon, casting a pattern of intermittent pale yellow through the hotel window. A chilling silence pervaded the room. Rick lay on the bed, his arms folded behind his head, his eyes wide open and staring blankly at the ceiling. Who could have done this? He bolted upright when he heard the faint sound of the bell tower chiming five o'clock. He slid his legs over the edge of the bed, then stood and walked slowly to the window. There were only five hours left before he was to meet with Wharton, five hours to decide whether to debrief the Company on the formula and the dissidents' plans—or go back to the other side and possibly face death.

His mind kept spinning. But even if he wanted to, how the hell could he get back into East Berlin? And once he did, who could guarantee that he'd be kept alive? They knew who he was now. Shit! But how... how did they find out? Who put the damn note in the bathroom? A mole? An Eastern agent? Who in the hell did it?

He paced in front of the window with his eyes lowered, looking down at his bare feet as he padded across the carpeted floor. He couldn't trust the East Germans, and he suddenly realized... he couldn't trust the CIA. He wondered if his "shadow" was sleeping. There wasn't any doubt Wharton had placed another agent in the

hotel to keep tabs on him. If the agent knew he was making a run to the East, he'd probably zap him without a second thought.

He turned quickly and rushed to the nightstand, nearly knocking over the brass lamp as he reached for the phone. He lifted the receiver and dialed the hotel switchboard.

"Guten morgen," a female voice responded pleasantly.

"This is Rick Lampson in Room 312. Could you tell me if there's a Captain Grant Stevens staying at the hotel?" He spoke in English, skipping the formalities.

"Just a moment, please." Sylvia Erdmann switched her response to impeccable English. Several seconds later, she returned. "Yes, there is a Captain Stevens in Room 228. Shall I ring his room for you?"

"Yes, yes, please."

Grant answered on the second ring, sounding slightly out of breath. "Stevens."

"Captain Stevens? This is Rick Lampson. Sorry to ring you this early."

"No problem, sir, just working on some sit-ups. Appreciate the interruption," he laughed. "What can I do for you?"

"Captain, can we talk?"

Grant rubbed a bath towel across his forehead, wiping away beads of sweat, then he sat on the arm of a blue upholstered wing chair. Dark patches of perspiration appeared down the front of his green fatigue T-shirt. "Sure. I'm listening."

"Could we meet for breakfast in the hotel's roof restaurant? Would that be all right?"

Grant asked with some concern, "Are you okay, sir?"

"Sure. I'm fine. Just need to chat."

Grant glanced at his watch, thinking: Something heavy must be happening.

"The restaurant opens at 0600, sir. Does 0615 sound okay?"

"Meet you then."

Grant hung up, draped the towel over the back of his neck, and then immediately called Adler. "Joe, something's going on with Lampson."

"How so, sir?"

Grant relayed his conversation with Lampson, then added, "Look, maybe you'd better do a *tail-end Charlie* for me, just in case. Be at the restaurant on the top floor at 0600. I'm supposed to meet up with Lampson about 15 minutes later. And, Joe, bring the *puppy*." He referred to the special issue, silenced Colt .45 used by covert operators. It was known as a "hushpuppy."

That's all he had to tell Adler, who knew Grant wanted him to hang close and keep his eyes and ears open. By the time Grant and Lampson arrived, Adler would already know every waiter, waitress, busboy, and cook.

The restaurant's maître'd, Ernst Zimmer, drew back the heavy, blue velvet drapes hanging from brass rods, exposing two large doors leading to the balcony. As he glanced down at the lights of West Berlin, he tugged lightly on his coat sleeves then adjusted his black bow tie. With the night's blackness as a backdrop, the glass doors simulated grand mirrors, and he gave himself the once-over before resuming his duties. He scanned the restaurant one more time, ensuring everything was in impeccable order. Seeing an older couple waiting by the

reservation station, he nodded then motioned for them to follow him to a table near the window.

Grant stood just outside the restaurant's entrance in his dress blues uniform, his cap tucked under his left arm. He was prepared to fly back to the States with Adler later that morning. Adler was already seated at a table in the corner opposite the entrance. He appeared to pay no mind to anyone entering the restaurant.

Grant extended his hand as Lampson walked up to him. "Morning, sir."

Lampson eyed the ribbons on Grant's uniform. Five medals for valor, two purple hearts. He failed to identify the remainder. "Captain, I appreciate your seeing me. And please call me Rick. By the way, how's the arm?"

"Dr. Adler knows his stuff," he laughed. "Thanks for asking." Grant immediately detected the shakiness in Lampson's voice but decided to hold off on any comment.

The maître'd approached them. Lampson requested a table in the far corner that would offer them more privacy. Once seated, both men ordered only coffee. Grant quickly scanned the ceiling above the table, then lifted the white napkin, intentionally knocking a spoon onto the floor. As he bent over to pick it up, he shot a quick glance under the table. It wasn't likely there'd be any hidden devices, but an extra gram of caution wouldn't hurt.

Lampson reached into his pocket and withdrew the note, sliding it across the table to Grant. He spoke in a hushed voice, still wary of his surroundings. "This was taped to the inside of the medicine cabinet in my room."

Grant read it, then looked at the photograph Lampson passed to him. He instinctively thought to himself: How the hell did they get this note into his room so fast?

"They're my sons, Captain." Grant looked at him completely expressionless. Lampson's voice trailed off. "I feel as if I've handed them over on a silver platter from being so stupid in thinking no one would find out." He shook his head slowly. "I should've gotten them out, but Greta..."

Grant put the photograph face down on the table. His mind was already racing at full throttle. "You have a picture of her?"

With sadness in his voice, Lampson responded, "Regrettably, no. We couldn't risk it being found in case my things were rifled through."

"Understood. Now, what's her last name?"

"Verner," Lampson answered, then spelled it out.

"Okay, Rick, why don't you start from the beginning?"

Lampson nodded. He placed his fingertips on the photo, sliding it closer to him. "Greta and I met at the university. We'd occasionally have lunch or dinner together in public, but never met at either one of our apartments. Her uncle had a place on the outskirts of the city with a small cottage at the back portion of the property, totally secluded. Then one day," Lampson continued, "she disappeared. She just up and left her job, her flat... and me."

No one had to tell Grant that Lampson wasn't a hard-core agent. The man was truly shaken. He couldn't hide the bewilderment he was feeling from the incident. Grant pushed the half-filled coffee cup further from him, then rested his arms on the table. Out of the corner of his eye he saw Adler holding his coffee cup in his

left hand. Grant knew that was the all-clear signal. Then he refocused his full attention on the story Lampson was unfolding.

Lampson sat back against the brown leather chair. "About eight months later, out of the blue, she called and asked me to meet her at her uncle's place. I knew something was wrong right away, but she refused to tell me anything over the phone." He picked up the photo, staring at the little faces.

"Why didn't she let you know right from the beginning about her pregnancy?" Grant finally asked.

"Old world thinking, Captain. It meant embarrassment and disgrace for herself, but she was thinking mostly of her family. She had nowhere to go but her uncle's. The babies were born there, so he was kind enough to let them stay in the cottage." He lowered his head, then slowly raised it and looked directly at Grant. "But it was old world thinking on my part, too. They're all my responsibility, but more than that... I love them. I need to get all of them out."

Grant swirled the coffee around in the cup, then took a swallow of the warm brew. "You were planning to go back after the debriefing, weren't you?" Lampson looked away, unable to bring himself to answer. "Now you want my help, right?"

"I don't know who else to turn to, Captain. Right now, you're the only one I can trust, considering the number of individuals that could have planted that note. I mean... shit! My extraction from the East was supposed to be a top secret operation."

Grant's brown eyes seemed to bore right through Lampson, and in a low, deep voice he said, "I've got some ears in D.C., but I think that before I commit to *grabbing my ankles*, I'd better check with my boss. You do understand, right?" Lampson nodded his response. "Now, you're going to have to answer some questions. Why did word come down to extract you? What was your debriefing with Wharton going to cover?"

Lampson's chest heaved, as if he were trying to rid it of a huge weight. He knew that security was about to be thrown right out the window. "I don't even know if you're aware of why I was sent in."

"Why don't you fill me in?"

"Our intelligence reported that the East German military was working on a new virus, a strain of Monkey Virus B that's been mutated. It's so potent that half a pint would eliminate the population of New York City in twenty-four hours."

Grant leaned closer. "What about the drug, Rick?"

"Shit! You seem to be one step ahead of me, Captain. Who's your source?" One look at Grant's expression and Lampson knew it had been foolish to even ask. "But you're right. That's the worry... never mind the virus. The drug, SD-7, is mind-altering in every sense of the word. Its base is a derivative of LSD, but much more powerful. There was a helluva lot of mixing and matching. Depending on the dose, one could expect anything from complete lethargy, to insanity, to death."

"I get the picture," Grant said grimly. "I assume they tested their new *tools*?"

Lampson paled. "We tested on rats and mice, but..." He lowered his head momentarily before looking up. "It was never confirmed to us, but we knew they randomly chose political prisoners, and even drug addicts they'd find in the streets."

"You can't feel guilty about that, Rick. Now, why don't you pick up from your orders."

"The Company checked out several professors at Humboldt Universitat at Berlin. I was instructed to make contact with Herman Schmitt, head of the law faculty. Schmitt had been a newly appointed judge in Berlin when the Russians began flooding the courts with their own partisan personnel. He was allowed a chair at the university where he became involved with Dr. Josef Von Wenzel who worked in the university's chemistry department.

"Dr. Von Wenzel had been ordered to develop deadly strains of mutant viruses and agents from other known biological and nerve agents. He sought out Schmitt to explore the legal and Geneva Convention positions as to the work he had been ordered to undertake. Through Schmitt, word was leaked to the U.S. intelligence community." Lampson weakly smiled. "I'm that result. The West knew Schmitt had a strong desire to see Germany reunited, and he was in a perfect position to assist in getting me hired. I already had papers prepared in advance, you know, like resumes and recommendations. So, I followed him for a week or so trying to find out what he did in his spare time. The man has a penchant for art and architecture of the ancient world. Every day he'd go to the Pergamon Museum. That's where I struck up a conversation, standing by the Ishtar Gate from Babylon.

"After several meetings and dinners, he took me under his wing, and it was mostly by his word alone that got me hired as a biochemistry professor. Five months later, because of my background and reputation at the university, plus a few good words from Schmitt, I was recruited by the military command to assist in bringing the virus and drug to fruition."

Grant made a mental note to run an intel check on Schmitt anyway, and one on Greta Verner. Then he said, "Look, I know that the Russians had rounded up German scientists to work in Soviet industries. The ones working with you at the military lab must be the cream of the crop."

"You're right. There were five: Rolf Ehrdmann, Franz Wilstoff, Wilhelm Freidling, Josef Von Wenzel and Fredric Heisen."

"Wilstoff," Grant mumbled. "Wasn't he nominated for a Nobel Prize awhile back?"

Lampson confirmed with a nod, shaking an index finger in Grant's direction. "Now, Heisen... there was a remarkable individual."

"How so?"

"He's been deaf since birth. He communicates with sign language and he reads lips." Lampson realized he'd drifted off the main reason for the conversation. "Sorry, Captain, didn't mean to..."

"Not a problem," Grant interrupted.

"My original assignment had been completed. I was to become a part of the inner circle of chemists and biologists hand-picked by the Soviets and East German military command. Since the Company was already aware that the project was being backed and funded by the Russians, the last part of the assignment was to get the entire formula for the virus and drug, then get the hell out. What the Company was going to do with them wasn't my concern. Then, I received new instructions. I was to somehow infiltrate..."

"Let me guess," Grant interrupted, "the FSG, the infamous *Freiheiten Soldaten Gruppe*, the Freedom Soldiers Group."

"You already know about them, too?"

Grant nodded, with his face reflecting obvious disgust.

Lampson fumbled with a teaspoon in the saucer. "Word was that they were trying to get the drug, and the Company wanted to know how much they knew about it. Specifically, I had to name names, find out who the leader was. So, I started hanging out at beer halls and cafes where we suspected they frequented, dropping words here and there that I was disgruntled with having to live under Russian rule."

"That could've gotten you arrested, if not killed."

"Yeah, well, it got me in the door, and that's what I was after. Eventually, I was approached by Klaus Steiner, the leader. Initially, he never gave details of his intentions for using the drug."

"And their reason for selecting the drug over the virus," Grant added, "was because the virus is too unstable. One whiff and it's over. Steiner couldn't risk it."

"Right. So, I gradually began passing bits and pieces of the formula to Steiner, some false, some not. I expected he'd eventually take me wholly into his confidence and bring me to their lab."

"Did he?"

"If you mean take me to the lab? No. And he trusted me as much as he trusted anyone, which isn't a whole lot."

"Who's working at the lab?"

"Von Wenzel and Heisen were, shall we say, *recruited* by the FSG. Von Wenzel and I got to be good friends while he was working at the university. It was only after the Company gave me orders to find out about the FSG that I discovered he was working for Steiner, and only because he voluntarily told me. And in case you're wondering, Captain, I can assure you that neither of those men were willing participants. Von Wenzel was one who did take me into his confidence and told me threats had been made against them and their families."

With a raised eyebrow Grant responded sarcastically, "No surprise there. Did Von Wenzel know it was you who was passing information to Steiner?"

Lampson shook his head. "No one knew."

"But... weren't they afraid of being followed by the military or the STASI (East German state security)?"

"With the threats being made against their families, I guess the STASI felt that was enough."

"Can't imagine the STASI taking that attitude." There wasn't a doubt in Grant's military mind that the scientists' homes were bugged. He was well acquainted with the East German organization. They conducted foreign intelligence in West Germany and even monitored activities of their own citizens. As far as their effectiveness among Soviet bloc intelligence organizations, they were second only to the KGB.

"Any idea where the lab is, Rick?"

"No, only that it's somewhere within the city."

Grant rubbed his chin, already picturing answers to his next question. "Did you use dead drops to pass the info?"

"Yeah. The usual way... books left on park benches with certain pages marked, notes left in waterproof pouches that I weighted down with small rocks and dropped into trash cans or buried, and always at different locations. Never saw anybody, though. Guess I should have made an effort and hung around."

"You did exactly what you were supposed to do, Rick. You could've jeopardized yourself and your mission. You were probably followed by Steiner's man and possibly the East Germans." Grant's respect for the Company was still just about nil. The *Cowboys in Action*. Christ! Sending an inexperienced agent to fill such a critical mission seemed preposterous.

Lampson smiled, nervously patting his pockets. Cigarette smoke drifted through the room, heightening his craving. "I couldn't be lucky enough for you to have a cigarette, could I?"

"Sorry. Never touch the stuff."

"Just as well."

"I'm assuming you didn't write down the formula, right?" Lampson responded with a nod and pointed to his head. "Rick, did Greta know you were involved with the FSG?"

"No! Absolutely not!" he answered in a loud whisper. "I tried like hell to keep her shielded from anything that could put her in danger." He nearly choked on his words. "I guess I didn't do a very good job."

"Look, you can't just assume that something's happened to her, Rick." A waiter approached their table, carrying a silver coffee pot. Grant motioned him away, then took a quick look at Adler. The side of his mouth curved up into a brief smile as he watched Joe partake in his own private breakfast buffet. The coffee cup was on the left side of his plate.

Lampson rotated the white china cup in its saucer, seemingly mesmerized by the beads of oil floating on the coffee's surface. He jerked his head up when he heard Grant's low pitched, authoritative voice.

"Come on, Rick. You've gotta keep it together."

"Yeah, I know. I know." He coughed and cleared phlegm from his throat, then he raised a glass of water to his lips and swallowed a mouthful. "Where was I? Oh, yeah. The final phase of my assignment was to find out what Steiner planned on doing with the drug. They're going right for the big guns, Captain. Their timeframe called for them to have the final product ready in order to strike the first blow during a conference in Moscow. Their sights are set on the Kremlin first and then KGB Headquarters."

That got Grant's attention. He pushed himself back against the thick leather chair. "Christ! Talk about having balls!" he muttered. Then, he leaned forward, staring at his fists resting on the table while he thought out loud. "The highest Russian officials, the powerful KGB... all in la-la land, or dead, in one fell swoop. Sounds like a perfect time for a military coup, taking into consideration the feelings the military and Politburo have for each other." Grant suddenly went silent. He seemed to be looking right through Lampson, as his mind reviewed the words he'd just spoken. File it, Stevens, he told himself.

His eyes refocused on the CIA agent who was now staring back at him. "Uh, sorry, Rick. I was doing some mental filing. Now, how? Do you know how they'll carry out their plan?"



"Simple." Lampson spread his hands out in front of him. "Someone will slip it into water, tea, any liquid that's been brought into the conference hall. Of course, there's always the possibility the Kremlin's entire water supply system could be contaminated."

"Hmm. That would kinda take all the fun out of it, wouldn't it? I mean, there'd be nobody to negotiate with."

"It was just a thought," Lampson smirked. "I can only assume that Steiner will immediately make contact with, oh, let's say, President Dropovsky. He'll tell him to stop in and take a look at the meeting's participants. Then, all he has to do is threaten more widespread use of the drug unless the Russians get their fuckin' asses out of East Germany."

"Ah, the plot thickens."

"Just the beginning, I'm afraid. The group will announce that the East Germans are in it with them."

"World opinion will certainly side with the Russians," Grant commented, "even when it's made known that the project was being funded by them."

Lampson shook his head. "Three weeks later, several villages throughout East Germany will have their water supplies contaminated with the drug... very heavily contaminated."

"Let me guess," Grant said as he propped his elbows on the table, grinding his knuckles against his palm. "The world will assume the Russians are retaliating. A meeting of the Security Council will be called. All parties involved will be condemned by the United Nations."

Something resembling a smile spread across Lampson's face. "Sounds like a plot made for television, doesn't it?"

"Of course," Grant said, "if there were a military coup, no one could guarantee what the outcome would be for any of this."

Lampson continued with his own train of thought. "Steiner said that he had a significant plan for helping the people of East Berlin."

Grant's sarcasm was more than evident. "Yeah, right. And the Pope's Greek Orthodox. Listen, Steiner's only in it to make a name for himself, to augment his own psyche. He fits the profile perfectly. He's willing to murder countless numbers of his own countrymen, to commit genocide, and that makes him more dangerous and totally unpredictable."

Silverware and china clattered when Lampson's fist struck the table. It was as if a shot had been fired in the quiet restaurant. Heads snapped around in his direction. Adler was half out of his chair, automatically reaching inside his uniform jacket.

"Shit!" Lampson whispered disgustedly through clenched teeth.

Grant stared intensely into Lampson's sweating face, then shifted his eyes to Adler, giving him an "okay" look. He waited for Lampson to settle down, then asked with concern, "Do they have the complete formula, Rick?"

Lampson just stared, as if reality had set in. "I can give you a fair estimate that they could be done within two weeks, in time for the conference. They probably would've been done sooner if Von Wenzel and Heisen were able to work on the project more often. They had to do a lot of sneaking around as it was. But one good thing, if you want to call it that, is that none of the components will cause

harm as separate entities. The original components of LSD were broken down completely, like starting from scratch. The way it was being formulated meant that only when all the components are brought together will it become lethal."

"Then we've got to get our asses in gear, don't we?" Grant grinned, trying to ease Lampson's anxiety. "Now, who can help us? Who can you trust?"

Without hesitation, Lampson responded, "Has to be Schmitt and Von Wenzel."

"Very well." Grant tapped the photograph with his finger, pointing to the distinguishing feature of the man's hand. "You don't happen to recognize that, do you?" Lampson shook his head, frustrated he wasn't able to give Grant any valuable information. "You know who that insignia belongs to?"

"Yeah. The East German Infantry."

"Right, only..."

"Only what?" Lampson asked, dabbing the white napkin on his forehead, leaning closer to Grant.

"Look, who would you say has more at stake in this?"

"In my opinion? I'd say it's a toss up. And you?"

"Keep in mind the Russian's have got something to say about how these'll be used. But I'll put my money on the FSG."

Lampson responded as if asking a question. "But the uniform in the picture..."

"Anybody could be wearing that, Rick. And don't forget there are discontented East Germans everywhere who are siding with the FSG. They don't much like being under Mother Russia's big thumb."

"What happens now?"

Grant turned sideways in the chair and rested his arms on his knees, his hands balled up into fists. It was the first time Lampson noticed old scars on the back of what he knew to be very strong hands. "You've got to proceed with the debriefing this morning. Matt Wharton's a good man and he can be trusted, but I suggest you insist that he be the only one in the room. Better still, maybe suggest that you meet outside someplace. Make up some excuse... but not the truth."

There was a slight nod from Lampson, then he asked incredulously, "You think an Embassy employee's involved?"

"For now it's just speculation, but we've gotta take precautions and not take any chances. As soon as we're through here, I'll contact my boss. It'll be his call if he wants you out of the country or kept here in a safe place."

Lampson's face showed obvious surprise. "But, I have to go back to East..."

"Listen to me," Grant said firmly. "What's in your head is too important. We can't take that chance. You're trained. You've heard of the truth serum, right?" Lampson's head bobbed up and down. Grant glanced at his watch. "It's nearly 0745. Time to move and get outta here. Look, when you're finished with Wharton, come back to your room. Tell him you're feeling sick from swallowing half the Spree and you need some rest." Grant pointed his index finger at Lampson. "A word of caution... don't call me when you return."

"But how...?"

"Don't worry about that," Grant smiled. "We have our ways." He stood up, noticing that Adler was already walking out. "Let's put the wheels in motion, Rick." He extended his hand.

"Thanks, Captain... again!"

## Chapter 5

### West Berlin

Morning traffic was heavy, with cars and double-decker buses constantly on the move. Trams heading in opposite directions clanged their bells as they glided along smoothly on worn, steel rails. Rods, extending from the trams yellow steel roofs, cracked and hissed as they made contact with electric wires that provided their main source of power.

Two American Navy officers, in dress blues uniforms, stood on the curb at the busy intersection, waiting for the light to change. Grant Stevens stared straight ahead, his square jaw tightening as he clamped down on his teeth. He focused on the building one block away. A twenty-five foot American flag, hoisted to the top of a fifty-foot pole, snapped in a fifteen knot wind, its red and white stripes twisting then unfurling rhythmically. With long strides, Grant and Adler hurried across the street.

Adler looked at Grant. "You think the Admiral will still be at NIS?"

Grant nodded. "You know him. He said he'd hang around till I confirmed we were leaving."

"Do you think he'll go along with your plan and let us go pay a visit on our Commie friends, sir?" The excitement in Joe Adler's voice was unmistakable. His clear, blue eyes twinkled. He screwed his cap down tighter against the gusts of wind.

"Don't know, Joe. Getting Lampson back was the immediate objective. But nobody considered everything else that's going on. I don't just mean the kids, but we've gotta worry about what the FSG has in its hands, and..."

"And who the hell's sneaking around hotel rooms leaving threatening messages," Adler finished.

"Roger that, Joe."

"Jesus, Skipper! Another possible goddamn mole! Is this shit ever gonna end?"

"Hope not! We'll be out of work," Grant laughed, giving Adler a slap on the back.

A ten-foot high, black wrought iron fence encircled the Embassy grounds. At the top of each iron bar was a spear-like finial. A Marine guard, in full dress uniform, stood rigidly at attention just inside the gate. He stepped forward and scrutinized the ID cards being held by the two Navy officers. Satisfied, he saluted sharply, but quickly scanned the area behind both officers before opening the gate.

Grant and Adler returned the salute then proceeded up the plant-lined walk leading to the front steps of the Embassy, entering through eight-foot high, brass-edged double doors. Their footsteps echoed in the long hallway as they walked along the white marble floor. A crystal and brass chandelier hung from a twenty foot high ceiling embossed with the Seal of the United States. These surroundings were all too familiar for the two men.

Located at the center of the building was one elevator with highly polished brass doors. The doors parted with a slight *hiss* almost as soon as Grant pressed the black button. He reached into his pocket and removed a small silver key as he and Adler stepped in. Once the doors closed, he inserted the key and opened a small panel located just below the floor selection buttons. Then he fit the same key into a half-round slot. By turning the key to the left, the direction of the elevator was reversed. Instead of going up, it went down two levels. When it came to rest, a panel on the rear elevator wall automatically slid to the left. Using the same key, Grant then unlocked a steel door leading to the cryptology room. Once they were inside the room, he pressed another button next to the door, sending the elevator back up to the main floor.

The room was soundproof, and had ten inch thick walls that were painted stark white. Dull gray linoleum covered the concrete floor and a double row of fluorescent lights blazed overhead. A tall, gray metal fireproof cabinet was propped next to the door. Locked inside were extra batteries, throat mikes, special weapons, and cases resembling briefcases containing Delco 5300 radios for field agents. Small but powerful, the radio could send voice or Morse code transmissions. Messages were transmitted and received on separate frequencies.

The only decoration in the stark room was a foldout color picture of Miss April from *Playboy* magazine. Making an L-shape along the opposite walls was a long, stainless steel table. Every inch of space was covered with sophisticated equipment consisting of scrambler communication gear, internal walkie-talkies, a short-wave radio system, radio directional finders and receivers. At the smaller end of the table were two recorders that were automatically activated when someone wearing a "wire" energized his unit or when a "bug" in a room picked up sounds.

Tucked away behind the file cabinet was a small safe, containing code books for secure communication. Normally, codes in the Embassy were changed weekly. The bureau chief, security chief, and the men working in the crypto lab are usually the ones the government spends the most money on, specifically for training, salaries and equipment. For intelligence purposes, they're the individuals who have the capability of making the Embassy the most vulnerable with all they know.

Two men, dressed in casual clothes, with the sleeves of their white shirts rolled up, sat at the table. George Canetti and Blake Kelley had been partners for just over two years, with nearly thirty years between them at the Company.

Not quite thirty, the short, heavy set, Brooklyn-born Kelley was the younger of the two. He'd joined the Company after a six year stint with the Navy as a CT (communication's technician). His last two years of military service were spent hidden away at a remote communication's intelligence site in Alaska.

Finishing up a coffee break, Canetti had a set of headphones draped around his neck. His curly salt and pepper hair and goatee were both neatly trimmed. Contrary to the belief that Southerner's speak with long, slow drawls, Canetti's words flowed as fast as a runaway train. He looked up from the September issue of *Sports Illustrated Magazine* as Grant and Adler approached. "Hey, Captain, Lieutenant! Ya'all back so soon? We thought you'd be on the big silver bird winging your way back to the States?"

Grant tossed his cap on the edge of the table. "Not yet, George; may have a change of plans."

Adler spotted leftover breakfast pastries sitting on a tray in the corner. Motioning in their direction with his thumb, he asked, "Say, George, have those been assigned to anybody specific?"

"Nah. Take what you want, Joe."

Grant just shook his head. All the years he'd known Joe Adler, the man's weight never varied more than a couple of pounds either side of 180 and was solidly dispersed over a 5'10" frame. His best description of Adler was that he was built like a brick shithouse.

Kelley reached for the logbook on an upper shelf then made a notation, recording the time and names of the two visitors who just arrived. He put his ball-point pen next to the log, then rubbed a blotch of black ink off his finger. "Is there something we can do for you, Captain?"

Grant pulled a chair closer to the table, then straddled it backwards, crossing his arms on top of the backrest. "Hope so, Blake. I need to use the scrambler phone to call Admiral Torrinson again."

"Something tells me you want us to make an exit this time," Canetti commented as he stood up. He noticed a surprised look on his partner's face. "It's okay, Blake. It's been real quiet around here; I think we can give them a few minutes. You know the recorders will kick in even if a mouse farts."

"Appreciate your understanding, George," Grant smiled, "but there's no need for you to leave. We'll just close the door, if that's okay with you."

"It's all yours, Navy," replied Canetti. At the same time Kelly frowned. "Hey, Blake, relax. It's Uncle Sam's equipment, remember? The Captain won't break it." He reached over and pressed the buzzer, unlocking the door that led to a small room, not much bigger than a walk-in closet.

Once behind the secure door, Grant placed his call to Rear Admiral John Torrinson at NIS (Naval Investigative Service) located outside Washington, D.C. When Grant made the initial recommendation to the Secretary of Defense for Torrinson to be assigned the job, the forty-seven year old admiral was stationed in Coronado, California at SPECWARCOM. The Special Warfare Command was the western headquarters for SEAL teams.

"Admiral Torrinson's office. Petty Officer Phillips."

"Zach, this is Captain Stevens. Is the Admiral in?"

"Wait one, sir. I'll buzz his desk." Yeoman Phillips pressed the intercom button. "Captain Stevens on the Red 1, sir."

"Patch him through, Zach." Torrinson put his fork down on a plate with half-eaten scrambled eggs, then washed down a mouthful of toast with strong black coffee.

Thank God Trish is an understanding wife, he thought as he glanced at the desk clock that showed 0400 hours. On top of the rectangular timepiece rested a bronze "Budweiser," the emblem of the SEALs. He dabbed at his mouth with a white cloth napkin before picking up the scrambler phone.

"Grant, good to hear from you."

"Thanks, Admiral."

"Thought you'd be on your way to the airport by now."

"Sir, we've got a problem."

"Does it have to do with Agent Lampson?" Torrinson asked through tight lips. He leaned forward in anticipation of the reply.

"Yes, sir," Grant replied as he was removing his jacket. A screeching noise as annoying as fingernails on a blackboard made him glance over his shoulder. Adler had spun a metal chair around, scraping the legs on the linoleum floor. He sat down, wiping the last remnants of powdered sugar from his mouth with the back of his hand.

Torrinson listened as Grant gave him a quick and dirty concerning the situation with Lampson, then he responded, "That's too bad about the kids, Grant, but you did what you were sent in to do. Lampson's safe, along with the formulas."

Grant pushed the chair out from under him, then stood up and leaned back against the metal table. "Sir, I'd like your permission for Joe and me to go back to East Berlin."

"Not if it means trying to find those kids, Grant," Torrinson replied adamantly.

"It's more than just them, sir. Lampson's life is in danger, too."

"I realize that, and that's why you need to get him the hell out of harm's way. Has any of his information been recorded or put on paper?"

"Not that I know of, sir. He confirmed that he's got it all stashed in his brain." Grant breathed in deeply, rubbing a hand over the top of his head, then pressed further. "Sir, we've got to destroy the FSG's lab and maybe the East German lab. We've got to act soon to at least try and set them back. As Lampson said, the FSG already has enough of the formula to piece together the last sequence of catalysts, sir. They could be done in two weeks."

"Look, Grant, you know that project is being funded by the Russkies. Your extra curricular activity might be like shoving a hot poker up their butts. I know you realize that the political ramifications could trash all of us. Hell, they'll blame us in a heartbeat. God only knows what the consequences would be. Besides, how can you be certain they're not being kept up to speed by the Germans?"

"I've considered that, sir, but I'm betting the Germans haven't let them in on the whole scenario. I'm also ninety-nine percent sure the Russians won't retaliate against us if we destroy the dissidents' lab. When word leaks out to the rest of the world, not only about the drug, but that the Russians were the ones behind the project from day one, they'll have to think twice. I can get proof of that through Lampson. Besides, sir, I think they'll be grateful for our help, since they're the intended victims scheduled to take the brunt of this."

Torrinson pressed his back against the leather swivel chair, propping a foot against the desk. He noticed a crumb clinging to his black tie and flicked it off. He was quiet for a moment, absorbing what Grant had said. Since he'd been at NIS, Torrinson had learned that Grant didn't *stick it out* without a pretty good chance that he could bring home the bacon. "You're only ninety-nine percent sure, Captain?" he asked with a smile in his voice.

"Yes, sir. Ninety-nine percent. Joe's figured in the other one percent."

"Ahh, I see. Well, with you two, how could I have thought otherwise?" The clear glass jar filled with a supply of Tootsie Roll Pops caught his eye, and he leaned forward and removed its cover. "Have you thought about the Russians maybe having their own agenda on how to make use of these particular items?"

"Yes, sir, I have. Right now it's pure guess, but with them being embroiled in the Mongolian situation, that could be a remote possibility."

Torrinson had read the intelligence reports on the Mongolian border flare-ups. "Like you said, Grant, it's a remote possibility. I'd better run it by SECDEF (Secretary of Defense) anyway." He unwrapped a cherry pop and tossed the paper onto the dirty dish. "Say, do you still have that friend of yours on the other side of the fence?"

Grant winked at Adler, realizing they were about to get the Admiral's verbal authorization. Adler responded with a grin and gave a thumb's up as Grant answered, "Yes, sir. Grigori Moshenko is still active. We've kept in touch. I know I can depend on him and use him as the pivot man. He's helped our intelligence community in the past, sir... along with other things."

"It's the other things you have to tell me about some day." Torrinson smiled, as he rolled the Tootsie Pop over his tongue. "You snake-eaters sure stick together, don't you?"

"Not all of us, sir, only a select few." Trying to ease some of Torrinson's concern, Grant added, "Tell you what, sir. I won't make a decision about the East German lab until I've discussed the situation with Grigori."

Torrinson pulled the pop from his mouth. "Fair enough, Grant. Now, listen, I'll give you *carte blanche*," he stated while he shook the pop in the air. "But you'd better find a way to keep me in the loop. I want to know what the hell's going on at all times, you understand?"

"Yes, sir. Understood. I'll have Wharton cranked in and he'll keep you on course, sir."

Torrinson was well aware that he was putting his own ass on the line, hoping it all didn't blow up in their faces. He trusted the SecDef and decided at that moment to use a little CYA (cover your ass) and would brief the secretary. But as Grant pointed out, too much was at stake in this game to bring in the National Security Agency folks right now.

Torrinson had put his trust in the thirty-six year old Grant Stevens numerous times over the past couple of years, as had his predecessor, Admiral Morelli. Grant Stevens' instincts under duress were simply uncanny. He was a "steely-eyed" natural born jungle fighter. Torrinson knew that whether God-given or SEAL training endowed, Grant would always have the "mission first mentality." The mission always came first, followed by the safety of his men, with his own safety coming in last place. That attitude had become common knowledge in the small group of exceptional black operators. Grant's men were aware that his decisions would always be mission- and survival-oriented, so whenever he asked for volunteers, there was always a long line. The men knew their jobs and Grant never failed to ensure their safety. There simply wasn't a better team commander when it came to the planning and execution of difficult missions. Grant's favorite saying to his men was, "I'll bring you back for another attack."

"Okay, Grant. What kind of logistics are we talking about here?"

"Well, sir, at least 10,000 Deutsche Marks and 5,000 East German Marks for bribes and *haul ass* money. We've already got most of our gear, but I'd like to have an Uzi with silencer, extra chemical pencils, two pounds of C4 (plastic explosive) and two MK6 (Mark Six) CS vials (tear gas). If you can put 'em on a helo out of

Bremerhaven, we should have them in a couple of hours. I'll pick them up at MILOPS (Military Operations) tower at Tegel Airport." Torrinson nodded to himself, jotting down Grant's request on a pad of yellow legal paper. "We'll put together an ingress and egress plan then schedule to pick up Lampson around 1930 tonight. Joe and I will phone our contacts and set up our *back doors* in case it goes bad. All things considered, Admiral, I should have a *dance card* coming to you within two hours of finishing this entire op." A dance card is an after action report, an AAR.

"Oh, sir, to help cut out some time, can you send the warning order for my eyes only?" What others in the fleet call an operation's order that describes the movements and logistics of an operational mission, including who the players are, the SEALs call a "warning order." It was simple... what, where, how, who, and when.

"No problem, Grant. I'll ask Zach to take care of it and send it while you're there with the Embassy boys. But make sure you fill me in. The CIA's black fund is tied up in this new satellite shit so I might have to dip into another pot, which means I may need to get the money side of it okayed at SecDef."

"Will do, sir."

"Anything else?"

"Oh, yes, sir, one more thing. I'd appreciate your running an intel check on a couple of East Germans."

"Fire away," Torrinson responded as he started writing down the two names. He shook the pen, trying to get the last drop of ink to flow. "Okay. Greta Verner and Herman Schmitt. The girlfriend and the professor."

"Yes, sir." Grant glanced at his watch. "It's time to give the phone back to the crypto guys."

"Good luck, Captain." Torrinson hung up the receiver, then stood up and stretched. Too late to make any calls, he reasoned. I may as well go home for a couple of hours. He went to the outer office and instructed his yeoman to prepare the warning order for Grant. Fifteen minutes later, he buttoned his jacket then stood in front of the oval mirror with a bronze eagle attached to the top, its wings spread wide. He adjusted his cap over salt and pepper hair, then left for home.

Grant and Adler emerged from the scrambler room. An obviously annoyed Blake Kelley gave a sideways glance in their direction, then immediately adjusted his headset, mentally noting the twenty minute phone call. After seeing Kelley's expression, Canetti looked in Grant's direction and shrugged his shoulders.

Not wanting to upset the balance between Canetti and Kelley any more than he knew he already had, Grant held back a smile then said, "One more thing... the Admiral's sending me a warning order. It should be here in a few minutes, for my eyes only."

"Be our guest. It'll come in on that scrambler over there," Canetti indicated with a thumb pointing over his shoulder.

Grant waited by the special equipment. The message would be sent over high-speed spurt transmission at eight thousand words per minute. When it arrived at the crypto room, it printed out in code on a special tape. Once the transmission finished, Grant removed the tape and went into the private room where he had



used the scrambler phone. Using his code book, he decoded the following message:

**TOP SECRET**

For: ComSpecOps Eyes Only (Commander,  
Special Operations)  
From: Director NIS  
Subject: Telcom November 11, 1977, 0400 Hours ET  
Re: Badger

Proceed as confirmed our telcom. All official duties outside the original authorization must be approved by originator.

Classified: TOP SECRET. Non-Declassifiable.

Category III. Funding via NIS Ops/BL/ND.

Support authorized at Embassy Level.

By: Direction of Director of Naval Investigative Service – Rear Admiral John Torrinson

Torrinson had confirmed their earlier telephone communication. *Category III* indicated Grant as having top level White House security. Funding for the operation would be coming out of NIS budget, covering Operations/Black (covert)/Non-Disclosure.

Grant folded the paper and put it in his jacket pocket. Will have to get this to Wharton... one of these days. He buttoned the jacket then adjusted his cap squarely on his head before walking into the crypto room.

Adler stepped closer to him. "Authorized?"

Grant nodded, as he turned to Canetti and Kelley. "Appreciate the use of your equipment."

"No problem, Captain," Canetti responded. "Guess you're both outta here now. Hey, give my regards to Uncle Sam when ya'all get back!"

Grant just smiled. "Will do. Thanks again." He and Adler shook hands with the two men then left.

**Hotel Berliner – 1930 hours**

The wall-to-wall carpet in front of the hotel room window showed a distinct strip of pile that had been beaten down to parade rest. Lampson paced back and forth, occasionally stopping to look out the window at the street below, hoping to see any sign of Grant and Adler. He'd lost track of the number of times he'd glanced over at the phone, wishing it would ring. "Where the hell are they?" he said nervously, with a hint of irritation in his voice.

His sweat suit reeked of cigarette smoke; butts from half the pack were mashed into the bottom of a glass ashtray. He cranked the handle at the bottom of the window frame. Cold, damp air invaded the room, the smell of rain unmistakable. Grabbing a lighter from the end table, he lit up another Marlboro then took a sip of Coke from the sweating bottle. He collapsed into the oversized, plush chair as

he mentally reviewed his meeting with the bureau chief that had lasted nearly two hours. Grant would be happy to hear the debriefing was outside the Embassy walls.

Wharton didn't need much convincing and was more than willing to accommodate Lampson after the agent expressed his need to experience true freedom again. They had walked in the late morning fog through the Tiergarten (Animal Garden), with its more than one million trees. Eventually, they parked themselves on the top step of the Bismarck monument. From that vantage point it gave them a bird's eye view of anyone and everyone. Near the end of the meeting, he persuaded Wharton to let him go back to the hotel for some much needed rest. With a complexion that had about as much color as bread dough, Lampson's excuse was accepted without question. They agreed to meet early the following morning at Wharton's office.

A rapping at the door gave his heart a jump-start. He had his hand on the polished brass door lever, when he saw a paper sliding underneath with one printed word: Grant. As soon as he opened the door, Grant put his finger to his lips. Understanding that Grant wanted him to keep his mouth shut, Lampson backed up as the two officers entered, closing the door quietly behind them. The two were dressed in civilian clothes, wearing dark slacks and black T-shirts. Grant had on a brown leather jacket, Adler, black.

Grant scanned the room quickly, spotting a door leading to the bathroom. He motioned for Lampson to follow him. After turning on the faucets full blast, both in the sink and shower, he whispered, "Rick, we're going to get you out of here and take you some place safe."

With a worried look, Lampson said, "But Wharton's expecting me. I'm supposed to be at his office..."

"Not your problem. Now, get your shoes. Joe's got some clothes for you to change into. We've gotta be ready to move out quick." Adler stood in the doorway and handed Lampson a black leather satchel. "One more thing, Rick. Could you describe Greta for me?"

"She was tall, came up to here on me," he indicated by putting his hand just below his shoulder. "I guess that'd be about 5'9. She had blue eyes and long, light brown hair. Most of the time she wore it pulled back, you know, like in a pony tail." Lampson spoke as if he was staring at an oil painting.

"Any distinguishing marks?"

"Only a small scar on the left side of her forehead." A light bulb suddenly went off in Lampson's head. "You're going back to East Berlin," he asked excitedly, "aren't you?"

"I don't have time to explain everything, but, yeah, we're going."

The two officers privately discussed final plans while Lampson changed. He rolled down the collar of the cable knit turtleneck sweater, then knelt down to tie his sneakers. "You know there's somebody watching the lobby, don't you?"

Adler winked. "Would you like a detailed description of both gentlemen?"

Grant glanced toward the open bedroom window, hearing the rolling sound of thunder. He only had to look at Adler for Joe to act on cue. With a quick nod, Adler turned and headed for his pre-assigned task.

A blinding strike from a powerful lightning bolt flashed against the tree-covered hills, and three seconds later, thunder reverberated across the city. Every light in the Hotel Berliner suddenly went out. Hallways were as pitch black as underground caves, just as was intended.

A single wooden door leading from the basement slowly opened. Joe Adler cautiously emerged, then he immediately made his way to the exit door at the end of the hall. Closing the door behind him, he pressed his back close to the exterior brick wall, looking up and down the alley. Taxi drivers lined their cabs along the curb in front of the hotel. Pedestrians hurried by. Twenty feet across from the hotel was the side delivery entrance of the Bruenhaus, one of West Berlin's main department stores. On their way to meet Lampson, Grant and Adler took a detour through the store, exiting at the delivery door. Adler used an invisible strip of tape to hold back the latch, ensuring they could regain entry.

The hotel door swung open. Grant and Lampson moved next to Adler. Like stealthy objects traveling in unison, the three men made a dash across the alley, quickly disappearing into the department store's basement. Once again Lampson was just along for the ride.

They were grateful the store was still crowded, as they wove in and out of last minute shoppers who were scurrying about before the 8:30 closing time. Large brass, swinging front doors came within sight, fifty feet ahead of them.

Once outside, Adler whispered to Lampson, "Stay with me, sir." Grant dropped back several paces, tugging on the brim of his black baseball cap.

One block away a cream-colored, double-decker bus was slowing. Passengers gathered in the aisles, ready to make a hasty exit from the rear door. An anxious throng of pedestrians waited to board the bus before the threatening storm released its fury on them. The wind was already gusting to twenty knots, making them grab hats and parcels while trying to shield their eyes from swirling dirt and leaves.

The three Americans pushed their way into the crowd, managing to jump onto the platform at the front of the vehicle. Once the bus passed the third stop, Adler inconspicuously grabbed Lampson's lower sleeve and edged toward the rear exit, with Grant hanging close behind. Adler looked out a side window, spotting the rental car he'd registered under an assumed name with fake Austrian identification papers.

Five minutes later and with Adler behind the wheel, their black BMW was speeding down the Autobahn, traveling at 150 kph heading for Bergfeld, a small hamlet just north of West Berlin in the Soviet sector.

Grant reached into his inside jacket pocket, then handed Lampson a manila envelope. "Get familiar with your new identity before we reach the checkpoint. There's an Austrian passport and another set of identification papers."

Lampson thumbed through a new passport with his photo, showing an issue date four years prior and pre-stamped to reflect past travels. "Remarkable," he mumbled as he removed a brown leather wallet from the envelope, containing Austrian and German currency, photos of a fictitious wife and daughter in Vienna, and business cards.

The BMW's windshield washers swished back and forth, smearing a thin film of road oil across the glass but quickly cleared as rain pelted the car. Reflections of

red taillights shimmered on the wet pavement as traffic slowed to a snail's pace as they approached the checkpoint. Adler handed their passports to a guard outfitted in rain gear. After a few questions, he passed them through without incident.

Adler pressed down on the accelerator, never letting up. His eyes constantly scanned the rearview mirror as he purposely wove the car in and out of the thinning traffic. He focused on a set of headlights that appeared to be following every move the BMW made.

"See somebody trying to hitch a ride?" Grant asked without turning around.

"Not sure. Just in case, let's see if we can send him on his way, shall we?" One hand tightened around the leather-covered steering wheel, the other reached for the gearshift.

Grant pressed himself against the black leather seat, turning just enough to see out the back window. "Hang on," he warned Lampson, who immediately grabbed hold of the door armrest.

A steady flow of traffic stretched ahead in their lane. The suspicious auto was three cars back behind a truck. Adler eased back on the accelerator. Heavy spray being kicked up by a Volkswagen's tires brought the visibility down to near zero. The VW's taillights were nothing but a fuzzy, red blur. Adler crept closer, leaving no room for error. He waited for a truck in the middle lane to close in. Then, with one swift move, the BMW shot out from behind the Volkswagen and directly in front of the truck, missing both bumpers by inches. The truck started fish-tailing on the slick road, its driver fighting to maintain control. Cars following it slammed on their brakes, unable to find any means of escape as they went out of control. In his rearview mirror Adler saw the truck slide sideways, finally coming to a stop, blocking all lanes. A sickening sound of metal striking metal could be heard above the roar of the BMW's engine.

"Oops," Adler grinned. Then, immediately taking advantage of the havoc he'd just wreaked, he floored the accelerator. The headlights behind him quickly became nothing more than blurry, white dots in the distance.

Grant turned halfway around in the seat. He took off his baseball cap and ran his fingers through his hair, then rested his elbow on the backrest, reacting like it was just another day at the office. "Guess you're curious where we're taking you, Rick," he grinned.

Pronounced dark circles under Lampson's eyes were in sharp contrast against his pale skin. He slouched down in the seat, a sense of relief overcoming him, but perhaps that reaction was too soon. He smiled weakly.

Grant continued, "Marie Lutger runs what we know as a boarding house, big enough for three regular boarders, with an extra room in the attic. She's a widow who's been working for the West Germans for the past eighteen years, always ready to lend a helping hand."

"She's good people," Adler commented.

Grant nodded. "You'll have to blend in with the town folk, Rick, but make sure you stay with the Austrian visitor routine. I don't know how long this is gonna take." His voice was firm, his words emphatic. "You've got to be patient and don't do anything that'll put you, or us, in any added danger. In case you're wondering why we're not flying you back to the States right away, it's because that's exactly what your new-found teammates will be expecting. Every airport and harbor is

probably being watched. If we were being followed, they most likely thought we were taking you to Bremerhaven. Keeping you here for a couple of days should throw them off." Lampson nodded, already aware that the next days would be even harder than the past few months. "We'll try and make contact with you as soon as we know something."

"This is it," Adler cut in as he eased back on the accelerator, shifted to a lower gear, and started making the turn off the highway. No other car was behind them.

Grant looked through the windshield at a pitch black country road. Beams from the BMW's headlights stretched before them, the only means of light. He turned back to Lampson. "We've got a suitcase in the trunk that's packed with extra clothes and essentials. In the side pocket are an extra two thousand Deutsche Marks."

"There isn't much you've missed, Captain. Now, are you going to tell me what your plans are?"

"Afraid not. The less you know the better."

"You mean, in case they find me, don't you?"

Without answering, Grant turned around as the car slowed, the flickering lights of the village coming into view. Adler adjusted the windshield washers to a slower speed as the rain turned into a sprinkle. He downshifted into second gear and the sound of the engine became a low rumble. The drive along the old cobblestone street put a slight shimmy in the steering wheel as the wide tires encountered large, irregular, slippery cobblestones.

"There's the street," Grant pointed.

Adler turned the BMW left onto the narrow lane, driving slowly up the winding incline, hugging the curb. The street was lined with shops and private homes, the black and white timbered buildings nestled side-by-side. He pulled up in front of a three-story structure, the number 552 hanging from a tarnished brass plate above the door's archway. "This is it," he said, shifting into park.

A small, dim light came out of nowhere, seemingly suspended in mid-air, bobbing up and down, aiming right for them. Grant instinctively slipped his hand inside his jacket, easing the .45 from his shoulder holster. An old man, riding a bicycle with a white headlight, glanced briefly at the BMW, then continued pedaling past the idling car. Adler stared into the side view mirror until the man and his bicycle disappeared around the bakery shop on the corner.

"End of the line, Rick," Grant said, as he opened the car door. "I'll get your suitcase."

Lampson leaned forward from the back seat, shaking Adler's shoulder. "Joe, thanks for everything you've done... and for what you're going to do."

"Our pleasure, sir," Adler grinned.

"Good luck, Lieutenant."

Lampson met Grant at the back of the car, reaching for the brown leather suitcase. Curious, he asked, "You didn't forget to bring any of your so-called equipment, did you, Captain?"

Grant closed the trunk lid. "Couldn't take any chances that we might be stopped and the car searched. Everything's securely tucked away," he winked.

Out of the corner of his eye, Lampson noticed the front door of the house being opened, a light shining through the crack. "Any last minute instructions, Captain?"

"Stay close to home, Rick. If you feel threatened—by anyone or anything—Marie will help. She'll know who to contact. And she's got a small *security blanket* for you with enough ammo that should see you through. There's the standard hidden compartment in your suitcase, just in case."

Lampson reached out to shake Grant's hand, their grip strong and firm. "Good luck, Captain. I owe you more than my life on this one."

Grant closed the car door and rolled down the window. "Be sure to tell Marie we said *danke*." He flashed a grin and snapped a quick salute as the car pulled away.

## Chapter 6

### U.S. Embassy

#### 0700 Hours – Day 3

"Matt, can I see you for a minute?" Blake Kelley asked as he poked his head around the office door.

"Sure, Blake, come on in. We're just going over today's schedule. I've got a few extra minutes to spare before I meet with Rick. What's going on?"

Pete Bradley was sitting on the corner of the desk with an open notebook in his lap. Kelley acknowledged Bradley with a contemptuous nod. "Matt, are you aware that Stevens and Adler used the scrambler phone?"

"Sure. They probably called Admiral Torrinson confirming Lampson was safe. Why?" Wharton scratched his chin as he leaned back in his swivel chair.

Kelley placed the logbook on the desk, pointing to his notation. "I don't mean that time. They came back yesterday morning and asked to use it again."

Wharton's shoulders went back, as he straightened in the chair. "They call Torrinson?"

"That's what they said."

Bradley stood and walked toward the window, then turned back to Kelley as he picked a piece of lint from his new pinstriped blue suit. "What do you mean *that's what they said*? You're supposed to keep your ears open."

"I know what I'm supposed to do, Pete!" Kelley lifted a pencil from behind his ear and pointed it at Wharton. "Look, they asked to go behind closed doors. George okayed it."

Wharton frowned, with his eyebrows knitting together, nearly becoming one strip of dark, thick hair. "So why wasn't this brought to my attention yesterday?"

"Believe me, Matt, I wanted to but George said it was all right and not to worry. It kept me awake most of the night. That's why I'm here."

Bradley stared at Kelley, thinking: *You fuckin' weasel.*

"Look, Blake," Wharton, said, "why don't you get back to work. We'll check into this." Kelley left. Wharton swiveled his chair around slowly, completing a 360 degree circle. "Pete, we had Lampson shadowed, didn't we?"

Bradley nodded. "Cummings and Hastings. They were instructed to cover the lobby until this morning, then Hastings was to follow Lampson back here for his meeting with you."

"He's due in any time now," Wharton said under his breath. He went over to the credenza, rolling up his white shirt sleeves as he walked. He poured a fresh cup of coffee. "Why don't you give him a call?" Bradley was headed for the outer office when Wharton stopped him. "And check Tegel base ops and see if Navy turned in their orders." Wharton watched Bradley as he left, thinking that the attaché's close cropped haircut made it seem as though his head was covered by a permanent shadow.

As soon as the door closed, Wharton went over to the window, sipping the hot coffee. Something's going on here. He tried remembering everything he and Lampson had spoken about at the park, trying to recall anything significant. During that earlier meeting, his gut kept trying to tell him something. He was getting the feeling now that he should have listened. He never should have let Lampson out of his sight, but he weakened after knowing how much the agent had been through.

Wharton worried that the Agency was going to have his ass. Retirement was suddenly looking better and better. Maybe he'd better call...

The door burst open and Bradley rushed in. "Lampson doesn't answer. Hastings was going to check his room and the restaurant, then call you."

Wharton took a deep breath between clenched teeth, resisting an urge to throw the cup against the wall. "And what about Navy?"

"Never got on the flight."

"Christ!" He slammed the cup on the desk. A stream of black coffee shot upward, then splattered across the ink-stained blotter. The phone rang and he grabbed the receiver. "What!" he shouted. "Hastings? You'd better tell me you know where he is." He sank into the swivel chair, resting his elbows on the desk as he listened to the agent's report. "Get your ass back here!" Bradley thought the phone was going to split in half when Wharton slammed down the receiver. "They lost him. They fuckin' lost him!"

"But... how? Neither one of them reported seeing him anywhere near the lobby. That hotel's been covered since Lampson got there."

Wharton stood then leaned forward, resting on knuckles of balled up clenched fists. "Remember the storm last night? Well, according to Hastings, there was a sixty second loss of power in the hotel."

"Yeah, the storm must have..."

"No, Pete. Not the storm. I'll bet my ass it was Navy... Stevens more precisely." He straightened up, folded his arms across his chest, and with a cold stare said, "Let's see. We've got two Navy NIS officers and one snatched agent who still hasn't been thoroughly debriefed, and who's now missing. Can you add two and two, Pete?"

Bradley rubbed the back of his neck, feeling the perspiration, and tried hard to ignore Wharton's sarcasm. "But why the hell would NIS take Lampson?"

"I guess we'd better find that out, shouldn't we?"

"Where do you want to start?"

"Oh, for Christ's sake! Forget it! I'll get the answers myself," Wharton snapped as he headed for the office door. "You may as well go back to bed, Pete! You've been asleep for the last seven months, anyway."

Bradley jerked his head back, narrowly escaping from having his medically-altered nose battered by the slamming door. "You blew it, you asshole! Shit! Shit!"

While Wharton waited to call Torrinson, he had Cummings and Hastings search the hotel rooms of Lampson, Grant, and Adler. He told them to make general inquiries with the hotel staff, trying not to raise any suspicion. No one had seen the three, except the restaurant staff the morning before.

He got off his personal office elevator, walking briskly towards the crypto room door, his mind going a mile a minute as he mentally replayed the conversation he'd had with Bradley. He couldn't believe the asshole made it through the diplomatic selection board. He made a mental note to contact Henry Parker at State and get Bradley out from under his shoes. "What a jerk!" he mumbled.

He nodded at Kelley and Canetti as he approached their desk. "I need the hot phone." He walked straight for the door as Canetti rolled his chair around and flashed an inquiring look toward Kelley as the bureau chief passed them.

Kelley asked, "Something hot, sir?"

"The buzzer! The buzzer!" Wharton impatiently demanded, snapping his fingers.

While he waited for the call to go through to Torrinson, he thought back to 1967 in Vietnam where he first met Lieutenant Commander Torrinson. Wharton had recruited him out of Camp Tien Shah in Da Nang to run some 'sneak and peek' ops for the CIA in Laos. The Teams were in Vietnam without an official mission statement. They were always open to running any operation they could get their hands on. Usually, it was some shit mission that no other SOF (Special Operations Force) would touch. A warning order would be written and given to the platoon that would carry it out.

Considering Torrinson's background, Wharton felt that a little camera work would introduce the young lieutenant commander to his world. He was right. Torrinson was hooked and it wasn't long before his career took on a new look—black.

The static stopped as he heard Torrinson's yeoman answer, "NIS. Admiral Torrinson's office. Petty Officer Phillips."

"Petty Officer, I need to talk with Admiral Torrinson. Tell him it's Matt Wharton."

A few seconds later, Torrinson answered the scrambler with a distinct smile in his voice. "Hey, Matt!"

"Admiral, how the hell are ya?"

"Can't complain," Torrinson responded. Already having a pretty good idea on the reason behind the call, he asked, "I have a feeling this is more than just a social call. Right?"

Getting right to the point, Wharton responded, "You might say that. What's the scoop on Captain Stevens and his buddy?"

Torrinson paused for a second and extracted the Tootsie Roll Pop from his cheek, his early morning sugar kick. "Who wants to know?" he laughed.



"Come on, Admiral, you've got a couple of your boys over here and it appears they have an agenda that I just might be interested in. Can you get me up to speed on it?"

"Not a problem, Matt, but on one condition. You've got to keep Bradley out of the loop. That guy has some friends at Defense who can't keep their mouths shut, especially to the Post reporters. That's not a problem, is it?"

"Understood, John, not a problem. As a matter of fact, I want to address that in just a moment. Am I in on this?"

"Affirmative." The Admiral paused. "Got a few things to clean up in the East concerning Lampson. Now, what I need is a blank check from the black money bank from the boys in the basement for Grant and his partner. It seems the Company's *professor* has some offspring roaming the back woods somewhere."

Wharton's eyebrows shot up. "He's got what? How many?"

"Two, Matt. Twin boys."

Wharton chuckled. "Busy little agent, isn't he?" Then he queried suspiciously, "Is there anything further I need to know about?"

"I've got a chemical problem I need to clean up at the lab level, as well as get Stevens and Adler over the wall and then back again."

"Okay. Let's see if I got this right: We've got kids, we've got a lab, we've got safe houses and 'do it' money to arrange. Right?"

Admiral Torrinson responded, "It's not that easy. There's also the little issue where I have to make sure that we save the Kremlin."

Wharton's jaw dropped. "Excuse me? You're gonna have to what? Never mind! Never mind! I don't want to know. What the hell am I talking about? Yes, I do. I'm a player! Wait a minute. I am in the loop, aren't I?"

"Of course you are. I couldn't do it without you. Hell, you know more about that area than any three agents, aside from Stevens, of course."

"I think I'm getting a hard-on! I like this one!"

Torrinson chuckled. "Can you do the money for me?"

Wharton shot back, "Is a fresh fucked fox in a forest fire hot?"

Torrinson nearly choked on his laughter from Wharton's retort. "I gotta remember that one! Just confirm in English, please."

"Of course you'll get your money. How much?"

As Torrinson composed himself, he filled Wharton in on Grant's request. Then he said, "I'm going to have Grant run the plan by you and leave it in your hands to fill in the blanks. Okay by you?"

"You bet your ass, John. Do you want me to run this as a black op?"

"You bet your ass. I'd better not hear a peep from anywhere in this crazy town of D.C."

"You've got it."

"By the way, are you still seeing Heidi?" Torrinson asked.

"Oh, yeah," Wharton answered.

"Give her my best," Torrinson said with sincerity.

Wharton realized this was all the information he'd get at this time. "Can I call you back, John?"

"No problem." Torrinson flipped open his schedule book, running his finger down the next day's events. "Twenty hundred hours tomorrow, my time."

"Roger that. Oh, by the way, can you get in touch with Henry Parker at State and ask him to shit in Bradley's mess kit?"

Torrinson broke into a hearty laugh and while nodding his head to the affirmative, said, "No problem. Do it as soon as we hang up. He's scheduled to be over with the SecDef this morning, briefing him on this op."

"Thanks, John. Give my best to the family."

## Chapter 7

### **East Berlin 2130 hours**

Shabby, yellowing net curtains hung motionless from a wooden rod covering the lower half of the grimy, plate glass window of the pub. Cigarette and cigar smoke hung heavy in the air, mingling with the pungent smell of beer. A once boisterous, rowdy gathering place, the dingy pub had become a place of temporary diversion ever since the city was divided. Patrons, mostly men from the local neighborhood, gathered at their regular tables, some playing skat, a popular card game. The pub was their home-away-from-home, a meeting point. Cautious mumbles filtered throughout as the patrons were always leery of who might be listening or watching. An old German saying, "quiet obedience is a citizen's first duty," still rang true.

One by one, and staggering their arrival over a fifteen minute period, three men entered the establishment, trying to avoid direct eye contact with the other patrons. They sat together at a back table, away from dim, overhead hanging lights, and close to a back door.

Klaus Steiner rolled a cold beer mug between his hands. Thick, bushy eyebrows framed deep-set eyes that were totally emotionless. "Has there been any word where he is?"

"No," answered Otto Neus, nervously tugging at his dark blond, straggly hair that hung over his shirt collar. "Our contact hasn't been able to find out anything. One minute he was in the hotel, and the next he was gone. It's like he's disappeared off the face of the earth without leaving a trace." Neus sipped at his beer, anticipating an ass-reaming from Steiner, but Steiner just leaned back in the wooden chair, balancing it on the two back legs. Neus decided to try and persuade Steiner to change his plans. "Why bother trying to bring him back? We've got most of the formula. The drug is nearly ready for use. Why jeopardize our plans? We're so close to completing what we've set out to do, Klaus." He glanced briefly at Horst Schinkel seated across from him but knew he couldn't expect support from the man known as a humanoid.

Schinkel rested his hands on his hips, his biceps muscles bulging under a dark brown woolen sweater. Tilting his head side to side, he attempted to stretch muscles in a very thick, stubby neck. He was never one to participate in

conversation. If he responded at all, the responses were usually in the form of *grunts*. For Horst Schinkel his sole purpose in life was to be a ruthless killer.

Steiner eased the chair forward and drank the last mouthful of dark beer. He wiped foam from his mouth and mustache with the back of his hand, then leaned his arms on the worn table surface. He spoke with a low gravelly voice that commanded attention. "It's not just a matter of the formula now."

Neus realized what Steiner was saying. Eleven months earlier, two other members broke away from the group. Steiner waited several weeks, letting the two men drop their guard, trying to make them feel they no longer had anything to fear, unaware they were being watched. On Steiner's orders, Horst Schinkel killed both men, slitting their throats with a straight razor. Now it was Brennar who'd betrayed him and made a fool of him. To make it even more humiliating, he was an American spy.

"But we have the children. Maybe he'll come back on his own," Neus tried to reason.

"Do really believe he will return to the East? Even if he wanted to, do you think his superiors would allow that, Otto? Do you think I'm that stupid to believe that?"

"No, Klaus, I..." Neus cut himself off, deciding to take a different tack. "You're right, you're right. What do you plan on doing with the two boys?"

Steiner shrugged indifferently, as he slowly ran the tips of his fingers back and forth across an unkempt mustache. Straggly hairs rubbed against his lower lip. "That remains to be seen. In the meantime, stay in touch with our contact. Keep the pressure on for more information."

"And what about Greta?"

"She was nothing but a whore. A mother would not give up her children without a fight like she did. She's probably glad to be rid of them anyway. Enough about her; right now our concern is Brennar."

## Chapter 8

### West Berlin

#### 0300 Hours – Day 4

A U.S. Navy helicopter lifted off the deserted end of a runway at West Berlin's Tegel Airport. The pilot rotated it ninety degrees, then headed in a southeasterly direction. In the cargo area, Grant and Adler were checking each other's gauges and hoses of their oxygen equipment.

"I don't know, sir," Adler shouted above the chopper's engine, "two vacations to East Berlin in less than a week... you must really love the place!"

"Near and dear to my heart, Joe." He checked his watch, signaled Adler, then they both slipped the straps of the oxygen masks over their heads, letting them hang from their necks.

The co-pilot, Lieutenant Samuels, with his head half turned, shouted from the cockpit, "We're passing fifteen thousand now! Time to go to oxygen! Twelve minutes to DZ!"

Grant gave a thumb's up. He and Adler put on their rubber aviator masks, adjusted the straps and turned on the O2. The last thing they did was secure their rucksacks to the D-rings attached to their reserve chutes. Minutes later they were standing by the open door. The weather was on their side, bringing in heavy cloud coverage that would prevent the possibility of moonlight giving them away as they made their drop. They looked out into the night, unable to see above or below as the chopper passed through a thick cloud bank. They grabbed hold of the overhead as the chopper was buffeted by air turbulence.

"Get ready for my signal!" Samuels yelled and held his fist in the air, ready to count down.

Grant quickly glanced at his wrist altimeter. His eyes shot back to Samuels' hand, anticipating the 'go' sign. The light went green just as Samuels pointed toward the door and shouted, "Go!"

Adler and Grant left the door in unison, diving head first into nothing but space, arching their backs to attain a good tracking position. With their arms and legs out slightly, they shot through the cold, damp clouds, traveling at nearly 130 miles an hour.

Grant eyed the backup altimeter on the top of his reserve chute. He maneuvered farther away from Adler, getting ready for chute deployment. At 13,000 feet he took another bearing on Adler. As they broke through the clouds at nine thousand feet, they popped their chutes simultaneously. Glancing over his shoulder, Grant spotted Adler swinging in his harness no more than fifty yards away. The ram air chutes floated them gently into the wind as both men checked their coordinates to make the LZ.

Grant tried focusing on the ground as he pulled on the toggles. Come on, come on! Where the hell are you? Somewhere in the surrounding area was supposed to be the signal light. His altimeter showed 5,000 feet. They had gone almost two horizontal miles when he began to pick up three faint white lights showing up off to his right, a little between him and Adler. Joe signaled that he'd seen them, too.

Thanks again, old friend, Grant smiled as he watched the lights on Manfred's farm guiding them in. It was the same as last time—three lights in the shape of the letter L.

Spotting the two jumpers moments before they hit the ground, Manfred extinguished the small lights on the roof of his house, then cautiously climbed down the ladder. Grant and Adler both did a standing landing within twenty yards of one another in the north corner of a plowed field. They quickly unhooked and began figure-eighting their shroud lines.

Manfred hobbled over to them. His left knee was riddled with arthritis, stemming from an injury received during World War II. He patted Grant on the back. "So, Captain, we meet again, and sooner than we both expected. And this time you've brought company, I see."

Grant gathered up his chute. "Manfred, this is Joe Adler."

"Nice to meet you, sir," Adler said, peering over an armful of black parachute silk. He used the shroud lines to tie the chute into a tight package.

"So, did Herr Captain promise you anything special for making the trip with him, Joe?"

Deep creases formed in Adler's smiling, rugged face. "We've yet to work that out, sir." After a brief pause, he winked and added, "But he knows I won't forget!"

They stored their gear in the safe room under the shed and changed their clothes. "Come then," Manfred said as he motioned with his arm, "I have some food for you in the kitchen."

"Maybe we'd better just stay in the safe room, Manfred," Grant replied, ever wary.

"No, no. It will be all right. At this late hour it is unlikely we will have to worry."

Grant gave a half smile. "You know I don't like surprises."

The hinges squeaked as Manfred opened the solid wood front door covered with scratches. A panel at the bottom had turned a weathered gray color. Dampness pervaded the small house, partly from lack of sufficient heat. One source of heat was an inefficient, small coal burning fireplace in the living room.

"Wait here," the elderly man said as he closed the door. A moment later he returned with a lighted kerosene lamp. Dark curtains had already been drawn across windows. Manfred removed his cap, revealing silver hair that curled over the tops of his ears. He handed the lamp to Grant as he hung the gray cap on a peg next to the door then took off his gray tweed jacket. "Come into the kitchen," he said as he reached for the lamp. The dim light cast eerie shadows across the walls, ceiling and meager furnishings in the kitchen as Manfred led the two men toward the kitchen table. Motioning towards the chairs he said, "Sit down, sit down."

The two Americans complied, pulling out straight-backed wooden chairs from beneath a wobbly, hand-hewn table. Grant unzipped his leather jacket part way, then pulled out a sealed paper bag, putting it in the center of the table. "Thought you might need a refill, Manfred."

The old German picked up the bag of his favorite Chase & Sanborn coffee and brought it close to his nose. He inhaled the contents' aroma. "Ahh. Your timing could not be more perfect, Captain! Danke." He lifted the kettle from the stove and placed it on a metal trivet. "Help yourselves, my friends, and I will make some of this wonderful coffee. You will eat, warm up, and then we will talk."

Adler looked at Grant as if to ask, "Where the hell did you get that coffee?"

Grant used the ladle and spooned steaming porridge into chipped, blue pottery bowls. "Coffee's one of the premium luxuries here, Joe; costs almost as much as a bike." He winked, adding, "The Embassy cook is Fritz Landen. He was President Kennedy's old yacht chef. He assured me the staff will never miss it."

The porridge was hot and sweetened with honey. Adler ate two bowls, grateful Manfred had insisted. Grant made a note to himself to leave some East German Marks for the old man, even though he anticipated there'd be protesting.

He pulled back his jacket sleeve just enough to be able to see his watch. At 0530 hours he had to make contact with Torrinson.

After freshening up their coffee, Manfred placed the pot back on the wood burning stove and asked enthusiastically, "So, my friends, how can I help?"

"Manfred, does the name *Greta Verner* wouldn't happen to ring a bell, would it?" The more he had thought about Lampson's relationship with the woman, the more

his instincts started to set off a distant alarm. At the moment he couldn't explain why it was trying to warn him.

The old man shook his head. "No. Who is she?" Grant responded, keeping the explanation brief, and then Manfred said, "These are strange, difficult times, Captain. It is understandable why so many of the young people do what they do. Lampson was an intelligent man and held a prestigious position at the university. Perhaps she saw a way to lift herself out of the mire. Who knows?"

Adler leaned forward, his blue eyes staring at Grant as he pointed a finger at him. "Yeah, or just maybe she had a deeper ulterior motive."

The distant alarm suddenly sounded loudly in Grant's head. "Think you may be onto something, Sherlock. It might be a long shot, but, shit! It's all we've got right now." It was obvious the two men were heading down the same path, one of the reasons they worked so well as a team.

"Of course," Adler said, "if that's the case, why the hell wouldn't she have protected herself, you know, taken the pill or something? The kids couldn't have been part of the plan, if there was a plan."

"I didn't go into that with Lampson, but it's possible she could've been taking it. I don't think those things are completely foolproof." Grant slowly held up his hand, with the palm facing Adler. "Wait a minute, Joe, wait a minute. I know this'll sound like it's coming out of left field, but what if, and I do mean a big what if, the kids aren't Lampson's?"

Manfred sat quietly and listened, swiveling his head back and forth from Grant to Adler. Just by the conversation taking place, he knew the two Americans shared a special bond, like brothers.

Adler's first response was a statement not a question. "You think she was a *plant*. Whadda ya think... East German military or the dissidents?"

Grant shrugged. "Could be either. Or maybe the East Germans have a hold on her, too. From what Lampson said, anyone working on the project was constantly watched and threatened, even though she had a minor role acting as an assistant. Actually, the way Lampson described her job, it was more like she was just a gopher. But with what he brought to the table, he was probably the most valuable. What better way to keep him reeled in, and since he was the only unmarried person among the scientists, they had to come up with a way to be assured he'd be thorough with his work and wouldn't skip town." He leaned back in the chair, momentarily stared up at the rough-hewn beams on the ceiling, then looked at Adler again. "Still got some holes in the plot, Joe, but I'll bet your ass we're onto something."

Adler laughed, running his hand back and forth across his crewcut. "Oh, so it's my ass!"

A laugh escaped from deep within Manfred and he rocked back in the chair. He briefly recalled his days at the German field command as one of the officers in the Infantry War Plans Department and how he slowly grew to hate Hitler and all tyrants. It was times like these that made him feel so alive.

Grant swallowed a last mouthful of coffee, then stood as he said, "We've got to make a call, Manfred. Sorry that Joe and I got off on a tangent. Give us about a half hour, then join us and we'll go over some plans."

Manfred extinguished the kerosene lamp before opening the door. Then Grant and Adler made a dash across the yard, vapors from their breath dissipating in the air as they ran. A cold wind had started blowing down from the north, causing the temperature to drop to thirty-four degrees. Clouds began to deteriorate. A new moon broke through the heavy gray.

Grant made contact with Torrinson, who said sources had confirmed a clean check on Professor Schmitt. Not to Grant's surprise, they were unable to find a complete background on Greta Verner. The path seemed to begin at the university and went as far as Lampson. "Does that help any, Grant?"

"Well, sir, Joe and I came up with our own scenario, and you've just allowed us to fast-forward to Chapter 2."

"Can you tell me how the chapter will begin?" Torrinson smiled.

"Not completely sure, sir, but I do smell something fishy. I think it's going to go in two directions, just like Joe and me. I've gotta find that lab and I've got a suspicion where it might be. On my way in to extract Lampson, I spotted a large pipe, probably about seven feet in diameter. It just seemed to be out of place, like it didn't belong there. So I had one of my sources research some old blueprints of the city before it was divided. The Nazis put in a lot of time and effort excavating under the streets, putting in escape routes. As I was looking at those blueprints, there were two in particular that got my attention. It's a longshot, sir, but we've gotta start somewhere. Manfred will drive us into East Berlin to..."

"Excuse me? Did you say you're going into the city again?"

"You've got to trust me, sir. We've still got a long way to go. In the meantime, can you confirm that you want Lampson to remain in Germany or do you want us to get him out?"

"Let him stay where he is for now, unless those instincts of yours start telling you something."

"Understand, sir. And I've still got to make contact with Grigori."

Torrinson hesitated but decided to ask anyway. "And when do you plan on contacting Colonel Moshenko?"

"I'll wait till I find the lab." Grant looked overhead when he heard the sound of footsteps. "Wait one, sir," he said in a hushed voice. Adler drew his "hushpuppy" and backed up into the shadows, then slowly brought back the hammer to full cock. Grant lowered the light on the kerosene lamp.

"Captain?" Manfred called softly as he tapped on the makeshift trapdoor.

Adler eased the hammer back, then holstered the firearm. Then he moved the portable wooden steps under the door, climbed up and slid the metal bar out, allowing Manfred entrance. The old German leaned over and handed him two cups.

"It's okay, sir," Grant continued. "Manfred's here. It's time we get to work. Will make contact again but can't say for sure when."

"I'll call SECDEF with the update. Good luck, Captain."

Grant switched off the radio and pulled the headphones off. A strong smell of coffee hit his senses, as Manfred poured the brew into each mug.

"Something hot to begin the day with, my friends."

Grant raised the mug in thanks. "I've got a big favor to ask, Manfred, above and beyond the call."

The old man's creased, pale face seemed to light up with the prospect. Grant was giving him a new sense of purpose. "At last!" he exclaimed excitedly as he slapped his knee. "Tell me."

Adler rested his back against the narrow wooden shelves, obviously rough cut with a hand saw. His eyes settled on Manfred, thinking the man was just the way he pictured him. Grant described the old German as someone full of life with a deep sense of pride and patriotism, willing to take the risks necessary to help bring freedom back to the people of East Germany. Adler liked Manfred right off.

"We need to find out more about this Greta Verner," Grant said. "Lampson gave us the location of her uncle's place. It's about five miles from Bernau. How far is that from here, Manfred?"

After thinking a moment, Manfred responded, "About twenty-five kilometers." He quickly added, "Patrols should be minimal."

Grant nodded. "What's the countryside like around there?"

Manfred scratched his unshaven cheek. "Mostly flat, with some small rises and stands of trees."

"Any ground cover, you know, like bushes?"

"Some scattered clumps, but there are large boulders in that particular area, if that helps you."

"Sure does." Grant sipped his coffee. "We've also got an address of the flat she had in East Berlin."

Shaking his head, the old German responded, "Apartments are at a premium in the city, Captain. Once they are abandoned, new tenants quickly move in."

"I believe it, but Lampson said he continued paying her rent right up until we snatched him."

"That may not have been very wise."

Grant shrugged his shoulders. "Yeah, I know, but it may be just what we need now. The address is 331 Hufeland Strasse, Flat C."

Manfred shifted his weight and rubbed his leg. Grant sensed the old man was getting uncomfortable. He rose from the chair, pushed it closer, then patted Manfred's shoulder. "Sit down while Joe and I check our gear."

They dragged two rucksacks toward the wall opposite from where Manfred was sitting, then knelt on the compacted dark, brown earth. Their planning continued as they checked each item, skillfully preventing Manfred from getting too close of a look. Adler examined one of the five concussion grenades. Each device measured about 1-1/2" high and wide and 6" long. Black, hard pressed paper made up the shell that enclosed the explosive material inside. There wouldn't be any shrapnel when the grenade exploded because of the paper shell. He glanced at several quarter pound blocks of C4. The C4's color and substance resembles white modeling clay. Det cord could be used to connect multiple blocks of C4. The explosive could be formed to almost any shape, then exploded with something like a blasting cap or chemical pencil. The three inch chemical pencils contained a one inch ampoule of acetone, that when crimped would allow the acetone to eat away a plastic washer holding back a striker under spring tension. When the washer erodes, the spring drives the striker into the explosive detonator, setting off the device.

"So what's next?" Adler asked.



"I think we should make a sweep of the uncle's place. Manfred can drop us off and keep our gear in the truck."

Adler winked at Manfred and said, "Clever of you to have that false bottom in the bed of your truck, sir."

Manfred acknowledged the comment with a bow of his head and smiled. "It has come in handy many times. When I'm not carrying potatoes into Berlin, I bring in coal." A deep, hearty laugh exploded from within him. "You, my friends, will become coal miners, hidden beneath layers of black coal."

Adler grinned. "I can think of some worse places I've been, sir!"

Grant zipped up the rucksack, stood and walked over to the cot, propping his foot on the edge and resting his arm on top of his knee. "After Manfred picks us up from the uncle's place, he can drive us into the city. Once we've made it past the guards, we'll head for the factory. Manfred's already checked it out and said there's plenty of activity and that'll be to our advantage. Welders are putting in long hours working on barge components. So we should be able to get away unnoticed. While you check out the flat, I'll check that tunnel."

"You got the key to the flat that Lampson gave you?" Adler asked.

"It's in that leather case," Grant answered as he pointed at Adler's gear.

"You think she's made any appearances there since we got Lampson?"

Grant shook his head. "Doubt it, unless there was something special she needed."

Adler rubbed his eyes, eyes that were tired and bloodshot. "What kind of timeframe are we talking?"

"I'll meet you at the flat. We'll hang out there till just before daylight and Manfred can meet us." He pulled his knife from a leather sheath and ran the razor-sharp edge across the back of his wrist.

"Think we'll have any unexpected company while we're there?" Adler smirked.

With the tip pointed toward the ceiling, Grant swiveled the weapon back and forth in front of his face, a weapon that had seen him through a few life and death encounters. With a cold stare that could send a violent chill up anyone's back but Adler's, he responded in a deep, low voice, "If we do, then that'll just be their bad luck, won't it?"

He looked at the old man, who'd drifted off to sleep, his head sagging down. His chest rose and fell in steady rhythm with his snoring. Grant poked an elbow against Joe's arm, motioning with his head. "It's been a long day for all of us. We'd better catch some Zs, too."

Adler stood and brushed dirt from his pants. "Should we wake him up?"

Grant shook his head, then reached for a blanket on the end of the cot. He draped it over the front of Manfred, drawing it up to the man's whiskered chin.

"Why don't you take the cot?" Adler said, as he was spreading another blanket on the ground. "You know I'm the camping type. Besides, you senior officers do need your Sealy's."

Grant reached for his flashlight and shot its beam directly into Adler's eyes. "How's your night vision?"

Adler blinked and chuckled. "Smart ass... sir!"

Grant dimmed the kerosene lamp, then tucked the flashlight under his pillow. He folded his arms behind his head, staring up towards the trapdoor that

concealed their presence. Shards of light from the early morning sun penetrated irregular spaces between the weathered roof timbers covering the shed, making their way down through knot holes in the trapdoor. Grant stared at the beams of light, feeling his body breaking out in a cold sweat, and hearing his heart pounding in his ears. His eyes locked onto the pencil-thin light beams, bringing back images in his mind that were all too real, all too unsettling.

\* \* \* \* \*

As a kid living in California, he and two friends had been buried in an underground pipe by a rockslide. A grate had covered an old water shed drain that had been condemned. As soon as the kids went in, it collapsed.

Grant's mind went back to that time, seeing again the light beams through the rocks and the crumpled grate that had caused a slight air space for them to survive until they were rescued nearly twelve hours later. It wasn't the only time Grant Stevens had felt as though he was trapped like an animal.

In February of 1969, Grant and Chief Marty Kilborn parachuted behind enemy lines into North Vietnam, just above the DMZ (demilitarized zone). Their mission—locate and destroy an NVA (North Vietnamese Army) communication's and mortar site set up inside a former POW camp. But something went terribly wrong. Their mission had been compromised—a leak. The NVA had laid a trap. The two SEALs had hidden themselves just outside the perimeter of the camp, observing the activity for a full day and night. The plan called for them to set off the explosives by 0200 hours, then get the hell out before the air strike.

After the guards around the main hut had been eliminated, they were preparing to set the explosives when Grant's instincts started talking to him. But it was too late. A booby-trapped floor blew up, throwing him and Kilborn into a ten foot deep pit, both of them knocked unconscious. Debris of wood, palm fronds, and dirt rained on top of them, covering their existence. But the hole would become their safe refuge, and as they regained consciousness, the air strike began. Minutes later, an eerie quiet settled over them. The filth and smells of the hell hole made it obvious they weren't the first to occupy the pit. American POWs suffered and probably died there. That's what touched Grant Stevens so deeply. As the dust cleared, the SEALs scrambled out of the pit, racing through the thick jungle to the LZ, waiting for extraction.

When Manfred first brought him to this safe room, he had fleeting moments of those same memories, those same feelings. Thanks to Manfred's company and all the years that had allowed him to deal with his personal monster, he was able to shake off those feelings—but never completely.

### **East Germany – 0700 Hours**

Two figures, with rucksacks slung over their shoulders and running in a zigzag pattern, came down a knoll on the western side of the property. Covering the ground beneath drooping boughs of fir trees, patches of ice crystals from an early morning frost crunched beneath their shoes. Grant and Adler finally lodged

themselves in between two rock formations approximately 1,200 yards from the farmhouse.

The tree line came within one hundred fifty yards of the cottage where Lampson and Greta had stayed. The shingled main house was situated a hundred yards in front of it. Access to the house was provided by an irregular, compacted dirt drive, stretching fifty feet from the house to as far as the eye could see. Firewood was stockpiled the whole length of the house on the southern side.

Adler had the binoculars pressed against his eyes, watching for any movement in and around the farm. "Don't see any sign of life," he confirmed.

Manfred told them that if the farmers wanted to make their living off the land, they had to join an agricultural co-op. Grant pointed to a section of land directly ahead of them, on the southern side of the property. "Looks like that area was farmed at one time, but not lately. Any farm equipment?"

Adler made another sweep with the binoculars. "No barn, no equipment."

The smell of pine and smoke from distant fireplaces mingled in the air, being carried on a northerly breeze. "On a cold morning like this, wouldn't you expect to see some smoke from that fireplace?" Grant asked.

"Yeah, I caught a whiff as we came over the rise, but it must've come from the place we passed in the truck."

"You thinking what I'm thinking?"

Adler secured the binoculars in the sack. "You bet. You wanna go knock on the door?" he grinned.

"Let's not get carried away here," Grant responded as he pulled a .45 from his shoulder holster. He ejected the clip, checked it, rammed it back up into the handle, then jacked back the slide. He gave Adler a sideways glance. "Leave the gear here. You go first."

"Well, shit, I guess your rank still has its privileges," Adler responded. "I'll take the northern route." Grant nodded his acknowledgment.

Adler took off first, crouching low as he ran toward the north side of the main house. When he reached the building he pressed his back against the wooden planks, holding the Uzi close, its muzzle pointed upward. He watched Grant running across the field and waited till he'd disappeared on the opposite side of the house.

Grant backed up as close as he could to the pile of firewood, inching closer to a single, shuttered window. He shot a quick glance around the property before peering into the window. Except for basic furnishings, the house appeared to be unoccupied. Still wary, he crept toward the front, seeing Adler poke his head cautiously around the corner.

Both men edged their way slowly toward the front door. Adler reached for the door handle. As he started to depress the latch with his thumb, he glanced at Grant, who nodded, giving him the go ahead. The latch offered no resistance; the door was unlocked. Adler entered first, stepping in at a forty-five degree angle, scanning the room, sweeping his Uzi side to side. Grant came in directly behind him, moving off to the left. After a brief search, they were satisfied the place was empty.

"Check the bedrooms," Grant motioned with his firearm. "See if you can find anything with a name on it. Lampson said the uncle's was *Karl Verner*." Adler

nodded, checking the one bedroom on the first floor, then he cautiously climbed up the narrow wooden stairwell leading to the loft.

Grant lifted the oven door latch and opened the square iron door. Piles of cold ashes lay on the bottom. He reached for a poker, then sifted through the ashes but found nothing. He turned his attention to the cupboards and began opening and closing doors. In the last cupboard he spotted what looked like the corner of an envelope that had been pushed to the back of a shelf at eye level. He slid it toward him. "Joe!"

Adler came down the stairs, taking them two at a time. "Find something?"

"Bingo!" He handed the letter to Adler.

Adler read the name and address. "So, who do you think this *Eberhard Weimar* is? Wait a minute. Son of a bitch!" Adler blurted out. "If this guy owned the property, what the hell do you think they did with him?"

Grant shrugged his shoulders. "Anything's possible."

"Maybe Manfred was able to find out something more in town."

"Maybe. Look, you go scope out the cottage and look for any indication there might be a grave. I'll keep looking in here."

Fifteen minutes later, Adler came back. "Any luck?" Grant asked as he walked toward the door.

"Only these." Alder opened his hand, revealing a pair of white baby socks. "Found them under a dresser."

"That just proves they were here, but we don't know much more than when we walked through the door. Any sign of a grave?"

"Ground looks like it hasn't been disturbed for a long time."

Grant brushed past Adler. "Come on. Let's get the hell outta here and meet Manfred."

## **1930 Hours**

An old flatbed truck sped along the roadway, heading west. Stacks of wooden racks were piled as high as the truck's cab. Fragile blocks of pressed coal (briquettes) were packed tightly inside each two by three foot rack to prevent them from disintegrating if the truck encountered rough terrain. Stretched out like fallen statues in a concealed compartment beneath the bed of the truck, the two Americans felt as if they were in a coffin. Already prepared for any heavy gas fumes that would be invading the confined space, they had their oxygen masks in place.

The truck began to slow, the sound of the engine winding down as Manfred shifted gears. A sudden backfire jolted the two passengers. They automatically gripped the handles of their .45s on their chests. The vehicle came to a complete stop at the checkpoint. Voices could barely be distinguished above the din of the engine. One of the East German soldiers, part of the German Democratic Republic Border Command, checked Manfred's papers, while the other walked slowly around the truck. The stop and inspection was cursory on their part, since the old German had become a familiar subject to them. Balancing his AK47 against the truck, Private Stoltz hopped up onto the rear of the bed. He bent down and lifted

one of the coal racks then yelled to Corporal Voigt, "Here! Take this!" The corporal slung his rifle over his shoulder, and reached up to take the rack, holding it high as another was placed on top.

Grant and Adler kept their breathing slow and steady, ready to react, until they felt the truck lurch forward and heard the gears grind.

As Manfred passed through the checkpoint, he broke out in a wide smile, stretching from ear to ear. Maybe tonight he had lost another two racks of coal, but they were certainly the most satisfying loss he'd experienced to date. He whistled a tune from his boyhood years, remembering days of freedom.

The truck made numerous sharp right- and left-hand turns, traveling at no more than 25 kph, eventually coming to a stop. Manfred parked the truck at the back of the factory where vehicles were being loaded. He opened the door, then slid off the seat, wincing when his feet landed on the hard pavement, the jolt sending a shooting pain up his leg. Taking a final look around, he tapped twice on the truck bed. A side door on the hidden compartment opened then hung from its hinges. Grant and Adler rolled out, and quickly made a dash into the shadows. Manfred, meanwhile, unloaded two coal racks, taking them one at a time into the factory office.

Once they were clear of the factory, Grant said, "See you at the flat." Adler gave a thumb's up then headed toward the eastern part of the city. Grant tugged on the baseball cap, then slung a burlap sack over his shoulder, his facemask and snorkel hidden inside. He opted not to take his large swim fins. It would be easier and faster without them when it came time to exit the water. His powerful legs would be more than adequate.

There was still a lot of traffic. Pedestrians crowded the sidewalks. Grant maneuvered through the crowds, finding his way through the city as if he were reading a map in his mind. He paused momentarily at a bridge overpass, glancing casually up and down the river, trying to visualize the blueprint. Then he proceeded to follow the river in a southeasterly direction. After nearly twenty more minutes of walking, traffic had thinned to practically nil. He hadn't passed another pedestrian for over a half mile. Along the route he noticed that most of the small shops were boarded up. Obviously, this wasn't a popular place. Not far ahead of him, just beyond the shops, were two apartment buildings. Two to one that was the place. All he had to do was find that pipe and see if it led to the lab. Simple. Right!

For several blocks the entire area was void of lighting. He scoped out the riverfront, eyeing several tree limbs overhanging close to the water. He circled around and came in from the opposite side of the trees, staying in their shadows. With a final look around, he stripped off his outer clothes, removed the facemask and snorkel from the bag, then shoved his clothes into it. His black wetsuit allowed him to blend into the darkness even more. He looked overhead, then crammed the bag into a crook of the tree, ensuring it was wedged in tightly. It was time to hit the water. He got down on his belly and crawled toward the water, disappearing beneath the surface in an instant.

Staying close to the shoreline, he went down as deep in the river as he could, anticipating the pipe to be within fifty yards. Squinting through his mask, he pulled up suddenly, seeing the object of his search directly in his path. Still having

plenty of air in his lungs, but not knowing how long his swim through the pipe would take, he slowly ascended, until his eyes cleared the surface. Seeing no one, he exhaled sharply, expelling a fine spray of water from the snorkel. Sucking in a fresh lungful of air, he disappeared beneath the surface again.

At the entrance of the pipe, he pulled a flashlight from a hook on his belt then pointed the light ahead of him, swiveling it side to side. He felt a slight current flowing into the pipe. He reasoned there shouldn't be any current, unless there was an opening up ahead.

He would allow himself a round trip swim time of three minutes. Throwing caution aside, and considering what he had to accomplish, he kicked his legs hard. The tiny beam from the flashlight didn't allow him to see too far in the distance, but he'd been in worse circumstances than this. He continued kicking and glanced at his watch. Ninety seconds, he thought. Already past the time he had allotted himself, he was about to stop when he heard a noise in the distance that sounded like rushing water. The sound increased as he continued on. Aiming his flashlight off to the right, he spotted a ladder rising out of the darkness. He grabbed hold of a rung, and looked up to see a metal hatch. He had seen plenty of those. The hatch resembled an escape hatch on a submarine.

Without wasting any more time, he climbed four rungs, finally able to bring his head out of the water. He grabbed hold of the wheel and gave it a couple of turns. All he could hope was that no one was standing on the opposite side. From what Lampson was able to get out of Steiner, work in the lab was allowed only during daytime hours; but that didn't mean Steiner told him the truth.

Gradually raising the heavy cover, he stood on the top rung and poked his head through the opening. Letting the snorkel dangle from its strap, he breathed in, recognizing a faint odor. Chemicals. Scrambling through the hatch, he crouched low, finding himself inside a tunnel made up of the same type of pipe he just swam through. Overhead, bare light bulbs were strung from wire every twenty feet down the tunnel as far as he could see. This had to be one of their escape routes. He sealed the hatch, then started making his way through the pipe, all his senses on full alert. He was grateful that a smooth walkway had specifically been laid inside this portion of the pipe, his bare feet feeling its cool dampness.

He'd only traveled about fifty feet when another passage broke off to his left, lights strung from it as well. "Shit!" His voice echoed inside the metal casement. He tried to picture in his mind the route he'd been following as if he were above at ground level. It made sense that an escape route would lead under a road then probably exit in another basement. It wasn't likely they'd take a water route like he just did.

After another five minutes of half-jogging through the tunnel, he spotted less than twenty-feet ahead of him a plain, steel door with a ball-type doorknob. A steady humming noise somewhere overhead made him direct the flashlight beam along the top curve of the pipe. An exhaust fan was left running, drawing odors out of the room and into the tunnel, explaining why he smelled the chemicals early on.

He closed his eyes, trying to listen for the sound of any human voices coming from the other side, but all he heard was the steady drone of the fan. He had to take a chance and hope luck was with him. He unzipped his wetsuit then removed

a waterproof plastic case containing an electronic lock-opening device. He selected a pick from the carrying case, inserted one end into the device, the other into the lock, then switched on the device. Inside the lock, pins were being bounced around until they were in alignment. Piece of cake, he quipped. The lock clicked. He put the device back inside the case then slipped it into his wetsuit. Cautiously turning the knob, he pulled on the heavy door, cracking it just enough to be able to take another listen. The room was pitch black and quiet as a tomb.

He stepped in, making a quick 360-degree scan with the flashlight's small beam. He guessed it to be barely fifteen feet square, but every inch was jam packed with tables and lab equipment. There weren't any closed cabinets, only open shelving, leaving everything in full view. He moved the light across the ceiling and focused on a set of collapsible steps. They were encased in a wooden framework that was anchored to the ceiling in the middle of the lab. From what he could figure, the steps led to the basement of the building. He walked over to the counter and began picking up glass canisters, reading each label. "All the right ingredients," he mumbled. He lifted the lids of cardboard boxes, looking for notes but found none. He shone the light on his watch. It was already 2215 hours. It was time to make that call to Grigori then head for the flat.

Paramount in his mind was the fact that civilian casualties had to be avoided. Then again, from what he could see during his little jaunt to this place, civilians seemed to avoid this end of town like the plague. He already decided on the explosives he'd be using. As soon as he closed the door of the lab, he took a reading on his compass, and then jogged back through the tunnel effortlessly, making mental notes of distance and direction, finally reaching the hatch. The swim back to the Spree and his original point of departure would be a breeze. He could only hope he didn't drip too much water once he had on his civilian clothes.

He made his way down alleys, around the backs of buildings, trying to stay out of sight as much as possible. Traffic was merely a trickle. Twenty-five minutes after leaving the river, he was in a phone booth on Kruegstrasse. He took a quick glance around before dialing a twelve digit number that would ring a phone in Moscow.

After three rings, there was a series of beeps. Once they stopped, Grant spoke in impeccable Russian, leaving a coded message made up entirely of a series of numbers. There was no need to expect any voice response from this particular phone call. It was similar to what was known as a *blind transmission*, when a person transmits a message without expecting a response. He immediately hung up and left the phone booth, making haste for his rendezvous with Adler.

## **Moscow, Russia**

Seated at the mahogany desk in his study, Grigori Moshenko listened to the familiar voice on the tape. He deciphered the message as each number was spoken. There was the sound of the connection breaking, then a steady dial tone. He immediately pressed the erase button on the recorder then pulled the cassette from the machine. He pushed the chair away from the desk, and then walked toward a massive fireplace, built of irregularly shaped brown stones. Pulling a

length of the magnetic tape from inside its protective case, he tore it in half. He felt the warmth on his hands from the intensely burning logs as he tossed in the tape then watched the plastic case melt.

Dangling from the side of his mouth was a Davidoff Grand Gru cigar, with an inch long charred gray ash hanging precariously from the tip. After flicking the cigar ash into the fireplace, he rested his hand on the rough hewn hardwood mantel, made from the piece of Russian oak he'd brought back from a trip to Odessa. Staring at the burning, orange embers, he seemed mesmerized as he watched them flutter like fireflies, floating upward, finally disappearing in the chimney. Once he had assured himself the tape was entirely destroyed, he took a step away from the fireplace and sat down slowly on a large upholstered chair. A good warm fire, with its crackling and hissing, relaxed his mind and body.

A light tapping on the door made him turn. "Yes?"

The door opened and his wife, Alexandra, called quietly, "Grigori?"

"Come, Alexandra," he smiled and waved her over to him.

She carried a glass of hot Russian tea then placed it on the table by his chair before leaning over and kissing him lightly. As she did, a wisp of her dark brown hair caressed his cheek. He reached for her hand, feeling the smooth wedding ring, one she'd worn for twenty-six years, twenty-seven next January.

"You've spent so many hours working and worrying these past months," she said in nearly a whisper. She tenderly ran a hand across his receding hairline, smoothing back jet black hair.

He took her hand in both of his, caressing her long, slender fingers, then looked up into her gentle, brown eyes. "You go to bed and stay warm," he smiled. "I'll be with you shortly."

When she reached the door, she turned her head and looked at him over her shoulder, saying demurely, "I'll be waiting." He responded with a smile.

After the door closed, he picked up the cigar from the ashtray. He stared at the burning cigar with its tawny brown wrapper, rolling it between his fingers as his mind started creating a plan. An inspection tour will do nicely. One of the early Aeroflot flights would get him to East Berlin in plenty of time. His American friend, Grant Stevens, needed his help.

A familiar aroma from the hot tea drifted into his senses. He breathed in then reached for the glass, picking it up by its gold-plated handle. The rim of the glass was hot against his lips as he sipped the tea. He immediately tasted the Ryabinovka-flavored vodka, steeped with ash berries. He smacked his lips then raised the glass and said softly to himself, "Ahh. Thank you, my dear Alexandra."

His eyes strayed to the crackling fire as a spark leaped onto the fieldstone base skirting the fireplace. He sipped again on the vodka-laced tea, then let his head fall back against the chair. Appearing in his mind was a visual replay of his first encounter with the then Lieutenant Grant Stevens.

\* \* \* \* \*

The British Navy had requested assistance from the Americans following the crash of its sleek British bomber, the delta-winged Vulcan, in the northern Mediterranean. Remnants of the aircraft began to surface off the coast of Portugal. Initial reports released to the media were sketchy, at best. The crew was presumed



dead, but the search was continuing. The U.S. Navy sent in its DSRV (deep submersible rescue vehicle). Grant was the OIC (Officer in Charge) of the dive team.

The Kalinin, a Soviet Kresta-class cruiser, had been tracking the British and American ships. As expected, the Soviets offered their assistance and were diplomatically turned down by the British. But it was much more than just concern or morbid curiosity that brought the Russians to the scene. The Vulcan was carrying a nuclear bomb, still yet to be recovered.

At the time, Moshenko was working with the Main Intelligence Directorate, the GRU, in their special services unit, the Spetsnaz. He was assigned to intelligence duties aboard the Kalinin, using the cover of a helicopter pilot, in that his background included 1500 hours of flying the KA-25. The chopper was equipped with search-radar in an under nose radome. After lifting off the cruiser, Moshenko hovered the chopper close to the recovery site.

Grant, dressed out in his wetsuit, was in a rubber boat, directing operations. He glanced up at the chopper for an instant, and shook his head in disgust as if to say, "Back off!"

His eyes were still glued to the helicopter when a noise like an extremely loud backfire echoed across the sky. Smoke began billowing from the chopper's motor. The KA-25 suddenly started rocking back and forth, nose up and tail down. Moshenko lost total control as it began to gyro-rotate, its body spinning the opposite of the rotor blades. The Mediterranean, ninety feet below, was approaching at what seemed like blinding speed. The engine sputtered and died just as the aircraft hit the water, belly first. An explosion of sea water burst outward. Moshenko felt as if his spine was being rammed up into his skull from the force of the impact. One of the tail fins snapped off, back-spinning across the water, but somehow, the rest of the aircraft remained intact. The lock on the sliding cargo door snapped from the force, sending the door back on its track. Water rushed in through the wide opening, causing the chopper to list to starboard. Moshenko hit the release on his safety belt but it jammed. Pulled in tight against the backrest, he had no way to wriggle out of the harness. The more he struggled, the tighter it got, and water was gurgling all around him.

As soon as the chopper started going down, Grant ordered the coxswain to fire up the engine and head for it. He shouted to Chief Cole in the other boat to take over operations. As the rubber boat skimmed over the two foot swells, Grant knelt down in the center, steadying himself as he worked quickly to put on his scuba tank, fins and mask. The coxswain pulled back on the throttle. The boat was still fifty feet from the chopper when Grant hit the water.

By now, the helo was almost totally underwater, only the tip of a red star on its remaining twin tail fin was visible. One rotor blade poked up through the water's surface. Grant stroked like hell, finally coming close to the front starboard side of the chopper. Sunlight filtered through the blue-green sea water, making visibility crystal-clear. He immediately spotted someone in the cockpit. Recognizing the chopper as a KA-25, he knew it would be fruitless to try and open the pilot-side door. He swam directly for the open cargo bay, propelling himself to the forward section, pulling his knife from his thigh strap. The chopper was beginning to sink faster, as if being drawn downward by a powerful magnet.

Moshenko was still struggling when Grant swam up behind him. He floated in next to Moshenko, sucked in another lungful of air, then pulled the mouthpiece from his mouth and shoved it against Moshenko's. The Soviet breathed in deeply and quickly while Grant slashed at the safety belt with his knife. Moshenko handed the mouthpiece back to Grant as Grant pulled him from the seat. They swam back through the cargo bay toward the open door. They were seconds away from being at the hundred foot depth, when oxygen from the tank would be useless. The bends, every diver's fear, could soon become reality.

Grant had just guided Moshenko through the opening when the chopper suddenly listed to port. The motion of the chopper caused the flexible blades to shimmy. A tip sliced through the flesh of Moshenko's right calf. The Soviet's mouth opened in a scream, air bubbles gushed out. Grant pulled him closer, shoving the mouthpiece back into his mouth. He glanced down, seeing the blood being diluted by sea water, pouring from the deep wound. He pointed up, motioning for Moshenko to continue breathing as they ascended. He could only hope the Soviet understood and didn't hold his breath during the ascent. Moshenko nodded, acknowledging Grant's instructions but he was in obvious pain. With one hand hanging onto the Soviet's sleeve, Grant did a *blow and go*, sending out a steady stream of bubbles, releasing all the air in his lungs as they made their way to the surface.

Now, in the sanctuary and comfort of his own home, Grigori Moshenko found himself sweating. Whether imaginary or real, he reached down and massaged the ache in his calf. Even Soviets have their own demons to confront every now and then.

## Chapter 9

### Hufeland Strasse – East Berlin

A city alive during the day now rested quietly beneath a suspended gray crown of smoke being discharged from fireplaces and factories throughout the city. The top floor of a ten-story, nineteenth century tenement building seemed to vanish within a cloud of smoke. The lower exterior of the concrete mass was still battered and pock-marked, a testimonial to wartime bombings. The state began renovating many of the apartments, although most were still considered to be very under-modernized.

Grant waited patiently as he hid in the alley across from the building where he and Adler were to meet. Close to midnight, most of the lights in the apartments had already been extinguished. Like a jungle cat, he moved quietly, unseen, making his way to the doorway, then immediately disappeared inside the building. A wooden staircase was directly in front of him, the first of three floors he'd have to encounter. With Lampson's description clear in his mind, he made a dash up the stairs, hanging close to the wall where the steps were more secure, less likely to give him away. In what seemed like seconds, he was at 3C, tapping out a

prearranged signal. The lock clicked and he squeezed through the partially open door into a pitch dark room.

Dampness and a distinct musty odor hit his senses as soon as he stepped into the flat, making it obvious no one had lived there for some time. Adler immediately closed the door, set the lock, then turned on a flashlight. He shoved a throw rug up against the bottom of the door to help prevent any light from being seen from the hallway. He motioned for Grant to follow him into the kitchen, where a dark blanket had already been draped across the only window. He switched on a dim light hanging above a square wooden table that was covered by a worn piece of red oilcloth.

Grant stripped off his outer layer of clothes, then his wetsuit. He redressed, and after rolling up the wetsuit, he stuffed it into the burlap bag. Already suspecting the walls were paper thin, he kept his voice low. "Find anything of interest?"

"Clean as a whistle, almost like somebody wiped it down. No papers, no pictures... zippo." Grant was tying his sneakers when Adler asked, "How about you? Any luck?"

One side of Grant's mouth curved up into a smile. "Target acquired!"

"Outstanding! What's next?"

"Gotta wait till I meet with Grigori."

"Your usual place?" Adler asked.

"That's affirmative."

Adler jokingly asked, "How about a snack before bedtime?" He pushed a paper bag across the table.

"Assume you've already eaten your share," Grant commented as pulled out bread and a chunk of cheese. His knife sliced through the muenster as if it were softened butter. He popped the cheese into his mouth, when suddenly he and Adler froze.

They snapped their heads around, staring at the door, hearing a creaking from the wooden steps. Grant took a firm grip on his knife as he slowly pushed himself away from the table. Adler drew his .45 from his shoulder holster. After a series of hand signals, Adler extinguished the overhead light.

Their eyes adjusted quickly to the darkness, and in complete silence, they took their positions. Adler concealed himself just beyond the bedroom doorway. Grant flattened himself against a wall next to the door. Using his foot, he slowly drew the throw rug to the side. Immediately, a shaft of light breached the space beneath the door. A moment later, the sound of approaching footsteps suddenly stopped. Grant looked down, waiting, as a shadow appeared underneath the door. He re-gripped the knife, holding the cold steel blade close to his cheek. The unseen stranger tapped on the door. Then, a key was inserted into the lock and the door was slowly pushed open.

Grant tensed as he watched a head poke around the door, and a stranger called softly, "Greta?" A man walked into the room and closed the door.

As rapid as the blink of an eye, Grant's hand clasped over the man's mouth, the razor-sharp edge of his knife pressed against the jugular. Adler immediately ran from the bedroom, stopping directly in front of the man, shining a flashlight into his face. A look of absolute terror clearly showed in the stranger's eyes. Grant slid

the knife blade to just above the Adam's apple, applying a slight pressure, then he slowly removed his hand from the man's mouth.

Adler grabbed the front of the man's shirt, dragging him toward the middle of the living room, the whole time Grant kept pressure on the knife. Keeping his voice low and menacing and speaking in German, Adler said, "I want you to keep your voice quiet, do you understand?" The German nodded. "Now," Adler said, "who are you?"

The only word that escaped from the German's lips was a shaky, "Nein!"

"We've got all night, friend, but I can guarantee that you don't," Adler gruffly whispered close to the man's face, a smell of beer evident on the German's breath.

Grant felt the man's body start to go limp. He slid a chair over with his foot, then roughly pushed him into the seat, the knife still lodged in place.

Adler leaned closer. "One more time... who are you?"

The man blinked. "Otto... Neus."

Adler glanced quickly at Grant, who shrugged his shoulders, indicating that he didn't recognize the name. "Good response, Otto. Now, why are you here?"

"I... I wanted to see if Greta had returned."

"Did you tell anyone you were coming here?"

"Nein."

"How'd you like my friend to give you some breathing room, Otto?" Adler asked.

"Ja! Ja!" he pleaded, remembering to talk quietly.

Grant removed the knife, but kept the cold, flat blade resting on Neus' shoulder. The German felt pressure from a strong hand pressing down on his opposite shoulder, ensuring he remained in the chair.

"Okay, Otto, you said you wanted to see if Greta had returned. Returned from where?"

"I don't know. She just disappeared after we..." It was too late to retract his statement.

"We? Who is *we*?"

Neus felt the sharp point of the knife jab at his jugular, making him freeze. Beads of sweat began trickling down his temples. His knuckles turned white as his hands gripped the edges of the seat. "I... I cannot tell you."

"Sure you can," Adler said with a smirk. "Give it a try."

Grant ran the point of the knife up and down the side of the German's neck, persuading him to blurt out, "Klaus. Klaus Steiner."

Adler looked up at Grant who motioned with his head. Still blinded from the harsh light, Neus blinked rapidly, trying to refocus. He could hear only whispers from the two strangers.

Adler said, "My friend and I are going to have a chat while you stay here." He unrolled a length of cord, tying the prisoner's ankles to the chair legs. Then he ordered, "Hands behind your back." Grant took a strip of cord and tied the German's hands, as Adler shoved part of a small towel into Neus' mouth. The Americans backed up into the kitchen, continuing to keep their voices at a whisper.

"Looks like you were right about the FSG taking the kids," Adler said.

"Yeah, but this opens up a whole shitload of questions."

Adler nodded. "What are we gonna do with him?" he asked as he motioned with his thumb over his shoulder.

Grant took a step away from the stove. "I think this guy's terrified of Steiner." Deep in thought, he walked over to the window, then went back to Adler. "Somehow we've gotta get him out of here. We still need to extract more information from him."

"Same way we came in?"

Grant nodded. "When Manfred shows up with his load of coal, it'll be you and Otto making the return trip. You'll have to do the interrogation."

"I can do that," Adler grinned.

"You still got those syringes with *knockout drops*, right?"

"In the rucksack. Three cc's each; should be enough to keep him quiet for awhile."

"Once you're underway, I'll head out for my meeting with Grigori. I'll rely on him to help get me out of the city." Both of them turned their heads, looking at the shadowy form of Otto Neus, sitting stone-still. "See if you can find something for a blindfold."

Grant walked behind the German. Neus' body tensed. His mouth went dry from feeling the presence of his unseen, knife-wielding captor. Adler handed Grant a strip of bed sheet. Neus tried to jerk his head aside as Grant tied the blindfold in place.

Adler walked around and stood in front of Neus, saying, "Afraid you're going for a little ride, Otto." The bound and gagged German saw his life pass before his eyes, a deep groan rising from his throat.

Grant glanced at his watch. They still had an hour before Manfred was scheduled to show up. May as well keep the conversation going, he thought. He motioned to Adler, who removed the gag from the German's mouth.

Neus coughed, then took some short, quick breaths before asking, "Are you going to kill me?"

Adler ignored the question. "Tell us where the children are."

"I don't know." He heard Grant move behind him, anticipating the feel of the cold steel. "I swear! I don't know! Klaus didn't tell me."

"What was Greta to you?"

"We were... lovers... before Brennar came along." Grant's eyebrow shot up. This is getting very interesting.

"I want you to think carefully about your next answer, Otto. Is Brennar the father of those children?"

Neus tilted his head slightly, as if the question were absurd. "Of course. Greta told me they were."

Grant signaled time was up; they had to prepare to meet Manfred. Neus nearly came off the seat when he suddenly felt the cloth touch his lips before being roughly shoved into his mouth. Adler grabbed hold of Neus' elbow, assisting him in getting up. His legs were untied, then his wrists retied in front of him. His jacket was buttoned to the top then his collar pulled up, his blond hair hanging over it. The next thing he knew, he was being half dragged, half carried down the stairs, with Grant and Adler each holding onto an arm. When they reached the

main landing, Grant kept an iron grip on Neus' arm while Adler scoped out the alley, returning in seconds, saying softly, "Schnell."

Manfred was ready for them and had opened the hidden compartment door. Even though he was surprised to see the German, he remained quiet and stood aside while the Americans did their work.

Adler pulled a syringe from the rucksack, snapped his finger against it, then squirted a small amount into the air, ensuring there weren't any bubbles. Grant held Neus' arm in a vice-like grip. Veins in the back of the German's hand made an easy target for Adler, and within seconds, the sodium pentothal took effect. The German's knees buckled from under him. They pulled the gag from his mouth, then rolled him into the compartment. Adler crawled in next to him and quickly adjusted the oxygen masks. He gave a thumb's up and Grant secured the hinged door. Grant patted Manfred on his back and the old man climbed into the cab of the truck, giving Grant a wink as he drove away.

Once again looking like another East Berliner going off to work, Grant slung the sack over his shoulder and headed for his rendezvous with Grigori Moshenko.

## Chapter 10

### East Berlin – Day 5

Early morning shadows began creeping down the curb outside a cafe, stretching themselves across gutters and into the street. Sputtering motorbikes, popular and inexpensive modes of transportation, passed up and down the narrow road. Puffs of white smoke sputtered from the exhausts, expelling acrid fumes. A sound of clanking bottles and wooden crates echoed from the alley next to the cafe as a delivery truck driver prepared to make early morning rounds.

Seated at a black wrought iron table beneath the café's gray and white awning, Grant occasionally glanced across the street at the grocery store. He spread a spoonful of honey on his second breakfast roll, while every once in awhile taking a quick, nonchalant look up and down the street. As he licked drops of honey from his fingers, he glanced in the direction of the chimes of a distant bell tower. Almost at that exact moment, a Soviet military officer appeared from around a corner, stopping momentarily on the curb a few yards from the cafe. Grant signaled for a waiter and asked for the check. The basic German Adler had taught him was more than sufficient to get him by. He handed the money to the waiter then waited for his change. Without being obvious, he leaned slightly, just enough to observe the uniformed officer.

The Russian was just about 5'10", with a solid, muscular body and short, black hair. Checking the traffic, he looked up the street. Then, turning back, his eyes made split-second contact with Grant's. Taking a puff from a cigar, Grigori Moshenko stepped off the curb and walked towards the grocery store.

Once on the other side, he paced up and down in front of the store, examining the food products meticulously displayed in the window. He intentionally fixed his

eyes on a reflection in the glass watching Grant Stevens cross the street then continue walking toward an alley, eventually disappearing from view. Moshenko entered the grocery store, nodding his head to a store clerk, and then walked towards the refrigerated glass case, pausing to look at a lavish array of meats and sausages.

Located near Alexanderplatz, the small but well-stocked grocery store catered to Soviet and East German government officials and military personnel. Already in business before the city was divided, the owner, Fritz Baumann, persuaded the new government to allow him to continue running the shop, even offering a monthly payoff to a designated party member. A simple, common man with vision and forethought, he devised a concealed room in the basement behind shelves stocked with goods. His intention was to eventually begin the construction of a tunnel for escapees. Baumann was easily recruited to become an operative for West Germany.

"Colonel Moshenko," Fritz Baumann called as he came from behind the counter. "It's so good to see you again." Moshenko merely nodded in acknowledgment. Baumann followed close behind, finally asking, "Is there anything special you are looking for?"

The Russian continued walking down the aisle, glancing at shelves stocked with colorful cans of tomatoes, imported olives and kippers. A steady stream of smoke rose from the cigar he now pointed at Baumann. "My wife has asked that I bring her some of those pickled eggs I purchased last time."

"Ahh, soleier," Baumann answered. "A new shipment is still packed in the basement. I haven't had time to stock the shelves. Would you like to come down with me? Perhaps you will see something else to bring home."

"Perhaps," Moshenko answered curtly.

Baumann led the way toward the back of the store. "If I remember correctly, you like Riesling, don't you?" Moshenko nodded. "You may want to look through the wine shelves, also. I purchased a new label recently." He called to his store clerk, as he reached for a notebook. "Freda, I'm taking the colonel downstairs to look through the new supplies. I'll take a quick inventory of the caviar while I'm down there. Take care of any customers." The gray-haired woman adjusted her white apron and nodded.

A strong, pungent smell of sausage drifted up the stairwell as the two men made their way to the basement. Once the basement door had been closed, Moshenko shook Baumann's hand. "Your help is once again appreciated, Herr Baumann."

"It is my pleasure, Colonel." He gestured toward the secret panel. "Take as long as you wish."

Grant was sitting on the corner of a small table, swinging one leg back and forth, a wide grin spreading across his face when Moshenko came in. "It's about time you showed up," he laughed as he stood then walked toward the Soviet.

Moshenko dropped the cigar butt on the irregular cement floor, grinding it with the heel of his boot. He threw his arms around Grant, slapping him on the back. "It's been a long time, my friend." Stepping back, he eyed the tall, good looking American up and down. "You are looking well." He poked a finger into Grant's rock-hard stomach muscles. "Still working out, I see."

"Have to keep up to Uncle Sam's standards," Grant grinned. "How's Alexandra?"

Moshenko put his cap on the table. "She is well; still keeps me in line, as you say," he laughed.

"Why don't you sit down, Grigori." Grant motioned to a wooden chair.

As he sat in the chair, Moshenko adjusted the position of a side holster holding his firearm, a 9mm Makarov automatic pistol. He immediately noticed Grant's expression change. "There's a serious problem?"

Grant nodded. "Yeah, you might say that. You know that project your country is presently funding here?"

"You are well informed. But then, I wouldn't have expected anything less," Moshenko responded trying to disguise a smile.

Kneading the muscles in the back of his neck, Grant continued. "I'm afraid your project's been compromised." Moshenko leaned forward, hanging on Grant's words. "We found out that the FSG has gotten its hands on a sizable portion of the formula."

The Russian's face turned grim. "My God."

"I'm afraid that's just the beginning." Grant got up and slowly walked across the room, glancing up at the single, glaring light bulb. He turned around to look at Moshenko, as he anchored his thumbs in his back pockets. "I've gotta apologize first, Grigori."

"You? For what?"

Grant expelled a breath of air through clenched teeth, then said almost apologetically, "It was one of our agents who passed some of the recipe to them."

"I'm assuming that what you are about to say is classified." Grant nodded. "Has your Admiral Torrinson been informed of your intentions to tell me?"

"Yes."

"Then, continue."

"Part of the agent's assignment was to find out what the FSG planned on doing with the drug. In order to do that, he had to get their full confidence, and by passing bits and pieces of the formula, he did just that. I might add that not all the information he gave them was accurate, but unfortunately, what he did give them was more than enough to put them close to bringing it together."

With a sick feeling in the pit of his stomach, Moshenko questioned, "You said *part of his assignment*?"

"He'd been working for the East Germans for over a year, Grigori, helping with the formula."

Moshenko gritted his teeth. "Were you aware of all this?"

Grant shook his head, as he leaned against the wall, folding his arms across his chest. "Had no idea. Without any explanation, we got orders to extract him. It was only after we completed the mission that we found out."

"And you know what the FSG's plans are, don't you?"

Grant nodded. "They're going to use it on you, Grigori, the Russian people, starting with the Kremlin during an upcoming conference."

Moshenko sucked in a lungful of air, stunned by the news. He ran a hand through his hair, shaking his head. "No one would listen to me. From the beginning I warned my superiors that this project was too dangerous to put entirely in the hands of the East Germans." He stood up, pacing the room a few times before stopping and looking up into Grant's concerned face. "But, knowing



you, my friend, you already have something in mind to resolve the situation, don't you?"

"Do you have any extra time on your hands today?"

"They believe I'm here on an inspection tour. I'm not expected to be back in Moscow for a couple of days."

"Good. How'd you like to take a trip to the country? I hear it's beautiful this time of year."

Moshenko trusted Grant to the utmost, not even questioning why. "I take it you are looking for me to, how do you say, *take a ride*?"

"Hitch a ride," Grant laughed. "I've got a couple of friends and one unexpected guest waiting."

"Would one of the friends be Joe Adler?"

"You got it."

Moshenko picked up his cap. Sliding his fingers along its brim, his lighthearted attitude quickly changed. "These are very serious times, Grant, very serious. It is best we handle this ourselves and explain later."

"I agree. The fewer involved, the better."

Moshenko put on his cap. "I'll be back in one hour. Be in the alley. We'll talk further during our ride."

Making his way through the basement storeroom, Moshenko remembered to select a bottle of good Riesling and two jars of pickled eggs. He met Baumann on the way and they left the storeroom together.

### **East Berlin Military Headquarters**

Colonel Helmut Durer felt the beads of perspiration spreading across his brow. He shifted nervously in the chair, his gray eyes staring at the general.

General Hermann Stauffenberg sat in his leather, high-backed armchair, with his fingers pressed together, tapping against his lips. "You still haven't found Eric Brennar. You still haven't found Greta Verner. Do you have any idea where they could be?" the general asked as he tugged on the cuffs of his shirt.

"Sir, we have watched all the airports and ports of call. No one has seen him. We believe he is still somewhere in Germany."

"*Somewhere?* Can you narrow that down?"

"Not at this time, sir."

Stauffenberg pushed himself away from the desk. He walked around to the front, stopping next to Durer's chair. "And the woman?"

"There are rumors that she's been disposed of, but that hasn't been confirmed."

The short, balding general walked toward the window. He spread apart two of the window blind slats and glanced across the parade field. Two rows of tanks and jeeps were lined up inside the perimeter of a high chain-link fence that had concertina barbed wire strung across the upper edge. Every vehicle bore the red star of Russia.

Stauffenberg pulled on the cord, raising the blind to the top of the window. "How many people are working this?" he asked while staring at a platoon of East

German soldiers standing at attention for daily inspection. Their AK47s were held at arm's length in front of their bodies.

"We have ten people in West Berlin, another ten in the Soviet Sector."

"Hmm." Stauffenberg picked at his lower teeth, peculiarly exposed from a jutting jawline. "I assume that money was the main motivating factor," he said as he looked at a piece of leftover sauerkraut he'd pulled from his tooth, now stuck to the tip of his index finger.

"As it usually is these days."

"You need to put more pressure on these people. Do you understand?"

"Yes, sir."

Stauffenberg gestured for Durer to leave. The officer immediately jumped to attention then saluted crisply. He turned on his heel and left.

Stauffenberg went behind his desk, glancing at the calendar. In a couple of days he was to attend a meeting at the Kremlin, one of several where he and his East German counterparts were invited. All members participated in discussing special interests. Questions would surely be raised by his Russian superiors concerning how the project for the virus was proceeding. The Russians knew Brennar was a vital link in seeing that the project was a success. In Stauffenberg's estimation it would take perhaps four to five weeks longer to complete the formula. His superiors might not be happy with that, but he was confident he could convince them the scientists were proceeding more slowly at this point just to ensure complete success.

He sat in his chair and picked up a ball-point pen, idly scribbling doodles on a folder. He'd been fortunate, so far, in keeping Brennar's escape under wraps. But what troubled him was that no word had come out of the West about Brennar's defection. In this day and age, defections were always front page news. It was as if Eric Brennar no longer existed.

\* \* \* \* \*

A radiant sun was not quite directly overhead as a four-door, 1976 Mercedes Benz was waved through the last East Berlin checkpoint without incident. Once it had traveled two miles beyond it, Moshenko pulled over to a secluded spot. He unlocked the trunk and Grant scrambled out. Within seconds, they continued on their way. The silver vehicle raced along a two-lane country road, heading east. Tires squealed on black pavement as the auto took the sharp curves at extraordinary speeds. Moshenko handled the wheel like a natural-born race car driver, one of the pleasures of his life.

With a cigar dangling from the side of his mouth, he said to Grant, "Now, my friend, tell me the rest of the story."

Twenty-five minutes later, and close to their destination, Grant leaned forward, his eyes scanning the road ahead. "Think you'd better slow down, Grigori. There's supposed to be a dirt road coming up on the right." Moshenko slowed the vehicle. "There. Twenty yards ahead."

The tires rolled over rocks and depressions. Heavy brush rubbed against the undercarriage as Moshenko guided the Mercedes along what was little more than a cow path. They had traveled nearly a mile when Grant said, "We'll have to ditch the car here, then hoof it for about a mile and a half."

"Hoof it?" Moshenko asked in his thick Russian accent. He laughed as he drove the car off the path, steering it toward a tall, thick growth of brush.

"Yeah, you know, *hike, take a walk*," Grant replied with a grin.

They both got out of the car and Moshenko looked at Grant over the roof, shielding his eyes from the sun's glare. "I like your American expressions! But I find I have to be careful during conversations with my Russian comrades. One day I may slip, and the consequences will be on your shoulders!"

Keeping up a pretty good pace, the two men made their way toward Manfred's farm, traveling across mostly open ground. After they had walked for close to fifteen minutes, Grant patted his friend's shoulder. "How ya doing?"

"Piece of cake!"

### **Manfred's Farm – Day 5**

Responding to a tap at the door, Manfred lifted the latch, and immediately stepped back, a stupefied expression covering his aged face. Never would he have expected to have a Russian military officer show up at his home. An image of his son, Hans, flashed in his mind and his heart pounded. Finally, he directed his eyes to Grant, who was standing next to the Soviet.

"It's okay," Grant said reassuringly, catching the unmistakable look of anger on the old man's pale face. Manfred nodded slowly, keeping his eyes riveted on Moshenko. Grant eliminated any introductions, keeping Moshenko's identity classified. "We'll talk later." Grant chastised himself for having subjected Manfred to a face-to-face with Moshenko, knowing his feelings toward Russians: Shit! Stupid mistake, Stevens. Never should've let him see Grigori.

Leading Moshenko to the shed, Grant signaled for him to stay quiet. Adler slid the bolt back then pushed up on the trapdoor. Grant peered down, seeing the dark form of Otto Neus sitting in a corner of the underground room, with his hands tied in front of him, his body lashed to the chair, a blindfold in place. Grant motioned for Adler to climb up the ladder, then they stepped outside and went around the back, surrounded by nothing but deserted, open fields.

"Colonel Moshenko," Adler said, still keeping his voice low, "it's good to see you, sir."

"And you, Joe," Moshenko responded with a smile, extending a hand.

"How's our friend?" Grant inquired.

"He was pretty groggy for awhile. Manfred gave him something to eat and drink. I can tell you one thing for certain. He's scared shitless."

"Steiner?"

"Steiner and his henchman, but he's not looking forward to meeting up with you again either."

Grant acknowledged the remark with a half smile. "I'll keep that in mind. Have you been able to get any more out of him?"

"You'll enjoy this one. With a little extra persuasiveness provided by yours truly and an added shot of *truth juice*, he said. Steiner told him the kids were safe at the uncle's place."

Grant frowned, as he ground his fist into his palm. Moshenko had remained quietly in the background but then asked, "You know this not to be true?"

"Like I mentioned before, the only evidence we found of any kids having been there were the socks. I doubt he disposed of the kids this early in the game." He rubbed his hand along his chin. "I've got a bad feeling. If my hunch is right, both Steiner and the East Germans are going on a hunt for Lampson."

"I agree," Adler nodded. "According to Otto, Steiner's a vengeful son of a bitch."

Grant turned toward the window, drawing question marks with his finger on the dirt-covered glass panes. Adler took a step closer to him. "What's wrong, boss?"

"I've been thinking about this since I talked with Lampson that day in the restaurant. It's gotta be somebody in the Embassy, Joe."

"Sir?"

Grant turned and faced the two men, then walked past them, thinking out loud. "Somebody from the Embassy passed information about Lampson."

"Not another goddamn spy!" Adler blurted out, referring to an incident two years prior that he and Grant had played a major role in.

Moshenko raised an index finger, moving it side to side at both men. "Ahh, but this time we are not responsible for this spy!"

Grant smiled. "I know, Grigori. Two to one the FSG got to him with either money or by blackmail."

Moshenko pulled a cigar from inside his dark green uniform jacket pocket. A gust of wind swirled around the shed. He turned around, shielding the match flame. "You know the backgrounds of these men in your Embassy?" he asked, facing Grant again.

Grant glanced in the direction of the main house, but didn't expect to see Manfred. The man knew when to stay in the background. "I don't have complete histories on all of them, but we can eliminate Matt Wharton right off the top."

The three men stood in silence, Adler and Moshenko anticipating Grant had something else on his mind. "This is gonna sound crazy, but I think I know how to keep Lampson safe, considering we can't trust a goddamn soul. And that's where you come in, Grigori."

"What can I do?" Moshenko asked, blowing out a stream of cigar smoke that immediately vanished in the swirling air.

"Take him to Poland."

Adler's jaw dropped. "Poland? You've gotta be shittin' me!"

"Think about it, Joe. If we flew him back to the States, word would get out, sure as shootin'. Poland's gotta be the last place anyone would look for him."

"You got that right!" Adler roared. He rested his hands on his hips, shaking his head. "And I was naive enough to think you'd grown attached to those four gold bars on your shoulders." Somewhere in his mind he imagined hearing the voice of a bellowing Torrinson and he remarked, "Shit! The Admiral's really gonna be pissed!"

"Not if he doesn't find out," Grant replied with a grin. "Besides, if the FSG doesn't know where he is, they've lost their ability to threaten him with those kids' lives. It'll be like cutting the cord." Grant also knew he was taking a big risk. There was always a real possibility that whoever had the boys would dispose of them if

they no longer felt Lampson could be found. The lives of the twins weighed heavily on Grant's shoulders—but he had a mission to complete.

"Aren't you anticipating some resistance from Lampson?" Adler asked, a frown appearing on his rugged face.

"Not his call," Grant answered bluntly.

Moshenko squinted his eyes as he analyzed Grant's suggestion, and then finally nodded approvingly. "I like this plan of yours."

"Wasn't a doubt in my military mind that you wouldn't. Any ideas on how you can pull it off?"

Moshenko stroked his chin. "How big is Lampson?"

"He's probably three inches taller than me, about 6'4, and about 220 pounds."

"You Americans—so tall!" Moshenko said as if in amazement. "Finding him a uniform might be difficult but I will work something out. It will probably be an East German uniform since you said he speaks German fluently."

"Good idea. Have you thought of a place to stash him?"

"There is an airfield in Gdansk, not far from the shipyards. We make use of it all the time. In fact, there is a small contingency of East Germans based close by. Within walking distance from the base is a hotel. Lampson will be safe there. I know the owner, Leo Grobowski, quite well."

"Sounds good. He's got extra civilian clothes he can use once he settles in. You'll need to exchange some money for him." Grant thought for a moment then added, "We've supplied him with an Austrian passport. I'll leave it to your discretion whether he remains a soldier or a civilian." Moshenko nodded.

The one reservation Grant had was whether Lampson would be stupid enough to try and contact someone back in Germany. "Would that friend of yours consider keeping an eye on Lampson, especially if he tries to contact anybody?"

"I will see to it."

"You have my permission to put the fear of God in him, Grigori." Moshenko nodded, as Grant asked, "Last question... how can you get him out of Germany?"

"We have several helicopters at the base that I have access to. And I have traveled before with East Germans. If anyone questions this, we can use the story that he's under transfer orders, waiting to assume command of the border guards. There should not be any questions. And I will try and get him an officer's uniform which will draw less suspicion to him being with me." He had anticipated and was prepared for any requests by his American friends. Moshenko would fly a Kamov KA-18. The chopper was identified as a "Hog" by NATO.

It was obvious from Grant's expression that he had something else on his mind. Adler stepped closer. "Whatcha thinking?"

Grant readjusted his cap, tugging on the brim till his brown eyes were in its shadow. "The woman. We've gotta find her. My gut's telling me she's a major part of this shit. Grigori, the only accurate information we've got on her is that she worked at Humboldt University. We need to know more. How quick can you get info out of the East Germans?"

"It is what I do," he smiled proudly, then flicked an ash from the tip of the cigar.

Adler motioned with his head. "What about Otto?"

"He didn't happen to give you an address for Steiner, did he?" Grant asked, as he tucked his hands into the side pockets of the leather jacket.

"The man's invisible, keeps a real low profile. Only time Otto sees him is when it's time for a meeting or by personal invitation."

"Did he give you a description?"

Adler nodded. "Matches the one we got from Lampson, so I guess we can rule out a disguise."

"Probably," Grant responded. "Looks like we've exhausted Otto's resources."

Moshenko asked, "You want me to take...?"

"One passenger is enough for you, Grigori. Thanks. No, I think we'll just give Herr Neus another ride ourselves. We'll give him a little something to help him sleep for a couple of hours. Joe and Manfred can leave him a few miles from the city's border. But, unfortunately for him, he'll be unable to produce the necessary papers for the border patrol." Grant glanced at Adler, who was patting his breast pocket. Neus' identification papers and money were tucked inside. The papers would be destroyed before they departed and the money given to Manfred. Grant continued: "And unless Neus is really stupid, I highly doubt he'll be mentioning his relationship with the FSG to anyone, especially the border patrol."

Adler laughed, "And, I've got a good idea he thinks we may be a couple of Steiner's men. Poor Otto—so confused!"

Grant turned toward the shed, then came to a sudden stop. "Son of a bitch! Son... of... a... bitch!"

"Tell us what you know, boss," Adler anxiously requested.

Grant pounded his fist against his palm. "I bet I know where those kids are, Joe!" Even Moshenko seemed stunned as both men waited for Grant to explain. "The lab! They're in the building above the lab. What better place? Two to one Steiner figured that if we found the lab and destroyed it, we'd be the ones responsible for killing the kids. We'd be the ones taking the heat. Did Otto say how often Steiner visited the lab?"

"Otto had never been there himself, but said Steiner usually told him when he went to check on the scientists. It seems lately he's made a lot of visits."

Grant pointed his index finger continuously at Adler as if driving home his statement. "You can bet your sweet ass he's checking on the kids."

"Oh, hell, here we go again... my ass!" Adler chuckled.

Moshenko broke off the end of the lighted cigar, then stuck the costly Havana in his pocket. "We have lots to do, my friends."

"Roger that," replied Grant, "and little time to do it in." His mind was swirling like a category three tornado. "Step one is to see Lampson off safely." He turned to Moshenko. "The chopper's at Schonefeld, right?" The Soviet nodded. "Okay. I know you can fly that thing low and fast enough to hide from radar. So, we'll need you to pick us up here, early, before daybreak, let's say 0430 hours. After we pick up Lampson, can you make a side trip and drop us close to East Berlin?"

Moshenko instantly pictured and calculated the entire flight plan, then responded, "Da. That should still give me plenty of time to get him to Gdansk then come back to East Berlin and catch a flight back to Moscow."

"We'll huddle over a map now and talk coordinates, then tonight I'll contact Marie at our prearranged time. She can drive Lampson to the site."

Moshenko said, "I know a place where we had practiced maneuvers one time with our East German comrades. It should be away from prying eyes."

"Sounds good." Grant could only imagine what Lampson's reaction would be when he saw a Soviet-made chopper being piloted by a Russian officer. "Lampson's going to have a heart attack when he sees you, Grigori!" Moshenko just shrugged his shoulders and smiled.

"We staying with Marie after, or what?" Adler asked.

"Or *what*," Grant answered. "We've got to get her out of the picture as soon as possible. Joe, get one of the maps and we'll talk coordinates."

Within five minutes Adler came out of the shed grinning, as he handed the rolled up map to Grant. "Listen, while you two start your discussion, I think I'd better give Otto a potty break. I'd prefer not to have to clean up after him."

Grant and Moshenko knelt on the ground, tracing planned routes along the map and finally settling on the coordinates.

Adler emerged from the shed, smiling. "When we going after the lab?" He rubbed his hands together as if he were a child anxiously anticipating Christmas morning.

"We'll give Grigori some time to make inquiries into who our mysterious woman is. While he's doing that, we'll run surveillance on the lab and see if we can find the kids."

"What if we don't find them?" Grant just had to give Adler an all too familiar look that seemed to say, You doubt me? "Okay, okay," Adler conceded, lifting his arms as if surrendering. "After we find them, when do we eliminate the lab?"

"You'll be in charge of guarding the kids, while I..."

"Whoa! Just a damn minute, sir. No way are you gonna have all the fun on this one. Besides, I've got the ordnance experience. Remember, UDT and EOD (Underwater Demolition Team, Explosive Ordnance Disposal)?"

"Look, Joe, if it goes wrong, you've gotta get those kids out. You speak German like a native. You'll be their only hope."

Adler frowned as he turned away from Grant, pondering the unspoken order. He faced Grant again, throwing his hands up in defeat. "Okay, but I don't like it."

"You don't have to," Grant retorted.

"What'll happen with all the chemicals? Any side-effects to worry about?"

"Not according to Lampson. The drug has to be ingested by mouth or needle. And he figured they're still a couple weeks away from bringing it together. Besides, any chemicals should expedite the destruction of the lab." Grant responded to Adler's unasked question. "We'll rely on Grigori's art of persuasion to convince the Russians to pull the plug on the East German's project."

"And what about Steiner?" Adler asked, as he slid his index finger across his throat.

"Only if he accidentally falls on my knife. Otherwise, we'll leave it up to the Russians and East Germans to take care of him in whatever way they see fit. Sound okay, Grigori?"

"We will look after him, my friends, and also have a serious talk with our East German comrades who allowed this to happen in the first place." He thought about his statement then added, "Of course, if their security was as it should be, your Agent Lampson might be in prison, or perhaps... even dead."

"It's a chance we all take, my friend. Lampson was damn lucky this time." Grant reached inside his jacket pocket, pulling out his wallet. He removed several large bills, handing them to Adler. "Joe, could you take this to Manfred? Ask him if

he can make a quick trip in the morning to buy those kids some clothes, especially jackets and boots. They probably don't have squat."

"Can you give me an idea on what size he needs to buy?"

"Just tell him they're two years old."

"Right."

Grant put his wallet away while he looked toward the west, as the last rays of the sun painted brilliant streaks of burnt orange across the horizon. "It'll be dark soon." He zipped up his jacket. "I'll go get your car, Grigori. While I'm gone, would you mind helping Joe get Otto ready?"

"More than delighted!" Moshenko responded, as he reached into his coat pocket, then chucked the keys to Grant.

"Spaseeba. You can follow Manfred till he drops off Otto, then you should be able to make it into Berlin on your own."

Grant started to turn, when Moshenko grabbed his arm. "When this is over, my friend, we will all drink a toast with some of my best Russian vodka!"

Grant winked. "Salokov?"

"Da!" Moshenko laughed.

"Deal!" Grant threw a salute and sprinted across the field.

## Chapter 11

### Manfred's farm – Day 6

Joe Adler peered through a Starlighter scope into a cloudy, early morning sky. "It's not looking too good, sir. That storm front's moving in fast." The feel of a cold, damp wind reinforced his statement. "The ceiling can't be more than three thousand feet."

"Grigori loves a challenge!" Grant responded while keeping his head in constant motion, his eyes searching the sky. As he glanced overhead, he strained to hear the familiar sound of a chopper. He thrust his hands into his back pockets, as he retraced his footsteps, pacing back and forth in front of Adler. They both knew time was of the essence now. Moshenko had to get them to Lampson.

Adler kept the scope pressed against his eye as he asked, "You leave that envelope of money for Manfred?"

"Yeah. Dropped it on the kitchen table," Grant responded, giving a quick glance at his watch. "Come on, Grigori," he muttered. "It's nearly 0430."

As if on cue, a dull, repetitive sound off in the distance gradually became louder. Both men looked toward the northwest, Adler making a quick sweep with the Starlighter. "Got it!" he shouted. "Two five zero degrees!"

Grant finally caught site of a black shape heading straight at them. The chopper was coming in at no more than 150 feet above ground level. He grabbed hold of his baseball cap as the helo began its descent. Dirt and debris violently swirled around the two men, both of them shielding their eyes. As soon as the skids touched down, Grant and Adler made a dash for the chopper, Adler climbing



aboard first. Grant was ready to pull himself up into the cockpit when he glanced over his shoulder, seeing Manfred standing just outside his doorway, waving the envelope of money. Grant stepped away from the chopper and snapped the elderly gentleman a smart salute before he climbed aboard.

### **Soviet Sector – 0500 Hours**

Two beams of bright lights stretched ahead of a black four-door Audi, guiding it along the winding single lane road. The driver, Albert Richter, wrapped his hands around the steering wheel at the ten and two o'clock positions. He glanced in the rearview mirror, seeing nothing but total blackness following them.

The passenger, Horst Schinkel, flipped on the overhead reading light and spread the map across his lap. He followed their route with his finger. "We should be there in twenty minutes," he said, taking a look at the green light illuminating the dashboard clock.

Richter slowed the car as it approached a T intersection, then swung the wheel to the left and stepped on the accelerator. The headlights swept across pitch black fields, flat and desolate.

Schinkel leaned his head closer toward the open window and motioned toward Richter. "Pull over and shut off the lights!"

Richter switched off the headlights. He quickly downshifted. The steering wheel jerked in his hands as the front tires encountered the rough, irregular shoulder. "What?"

"Shut up!" Schinkel ordered. He grabbed the night vision goggles from the floor as he shoved the door open. He hit the ground running before the car came to a full stop, not even thinking about the fact that the car's reading lights were still on.

Richter threw the gearshift into park and jumped out, running around the front of the car. The toe of his heavy leather boot caught on a half-buried corroded motorcycle muffler, a remnant from World War II. He fell to his knees, his palms skidding along the loose dirt, with the entire incident completely ignored by Schinkel.

A chopper was flying straight and low, no more than one hundred twenty feet off the ground. Resembling a prehistoric black bug, it flew past the two Germans. Schinkel watched the unusual sight through the goggles, Richter from his ground level location.

"Let's go!" Schinkel shouted, as he made a dash for the car, catching Richter by surprise, who had to scramble along on his knees before getting his feet back under him.

The Audi's tires spit gravel as Richter floored the accelerator, the car fishtailing as it hit the road pavement. His palms were bloody. The open wounds stung as he gripped the steering wheel. "What was it?" he asked, now even more confused.

"A Russian KA-18," he confirmed. If there was one thing Horst Schinkel knew about, it was aircraft. He reached behind the driver's seat and grabbed a night scope from the floor lying next to an AK-47. Looking through the scope, he quickly

sighted the chopper again, estimating its speed between 80-90 kph. "Step on it," he growled at Richter.

The heavy, muscular East German tried to sort his thoughts: Flying that low, and close to top speed, somebody's trying to avoid radar. But—Russians? There weren't any airfields in this sector. He made a decision. They were all headed in the same direction, and since the target wasn't far from where they were, they'd have nothing to lose by tailing the chopper. They could always break away if it proved to be nothing.

Richter concentrated on the road ahead of them, staying on alert for any sudden change that Schinkel might throw at him again. Out of the corner of his eye he could see the front of the scope Schinkel had aimed at the windshield. "Keep at this speed. I still have it in sight."

Within five minutes, the aircraft's speed seemed to decrease as the Audi started to gain on it. There still weren't any other lights or vehicles in the vicinity. The chopper was approaching a tree line just northeast of their location. Richter jumped hearing Schinkel's gruff voice shouting, "Shut off the headlights—now!" He directed Richter to continue along the roadway. Even if this turned out to be nothing, Schinkel had to investigate. Traveling at barely fifteen kph and in complete darkness, they found a rutted trail that led in an easterly direction. Tall heavy shrubs lined both sides. At some points the trail was barely wide enough for the car to fit through. Spindly branches drooped overhead, scraping along the Audi's roof. Gusts of wind slapped branches against its windshield.

Richter's forehead broke out in a sweat, his eyes aching from trying to see through the blackness. Schinkel put on the night vision goggles, supplying directions for Richter to follow. Downshifting to second gear, Richter tried to press on the accelerator as little as possible, preventing the engine from making any unnecessary noise. They weren't able to see the chopper, but knew by the distinct sound that it was somewhere close up ahead.

The car encountered an uphill grade. "Slow! Slow!" Schinkel gruffly whispered. "Right here—stop!" He made sure they were still camouflaged by shrubbery and trees, because ahead of them wasn't any cover, just open ground. The car came to rest on a small rise. Richter immediately turned off the engine, then rested his arms on top of the steering wheel and rubbed his eyes with the back of his hands before rolling down his window. With the help of the night scope, they were close enough to be able to see images on the field.

"Wait here," Schinkel ordered, as he got out of the car. He crouched low, traversing the incline, then got down and hugged the ground, bringing the scope to his eyes, and then he waited.

Winds from the approaching storm buffeted the four-seat chopper as it made a 360 degree sweep around the inside perimeter of the predetermined LZ. The three men aboard scanned the pitch black field. Moshenko guided the chopper toward an oddly shaped object positioned nearly dead center of the field. As it approached, the VW's headlights flashed twice.

Marie kept her eyes on the hovering helo. Her instructions from Grant had been to not tell Lampson about his soon-to-be mode of transportation, only that she'd been instructed to deliver him to this field on this particular night. Once again, Grant was trying to be protective. She glanced at Lampson sitting in the seat

beside her, his tall body looking cramped and uncomfortable in the little car. He rolled down the window, then immediately shielded his eyes from flying debris while he strained his neck to keep an eye on the descending helicopter.

"I suppose Captain Stevens told you not to advise me about the type of transportation he'd be providing?" Lampson asked with a touch of sarcasm. He pulled off his steel-rimmed glasses and shoved them into his jacket pocket.

"He only told me to be here at this time," Marie responded quietly. As the chopper's skids touched earth, she turned on the car's parking lights.

The two Americans jumped from the chopper. Grant had his .45 drawn; Adler carried an Uzi. Their eyes were fixed on the VW as they ducked under the rotating blades then ran toward the car. Adler stopped just shy of the car, taking up a position in front of the boot, continuously sweeping the area with his eyes. The Uzi followed the same sweep, at the same pace.

The propellers continued rotating while Moshenko stayed inside, his hand resting on the control stick, ready to lift off when all were aboard. The Russian had already removed his military cap and jacket, making it impossible to tell who or what he was.

Grant reached for the car door handle and pulled open the passenger side door. "Let's go," he shouted above the noise of the chopper. As Lampson was extracting himself from the car, Grant said, "You've gotta trust me, Rick. No questions. Just listen and do as I say." He leaned toward the open car window. "Marie, wait a second and I'll be right back." Grant again turned his attention to Lampson as he pointed to Moshenko. "Our friend over there is going to get you out of Germany and take you some place safe."

Lampson's heart started pounding. He squinted, trying to prevent flying dust from blinding him, as he tried to identify the chopper. From his angle, he wasn't able to see the red stars painted on the outside of the twin tail sections.

Grant shook Lampson's shoulder, getting his attention. "I think I know where your kids are, Rick." Lampson didn't have time to react as Grant grabbed hold of his arm and led him away from the VW and out of Marie's earshot. "It's gonna take a few more days to finish up here." Then he poked an index finger into Lampson's chest. "Now listen to me. You've got to do exactly what Colonel Moshenko tells you. Exactly! You understand?"

Lampson tried to step back but Grant's grip was firm. Completely taken by surprise, Lampson had hoped he misunderstood the name that just heard. "You're turning me over to a Russian?" he asked incredulously and with obvious panic rising in his voice.

"I told you to trust me! And if I can trust Grigori, you sure as hell can! Now, let's go!" He held onto Lampson's arm, practically dragging him toward the chopper, with Adler bringing up the rear.

Lampson looked up into the cockpit and into the face of a smiling Soviet military officer, who waved him aboard as he shouted at him in Russian. Grant translated: "Grigori wants to welcome you to Russia!" Lampson's eyes blinked and he started to turn around to say something, when Grant all but shoved him into the chopper. "Keep an eye on him, Grigori! We'll be right back."

Back in his hiding place, Horst Schinkel couldn't believe his luck. He'd never seen Brennar, but with the description Steiner had given him, there was no doubt

that's who he was now looking at through the scope. Steiner never let his men make their own decisions, but this was one time Schinkel would change that rule. The opportunity was too good to pass up. He gave Richter an order to start the car.

Grant and Adler snapped their heads around, as a set of headlights suddenly came out of the darkness, obvious that a vehicle was traveling at a high rate of speed. Grant yelled, "Go! Go! Get outta here!" Lampson started shouting frantically, but it was too late, as Grant slammed the chopper door.

As suddenly as lightning strikes, so can plans be altered during covert ops. Moshenko gave one quick look at Grant knowing he had to leave the two behind. His primary objective was to get Lampson out of Germany. His friends were on their own. The rotors whined, cranking up to full power. Barely off the ground, a strong gust of wind hit the chopper broadside, one of its skids striking the ground. Moshenko reacted in a split second and got the chopper airborne.

The two Americans raced back toward the VW to try and head off the oncoming vehicle. The unfamiliar car barreled across the field, aiming right at them like a raging bull. Suddenly, machine gun fire erupted from the car's passenger side window, sending bullets whizzing around the ascending chopper. Two smashed into the cockpit, narrowly missing Lampson. Moshenko put the chopper into a sharp forty-five degree turn to starboard, applying power. He had to fly low to avoid radar, but now speed would be their only salvation.

The Americans immediately responded, firing their weapons simultaneously. Grant crouched low, and then flung open the VW door, pulling Marie briskly from the seat and shoved her to the ground. The attacking car, an older black Audi, sped past them on the VW's passenger side. Adler hit the deck, the barrel of the Uzi red hot. Bullets ripped into both vehicles.

"Get down!" Grant shouted to Marie. With lightning speed, he ejected the empty clip, reloaded, then resumed rapid fire as he attempted to shield her with his body.

With the chopper all but disappearing into the darkness, the driver of the Audi turned his attention to the two men by the VW. He put the car into a 180 degree spin, aimed it directly at the VW, and then gunned the engine.

Grant and Adler jumped up, one on either side of the little car. Crouching down in a shooter's stance, with guns aimed straight ahead, they opened fire on the oncoming vehicle. A barrage of bullets struck the Audi. Its front tire exploded. White hot steam shot upward from a demolished radiator. The windshield and headlights disintegrated. The car went into an uncontrolled spin fifty feet in front of them. Its tires kicked up clouds of dirt that obscured it from view momentarily. The Audi's rear end slid around. The car rocked back and forth before finally coming to a stop head-on with the Volkswagen.

"Stay down, Marie!" Grant shouted over his shoulder. She sat on the ground, curled up into a ball, huddling behind the open door with her arms protectively covering her head. Grant rammed a fully loaded clip into the .45.

Gusts of wind continued swirling dust around them. Their eyes adjusted rapidly to the blackness. Still not able to see into the car, they walked toward it in a high state of readiness. Grant motioned with his hand for Adler to approach from the driver's side, while he trained his sites on the passenger side. Reaching the dusty, bullet-ridden car, they proceeded cautiously, leaving plenty of room between them

and the Audi. They edged closer, finally able to see the driver, who was dressed in civilian clothes, completely bloodied, and slumped over the steering wheel. His chest looked like a strainer and the front of his face had nearly been blown away. Blood was sprayed throughout the interior. Adler's Uzi had found its target multiple times.

Still unable to see the passenger who'd fired the machine gun, Grant walked along the side of the car, gripping his .45 with both hands. He aimed the muzzle directly ahead of him as he stepped nearer, all his senses on alert. A man's bulky body lay crumpled on the front seat. Grant took another step, confirming the back seat was empty. He again turned his attention to the passenger, noticing a throat and head wound, the blood flowing down across a large barrel chest and beginning to soak through a brown sweater. The back of his head was resting against the center console, revealing a short, muscular neck. Grant reached inside the car and snatched the Uzi off the man's chest.

Adler ducked down, looking through the car at Grant. "A G2 (interrogation) session's out of the question."

"Your aim gets better with age," Grant answered.

Adler came around the front of the Audi, glancing at the shattered windshield, then stooped to look down at the dead assailant. "I'd say those holes in him were made by a .45. I believe they're yours." He stood opposite Grant with his Uzi hanging loosely by his side.

Grant leaned against the Audi, deep in thought, holding the assailant's gun in front of him as if examining it. But his question had nothing to do with the gun. "How the fuck did they find out, Joe?"

"It's pointing more and more to some asshole in the Embassy, isn't it?"

"Yeah, but it still doesn't explain how they knew we'd be here. We never mentioned where we were taking Lampson, and never mentioned Marie's name anywhere near the Embassy or the hotel."

"You remember that set of headlights we flew past? You think it was these guys?"

"Could've been. Christ! Talk about luck if it was!" A picture of Lampson screaming at him just before the chopper lifted off made him pause. Bits and pieces of words being shouted hadn't registered until this instant.

Adler waited patiently for an explanation. Then, he lifted the submachine gun and rested the barrel against the front of his shoulder. "Speak to..."

Grant held up his hand. Adler immediately went silent. Grant closed his eyes, picturing the scene in his mind, attempting to hear Lampson's words, visualizing his mouth movements. His eyelids shot open. An instant later his fist struck the car's roof, the sound like a sledge hammer pounding sheet metal. He immediately began pacing back and forth, shaking his head. Even in the darkness Adler detected anger on Grant's face. "Jesus Christ! The stupid bastard! I specifically told him not to contact anyone, to keep his goddamn mouth shut!"

"That's affirmative."

"I should've yanked his ass out of that chopper!" Grant jerked his arm up, as if pulling a heavy object. "He put everybody in danger, everybody..."

Adler stepped in front of his friend, bringing Grant to a sudden stop. He found it hard to remember a time when he'd seen Grant so infuriated. "Care to explain?"

"A letter! He sent that scientist, Von Wenzel, a fuckin' letter!"

"Uh oh," Adler responded, as he stepped back, giving Grant a wide berth. "Think he wanted to know if Greta showed up?"

"Wouldn't surprise me," Grant answered, slowly getting his voice and behavior back under control. "And no, I don't think Von Wenzel informed on him." Just then the VW came into his peripheral vision. "See if you can find papers on these two. I need to talk with Marie, then we need to get our asses out of here. Daylight's not too far off." He handed the German's machine gun to Adler, then holstered his .45. As he walked across the ruts created by the Audi, he brushed dust and soil from his clothes. He bent down and picked up his cap, slapping it back and forth against his thigh, shaking off the dirt.

Marie was still sitting on the ground with her back against the running board, her chin length dark blonde hair disheveled and hanging in front of her eyes. Afraid to look up, her body went rigid with the sight of a man suddenly standing in front of her.

Grant knelt down on one knee, brushing hair from her face. He took one of her hands in his, feeling it trembling. "It's over, Marie."

She looked up into the strong, handsome face, coated with a fine layer of dust. Grant's brown eyes stared at her, his face showing concern and caring. Then he asked, "Are you hurt? Are you okay?"

Her blue eyes refused to tear. "I'm all right."

"I'm sorry this happened. I..."

"No, no," she interrupted, "I never thought I would ever react this way. It's been so many years, but the sounds of the guns brought back horrifying memories." Even though time was against them now, Grant was not about to pressure her into hurrying and let her continue at her own pace. "I was barely a teenager when World War II was drawing to a close. The Nazis stormed into our village, trying to make a stand against the advancing Allies." Suddenly, tears welled up in her eyes, overflowing onto her cheeks. She brushed them aside. "My father and two young brothers died during the fighting. They were used as human shields by the Nazis."

She was sobbing now. Grant drew her close, cradling her in his strong arms. Since the day they met, three years prior, Grant had known Marie to be a woman of determination and fortitude, belying her frail, slender build. The middle-aged woman had spent nearly two decades of her life offering assistance to the Allies, providing a safe house and transportation whenever she was called upon to do so.

He helped her to her feet. "I'm going to talk with Joe. Why don't you sit in the car and rest. We won't be much longer." She nodded and forced a smile, creases forming around her mournful eyes. Then, she climbed into the back, hugging her knees close to her chest like a small child trying to make herself feel safe.

Grant walked away with his head bowed, feeling guilty for having placed her in a terrifying situation, for having exposed her to the violence.

Adler interrupted his thoughts. "Is she okay?"

Grant nodded, then asked, "Find anything?"

Directing the flashlight beam over the blood-spattered identification papers he'd pulled from the bodies, Adler responded, "Couple of names—Albert Richter and Horst Schinkel. Don't mean squat to me. You?"

"I'll ask Grigori to check with Lampson. Don't want to bring in the Admiral yet."

Adler grinned. "Can't understand why not." He walked closer to the Audi and shinned the flashlight down on the muscular passenger. "Did you notice this?"

Grant leaned toward the window, seeing the disfigured index finger. "I'll be damned!"

"What?"

"He was the one in the photo holding Lampson's kids."

Adler snapped off the flashlight. "Do we need to classify this as a royal fuck up, boss?"

Grant ignored the question, trying to make some sense of what was happening. "These guys had to be FSG. Steiner's behind this. We're gonna have to rely on Grigori to get us some answers."

"Whadda we do with them in the meantime?"

Grant surveyed the area, remembering their flyover in the chopper. He pointed toward the northeast, where a stand of trees appeared as jagged shadows against the horizon. He estimated the distance to be about half a mile. "Drive the car into those trees. We're pretty far off the beaten path, but we'd still better camouflage it. I'll follow you in the VW... as long as it starts."

They pulled the driver from behind the steering wheel, then pushed him through the open back door, the body flopping over on the upholstery like a discarded piece of rubbish. As Grant slammed the door, Adler unlocked the trunk. He ripped out a piece of the carpet to use as a cover on the front seat to prevent blood from staining his clothes, as he asked Grant, "Think Marie'll be safe?"

"Can't take any chances, Joe. We'll take her back to West Berlin. It's one more reason for us to finish this shit ASAP."

"Roger that!"

Twenty minutes later, the Audi had been hidden, covered by pieces of brush and branches. The two passengers' identification papers and everything from the glovebox were burned and the ashes buried. With the Volkswagen riddled with bullet holes, they would have to find alternate means of transportation in order to pass through the Soviet checkpoint. This car would have to be ditched on the outskirts of Marie's village... and before daybreak.

A desperate situation calls for desperate measures. *Nimble fingers* Adler would have to steal another car, selecting a completely nondescript mode of transportation, more than likely another popular Volkswagen then switch the license plates.

Their cover story would be that Marie was taking her two Austrian friends to Tegel Airport for their return trip to Vienna. But Grant had to do some fancy talking to convince her she'd have to seek safety and protection in West Berlin. Whether she agreed or not, he'd see to it that she made the trip. He instructed her to tell her boarders at the rooming house that she would be going away for a few days to care for a cousin recovering from an auto accident. He gave her enough Deutsche Marks for her to register at the Hotel Berliner for five days.

A plan had been quickly put together in determining how to protect her. Over the past years she'd been supplied by West German intelligence with several passports and matching identification papers. Grant suggested she use the Austrian passport when she checked into the hotel, using the assumed name of "Erica Rhone". Before leaving for the airport, they removed the back seat of the

"acquired" VW and hid her fake passport and papers inside. The Uzi and .45 were wired to the underbelly of the car—a chance they had to take.

### **MILOPS – West Berlin**

As soon as they arrived at the airport, they drove directly to MILOPS. There, Grant placed a call to an NIS officer stationed at the air base at Tempelhof.

In less than two hours a West Berlin taxi pulled up to a side entrance at MILOPS. The driver, in his early thirties, hopped out of the cab then walked briskly around the rear. A Baltimore Colts patch was sewn just under the epaulette on the right sleeve of his khaki windbreaker. "Captain Stevens?" he asked, his blue eyes going from Grant to Adler.

Grant extended a hand. "That'd be me."

"I'm Glen Webster," he grinned as he shook hands with Adler and Marie as Grant introduced them.

Although they never met, Grant had heard stories about Webster. At 5'9" with an average build, Webster easily concealed the fact that he was a man who possessed a fifth degree black belt in Shotokan karate, a traditional style that emphasizes discipline and the ancient art of the "one punch kill." His strength, quickness, and sharp mind had made him a valuable asset to the NIS and the occasional covert op.

Adler tuned in on the conversation but tried to be inconspicuous as he swept the area with his eyes, as would a Secret Service agent with responsibility for guarding a president.

"As I explained over the phone, Glen, we'd like you to take Marie to the Hotel Berliner. And since Joe and I will be, shall we say, out of pocket for a couple of days, we'd sure appreciate it if you could..."

"Hell, Captain, it'd be my pleasure to check on the little lady!" A light flush came over Marie's face as he looked at her. Sensing he may have embarrassed her, Webster immediately reached for her suitcase. "Let me help you with that, ma'am. Are you ready?"

She buttoned the top button of her raincoat and answered, "Yes, Herr Webster, in a moment." She turned to Grant, and gave him a hug.

He smiled. "Can't thank you enough, Marie. You came through for us again."

She stood on her toes in order to kiss him lightly on the cheek, but he still had to lean forward in order for her to reach him. She laid a hand gently against his chest. "Take care of yourself, Grant. I'll expect to see you again."

Then, she stepped over to Adler, giving him a hug. Adler hugged right back. "Thanks for your help, Marie."

"And you, Joe Adler, be careful," she laughed and shook a finger at him.

They watched the cab drive down the apron of the runway and make a right turn, heading toward the Autobahn. They were comfortable in the fact that Marie would be safe.



## Chapter 12

### **MILOPS – Tegel Airport West Berlin 1015 Hours**

A silhouetted figure stood on the fringe of the tarmac close to MILOPS. With his arms folded across his chest, Grant Stevens glanced upward at the morning sun. It was a crisp, autumn day, with bands of clouds being nudged along the horizon by a moderate, northerly breeze.

Hearing the sound of jet engines, his gaze turned to a Pan Am 707 lifting off runway 27. Gray streams of exhaust, spewing from four jet engines became clearly visible against the cobalt blue sky. The silver fuselage gleamed as the aircraft banked left, beginning its flight to New York City. His eyes followed the aircraft, but his thoughts were on the events that had taken place earlier that morning, leading up to Marie's departure for the hotel. Whether or not he contacted Matt Wharton for assistance was yet to be seen. Too many "eyes and ears" inhabited the Embassy. Maybe there would be hell to pay later on, but right now, the risk might be too great to take any unnecessary chances.

He turned, hearing the main door to MILOPS swing open. Adler stepped out, swiveling his head till he spotted Grant. He jogged across the parking lot, with his unzipped leather jacket flapping as he ran. He pulled up when he was next to Grant, extending a hand holding a covered paper cup. "Coffee, sir?"

"No, thanks, Joe."

Adler flipped the plastic cover off and sipped on the steaming black coffee. He licked his lips. "Marie's okay, sir. Checked in without any problem. She's in room 415."

Grant nodded. Behind the dark aviator sunglasses were intense brown eyes. His thoughts were solely on his own initiated DAM (direct action mission). The term was used by SEALs for a specific military operation involving commando-style raids into hostile or denied areas.

Grant's target had been acquired. The kids had to be found today and the lab destroyed, not to mention getting their own asses safely out of East Berlin.

Adler reached into his inside breast pocket and pulled out his sunglasses, giving them a downward shake to separate the thin, gold-colored wires, then he fitted them over his ears. As he adjusted them on his nose, he tilted his head back, scrutinizing a day that was starting off to be just about perfect. He rocked back and forth on his heels while inhaling a lungful of air and getting a brief whiff of jet fuel. "I don't know about you, sir, but that shower sure as hell felt good!" He swirled the remaining coffee around in the bottom of the paper cup. The black brew had cooled rapidly in the morning air and he chugged down the last mouthful, flattening the cup before slipping it into his pocket. Thinking about seeing his reflection in the mirror earlier, he rubbed his hand along his hairline, then glanced at Grant. Both of them were in need of haircuts.

The wheels of a Swiss Air passenger jet screeched down on the runway, its engines screaming as the pilot threw them into reverse. But the long, quiet moment between Adler and Grant continued. Grant's face had a look of fierce determination. The clamping of the square jaw and grinding of teeth was a familiar sight for Adler. Knowing the pressure and concern his good friend was experiencing, he attempted to disguise the excitement he was feeling.

"Today's the day, isn't it, sir?"

Grant lowered his head, then looked up, pushing the aviator glasses back on the bridge of his nose. "It's gotta be, Joe. We're out of time. We need to stage now. Did you check to see that the chopper was still in the hanger?"

"It's fueled and froggie, Skipper."

"Very well."

"You got something else on your mind?" Adler questioned as he tilted his head down and looked over the top of his sunglasses.

Grant jabbed him in the shoulder. "You read me like a cheap novel, Joe! And, yeah... I decided it's time we lay a trap for that shitbird in the Embassy."

"Hot damn!" Adler bellowed, as he smacked his hands together. "I tell you what, Skipper, I thought you were gonna miss that one. I should've known better, foolish kid that I am."

Grant had to laugh, knowing Adler was "hot to trot" for some action. "How could you think I'd let a smell like that go unattended? Let's think about this. The only ones who didn't ask any questions after we extracted Lampson were Bradley and the two crypto guys."

"But Wharton would have probably clued Bradley in, right?"

"This was a lone wolf, Joe. Only Wharton knew that we were gonna snatch Lampson. Bradley wasn't brought in until he was instructed to take you to the pickup site."

"Well, hell, then, no wonder nobody's asking questions. Nobody knew."

"Oh, come on, Joe. Once we got back to the Embassy even the cockroaches were poppin' questions, yet those three guys were zipped up tighter than your fly."

"See what you mean. Think we ought to do a bait and switch on them and fuck up the bad guys? That'll give us some extra time to let us do our thing."

"Right. We'll have to get Wharton to drop the info at the right time."

"Good idea, Skipper."

Grant stroked his chin as he started pacing back and forth in front of Adler, his plan unfolding as he talked. "We'll have to give him three separate bogus locations, telling all of them that we'll be dropping into the East at 2330 hours, with transportation waiting, of course."

"Of course," Adler laughed.

"Wharton's got to make sure that they get the word separately, no later than 1500 today. Final phase will be to have him assign the comm guys to the crypto room from 2100 hours on. His orders for them will be to wait for confirmation from us that we're in."

"Ahh," Adler remarked, "and, of course, that call will never come since we'll already have contacted Wharton." He tapped an index finger against his lips as he asked, "What about Bradley? Shouldn't he be invited to the party, too?"

"You can bet Wharton will give all three of them special invitations." His concern was apparent as he added, "I was hoping we could leave Manfred out of the rest of this shit," he remarked thoughtfully, lowering his head. "But we'll have to bring him in again. He can play it safe by concealing himself in the woods and use a long-range scope."

"You know him better than me, boss, but from what I gathered, the old gentleman strikes me as someone who likes to be in the thick of things. You think he'll be satisfied with just hiding in the bushes?"

"You're right about him, Joe, but he's not one to jeopardize an operation, believe me."

"Gotcha. You planning on us covering the second and third sites, right?" Grant nodded. "So then whichever one of us acquires a target will make contact with Wharton."

"Roger that. That'll still give us plenty of time to reach our destination."

"Final question, Skipper. Do you think Wharton is gonna pull 'his boy' outta circulation mucho quick?"

"That'll be up to him. Don't think we'd be able to hold him back, though." He kicked at a small rock, sending it skittering across the sidewalk. "Jesus! He's gonna go ballistic when I drop this one on him. Three of his boys are under suspicion."

"Not a pretty thought, boss. You think we need to get him away from the Embassy for this little meaningful discussion?" Grant nodded, then Adler suggested, "How about the cafe in the airport terminal? It's usually crowded enough, so we can blend right in."

"Sounds good, Joe. It should only take him fifteen to twenty minutes to get here."

"We've got a helluva lot of names on our dance card, Skipper, including Grigori. What time are you supposed to make contact?"

"Fourteen hundred hours. That'll give us enough time to chat with Wharton then pick up our gear from the locker." He grinned and punched Adler's arm. "Looks like I've run out of excuses to go *dancing* tonight. What say we have our own hoe-down?"

As they turned and headed for the offices to make the phone call to Wharton, Adler said, "Skipper, I've jumped a lot of fences with you and I don't mind telling you, this one's got my attention."

Grant stopped in his tracks and stared down at his shoes for a few seconds, then turned and looked Adler straight in the eyes. "I've never been on one that didn't give me that feeling, Joe, but there's not a man in this world I'd want covering my *six* more than you."

The silence of genuine respect and true friendship struck them both as they stood facing each other. Finally, Adler's rugged face broke into a broad grin, with deep creases visible at the corners of his blue eyes. He bowed and motioned with his arm. "Take me to Indian country, my fearless leader!"

**East Berlin – 1045 hours**

The window panes of the small three room flat were covered inside and out with grime and grease. Dirt had accumulated along the window sill and on the wooden strips dividing the two panes. A man inside the living room stepped closer to the window. Ever wary of an occasional patrol, he peaked out the side of the dark, brown blanket tacked to the top of the window. He glanced at his watch, then looked out at the street and sidewalk again. From his vantage point from the second floor, no one would be able to enter the building without him seeing them. He made sure that the door leading to the basement at the rear was securely locked, forcing any visitors to use the front door.

Allowing the window covering to fall back into place, he put the beer stein to his lips and sipped on the dark beer, licking the foam from his lips. Then, he turned away, his heavy footsteps on the scuffed wooden floor echoing in a room that's furnishings were only two hand-made wooden benches placed at forty-five degree angles to one another, and set close to the wall opposite the window. During the night, the only source of light came from a kerosene lamp sitting on the end of one of the benches, placed far enough away from the window.

He went to the front door, jiggled the handle to ensure the lock was secure, then he walked into the shabby kitchen. A small radiator, chipped and rusty, was crammed between the sink basin and refrigerator that was less than six cubic feet in size. Discolored grout criss-crossed white tiles from the baseboard to midway up the walls. Small diamond-shaped black accent pieces were intermittently dispersed among the tiles, the only embellishment in the dingy room.

He glanced indifferently at two tousled-haired little boys who sat under the folding table, quietly occupying themselves by playing with teaspoons and paper cups. They were both wearing thin, long sleeve blue pullovers, green overalls, white hooded sweatshirts and white socks. Two sets of small brown shoes lay strewn near a wall.

"Did she feed them?" Steiner asked.

Victor Engels, Steiner's second in command, ran the point of a pocketknife under his fingernails, and without looking up, motioned with his head toward the sink.

Engels was a man with a penchant for having a quick, violent temper. Rows of wrinkles ran the width of his broad forehead; brooding dark eyes looked out from beneath sloping blond eyebrows. His black boots, the kind often seen worn by motorcyclists, were propped up on the edge of the wobbly table.

Steiner glanced at the soiled ceramic bowls, with clumps of dried oatmeal stuck to the sides. Sitting on a two-burner, portable propane stove, was a white enamel pot. An empty quart-size bottle of milk lay on its side in the stained sink. He sipped again on the beer, then walked toward the bedroom and unlocked the door. Pushing it part way open, he stepped into the dismal room. Peeling paint and nail holes marred the walls. A tattered, braided throw rug lay in the middle of the room on a wooden floor. A gray metal folding chair was in the corner, barely three feet away from two canvas cots that were pushed lengthwise up against the wall, end to end. Two pillows and an olive-drab blanket were strewn on one cot. A cracked, rectangular mirror hung next to the window. Even in daylight, the room remained dim because of the closeness of the building across the alley.

Steiner checked the window lock just as a precaution. He pulled back the blanket then leaned closer to the glass, finally able to see his brother, Friedrich, standing in the vacant alley, safeguarding there'd be no escape or rescue attempt. Steiner let his eyes roam up and down the alley, then at the building opposite the bedroom. Months of thorough research led him to this particular site. Both buildings were unoccupied, situated in a district completely isolated and not yet on the list for restoration by the government. Another group member, Rolf Weider, who worked as an electrician for the Ministry of Regional Housing, had obtained floor plans and duplicate keys.

He turned, then stood still, quietly sipping his beer, looking down at one of the cots where a woman was sleeping. Her body was covered by a thin white sheet. She was fully clothed, wearing a pair of worn jeans, a long sleeve white blouse, topped with a red, wool pullover sweater. She stirred slightly and turned away from the wall, her long hair falling across her cheek. He left the room, locking the door behind him.

The woman stayed motionless and looked toward the door through squinted eyes just as a precaution in case her captor hadn't really left. Satisfied he'd gone, she sat up and slid her long legs over the edge of the cot. As she stood, one of the uneven legs of the cot struck the floor. She hesitated for a moment, watching the door. Satisfied no one heard the noise, she tugged on her sweater, stretching it till it hung loosely around her narrow hips. Without bothering to put on her loafers, she tip-toed toward the door, trying to remain quiet. She leaned close and placed her ear against it, listening for any sounds coming from the kitchen. Hearing the twins playing, she made her way over to the window and peeked out of the side of the blanket. Trying to escape would be not be wise, especially knowing someone was waiting outside. She had caught only glimpses of the guard since they brought her to the flat. There had been times when she heard clanking sounds on the fire escape, but she could never really be sure where he might be located.

Her mind was filled with questions: How much longer would it be before Steiner would tire of keeping her alive or from harm? On several occasions he'd prevented his thugs from raping her. But she saw a familiar look in his eyes, one that seemed to say he wanted her for himself. He hadn't tried to touch her in any way since bringing her and the children to this place. She rubbed her forearm thinking of how he had grabbed her when she tried to run, leaving a bruise that was just beginning to fade. And what about Eric? Would he find a way to come back? Or would they find him first?

As she stepped away from the window, she caught a glimpse of herself in the mirror. The strain, worry, and anger she felt were taking their toll. Her peaches and cream skin now looked drawn and sallow. She lightly ran a finger across dark circles under her tired eyes. She noticed that even her hair no longer had its luster. She bent forward and ran her fingers through the tresses, occasionally catching them in a tangle. As she stood up, she threw her head back, shaking the long strands back and forth before gathering them into a ponytail and securing it with the rubber band from her wrist.

She walked quietly across the room, then lifted the canvas shoulder bag from the chair. She picked up the book of matches and started to light the lamp, but then she thought otherwise as she glanced at the bedroom door. Rummaging

through the bag, her hand felt the round, smooth tube. She took it out and removed the silver-colored cap. But she thought twice. This isn't the time. She replaced the cap and dropped it back into the bag.

Patience was not a virtue that Klaus Steiner was known for, and he went back into the living room to wait for his two men. He pulled his Walther PPK from his back waistband and placed it on one of the benches. He sat at an angle so he could watch the front door, then propped his feet up on the other bench, resting his back against one side of the brick fireplace. A small coal-burning stove occupied a spot in front of the fireplace.

He thought about Richter and Schinkel. No matter what assignment he gave them, he never questioned their methods and always counted on their thoroughness. But today they were long overdue from their appointed task. As for Otto Neus, he hadn't been seen or heard from for over a day, although it was something that didn't surprise Steiner. Compared with other members of the group, Neus was a completely different story.

For the past two months Neus' enthusiasm for the project had waned considerably. He'd become nothing but a pain in the ass, questioning every order and plan that Steiner designed. For weeks Steiner made it a point to never tell Neus the whole truth, never allowing him to go to the lab or come to this flat, never telling him Greta's whereabouts. He regretted not having given Schinkel the order to put Neus away permanently. But perhaps he would still have that opportunity.

He pushed up the sleeves of his green wool sweater as he smugly thought: As intelligent as those goddamn scientists think they are, their common sense is non-existent.

Growing up during post-World War II in a city nearly destroyed by Allied bombs, Steiner had to learn strategies for survival. He prided himself on his "street smarts," something the so-called intelligent scientists didn't possess. For that, he felt superior to them all. He thought how much greed, money, and fear played such an important role in his accomplishments to date. As a man who never showed emotion, his demeanor was an important part of maintaining control of himself and the group. But a brief, almost unnoticeable crack surfaced from his normally stoic expression as he thought about how luck had turned his way when he found the letter.

\* \* \* \* \*

During the interim when Eric Brennar was waiting for extraction from East Berlin, he made contact with Von Wenzel regularly. Even though the scientist was unaware of Brennar being CIA, he had taken him into his confidence, freely discussing possible methods for escaping to the West. Brennar reassured Von Wenzel that if they were ever in a situation where face-to-face contact was no longer possible, the scientist could count on correspondence becoming their means of staying in touch. Brennar knew the risk he'd be taking in contacting Von Wenzel.

The sudden disappearance of Brennar had left Von Wenzel shaken, fearing some terrible harm had come to him. But beyond that, a bone-chilling thought shook him to his very core. He'd been so free with his words while talking to

Brennar. Could it be that Brennar was STASI? Did Von Wenzel now have to worry that he and his family would be arrested? But then, one afternoon, a great sense of relief came over him when he received Brennar's one and only note.

In the assumed safety of his own home, and with his wife and children finishing dinner in the kitchen, Von Wenzel excused himself and retreated to the bedroom. When he opened the envelope, all he removed was a single, standard-size white, cotton handkerchief. After unfolding the handkerchief, he held it above the flame of a lighted candle, staring impatiently as the letters slowly appeared. Brennar had used one of the simplest methods known as *secret* writing. The message had been written with a matchstick dipped in lemon juice. Heat from the candle's flame turned the dried juice brown, revealing Brennar's words. The message had been brief. Brennar appealed to Von Wenzel to contact him with any news on Greta. He only gave a phone number as a point of contact, feeling more secure with that than having to reveal Marie's address.

Later that evening Von Wenzel received a frenzied call from Herman Schmitt at the university. A number of students had organized what was scheduled to be a peaceful demonstration, but everyone was fully aware those often turned violent. As a precautionary measure, Schmitt requested Von Wenzel come to the university to assist him in collecting and securing valuable data from the law library. In his haste to leave, Von Wenzel absent-mindedly tucked the handkerchief into his overcoat pocket. For all the months Von Wenzel and Heisen had worked in the lab, not once had they even imagined that someone could be searching their apartments, clothes, or belongings while they worked.

\* \* \* \* \*

Steiner's thoughts once again turned to his missing men. An unfamiliar, icy chill suddenly gripped him. He moved his feet from the bench to the floor, then leaned forward. Could it be that his men's possible disappearance had to do with the same men who extracted Brennar from the East? Steiner's contact had little to say about the two, only that they were both with the American Navy. Brennar must have told them about the drug and perhaps even our plans. He couldn't delay any further.

Engels appeared from the kitchen, standing in the shadows between Steiner and the front door. A knuckle knife was in his hand, so named because one side of the handle resembled a set of metal knuckles. He stood there quietly polishing the 5-1/2" blade with a ragged cloth. He finally asked, "Aren't they back yet?"

The sound of Engels' voice shook Steiner from his deliberations. He picked up the handgun before he stood up. "Nein." He slipped the gun into his back waistband then went toward the front door. As he turned the lock, he motioned with his head toward the kitchen and said, "Keep an eye on them. I'm going down to the lab."

The wooden banisters in the stairwells were rough and splintered; many support spindles were either broken or completely missing. On each landing one light socket was positioned in the middle of the ceiling. Steiner had seen to it that all the bulbs were removed.

His footsteps echoed as he stepped heavily going down to the first floor. Even though he'd been up and down these same steps hundreds of times, he ran a

hand along the wall as he descended the last flight, being cautious with his footing as his eyes adjusted to the dark. He stopped momentarily, then pulled a key from his pants pocket, the only key that unlocked the door leading to the basement. No one entered or left without his knowledge. Opening the door, he stood at the top of the steps and lit a kerosene lamp hanging from a hook.

It was time to put the final phase of his plan into action. Whether Brennar was brought back, or even if he was already dead, no longer mattered. Once Steiner was on his way to Moscow, the woman and twins would be disposed of. They had already outlived their original purpose. The question of why he allowed them to survive this long passed briefly through his mind but he didn't linger on it. There wasn't any need at this point in time.

He reached the bottom of the stairs and stepped onto solid concrete, then he turned up the light on the lamp. His nostrils flared as putrid smells buffeted his senses. More goddamn dead rats, he thought disgustedly.

He stopped and turned, hearing a faint sound somewhere behind him. He held the kerosene lamp high as he took a few steps. The light extended enough for him to see water leaking from a section of pipe. He turned back around and let the light cascade down on a rectangular wooden box, about five feet long, three feet wide, six inches high. He walked to it then set the lamp on the floor. Reaching down, he lifted one end. A shaft of light erupted through the opening. He raised the lid on its hinges, locked it into place at a ninety degree angle, then flipped a switch inside the opening with his thumb, energizing a small motor. The steps began unfolding as they lowered into the lab. He left the kerosene lamp burning, then climbed down the stairs.

Josef Von Wenzel looked up at him through the steps, then walked away. Flecks of gray were disbursed throughout Von Wenzel's dark brown hair. He wore black horn-rimmed glasses. A white lab coat covered dark gray slacks and shirt. He stood bent over a worktable, listening as Steiner's footsteps came closer. All the months he'd worked at this place, the scientist constantly worried about his family, about his own life. When Brennar disappeared and after he received his note, he prayed that someone would find the lab and destroy it. If that meant he and the others died, so be it. Even though he'd been coerced into fabricating the potentially lethal drug, whatever Steiner's final plans were, he, Josef Von Wenzel, and even Heisen, would be equally responsible.

"We've let this process go on too long, Herr Von Wenzel." His voice purposely sounded intimidating. "I know you've finished."

Von Wenzel turned, looking at Steiner with a questioning stare. "Finished? We still have..."

Steiner grabbed hold of a thin, frail forearm, squeezing it till Von Wenzel winced. "I said I know you're finished."

Von Wenzel seemed astonished. "But, how...? Oh, my God! Heisen—you got to Heisen."

"It seems Herr Heisen was more concerned for his family than you." Steiner gave Von Wenzel's arm a final twist, then released it. He took a step then reached behind his back, touching the Walther, but then left it alone. "While we talk, why don't you prepare some of the drug for me. I should think that two of those tubes



should be enough." Steiner leaned against the table, watching every move the scientist made.

Von Wenzel transferred the clear liquid into two, four inch glass tubes, then pushed a cork securely into the top of each. He prepared himself for the worst. "And now?" he asked with a trembling voice, as he handed the glass containers to Steiner one at a time.

"Now? Now I'll leave you to clean up in here. Then, why don't you go home to your family?" Von Wenzel's knees nearly gave way beneath him as he closed his eyes in relief. Steiner reminded him, "When you leave, be sure to go out through the rear door in the basement. I'll unlock it for you. Remember, it's still daylight, and we wouldn't want you to be seen, would we?" Von Wenzel shook his head. Steiner walked by him and climbed the stairs.

Von Wenzel kept an eye on his tormentor, then, once Steiner disappeared from sight, he began wondering. Steiner seemed... rushed. Could it be possible that the lab has been discovered by the authorities? He mumbled softly, "I've got to do something." He spun around to the table, grabbed a pen, and scribbled a brief note on a scrap of paper. He reached for a small white envelope, dumping out loose paperclips. Quickly addressing the envelope to the Chief of Police in East Berlin, he folded the paper in half and shoved it into the envelope, thinking he'd post it on the way home.

A single shot rang out. The bullet struck the scientist at the base of his skull. A reflex action caused his hand to curl around the envelope, then his body slid down the edge of the countertop. He collapsed on the floor, falling face first, with his arm outstretched under the counter. His fingers twitched, gradually uncurling, and the envelope fell from his grasp.

Steiner stood momentarily on the top step, first looking at Von Wenzel, then glancing down at the glass tubes in his own palm. He finally climbed up into the basement, leaving the trapdoor open.

Once back in the apartment, he ordered Engels to dispose of Von Wenzel's body. The procedure was simple. It was just a matter of carrying and dragging the body through the tunnel, then dumping it through the open hatch. The water flowing through the pipe was being fed by the Spree. From that point, the body would be carried along a series of pipes that formed the tunnel. They were set at different levels, each one slightly lower than the previous. Eventually, the water and Von Wenzel's body would exit at a fifty foot waterfall, emptying into a lake formed by the Muritz Dam.

Steiner opened a closet door in the hall. Hanging from a wire coat hanger was an East German military officer's uniform, bearing the insignia of a major. He pulled the uniform jacket from the hanger and carried it into the living room. He stood by the window, glancing at two rows of medals hanging above the left jacket pocket.

He pressed the cork into each of the glass tubes, ensuring they were secure. Then he placed them in an eyeglass case before slipping it inside the breast pocket. He carried the uniform back to the closet.

Engels walked through the front door, seeing Steiner leaning up against the closet door deep in thought. Engels was unable to interpret Steiner's expression,

thinking perhaps it concerned Von Wenzel. "Don't worry, Klaus. It's all taken care of."

Steiner gestured with his hand. "Good. Good."

"Do you have something on your mind? Anything else I can do?"

Steiner shook his head. "I was just remembering something I read one time that suits what I am trying to accomplish. *To choose one's victim, to prepare one's plan minutely, to slake an implacable vengeance, and then go to bed... there is nothing sweeter in the world.*"

"Hitler?"

"No. Stalin."

## Chapter 13

### West Berlin – U.S. Embassy

A cigarette dangled from the right corner of Matt Wharton's mouth. Hazy, weightless gray smoke hung close to the ceiling. He sat behind his desk reviewing the report word for word. The outside of the folder was stamped with the words: TOP SECRET.

His private line rang. He gave the phone a disgusted glance then returned his eyes to the pile of paper. On the third ring he angrily grabbed the receiver. "Wharton!"

"Grant Stevens, sir. You alone?"

"Well, Captain! Yes, as a matter of fact, I am." He pulled off his reading glasses and flipped them onto the desk then squeezed the bridge of his nose between his thumb and index finger.

"Can we talk?" Grant asked.

Wharton leaned forward, tensing instinctively. "Sure, sure. This line's secure and most of the staff's gone to lunch. What's the problem?"

"I know Admiral Torrinson's filled you in on our upcoming activities."

"Yeah, we've discussed it." Wharton heard something that sounded like a long breath being exhaled, unsure of what he was going to hear but positive it wasn't going to be to his liking.

"I'll cut right to the chase, sir. I've got every reason to believe somebody there at the Embassy is playing double duty with you."

Wharton blinked. It felt like every ounce of blood in his body had just been shot through a cannon, firing against the inside of his skull. His head pounded. "Oh, Christ!"

"Look, I think we need to talk face-to-face. We're gonna need your help. Can you come out to Tegel?"

"Hell, yes. Name the time." Grant responded with time and place, and then Wharton said, "I'm on my way."

Activity in the outer office alerted him to the fact that his staff was returning from lunch. It was a perfect time for him to leave without any questions being asked.

Not longer after his conversation with Grant, he walked three blocks before ducking into a side street then hailed a cab. Handing a couple of extra Deutsche Marks to the cabby would ensure his swift arrival at Tegel Airport.

Wharton pushed himself back against the seat. Nervous tremors in his right foot started his heel pounding involuntarily against the floorboard. Images of faces flashed through his mind as if he was thumbing through a loose-leaf binder filled with portraits. Employees in the Embassy had worked for him anywhere from six months to the longest, two years. He swore to himself: Jesus Christ! How the hell could this happen on my watch?

He reflected back on the number of times he had observed, with mixed feelings, the exchange of spies at the Glienicke Bridge. How the hell long had the fuckin' shitbird been making a fool out of him, out of all of them?

Suddenly, a white Mercedes shot past the cab, its tires screeching as it cut in front to make a right-hand turn. The cabby leaned on his horn and hit the brakes. Wharton's head snapped forward and he grabbed hold of the armrest out of instinct, because his mind continued spinning on another matter. First, it was shock that held him firmly in its grasp. Now it was complete, unadulterated fury.

The cabby glanced in his rearview mirror, seeing his passenger's face change from white to a shade close to purple. Terrified the man was having a heart attack, he slowed the vehicle and nervously shouted, "Are you sick?"

The sound of the voice startled Wharton, shaking him out of his stupor. "Nein!" He motioned with his hand for the driver to keep going, saying, "Faster!"

Within twelve minutes the cab pulled in front of the Kummel Cafe. Wharton handed the cabby his fare. "Danke." The confused cabby could only watch as Wharton jumped out of the cab, slamming the door behind him.

He stormed into the noisy cafe, then stood just inside the entryway. Several men stood around a billiard table as they anticipated the next shot by a portly man, leaning over the table with his cue stick poised. A crack of a cue ball striking another one on the green felt tabletop caused Wharton to jerk his head toward the source of the noise. He stretched his neck, trying to see above the heads of patrons milling around the bar, trying to tune out other sounds of silverware, clanking glasses and a steady hum of chatter. Finally, near the far wall, he noticed Grant looking in his direction. Wharton bulldozed his way through a throng of boisterous patrons.

Grant sat down as soon as Wharton spotted him. He picked up his coffee cup and looked at Adler. "Batten down the hatches, Joe."

Adler swished a mouthful of Coke back and forth between his cheeks, finally swallowing it as he answered, "Aye, aye, Skipper."

Wharton paused at the bar to order a beer. A young female, with short blond hair, poured a deep gold-colored beer into a tall beer glass. He ignored her smile, dropped money on the bar, and with the stein gripped in his hand, made his way over to the two Americans.

He took a swig of the warm ale as he got to the table. "Gentlemen," he said as he nodded, then pulled a chair out and sat down heavily. The stein rapped against

the tabletop. He rubbed his hands together then reached into his jacket pocket, pulling out a pack of cigarettes, offering one to the two men, who both declined. He took a deep drag, then let the smoke stream out of both nostrils. "Before we get started, are you gonna tell me what the fuck you've done with my favorite boy?"

"Uh, I'd prefer just to tell you that he's safe and in good hands, sir," Grant responded, shooting a quick glance at Adler.

"That's all I get?" Wharton asked with a rising voice, showing his obvious annoyance.

"I'm afraid for now, that's it."

"Listen, you know that if I hadn't already talked with Torrinson we wouldn't be having this goddamn conversation." Grant gave a slight nod, then Wharton added, "But since I did, I assured him I'd give you any assistance you needed, and that was after his shorthand overview of your upcoming operation. All I can say is that you'd better make damn well sure that I get my merchandise back in excellent working condition," he declared gruffly, pounding the tip of his index finger continuously on the table. "Do I make myself clear, Captain?"

Grant nodded, then replied, "Perfectly." He scooted himself forward on the chair. "Look, we did what was necessary to protect Rick. And by the way, one attempt was already made on his life not long ago."

"Don't be fuckin' with me, Captain."

"Wouldn't think of it, sir," Grant shot back.

Adler just listened to the banter, as he thought: This is certainly going so much damn better than expected! Shit!

"Yeah, right," Wharton responded before taking a swig of beer. "Let's get this show on the road. Who do you have under the microscope?"

Noise in the cafe continued at a fever pitch. A thick layer of cigar and cigarette smoke filled the cafe like an early morning fog. Grant took a quick look around, then leaned closer, rolling the coffee cup between his palms. "I can't give you a single name, but I've got it narrowed down to three."

"Just how'd you come up with those three names?" Wharton asked skeptically.

"Part what Joe and I observed after we got back with Lampson, and part from my instincts."

Wharton nearly choked on a mouthful of beer. "Your instincts? Your damn instincts?"

Adler quickly interjected, "You gotta go with his instincts, sir, believe me. You gotta believe in 'em."

"Why should I?"

Adler knew he was going to be up shitcreek but he went with it anyway. He lowered his voice. "Does the USS BRONSON ring a bell, sir?" Grant flashed an *I don't believe you said that* look. Adler ignored him.

In 1975 the two of them had been instrumental in preventing the most advanced destroyer in existence, the USS BRONSON, from falling into Russian hands.

"Ahh," Wharton smirked, "the BRONSON." He flicked an ash on the floor, then shifted his eyes to Grant. "If I'm not mistaken, one of our boys worked with you on that one. Tony Mullins, right?" Grant held back any reaction. "And you say it was all on instincts?"

"Pretty much!" Adler sheepishly looked in Grant's direction, giving him a *see... no problem* wink.

"It's still gonna take a fuckin' lot more than that to convince me," Wharton added. "Gimme some names."

Grant stared intently into Wharton's round, full face, watching for a reaction. "Bradley, Canetti, Kelley."

Wharton barely blinked. His face remained like a mask. He leaned back against the chair, intertwined his fingers, then rested his hands on his midsection. Grant gave him a chance to roll the names around in his mind.

"In my estimation, you're picking the three most obvious, maybe too obvious," Wharton finally responded.

"Don't think so. Look, confirm for me that they were the only individuals who knew Lampson was coming back that night, and only just before extraction."

Wharton sighed deeply, reaching for his beer, but refrained from drinking. "I informed Bradley two hours prior to his taking Joe to the Spree, and Canetti and Kelley were put on alert to wait in the crypto lab for any transmissions from you. So that would've been around 2000 hours for all parties."

"Were they informed Lampson was being stashed at the Hotel Berliner?" Grant asked as he sipped on the cold coffee.

Wharton glanced up at the ceiling, thinking back to his conversations with the three men. He moved his eyes from Adler then back to Grant. "Yeah, I did tell them."

Adler asked, "What about the two agents assigned to guarding Lampson at the hotel?"

"They were that obvious, huh?" Wharton chuckled. Adler just shrugged his shoulders as Wharton responded, "No, they knew nothing until Bradley took Lampson over there."

"Would you say that the two hours was more than enough time to put a note in Lampson's room?" Grant asked.

"Note? What the hell are you talking about?"

"A note was taped to the inside of the medicine cabinet. It addressed Lampson by his German name, Eric Brennar, and threatened his twin sons. As a nice touch," Grant said with a note of sarcasm, "a photo of the kids was included."

"Torrinson mentioned the kids," Wharton nodded. "And getting back to your question, yeah, two hours would've given someone time to get the note to the hotel, or at least contact someone else to do it. My guess is it was probably the latter."

Grant pushed the coffee cup away, then rested his arms on the table. "Would you be willing to run some interference for us?"

"Like what?"

"Joe and I came up with a way to put our cast of characters through a test."

"I'm listening."

Grant outlined the plan. Wharton listened intently, sipping on his beer, every once in a while nodding his head, but he refrained from asking any questions. The plan was simple enough. Only the three men under suspicion would be involved. No one in the Embassy or West Berlin civilian community would be put in any danger.

The CIA bureau chief raised the beer stein to his lips and downed the last mouthful of warm beer. He held onto the stein momentarily, turning it around, letting his eyes wander across the colorful, intricate carvings covering the outer shell. Finally, he said, "I told the Admiral I'd help you two and this definitely falls into that category."

Grant's face broke into a grin. "Thanks."

Wharton stood up, with Grant and Adler following. "Speaking of help," Wharton said, "John, I mean Admiral Torrinson, said you might need additional supplies."

"We're covered, but thanks anyway." As they shook hands, Grant said, "Sorry it had to be this way, sir."

Wharton then offered a hand to Adler as he said, "Listen, all we need to do is identify the son of a bitch then hope he didn't cause any irreparable damage." He started to turn away, then looked back at Grant. "You sure Rick's in good hands?"

"As safe as a baby in its mother's arms," Grant answered reassuringly.

Wharton nodded. "You know I'm not looking forward to talking with any of you tonight."

"Understood, sir," Grant nodded. The bureau chief sighed deeply and lowered his head before turning and heading for the front door. As soon as he'd gone, Grant said, "Come on, Joe. Let's go make that call to Grigori."

## **U.S. Embassy – 1310 Hours**

Wharton climbed the winding marble staircase leading to the second floor offices. He by-passed the elevator because he wanted the few additional minutes to think. As he reached the top step, he noticed Pete Bradley standing by a secretary's desk, thumbing through a manila folder. "Pete, I need to see you."

"Sure, Matt," Bradley answered, as he dropped the folder on the corner of the desk.

Wharton leaned toward his secretary. "Margaret, hold all calls, okay?" She nodded with a smile. He walked ahead of Bradley into his office, and hung his suede jacket on the clothes pole. Walking to his desk, he flopped down in the chair, opened the top drawer and pulled out a new pack of cigarettes, stripping away the cellophane wrapper. "Sit down, Pete." Bradley pulled a red leather upholstered chair closer to the front of the desk, then sat down. He waited while Wharton lit a cigarette. Wharton took a long drag from the Marlboro, then let out the smoke through a corner of his mouth. "Pete, what I'm going to tell you stays in this room. Understand?"

"Of course."

"I've been in contact with the Navy boys."

"Did you find out what they did with Lampson?"

"Yes and no."

"What's that supposed to mean? You were 'ready for bear' earlier."

"Just listen to me, okay?" Bradley shrugged his shoulders then sat back. Wharton thought about his response, then added, "I've been assured Lampson is safe. That's all you need to know. Now, Navy's going back into East Berlin tonight."

"What the..."

"I told you to listen! When I spoke with Admiral Torrinson he asked for our assistance. They've got some business to finish over there. At 2230 hours they'll be making their drop. Once they're safely in, they'll be contacting us." He got up and went over to a five-drawer file cabinet.

As he did Bradley asked, "Where's the designated drop zone?"

While he was unlocking the cabinet, Wharton informed him of the site, its coordinates, and code name. He then lifted his Delco portable radio from the top drawer. "Here. I want you to take this to your office when we're through." He put the black case on the floor next to Bradley's chair, then sat on the corner of his desk and picked up a pen and piece of note paper. He scribbled something then handed the paper to Bradley. "That's the frequency they'll be calling on. You've gotta start monitoring at 2100 hours. As soon as you hear from them, you get your ass back in here. I've gotta stay here and wait for Torrinson, you know, hold his hand while his boys are out playing their dangerous little games."

"Right," Bradley snickered.

"Remember, Pete... no one, I repeat, no one else is to know about this. Their mission is critical."

"You've got my word, Matt." He picked up the case containing the radio. "Listen, Matt, I know I haven't lived up to your expectations, so, well, I guess I'm surprised at your letting me help with this."

Wharton slid off the corner of the desk and placed a hand on the attaché's back, gently showing him to the door. "It's time you got involved around here with more than just paperwork. Now, go lock up that radio." Bradley left. Wharton turned and walked over to the window. If it's you, you little shit, I'll break off your goddamn head and shit in the hole personally!

The clock above the door showed 1315. He went to the outer office. "Margaret, do you know if George and Blake are in the crypto lab now?"

"I know Blake is. When George left for lunch, he said he had an errand to run and would probably be back by two," she answered as she curled a strand of chin-length black hair behind her ear.

"Okay. Think I'll go take a walk around the building. Whatever I ate for lunch is sitting pretty heavy on my stomach," he said as he patted his belly.

"Hope you feel better, Matt." She turned toward the IBM Selectric typewriter and started filling out the daily report.

Instead of going outside, Wharton made a detour and went to the crypto lab, giving the same instructions to Blake Kelley as he'd given to Bradley, except the drop zone was different. Fifteen minutes later he was outside smoking a cigarette, waiting for George Canetti to return. Canetti would be given the third drop site.

All three sites were in secluded areas in the southeastern section of East Berlin where there was plenty of tree coverage. Grant, Joe and Manfred would be close enough in proximity to one another in order to pair up quickly when it was time to head out for the lab. Afterwards, Manfred would drive to a designated site and wait for Grant and Adler to bring the children.

After his discussion with Canetti, Wharton walked over to the iron gate. The Marine guard snapped to attention. "At ease, son," Wharton smiled. The guard relaxed to a stiff parade rest. Wharton leaned against the gate, staring across the

busy four-lane road. Business as usual. He blew a mouthful of smoke between the iron bars while he mentally reviewed the intended plans for that night. All three men—Bradley, Canetti, Kelley—would be waiting for a confirmation call from the Navy boys, but that call would never come. Instead, he'd be getting that call, a verification that one of his men had turned. Whatever site the FSG showed up at would point the finger directly at one of them. Christ!

Stevens was leaving it up to him to decide what to do next. It didn't take a rocket scientist to figure out that Stevens and Adler were going after the FSG's lab to destroy the formula. He flicked the cigarette through the bars. What the hell was it that Torrinson said? Save the Kremlin? "Holy shit!" he shouted. The Marine jumped to attention as Wharton flew past him. He started running up the stairs, then nearly stumbled when he tried to stop on a dime. Now wasn't the time to draw attention or raise suspicion. He ran his palms along the sides of his head, smoothing down disheveled strands of hair.

"How are you feeling?" Margaret asked before popping a peppermint candy into her mouth.

He reached into the cellophane bag and pulled out one of the wrapped candies. "Better, thanks."

"That should help," she smiled. "Peppermint's supposed to be good for the tummy."

He grabbed another one, then went into his office, closing the door behind him. Standing near the desk, he dialed a number then sat down. Torrinson's yeoman answered and Wharton responded, "Matt Wharton here. Let me speak to the Admiral."

"Wait one, sir."

Within a matter of seconds, Wharton heard, "Hey, Matt!" Torrinson scooted closer to the edge of his leather swivel chair, bracing his arms on the desk. "What's happening?"

"Do you remember our conversation a couple nights ago?"

"Yeah," Torrinson replied, drawing the word out slowly.

"More specifically, about a certain place in the world that's near and dear to our hearts?"

Torrinson knew the place was Moscow but didn't know where the conversation was going. He wanted to clear up one point immediately. "Lay it on me, Matt. Are the boys okay?"

"Sure, sure. Now, tell me, John, the info they got from my boy has something to do with how the group plans on using the new *candy*, right?"

There was a brief moment of silence before Torrinson answered, "Affirmative." Before Wharton could reply, he added, "As a favor, Matt, leave them to their game, okay? They'll handle it."

Wharton pressed his back against the chair, rocking it back and forth. "From what I know of them, I'm sure they will, John. But if things start to turn to shit, you've gotta pull me in on it. Deal?"

The game was too far along. Torrinson didn't expect to hear from Grant till it was over, one way or other. If it went wrong, they'd all be up shitcreek. "Yeah, Matt, it's a deal."



"Good. Thanks. Hate to end our cheery little talk, but I've got a busy day and probably a busier evening. I'm sure we'll be talking again soon."

"For all of our sakes, I hope not real soon, Matt."

## Chapter 14

### **Hurstengarten, outside East Berlin 2120 Hours**

Closing time for the park was seven o'clock. A heavy chain had been pulled across the road then attached to a five-foot high concrete pillar on the opposite side, prohibiting entry. A gravel road traveled approximately one mile from the entrance then made a loop and returned. This was the only way in and out.

Within ten minutes after hitting the ground, Grant had buried his jump gear and chute deep within the woods. He was outfitted completely in black with a black watch cap pulled low on his head. He retrieved the rucksack, then crouching low, he ran halfway down a knoll, weaving in and out of pine trees, finally taking up a position about a hundred yards from the park's entrance. A fifty foot pine was broken seven feet above its base, a recent victim of a lightning strike. A few lower branches close to the stump still had their needles intact. Good cover, he thought as he scooted behind the stump, dragging the rucksack as he went. Resting on one knee, he unzipped the sack. He took a quick look around the tree trunk, then removed a standard issue, drab green walkie-talkie. The thin band of its antenna flopped back and forth. "Panther calling Timberwolf. Come in Timberwolf."

"Timberwolf. Go 'head, Panther," Adler replied.

"Confirm contact with Silverfox."

"Confirmed and secure." Once Adler had secured his own position, he made contact with Manfred. The old man had instructions to contact Adler if anyone appeared at his location. If not, he was to wait until 2345 hours then drive to a predetermined location and wait.

"Roger," Grant answered, keeping his voice to just above a loud whisper. "Over and out."

It was understood that unless they encountered a problem, their next transmission would be at 2330 hours. He put the walkie-talkie back into the rucksack, pulled out his "hushpuppy" and screwed on a silencer. He slipped it into his front waistband. Taking the rucksack with him, he crept across the grass until he was in the thick of some branches still covered with long needles, then he maneuvered himself in between two large boughs, crawling close to the main trunk. He felt the prick of sharp needles poking through his sweater. The branches gave him enough coverage, even from a kneeling position. Again he opened the rucksack and removed the Starlighter scope. Looking through a Starlighter was like looking at a negative, only instead of black and white, objects showed in light and dark green. He knelt close to the tree and put the scope to his eye, slowly

making a hundred eighty degree sweep of his surroundings. Then, he turned around and checked his back.

After nearly twenty minutes of continuous listening and watching, he lowered the scope then pushed his shoulders back, trying to ease the tightness. He glanced overhead, looking up between the surrounding trees through the space left by the fallen pine. It was a moonless, starless sky. How many missions had he found himself looking up into this same type of sky, under the same conditions, in the middle of some goddamn ocean, desert, or jungle. He thought to himself: Christ! Fourteen years of my life. Hold it! This isn't the time to get into one of your philosophical bullshit sessions, Stevens.

He continued waiting. It was 2230 hours. A faint noise off in the distance made him quickly raise the scope as he leaned forward and rested on the downed tree. It was so very quiet, almost too quiet, making it difficult to pinpoint the right direction as the noise echoed. He focused the scope on the entrance and then beyond.

There were three roads. Two ran parallel to the park, and one head-on. Each had two lanes and intersected just outside the entrance. They joined at a roundabout, a circle. Grant slowly moved his head, training the scope up and down on the far right road, then continued moving left. Nothing was happening on the middle road. He had just scanned the grassy area to the left, when something caught his eye. Wait one! He steadied his elbows on the trunk.

Two subjects came briefly into view then disappeared behind a ten foot section of a brick wall that had been all but destroyed during World War II. The noise must have been car doors. They parked far enough away. That's why it took five minutes before he spotted them. Odds weren't exactly in his favor. With final confirmation that an Embassy employee was a traitor, he could haul ass now then contact Wharton. But Grant Stevens was going to play the game until its conclusion. The two pursuers were about to become the pursued.

They ran across the street, quickly stepping over the chain at the entrance. Both men were wearing dark slacks, heavy sweaters and loose fitting jackets. Only one, the taller of the two, wore a cap, similar to a golfer's cap.

Grant zeroed in with the scope, noticing a weapon in each man's hand, complete with silencers. He laid the Starlighter in front of him, then reached down and touched the handle of his knife. Instead, he opted for the .45 and drew it from his waistband. "Oh, shit," he said under his breath, seeing the taller man giving directions to his partner as he pointed in Grant's direction. The shorter man started running up the hill straight for him. Grant took a quick glance at the taller man running up the opposite side, then, he immediately flattened his body under a needle-covered branch, with his arms slightly bent. The gun handle was gripped in his hand in front of his face. He listened to twigs snapping under running feet.

There was a rustling sound as the man crawled around behind the stump. He was less than fifteen feet from Grant when a sound suddenly made Grant flinch. The man was trying to imitate a birdcall as a signal. Grant waited. Then a second later there was a response somewhere off to his left. He heard a *click*. A gun hammer? The man was on his knees now, allowing Grant a clearer view through the branches. He was about 5'7", maybe in his late twenties and stocky. By the way he was breathing, it was obvious he wasn't in good, physical shape.

After twelve minutes in a kneeling position, the man started rubbing his legs, finally falling back on his rearend, extending his legs out in front of him.

Grant's options were very limited when it came to putting this guy out of commission. Positioning the .45 so it was aimed straight ahead, he felt around with his other hand and found a small rock, then tossed it beyond the tree branches. The East German snapped his head around, shifting the Luger to his right hand before getting back into a kneeling position. He gradually stood but remained crouched, while he moved slowly away from the fallen tree, taking one cautious step at a time.

Grant turned his head to the right, ignoring the scraping of his cheek over prickly pine needles. The man was in clear view now, still trying to find the source of the noise. He was no more than twelve feet from Grant when he heard, "Psstt." He jerked around. A second after his eyes met Grant's, the bullet struck his forehead, dropping him like a rock.

Grant crawled out from beneath the branch. Staying on his hands and knees, he moved next to the dead East German, whose eyes and mouth were still open as if in shock. Grant thought: No time to find out who you are... were, friend.

Keeping low, he scrambled back to the tree and grabbed the scope. Where the hell was the other guy? He looked through the scope trying to find the second gunman. A slight movement caught his attention.

He shoved the scope into the rucksack then took a bearing with his compass that was attached to his watch band. He looked up the hill, verifying his escape route. He was about to stash the rucksack behind another pine thirty feet away, when he heard an engine. Christ! More company. He peered over the tree trunk. A jeep-load of East Germans was driving down the road that led directly toward the entrance. It drove into the circle, then started heading away from the park. Time for you to join the party, Grant thought as he took aim and fired, intentionally aiming at the windshield. The bullet shattered the glass. The driver swerved and slammed on the brakes. Four soldiers scrambled out, taking cover behind the vehicle now sitting at a forty-five degree angle, blocking both lanes. The East German hiding in the trees snapped his head around, clearly surprised and near panic.

Knowing he'd probably be giving away his position, Grant fired again anyway, this time shooting at the ground close to the lone gunman. Dirt kicked up around the man and he jumped. Then, confused and scared, he fired recklessly into the trees.

Just as Grant had hoped, the soldiers didn't take the time to analyze which direction the bullets were heading or coming from, never thinking there could possibly be two gunmen. Instinctively, they opened fire with their AK47's.

Time to haul ass, Stevens! He slung the rucksack over his shoulder, and crouching as low as possible, he beat feet up the hill, ducking behind trees as he ran, not bothering to look back. He ran full tilt, hearing the firefight taking place behind him. Suddenly, everything went dead quiet just as he reached the top of the hill. He glanced back, seeing the soldiers running into the park, all four heading toward the last known position of the lone gunman. Whatever the outcome, Grant wasn't hanging around. Not even out of breath, he started running

again, putting as much distance between himself and the East Germans as he possibly could.

When he had covered nearly two miles, he dropped to the ground then took the walkie-talkie from the sack. "Panther calling Timberwolf. Come in Timberwolf. Over."

The walkie-talkie crackled. "Timberwolf. Over."

"Target acquired. Call Silverfox then Chief. On my way to rendezvous. Over and out."

Adler switched off the walkie-talkie and let out a muffled shout, "Hot damn!" He immediately called Manfred, then Wharton.

## **U.S. Embassy**

Wharton had locked himself in his office. He was sitting behind his desk with his sleeves rolled up. Several cigarette butts had already been thoroughly crushed in the ashtray. Nervously, his eyes kept shifting from the wall clock to the walkie-talkie in front of him. He thought to himself: Gotta remember to call that NIS guy when this is over. What the hell was his name? Oh, yeah, Webster, Glen Webster.

He grabbed a pen from the holder and made the note on his desk calendar, deciding not to trust his memory. Grant asked that when the double-crossing son of a bitch in the Embassy had been identified, Wharton was to contact Webster to have him see that Marie got back home safely. He flipped the ballpoint pen on the desk, ignoring it as it rolled over the edge. All the significant players were in place—Bradley, Canetti and Kelley. Christ! It was almost 2330 hours. Was this plan going to work? He nearly came out of his chair when he heard a crackle from the walkie-talkie.

"Timberwolf calling Chief. Come in. Over."

"Chief here. Over."

"Panther made contact. Repeat, Panther made contact. Three on way to rendezvous. Over."

"Understood. Good luck. Out." The transmission ended. "Son of a bitch! The bastard!" he swore as he shook his head and dropped the walkie-talkie on the desk. He'd been hoping Stevens was wrong, that his instincts would play him wrong this time. The chair rolled back and hit the wall with a thud as he angrily stood up. He punched in one of the buttons at the base of the phone then picked up the receiver. The button lit up then he dialed extension 55. "Sergeant Major, I want you and one of your men to come to my office on the double!" He slammed down the receiver. Within two minutes there was a rapping at the door. "Come!"

Sergeant Major Mike Mahoney and Corporal Lewis Franklin entered, immediately bracing themselves at attention, Mahoney saying sharply, "Sir!"

Wharton noticed both men were wearing sidearms. "Come with me." He barreled past them, nearly knocking Franklin off his feet. The two Marines looked at each other as if to say, "Oh, shit!" They stayed close to Wharton's heels as he charged down the hallway.

Without even bothering to knock on the door, Wharton burst into Bradley's office. "Pete!"

Bradley had a set of headphones on. As he spun his chair around, the wires tangled around his throat. "Jesus, Matt! You scared the shit..."

"Get off your ass and come with me now."

"But the radio trans..."

"What part of *now* don't you understand? Fuck the transmission! Come with me!" Bradley flung the headphones on his chair, nearly falling over himself trying to get around the desk.

The four men piled into the elevator. Wharton couldn't stay still, constantly tapping his foot on the floor. Finally, the door opened. Canetti and Kelley both turned around, surprise obvious on their faces.

"Matt," Canetti said. "What's up?"

Wharton walked toward them, finally setting his stare on Blake Kelley. "Sergeant Major, I want you to place this man under arrest."

Canetti jumped up and shouted, "What?! What the hell are you talking about?!"

Wharton never took his eyes from Kelley, even as the two Marines took their places on either side of him. "You wanna tell him, Blake? You wanna tell all of us why, why you turned?" If the proverbial pin had dropped in the room at that moment, it would have sounded like a bomb.

Perspiration broke out on Kelley's brow. He was positive he hadn't slipped up. Wharton had to be bluffing. "Like George said, Matt, what the hell are you talking about?"

Wharton shoved his hands into his pants pockets, and then shifted his eyes to the big Southerner. "George, why'd I ask you to be here tonight?" Canetti hesitated, and Wharton added, "It's okay, George. Navy's already landed. It's all over."

Canetti glanced at Kelley as he answered. "You said I was to wait for a transmission from one of the Navy boys. He was using the code name *Timberwolf*."

"Go on," Wharton said.

"He was to transmit at 2330 hours, as soon as he made it to his drop zone in Kruezgarten Park."

Wharton nodded. "Have you received a transmission?"

Canetti shook his head. "No."

Then Wharton called, "Pete."

Bradley walked around Wharton and stood next to Canetti. Anticipating Wharton wanted the same type of response from him, he said, "I was expecting a transmission from *Silverfox* at 2330 hours. He was to transmit from Prinzgarten Park. And, no, I didn't get any transmission."

Wharton turned back to Kelley. "And Kelley, let's see. You were waiting for a call from someone, too, weren't you?" Kelley diverted his eyes from Wharton, staring at the cold, tiled floor. "Code name *Panther*, right? *Panther* was to transmit at 2330 hours, also, only he would be calling from Hurstengarten Park." Wharton was seething. He spit the words out with a booming voice. "Isn't that right?!" Kelley jumped but remained silent. Wharton turned and walked away, standing momentarily in front of a file cabinet. Then he turned around. "At approximately 2329 hours I received a transmission. *Timberwolf* confirmed that *Panther* made contact with two East Germans. You care to tell us why they were there and who they were?"

"I don't know what the fuck you're talking about," Kelley answered flatly, in a monotone voice.

"Like hell you don't, you son of a bitch... you bastard!" Wharton shouted as he made a move toward him. Canetti grabbed his arm. Wharton pulled away then resumed talking. "You contacted somebody within the FSG organization. You told him exactly where and when the landing was going to be. You stupid bastard! We set you up, and you took the bait. Now, are you gonna tell us why?"

Kelley's shoulders went slack. He started sobbing. "I... I can't." He started shaking his head violently and screamed, "I can't tell you! I can't tell you!" He started to wretch then he vomited on his black trousers.

Wharton motioned to the Marines. They assisted Kelley in standing up then led him away to a secure room located at the opposite end of the Embassy's basement.

The three remaining men in the crypto room stared at one another in silence until Canetti mumbled, "Jesus Christ!" He looked into Wharton's bloodshot eyes, as he was shaking his head in disbelief. "What the fuck just happened here?"

"Your buddy's been feeding data to the FSG on Rick Lampson," Wharton answered. "Navy snatched Lampson because he had vital information on a drug the FSG group was working on, along with their plans for its use." He turned and walked slowly across the brightly lit room, trying to stabilize his heartbeat. An overhead fluorescent light bulb flickered and he glanced up at it. "It started when Kelley told them where we stashed Lampson."

"Christ," Canetti groaned. "But you didn't tell us anything about Lampson until two hours before he was to be extracted. How'd Kelley have the time to notify the FSG?"

"Don't know yet, George. But I can guarantee you that I'll find out." Wharton dug his hands into his trousers' side pockets. "Tonight Stevens and Adler were going back to take out the lab and rescue Lampson's kids." Canetti and Bradley shot a quick glance at one another, but refrained from asking any questions. "That's why Stevens put this scheme together, and Kelley went for it." He took quick steps over to the entrance. "Listen, George, I think you'd better hang around just in case Stevens calls in. I'll be in my office if he needs anything. Got it?"

"Right, Matt." When Wharton and Bradley had gone, Canetti got up and paced the room. His headphones were still draped around his neck. "How the hell did this happen? Why didn't I know?" A round stainless steel garbage can was just a little to close to his foot, and he intentionally kicked it across the room. The metal pail went airborne, bouncing off the door of a file cabinet then rolled across the room. Canetti flopped down in his chair, then started rolling the wheels back and forth. He stared at his former partner's chair, disbelieving but madder than hell.

## **East Berlin**

### **0015 Hours – Day 7**

Steiner stood in the living room, adjusting the uniform jacket. He looked down at the medals hanging from different colored ribbons. One ribbon was twisted, with the bronze medal facing backwards. He straightened it then ran his hand

along the double row. Making his way into the kitchen, the thoughts of his three missing men came to mind. He went to the window that was facing vacant acreage. A mile away a red blinking light at the top of the television tower, Fernsehturm, marked the location of Alexanderplatz.

As he stared into the distance, he remembered the last contact he had with Kelley from the U.S. Embassy. Kelley had been unable to find out any information pertaining to Steiner's men. It's too bad, he thought, as he leaned against the window frame. But Kelley did inform him that an American was scheduled to make a drop into the East tonight. Buy why? The Americans already had Brennar. Only six members of the FSG knew the location of the lab. Wait! Could Von Wenzel have told Brennar? Steiner thought for a moment, reasoning that he'd put enough fear in both Von Wenzel and Heisen to rule that out. Suddenly his back straightened. The twins! That American's coming back to look for Brennar's brats. But it was impossible for him to know where they were—impossible. He tilted his head back, momentarily letting his eyes wander back and forth across the discolored ceiling. Unless... He rested his hand against the wall as he continued to try and answer troubling questions. Neus, Schinkel and Richter are missing. Were they dead? Or did the Americans somehow abduct them to obtain further information?

After he had heard from Kelley, he'd put a plan together swiftly, sending Kirchner and Schloss to the park to handle that one American who was coming back to East Berlin. Was the same fate going to befall them? A strange, chilling feeling came over him. Someone was destroying the FSG, almost systematically, ever since Brennar defected. There seemed to be a pattern. What was the name Kelley mentioned? Stevens? Yes, Stevens. Captain Stevens was the one who took Brennar back to the West. Would he be the one Kirchner and Schloss would have to confront in the park tonight?

In the distance a bell chimed. Whatever was happening at the park, he didn't have time to wait for the outcome because the military flight to Moscow was scheduled for departure from Schonefeld at 0230 hours. He'd have to depend on his men. More pressing matters were waiting for him in Moscow, the first phase of his plan to rid East Germany of Soviet control. With its success, the second phase, and in his mind, the most important phase could proceed. The people of East Germany would turn to him when they learned he was responsible for freeing them. And who knows where that will lead?

Reaching into his jacket pocket, he withdrew fraudulent military identification papers and orders signed by General Hermann Stauffenberg. The orders directed him to Moscow to attend a conference at the Kremlin, joining Stauffenberg's group. He tapped the folded papers against his chin. He thought of Fraulein Hannah Zille, who did an excellent job in getting the papers. He'd have to pay her another visit when he returned, so he could show her his gratitude again.

Hannah Zille, twenty-three years old, worked at the East German Military Command Headquarters as a file clerk. Steiner began a relationship with her five months prior to setting up the lab. Getting more heavily involved with Steiner as the months passed, and with the many promises he made her, she didn't hesitate to supply him with any information or papers he needed.

No sounds came from the bedroom as Steiner opened the door. The kerosene lamp on the kitchen table barely shed enough light into the bedroom. As his eyes adjusted to the dark, he saw the two boys on one cot, the woman on the other. All were sleeping soundly. He left the door part way open then went back into the hallway.

Victor Engels and Karl Breite sat on a couple of blankets spread out near the fireplace. Breite was of medium build, in his early thirties and an expert when it came to explosives. He swallowed the last morsel of crusty bread filled with liver sausage, then licked his fingers. He glanced across the room at Steiner while he picked at his overlapping front teeth.

Engels kept his eyes on Steiner, asking, "You worried about Kirchner and Schloss?"

Steiner didn't bother answering. As he went to the closet, he rubbed his finger across his clean shaven upper lip. He'd touted a mustache for as long as he could remember, but the sacrifice had to be made. He reached up to the closet shelf and removed an East German military cap then rubbed the uniform jacket sleeve across its brim. He adjusted the cap on his head as he came back into the living room.

Engels and Breite got up off the floor. Steiner stood opposite them. He spoke with his voice lowered, looking directly at Breite. "I'm leaving it up to you to take care of them." He motioned toward the bedroom.

"You don't mean the children, too, do you?"

"We won't be able to stay here after I take care of our Moscow comrades. I'll need you and the others to be more than just watchdogs and babysitters. All of you will be disbursed to the locations we've pinpointed in the Soviet sector. Those three would just be in the way."

The idea wasn't sitting very well with Breite, and he tried protesting again. "Why don't we just take them someplace in the country and let them go?"

"Why?" An artery in Steiner's neck began to pulsate. "They can identify us, Karl. And she can bring the government or anybody else back here to the lab. We need a safe place to keep the drug until we've accomplished what we've set out to do. We still need this place."

"But if..."

As he stepped closer, Steiner reached behind his back and withdrew his Walther. Standing close enough to Breite that he could smell sausage on his breath, he ran the barrel of the gun down the side of Breite's tensed jaw. "I'm through arguing, Karl. If you can't do it, I'm sure I can find someone who can. Or maybe you're no longer capable of taking orders. Is that it?"

"All right! All right! I'll take care of it," Breite responded as he pushed the gun aside then backed away.

Steiner slowly lowered the gun then placed it back in his waistband. He continued looking at Breite as he said to Engels, "After you leave me at the airport, I want you to take a ride to Hurstengarten Park. See if you can find Kirchner and Schloss then come back here with them. We may need the extra security. Now, let's go." He stopped and turned around. "Karl, by the time Victor returns, I expect you to have completed your task." Breite nodded without responding.



## **East Berlin – 0130 Hours**

Two silhouetted figures, with weapons drawn, appeared from around the west-side of the building, flattening themselves against a wall. Having spotted a sentry when they came across the vacant lot, they proceeded cautiously and inched their way toward the front doors. Grant and Adler had small batteries attached to their waistbands, each with a dangling antenna. Wires ran from the batteries up under their sweaters to throat mikes and earpieces. They wore chest vests with additional gear. Adler had a rucksack strapped to his back.

Grant led the way, stepping onto the first of two concrete steps. He edged his way toward double wooden doors. Adler hung close, watching their backs while Grant jimmied the lock. He tapped Adler's shoulder. They disappeared into the building quickly and silently.

As their eyes started adjusting to the dark, they pulled pen-like flashlights from their waistbands. The thin beams cast enough light to guide them while they climbed the ten flights. Within minutes they were on the top floor.

Walking across the squeaking, wooden floor, they aimed the flashlight beams toward a passageway at the rear of the building. Tucked in a narrow shaft were a set of steep-angled stairs that led to the roof.

Once he was on the top step, Grant reached for the doorknob. He turned the dirt-encrusted knob, finding it was unlocked but the door hardly budged. He shined the flashlight around the frame. Years of neglect left the door warped, and its hinges completely rusted. He switched off the flashlight, reattaching it to his belt. Adler aimed his light back down the stairwell, preparing for the door to open. Grant braced himself, then threw his weight into it and hammered the door with his shoulder. Begrudgingly, it gave way enough to allow them to slip through. They took short, quick strides to reach the west side of the roof. Black strips of tarpaper ran across the width of the roof, most of it ripped and shredded. Small torn pieces were caught in a ten knot wind swirling around the building.

Finally reaching the side that faced the alley, they took a quick look across at their final objective. On the opposite side about fifty feet away was an exact duplicate of the building they were on. They ducked down behind a four-foot high, cement block wall that ran around the building's perimeter.

"What the hell...?" Grant said suddenly, as a familiar noise got their immediate attention. They snapped their heads around. The sound grew louder. It was the unmistakable noise of rotor blades. A chopper was approaching from the rear. Their eyes immediately focused on a beam of light, a searchlight affixed to the outside of the cargo bay. The operator swiveled it slowly, back and forth, sweeping the surrounding grounds.

Grant and Adler knew they were too exposed. The light had a range of nearly a hundred yards. Their only chance was to make it back to the stairwell. The chopper was nearly two hundred yards away, the light aimed at the field directly behind the two buildings. Taking off at the same time, the two raced across the roof, squeezing through the partially open door. Adler grabbed the door knob. He hoped that by using his forward momentum it would help pull the door closed behind him, but it jammed. Grant reached around him, and the two of them

asserted all their effort, pulling on the knob. A shaft of light started to penetrate the open space just as the door slammed shut. Again in pitch black surroundings, they waited, directing their eyes overhead, unable to see, but listening to the noise above them as the chopper continued to hover.

Several seconds later, the repetitive noise changed direction. Grant and Adler followed the sound, moving their heads to the right. Gradually, they were listening to silence. Once back outside, they took a quick glance toward the horizon, still able to see the beam of light reaching down to earth as if on a quest.

Adler pulled the Starlighter from the rucksack, as Grant was removing a black object that resembled a long tube. It was about eighteen inches in length, had a wire running from the handle to an earpiece, and the opposite end had a „sight“. A collapsible dish opened around the mike in order to capture more sound. The directional microphone, known as a "shotgun mike" was highly sensitive. Adler once said that the powerful microphone could pick up a gnat's fart.

Grant started to fit the earpiece into his ear when Adler nudged him and whispered, "One sentry, six o'clock."

Grant reached for the scope then leaned over the edge of the wall, aimed it at the alley directly below, and spotted a man standing in the middle of the dark alley. He wore a heavy jacket, and had an Uzi slung over his shoulder. A tiny flame suddenly glowed in the darkness, as a match was brought close to the tip of a cigarette. The small light flickered a moment before being extinguished, then the burned matchstick was dropped to the ground. A puff of cigarette smoke drifted into the air before the sentry turned and started meandering toward the vacant lot.

Grant nodded then handed the scope back to Adler. Once the small earpiece was snugly in his ear, he aimed the head of the shotgun mike toward the opposite building. Starting at the top floor, he moved it in a back and forth pattern, trying to cover every floor, every apartment. He leaned against the wall, keeping his eyes closed, allowing him total concentration on the sounds filtering through the earpiece. Minutes later, he stopped his arm motion and tilted his head.

Adler detected that Grant heard something significant, and he lowered the scope, waiting for confirmation.

Pressing his index finger against the earpiece, Grant heard what appeared to be whimpering, immediately followed by a female voice attempting to quiet a child. He whispered, "Live bodies. Kids, one female."

Adler's face broke out in a wide grin. He motioned with a thumb's up then asked, "Location?" Grant held up two fingers. Adler pressed the scope against his eye, moving the sight along the fire escape, zeroing in on a window that didn't have a trace of light filtering through it. He stepped back and ran behind Grant, heading for the rear of the building about forty feet away. First he made sure the sentry was still in the alley then he leaned over the wall as far as he could and checked every angle of the two buildings.

Beyond the rear of both buildings was an area covering approximately one hundred acres. Adler steadied the scope then moved the sight methodically back and forth, scanning the acreage they crossed earlier to reach their objective. They had made their way through piles of rubble and debris scattered across ground. Most of the rubble consisted of large chunks of concrete, broken sections of rusted

pipe, window glass, and even pieces of furniture, making it obvious another building had once occupied the site. There was little chance the average East Berlin citizen would wander into this neighborhood. All Grant and Adler had to worry about was an occasional patrol... or another flyover by a chopper.

Adler hurried back to Grant, who still had the microphone aimed at the second floor across the alley. "Anything?"

"At least one male," Grant replied. He pulled the earpiece from his ear, handing it and the microphone to Adler, who was on one knee, storing the scope in the rucksack. "Let's move," Grant said.

Once Adler had the rucksack secured on his back, they headed for the door leading from the roof. Securing it behind them, they immediately reached for the pen-like flashlights, the tiny beams guiding their way down the steep stairs. Staying on the top landing, they knelt down and gripped the flashlights between their teeth before they proceeded to check the equipment. Grant opened his chest vest and examined the roll of det cord, blocks of C4, and chemical pencils. Adler put a new clip into both his and Grant's .45 then tightened the silencers. They each carried five additional clips in their vests, one MK6 CS vial of tear gas, a set of lock picks, along with phony passports and "haul ass" money sealed in plastic. They sealed the chest vests and removed the flashlights from their mouths.

"Ready?" Grant asked, as he checked his knife, secured in the leg strap.

"Let's do it!"

All their planning, down to the most minute detail, was about to culminate. The flashlights were extinguished and slipped into their pockets for easy access. With weapons drawn, Adler partially opened the door, sliding his body through, then taking cover behind it as Grant exited, quietly closing it. He gave Adler a signal, and they both made a dash across the front of the building then turned the corner, running full bore across compacted dirt, heading for the rear. Their black clothes made them blend into the darkness, becoming shadows themselves.

Adler poked his head around the back corner. He gave Grant the "all clear" then they cautiously followed the building toward the alley. Once they reached the end of the wall, they paused, listening for anything that would tell them the sentry's location. While they were on the roof, Adler had timed how long it took for the German to make one pass around the entire building. But they couldn't depend on that. If he was smart, the sentry would vary his routine and maybe even use the fire escape to check the roof.

Detecting a slight odor, Adler turned his head and signaled it was a cigarette. Grant nodded, partially opened his vest and felt around inside. He pulled out a thin telescoping rod with a three inch round mirror attached to the end then handed it to Adler. Slowly extending the rod past the corner, Adler adjusted its angle as he stared into the mirror. He withdrew it, handed it back to Grant then gave a thumb's down. But the smell of cigarette smoke still lingered. Adler slid his back down the wall, getting himself into a low crouch. His eyes searched the ground, finally spotting a cigarette butt about seven feet away. He pointed for Grant to see.

Goddammit, Grant thought. They were wasting time!

Suddenly, a sound made them all but melt into the wall. They strained their ears, trying to pinpoint the location and identify the sound. Grant pressed on the throat mike, barely whispering, "Fire escape."

Adler nodded, taking a quick look around the corner. He signaled with a thumb's up then held up three fingers, indicating the second floor then pointed down with his index finger. The sentry was on his way back down to ground level.

The German had stopped on the second landing of the fire escape, his ear pressed against a window. He finally started down the metal steps, facing toward the front of the building. Adler cautiously ran across the alley, taking cover behind the building. He could hardly see Grant from that angle, but it didn't matter. They knew what had to happen next.

They didn't have time to wait and see which direction the sentry would go. They poked their heads around the corner, seeing the German beneath the fire escape, lighting up another cigarette then leaning against the wall. Adler took the penlight flashlight from his pocket, then clicked it on and off once, signaling Grant, who stood ready, holding the .45 with both hands in front of him, his elbows close to his body. He turned and faced Adler and the alley, poised and waiting.

Adler stuck the light around the corner and aimed the tiny beam along the ground, tracking a path toward the German whose eyes fell on the light. He blinked and threw the cigarette away, fumbling with the strap of the Uzi, finally pulling it from his shoulder. He started walking, when the light suddenly disappeared. He stopped in his tracks, staring at the ground then lifted his head, looking into the blackness of the field beyond, uncertain whether to proceed, but then he tried to reassure himself it was probably nothing. There hadn't been a single sighting of anyone near here, let alone any attempt to try and attack or break into the flat or lab. He hesitated, but knew he had to investigate. With the Uzi clutched in his hands, he started cautiously forward. The quiet was almost deafening. He swung the Uzi slowly from side to side, trying to cover both buildings, not knowing what to expect. He was less than eight feet from the corner when a black form swung out from behind the building on his left. Stunned, his reaction was only quick enough to raise the Uzi. The last sound he heard was a muffled "putt."

Grant and Adler rushed to the dead German. Each grabbed an arm and started dragging the body beyond the building to the edge of the field. Adler pulled the clip from the Uzi then rolled the German over, face down. Grant quickly scanned an area close by, quietly asking Adler, "See any camouflage?"

"Behind you," Adler answered immediately, spotting something over Grant's shoulder. He ran about fifteen feet, lifted a rusted piece of crumbled sheet metal, carried it back then covered the body. Only the bottoms of the German's shoes were left exposed.

Grant motioned with his head toward the building then took off, Adler right next to him. Jesus, Grant thought, where the hell is the trail of bodies going to end?

Not surprising, the basement door was locked. Grant pulled a case from his vest, removing a lock pick. Adler pulled double duty, holding the flashlight and standing guard. Grant manipulated the instrument inside the lock like an expert burglar, finally hearing a click.

Adler entered first, shining the beam of light ahead of him. Grant was right behind him, closing the door silently. "Nine o'clock," Adler whispered. He aimed the flashlight on what looked like a rectangular wooden box. "Trap door?" They moved cautiously toward the box. Grant knelt down on one knee, running his hand along the edge of the wooden frame, lifting one edge. Adler leaned over, shining the light down through the folding stairs. "Look familiar?"

"Yeah." He reached for Adler's flashlight, searching for some kind of switch. Finding it, he stood up and handed the flashlight back to Adler who started to close the lid. "Leave it," Grant said. "In a little while, it won't matter who knows we've been here. Let's go." At the top of the steps, they confronted another locked door. Christ! Grant again removed the lock picks. He swung the door out just enough to poke his head through the opening. His eyes had adjusted fully to the darkness, and he spotted the stairs just to his left. "Clear," he whispered. He led the way up the stairs to the first landing. Standing by the front door, Adler pressed an ear to it. They both listened for any sound, but there was only silence.

Grant moved to the next flight of stairs, as Adler stuck close. Almost in unison, they stared up toward the second landing, the outline of the apartment door in sight—their final objective. With adrenaline pumping, they ascended slowly, one step at a time, staying close to the wall, their weapons cocked and ready.

Karl Breite stood at the entrance of the kitchen, with a Luger gripped in his hand. He drew back the hammer, while never taking his eyes from the partially opened bedroom door. The children were quiet again after nearly thirty minutes of fussing. He made the decision to dispose of the woman first, then the children. He breathed in deeply, knowing he had no choice if he wanted to survive. Steiner would make good on his promise. Breite's only consolation for what he was about to do was that he'd make sure they didn't suffer.

A kerosene lamp sat near the edge of the folding table, its flame barely giving off enough light to cast shadows in the kitchen. Breite pictured in his mind the position of the cots and where the woman and children were. Deciding he couldn't take the chance and maybe miss the targets with first shots, he carried the lamp and put it down on the floor near the bedroom entrance. He turned up the wick. He stood in front of the door and began to push it open with his foot, his weapon secure in both hands. The cots were directly opposite him, the sleeping children coming into view as the door opened. He took a slight step to his left as he entered the room, preparing for the other cot to come into view. He started to pull the trigger when suddenly, out of his peripheral vision, he caught sight of someone lunging at him from behind the door. He began to swing the gun around when an excruciating pain shot through his chest, just below the sternum, the instrument of death being forced up at an angle, plunging into his heart. A reflex action caused his finger to squeeze the trigger.

Grant and Adler were at the front door when the shot rang out, sounding like a cannon in the empty building. Screams from the hysterical little boys made Grant's blood turn cold. "Oh, Christ! Go! Go!" he yelled.

Without hesitation, he and Adler fired at the lock then kicked in the door. Adler rushed in at a forty-five degree angle to the right, sweeping the room with his .45 as Grant came right in behind him. The children's screams were earsplitting. Adler searched the living room. "Clear!"

Grant pulled open the closet door, also confirming, "Clear!" He headed for the kitchen entrance, close behind Adler. A kerosene lamp on the floor outside the bedroom still burned, casting eerie shadows across the floor and wall. Adler took a position near the door's opening, Grant opposite him. Grant nodded. Adler reached for the doorknob, pushing the door open but something blocked its movement. The screams from the little boys had turned to pathetic cries. Every once in awhile one of them would choke and start coughing, then the crying would resume.

Adler tried to see inside the bedroom. All that was visible were a man's legs, his upper body hidden behind the door. Adler stood up and looked at Grant, moving an index finger across his throat. They had to make their move now.

Grant motioned that he'd throw his body weight against the door. Adler took a deep breath and nodded. Grant slammed his body against the door with full force. Adler rushed into the room. For one split second, there was complete silence. The twins stopped crying, shocked for a second time. But seeing two strangers, dressed completely in black was too much for the little boys, and they screamed.

Both men ignored them, keeping their guns ready and their senses on alert. A quick look around the room told them it was clear. In unison they looked down. "Jesus," Adler mumbled.

The man's body had been shoved across the floor from the force of the door, but it was the first time they noticed the woman. She was laying half under the man's upper body. No movement or sounds came from either one. Blood was pooling on the floor between both bodies. Her blond hair was draped across her face, the long strands showing streaks of blood. A metal nail file was embedded in the man's chest just below the sternum. His Luger remained clutched in his hand.

She nearly made it, Grant thought grimly. He opted not to have Adler bring in the kerosene lamp. His immediate thought was to try and block the view from the boys. He shook his head slowly. "Get the kids and get the hell out."

Adler quickly slipped the .45 into the shoulder holster. He stepped over the dead man and went to the cot where the twins were huddled. Tears streaked the small, pale faces. They stared at the stranger talking softly to them in their native language. Their cries changed to whimpers as Adler picked them up, carrying one in each of his arms. Grant snatched two blankets from the cots and caught up to Adler on the landing, taking one of the boys from him. Then, they rushed down the two flights with their penlights in hand, and continued down into the basement. Adler extinguished his light then Grant handed him a blanket. Grant bundled up the little boy he was carrying before handing him over to Adler.

"Wait one," Grant said, as he stuffed the light into his pocket then opened the door leading to the vacant lot. He scanned the darkness before exiting, then quickly went to the alley and checked it out. Returning to Adler, he pulled off his throat mike and earpiece. "Battery's dead." He shoved the unit into his vest then quickly removed the rucksack from Adler's back as he said, "Manfred should be at the designated site." When the old German offered his services to the West, he had been given instructions to locate sites throughout the city that could be used as possible safe places. He found a garage, once used for repairing electric trams and located just one block from the lot. Two large, rickety wooden doors swung

outward, allowing easy access. Since the garage was completely empty, the doors were left unlocked.

Grant shined the flashlight on his watch. "It's 0205. If I'm not there by 0230, you haul ass."

Adler immediately started to protest. "I won't..."

"That's an order!"

"Aye, aye, sir." He took a few steps then turned back to Grant. "Don't you go waitin' around for the BWF, ya hear?" Adler referred to the blinding white flash that's caused by an explosive device.

"Roger that. Now, go." As soon as Adler was out of the building, Grant closed the door only part way, planning his escape route. It was time to do it. He slung the rucksack over his shoulder and turned on the flashlight, hurrying over to the stairs leading to the lab. He bent over and flipped the small switch. The bottom rung had barely touched the floor when Grant was already climbing down, the flashlight casting a narrow beam of light. He hesitated halfway down, moving the flashlight beam slowly, checking for any obstacles in his path. He stopped his hand motion as the light fell on a discoloration on the floor by a counter. Making his way across the concrete floor, he got down on one knee, inspecting the irregularly shaped stain, touching it with his fingertips. Dried blood. He moved the light to the right where the blood had trickled under the counter. His eyes caught sight of a crumpled envelope. He reached for it then held it in front of the flashlight, reading the addressee's name. The note inside gave the location of the lab and also read: Klaus Steiner in possession of drug SD-7. "Jesus Christ! *Get your ass in gear, Stevens!*" It was imperative he contact Moshenko.

He immediately reached up and balanced the flashlight on the countertop, facing the beam toward the middle of the room. There wasn't any more time to play detective, he cautioned himself.

There was barely enough light for him to work, but he'd opted to not turn on the overhead lights, just in case any visitors stopped by. He opened the rucksack and removed a quarter pound block of C4 and a roll of det cord. At one time when he was planning this operation he was concerned about civilian casualties. Concussion grenades were to have been the explosives of choice. At least everything in the lab would be destroyed. But the buildings and entire neighborhood were civilian-free. The C4 would do a very thorough job in sealing the lab and tunnel.

Working quickly, he made a slash across the C4 with his knife. He tied a stiff knot in the end of the det cord, then pushed the cord into the slash with his thumbs, finally pressing the C4 against it, sealing it inside. He squeezed the explosive around the metal framework supporting the counters. Unwinding the det cord as he scooted farther across the floor, and following the length of counter, he repeated the process around the room until three more blocks of C4 and det cord were in place. He stood by the flashlight, positioning his arm to see his watch. It was nearly 0211 hours. Unrolling the det cord as he walked, he quickly made his way over to the steel door and unlocked it. He jerked the door open and stepped out into the tunnel. Glancing down, he tried to find more evidence that a body had been disposed of through the tunnel system. Dark spots, spaced apart every few

feet, led away from where he was standing and toward the river. Whoever he was, he was carried out of here.

Getting back to his task at hand, he glanced at the overhead. All he could do was guess how thick it was and hoped the explosives would cause enough damage to seal off the lab. He prepared the C4 with the det cord exactly as he did in the lab, then reaching as high as he could, attached the explosive to a conduit running vertically near the door. Quickly unrolling the det cord, he took long steps to the opposite side of the tunnel. And last but not least... He opened his vest and grabbed a chemical pencil with a three minute timed delay. Holding it and the end of the det cord together, he carefully molded the C4 around both. At the end of the pencil was an ampoule of acetone which he left protruding out of the upper part of the explosive. He reached up and bent the chemical pencil until he heard the ampoule break. He jumped back through the doorway, when he froze in place. Oh, shit! A board on one of the basement steps creaked. He pulled the .45 from the shoulder holster, cocking the hammer. The flashlight! He was on the opposite side of the room but he had to chance it. Keeping low, he hustled across the floor and grabbed the flashlight from the counter. Just as he shut off the light, a shot rang out, a bullet striking the countertop next to his head. Shards of metal slivers struck his face. The bullet careened off the countertop and slammed into the wall to his right. He leaned slightly forward and returned fire, getting off three rapid shots, aiming at the ceiling opening. He fell back, hitting the wall, as he brought the gun close to his cheek. He waited. But there was only silence. No return fire. Whether or not his bullets found their target was immaterial at this point. He had to get the hell out of the lab now or else he was going to become a permanent fixture.

Crouching, he ran to the steps and stared up toward the opening but saw only blackness and silence. He calculated he had less than ninety seconds to escape. Taking one step at a time, he kept the gun pointed up, swiveling his head, trying to cover every overhead angle. Instinctively, he held his breath as he reached the last step. Keeping low, he slowly brought his head through the opening then scrambled out and immediately flattened his body against the basement floor. The silhouette of the open back door came into his line of sight. A hundred thoughts ran through his mind in one split second. Could the shooter be outside waiting for him? Or was he hiding somewhere in the basement? He didn't remember hearing footsteps after the shot.

Whatever, he was outta there. Time was up. He jumped to his feet and made a beeline for the open door, his mind clicking off the seconds as he ran. A sound of gunfire erupted behind him just as he reached the doorway. He dove for open ground and rolled across the hard-packed dirt. He brought himself to a kneeling position and fired off a round at the dark form of a man rushing toward him. Grant fired again just as the first explosion in the tunnel went off, then a millisecond later, a horrific noise from the explosives in the lab ripped into the night. An orange-white glow spread through the basement, flames quickly engulfing wooden timbers and stairs. The concussion from the explosion sent the man careening forward, a painful groan escaping from his mouth from a burst eardrum. He came through the doorway off balance, his hands pressed against his ears.



Grant shot off another round. Victor Engels stumbled, fighting to retain his balance but his legs buckled. He fell to his knees then crumbled on the ground in a heap, landing about six feet from the door and moaning in pain.

Rapidly ejecting the empty clip from the .45, Grant reached into his vest then rammed a fresh one up into the handle, slowly raising himself up, keeping the gun gripped in both hands. He took side steps, cautiously approaching the body from the back. He kicked at the Luger, sending it spinning across the dirt. He stood over Engels momentarily, when out of the corner of his eye, he spotted a small object just under the door sill that resembled a large gun casing. As he picked it up, a noise off to his left made him freeze. He spun around, with his gun poised, nearly falling back on his butt. "Christ! When the hell are you gonna start following orders?!"

Adler came running up to him with gun drawn, briefly glancing down at the German. "It's good to see you, too."

Fire leapt through the lab's ceiling that had been blown out, flames licking at pieces of furniture on the floor above. Window glass cracked and popped.

Stuffing the object he found inside his vest, Grant searched Engels' pockets for identification. He withdrew folded papers from a pants pocket, then rolled Engels over on his back. The German's eyelids fluttered, but he was too weak to keep them open. A blood stain on his chest was spreading. Grant handed the papers to Adler.

Adler illuminated them with his penlight, then knelt down on one knee, leaned close and asked in German, "Where's Steiner, Victor?" Engels coughed, a trickle of blood dripped out of the corner of his mouth. His voice was barely a whisper, making Adler lower his head even closer. Engels' body went limp.

Grant and Adler stood simultaneously, as Adler said, "According to him, we're too late."

"Shit! He's on his way to Moscow."

"You sure?"

"I'll explain later."

An unmistakable sound of sirens punctuated their urgency as Adler grinned, "Polizia!"

"Let's get our asses outta here."

They ran full bore across the vacant field, hurdling obstacles in their path, racing to make their rendezvous with Manfred and the children.

## **NIS Headquarters**

Torrinson sat at his desk with his back pressed against his chair as he swiveled it back and forth. His fingers formed a teepee and he tapped them against his lips. He was worried and pissed at the same time. No word had come out of West Berlin. It was all too quiet. What the hell's going on over there? He said quietly, *Where the hell are you, Captain?* There was a knock at his door. "Come!"

"Sir," Zach Phillips said as he stuck his head around the door, "there's a call on the scrambler, from the West Berlin Embassy."

Torrinson all but lunged for the phone. "Matt!"

"Sounds like you missed me," Wharton laughed.

"No time for jokes, Matt. What the fuck's happening over there? Are Stevens and Adler okay?"

"The last time I talked with them, they were."

Torrinson's voice was rising with each question. "What the hell's that supposed to mean? And where are they?"

"Look, John, cut me some slack, will ya? It hasn't exactly been easy for me lately."

"Okay, okay. Point taken. What's the straight skinny?"

Wharton stood by his office window then pulled his chair around, finally flopping down into it. "Your Captain Stevens is quite the detective, John. He put a little scheme together that trapped our... Jesus, it still doesn't seem possible!"

"He found your mole, didn't he, Matt?"

"Yeah, he sure as hell did. It was Kelley, Blake Kelley, one of my crypto guys."

"Christ, Matt, I'm really sorry." He realized the pressure Wharton was under, and for the next several minutes let him detail, uninterrupted, the plan that Grant had devised to flush Kelley out. When Wharton finished, neither of them spoke until Torrinson asked, "Why, Matt? Did you find out why he did it?"

"The bastards were blackmailing him, John."

"Blackmail? What the hell did he do?"

"Not what he did, but what he was. They found out he was a homosexual."

Torrinson's head dropped back and he stared blankly up at the ceiling. "Christ," he mumbled softly.

"Ya know, when I confronted him that night, I wanted to rip his goddamn head off. I don't remember ever, ever, being so pissed in my whole life."

"Any indication he passed any other information, Matt, like your codes?"

"He hasn't admitted to it. He said all the group wanted was info on Lampson." He reached for a pack of cigarettes, pulled one out with his lips, then flung the pack across the desk. "Ya know, John, it makes you wonder how something like this could happen right under your nose. Goddammit!"

"How'd he pass all this info to begin with?"

"A driver that picks up dinners for the train station in the East was Kelley's drop man. Kelley would leave a message in a paper bag in the trash at the corner of Steinstrasse. It was always in a movie house popcorn bag. Horst Rhinehart would make the pickup and deliver it to Steiner."

"What's gonna happen to him now?"

"He's on a MAC (Military Airlift Command) flight to Andrews. I'm sure the *plumbers* will get what they're looking for to hook his ass. From there, further investigation, then trial." He pulled open his middle drawer, shoving aside papers till he found a book of matches. He folded back the cover and bent one of the matches over half way, flicking it against the striker with his thumb. A spark of sulfur flew against his tie. Another burn hole! Shit! He took a deep drag from his cigarette, then with smoke pouring from his nostrils, he finally said, "Getting back to your boys—we got word from their contact in the East that they'd succeeded in rescuing Lampson's kids and set off the explosives in the lab and tunnel."

Torrinson let out a deep sigh, his body going slack in the padded leather chair, then his brain registered and he sat up. "Where are they, Matt?"

"Don't know."

"Shit!"

"Don't get your ass in a twitter. You know they had to get the kids to Lampson."

"And where's Lampson?"

"Uh, don't know that either."

"You're sure a goddamn wealth of knowledge!" Torrinson roared back.

"Well, here's something else for you! The contact said that the group's leader, Klaus Steiner, had the drug. All indications are he's on his way to Moscow."

Torrinson groaned. "They're going after the bastard!"

"You can't be certain of that, John."

"Oh, no? Would you like a side bet?"

Wharton laughed, one of the few times since the shit started. "Listen, if I hear from them, I'll let you know, if you'll do the same. Deal?"

"Yeah, sure, sure."

"Good talking to you, John. Listen, you know your boys better than I do. But from what I've seen, you shouldn't worry."

Torrinson knew Wharton was right. He just didn't like being out of the loop.

## Chapter 15

### Moscow, Russia – 0430 Hours

Blasts of bitter cold wind whipped heavy, wet snow against a window in the study. The storm had descended on the city with the same ferocity as a pride of lions attacking prey. Inside the apartment, a black mesh folding screen was balanced against the stone hearth, stretched across the opening. Behind it a scattering of white hot nuggets of oak were among the pile of ashes in the fireplace, the simmering wood sporadically letting out pops and cracks as the fire slowly died.

Asleep in the second floor bedroom, Grigori Moshenko lay on his back in the overstuffed bed, a sheet and three heavy blankets pulled up tightly under his chin. In a quiet, peaceful slumber, a steady sound of snoring streamed from his open mouth. But a familiar noise was trying to reach into his subconscious mind and he began to awaken.

"Grigori," Alexandra said quietly, as she shook his shoulder. "Your phone, Grigori."

"Yes, yes. You go back to sleep," he said as he threw the covers from his body. He shivered as he got up then reached for his wool robe hanging on the bedpost. Fully awake now, he hurried down the staircase. The double ring of the phone was annoyingly persistent. He rushed into the study directly across from the stairs, fumbled with the lamp on the corner of the desk and finally lifted the receiver. "Moshenko!"

A familiar voice responded in Russian, "Grigori, it's me. Sorry to call at this hour." The entire conversation would be in Russian and in a form of code. Phones

were known to be bugged even within the homes of Russian military officers and the KGB themselves.

Moshenko walked around the desk, stretching the phone cord as he sat down. "Do not worry about the time. It is good to hear from you. Is everything going well?"

"We've been working very hard on the apartment. Most of the demolition work has been completed."

"And what about the children? How are they?"

"They're fine. We're going to bring them to their Uncle Leo's for a short visit while we finish our work."

"Ahh, Leo will be delighted to see all of you."

"Once the children are settled, we've decided to make a short side trip to attend a family gathering."

"That sounds like a fine idea. But I hope your weather is better than it is here," Moshenko responded as he stood then walked closer to the window. "We're having a snowstorm, but as we are speaking, it appears to be lessening somewhat. What time did you plan on leaving?"

"The earliest flight we could get is nine o'clock this morning," Grant answered, purposely using civilian time. "I understand one of the guests has already left ahead of us. He's bringing the gift he's been working on so diligently these past months."

Moshenko lowered his head, shaking it slowly from side to side. "I must ask you one question. Is it time for me to discuss plans for the party with the others?"

"Your discretion," Grant answered, "but you should still try and limit the number of people who know about it if it's going to be a surprise."

"I agree."

"We need to get some rest before the trip. We'll talk again soon. Give our best to Alexandra. Do svidaniya."

"Do svidaniya," Moshenko replied before hanging up. He stepped around to the front of the desk, turned off the light, then went over to the fireplace. There was still some warmth coming from the embers, even the stone facing was warm.

There's no sense in going back to bed now, he reasoned. He left the study and went to the kitchen to make some tea. He reached for the kettle on the back gas burner, then went to the sink and filled it, planning to have enough hot water ready for Alexandra when she got up. He turned the burner up high, the flames leaping up the sides of the copper kettle. While he spooned the loose tea into the teapot, he reviewed his phone conversation with Grant. So, my friend, you have found Lampson's children and destroyed the laboratory. Well done! Well done!

Adler and Grant were taking the children to Gdansk, then flying to Moscow, making contact with him once they did. The meeting at the Kremlin was scheduled for the following day. Klaus Steiner was on his way to Moscow or perhaps he was already in the city. Moshenko knew it was time to discuss Steiner's plan with Alexei Stoyakova. This was something he had to do. He questioned out loud, "What is it you say, my friend? To cover my ass? Yes! To cover my ass!"

\* \* \* \* \*

Darkness still engulfed the city. The early winter storm began to subside, but not before covering Moscow's streets, sidewalks and rooftops with a thick layer of wet, heavy snow. Even though the roads were slippery, few Muscovites were observing the sixty kph speed limit. The storm did little to deter them from driving in the normal, haphazard manner through the city as was evidenced by patterns of long figure-eights created by tires losing traction.

A black Russian-made Volga, its windshield wipers brushing away snow and road grime, traveled along the circular Dzerzhinsky Square, named in honor of the founder of the Cheka, the Soviet Union's original secret police. Moshenko glanced out the side window. A vast seven story yellow building faced the Square. Metal bars covered the ground floor windows of the infamous Lubyanka Prison, while the floors above conveniently housed KGB Headquarters. Ahead of him, encircled by a 7,300 foot long red brick wall and perched atop the sixty-five acres of Borovitsky Hill sat the very heart of Russia—the Kremlin.

Traffic slowed as he approached the entrance. He rolled down the window and leaned his head out, trying to determine the cause of the delay. Two spotlights, placed high on either side of the curved archway, shined down on the passing cars. The guards seem to be checking identifications this morning. He assumed they must be getting ready for the meeting. He rested his wrist on top of the steering wheel, moving it back and forth as the car inched forward slowly. He glanced off to his right at the snow-covered Mavzolei Lenina (Lenin Mausoleum) and Krasnaya Ploshchad (Red Square).

Following tracks in the snow gouged out by dozens of previous cars, Moshenko pulled close to the entrance. A guard waved him forward then motioned for him to stop. Moshenko rolled down his window, held up his identification card. He was waved through Spasskaya Tower. Spasskaya Tower (Tower of the Savior) is the main entrance of the Kremlin located on the eastern side. Its steeple holds intricate clockwork and chimes, while below the structure there is a network of secret passages.

Even though he maneuvered the vehicle cautiously along the snow-covered road, the rear of the car fishtailed as he made a right. He drove past the Presidium, finally pulling into a parking area between it and another building that housed the Oval Hall, Sverdlov Hall, and Council of Ministers. A reflection of the Presidium appeared in his rearview mirror as he parked. He turned off the engine but lingered briefly, drumming his fingertips on the steering wheel. With his thoughts finally in order, he got out and locked the door.

The wind was blowing steadily at fifteen knots. He glanced overhead as he adjusted his fur hat. Breaks in the fast moving clouds allowed brief glimpses of a black sky and sparkling stars. He brushed snow from his eyelashes then started heading toward the building's entrance.

Walking through a long corridor on the first floor, he passed several offices before going through a set of large double doors, where the words "Offices of the Politburo" were spelled out in solid block gold letters. He entered a large, open office space then made his way to the third door to his right. He rapped his knuckles against the door housing the office of Alexei Stoyakova, Minister of Internal Security. As minister, Stoyakova reports to the Russian president, the same manner in which the National Security Advisor reports to the U.S. president.

After waiting several seconds for a response, Moshenko was about to knock again, when he heard Stoyakova's bellowing voice. "Come in!"

Moshenko entered and said cheerfully, "Good morning, Alexei." As he closed the door, he spotted someone standing in the corner of the room who was lowering a projection screen.

Stoyakova waved Moshenko over to a chair in front of the desk. "Ahh, Grigori. Come. Sit down."

Moshenko stepped closer to the desk. "I didn't mean to interrupt."

"You're not. We were finished." Stoyakova walked from behind his desk, then went over to a small table holding a projector. A spool of 8mm film had just finished rewinding, the end of it flapping continuously against the lower reel. Stoyakova lightly rested his hand on the spinning reel, bringing it to a stop. "Grigori, do you know Major Boris Zuyeva?" Moshenko shook his head. "The major is one of my... interpreters."

Moshenko removed his full-length black leather coat and then his hat, dropping them over the back of a chair. He stood at a corner of the desk, eyeing the frail-looking Zuyeva, trying to associate the name with files and records.

Stoyakova remained by the small table, watching Zuyeva as he pulled the movie reel from the projector then secured the loose end of film on the reel with a rubber band, finally putting it in his briefcase.

Moshenko, always the inquisitive KGB officer that he was, noticed a manila folder on the edge of the desk. He tilted his head ever so slightly, reading the name typed in block letters on the top edge of the folder. The snap of the briefcase locks drew his attention away from the folder, and he immediately pulled up a chair then sat down.

"Will there be anything else, Minister Stoyakova?" Zuyeva turned his head, seeing KGB officer Moshenko watching him with intimidating eyes. Moshenko's very presence was enough to send a nervous chill up Zuyeva's spine.

Stoyakova answered as he flicked his hand away from him, "No. I'll contact you later."

The door closed. Moshenko wouldn't inquire about Zuyeva at the present time. There had been something, though, in the way Stoyakova introduced him as being an "interpreter." That statement Moshenko would keep in the recesses of his mind. His eyes shifted to the credenza.

"Would you like some fresh hot tea, Grigori?"

"Please," Moshenko smiled, rubbing his hands together. "The winters get colder every year, Alexei."

"Ahh, Grigori, every year our bodies get older. That is why the winters seem colder. No?"

"You don't have to remind me."

Stoyakova swung his chair around. A small double charcoal burner, called a samovar, sat on the credenza. One burner had a teapot with a very concentrated infusion of tea, while the other pot held plain hot water. He poured tea from the teapot into a traditional tulip-shaped glass then diluted it slightly with plain water.

Moshenko studied the features he knew by heart. Stoyakova seemed the typical politician, short, stocky, and stuffed into a badly fitting suit. The sleeves of his suit

coat hung loosely over his knuckles. Moshenko grinned to himself as Stoyakova asked, "Sugar?"

"Da," Moshenko answered, raising an index finger.

Stoyakova handed the glass to Moshenko then leaned back in his chair, rocking it back and forth. He tapped a finger against his lips. "What do you wish to discuss, Grigori?"

Moshenko placed the glass on the edge of the desk. His eyes met the minister's. "I've been made privy to information concerning an event that could affect our government's security and well-being."

Stoyakova didn't blink. "Can you give me more than that?"

Moshenko sat back. "At this time? No."

Stoyakova breathed deeply, his barrel chest expanding. "Not even who supplied you with the information?"

"All I can tell you, Alexei, is that it was a friend, who is a very reliable source. We have worked together before." Moshenko could tell the wheels were turning inside Stoyakova's razor sharp mind. A list of names and faces were undoubtedly in the spotlight. "This is of a most urgent matter," Moshenko emphasized. He sipped at his tea then smacked his lips. "The lives of many of our comrades could be at stake."

Stoyakova sat forward in his chair, then picked up a letter opener resembling a miniature sword. He jabbed the tip repeatedly into a thick manila folder on top of his desk. Trying to appear inconspicuous, he slid the folder closer to him with the tip of the opener. Moshenko pretended not to notice.

Stoyakova asked, "Then wouldn't that be all the more reason for me to be involved?"

"Believe me," Moshenko quietly said through tight lips, "the fewer who know, the better. There could be players that still have yet to be identified."

Stoyakova rolled his chair back, then stood up and turned away from Moshenko's stare. Red velvet curtains partially covered the plate glass window. He pulled one of the curtains aside. A glow of early morning sunlight broke through the clouds, casting a golden glow on the building surrounding the courtyard. He put his hands behind his back, quietly slapping the back of one hand against the other palm. Keeping his eyes on the snow-covered courtyard, he asked, "Soon?"

Moshenko replied solemnly, "Da."

Stoyakova sat down heavily and sighed deeply. "I will give you three days, Grigori, after which I will have to report our conversation to the president. Would you be prepared for that?"

Moshenko maintained his composure, confident he and his American friends would have the matter resolved before that event occurred. "You must trust me, Alexei."

Stoyakova laughed. "I have on your past escapades, have I not?"

"This is true. But I know you are also just trying to cover your..." Moshenko cut himself short.

"Excuse me?" Stoyakova asked, his gray, bushy eyebrows shooting up in surprise. "Was there something else you wanted to add?"

"No. Nothing, nothing," Moshenko answered, side-stepping his remark. I knew it would happen one of these days! he thought.

"Now," the minister said, "what do you need? Money, I suppose."

Moshenko laughed, "Not too much, but enough."

"Go to any of the usual banks and draw what you need," Stoyakova said while he wrote a note on letterhead paper and affixed his signature to the bottom. He folded it precisely into thirds and handed it across the desk to Moshenko.

It wasn't necessary for Moshenko to read it. He simply slipped it inside his suit jacket pocket. "It's time for me to begin my work," he said at the same time he was standing up and putting on his coat.

Stoyakova leaned back in his chair, tapping his pen against his palm. "Remember, Grigori... three days."

Moshenko stopped by the door. Without looking back, he repeated, "Three days." He left.

Stoyakova rose from his chair, taking slow deliberate steps across the room, pausing by the rolled up projection screen. "So, Grigori, where will this adventure be taking you? Is it possible that our paths will soon be crossing?" He turned and hurried to the desk, lifting the phone from its cradle as he dialed a four-digit number. "Zuyeva? Have you had the report transcribed? Good. Bring it to me right away." He dropped the phone into its cradle before walking behind his desk and pouring another glass of tea.

## **KGB Headquarters**

Moshenko stood at his office window with the phone pressed to his ear. From his fourth floor location he had a view of Zerzhinsky's monument. He swiveled his head back and forth, watching all that was going on in the streets below, looking for anything unusual. Before he had even picked up the phone, he made a thorough sweep of his office, looking for any hidden listening devices. This was a trademark of his training as a spy and KGB officer. He sat down, waiting for a response at the other end of the line.

Finally, he heard, "Comrade Moshenko!" It was East German General Stauffenberg.

Moshenko skipped all formalities. "General, I'll get right to the point. It's my understanding that you have misplaced something of importance to both of us."

Beads of sweat appeared along the general's brow. His back stiffened. "I'm not sure what you're referring to, Comrade."

So, it's a game you want to play, Moshenko thought. "Does the name *Eric Brennar* mean anything to you?" Moshenko heard something of a groan then quickly turned the screw tighter. "You were in charge of all the people working on the project, if I'm not mistaken, General. He was your responsibility. You allowed him to escape. I'm sure you have already given a similar speech to your subordinates."

Stauffenberg had to try and salvage whatever he could out of the situation. "We have nearly twenty people looking for him, Comrade. I anticipate that at any time I will receive a report that he has been found."

"General, I do not think that will happen."



"What's that supposed to mean?" Stauffenberg asked indignantly, realizing too late how his response sounded.

"What I mean is I want you to call off your search for Brennar."

Stauffenberg slowly rose out of his chair, bracing himself against his desk. "Do you realize what you're asking? Do you realize the implications if we don't find him?"

"You should have thought about that before you let him escape, General. And lest you forget, you take orders from me, and I'm ordering you to stop your search." A streak of sunlight glinted off one of Moshenko's most cherished possessions, his father's ceremonial sword, worn during the reign of Tzar Nicholas. Moshenko's eyes lingered on the sword momentarily then he continued the conversation. "Now," he said, as he reached for a sheet of paper on his desk, "I have a list that your staff forwarded to my office showing who will be attending tomorrow's meeting."

"Yes," Stauffenberg responded, with defeat in his voice.

"Do you have your copy?"

"I will get it, Comrade."

As he waited, Moshenko let his eyes scan the list of names. In the background he heard what was probably Stauffenberg's office door slamming.

"I have it," the general said, as he slumped into his chair.

"Do you recognize all the names? Do you know all of the officers listed?" Moshenko could only hope that luck would turn his way.

"This is a waste of time, Comrade. I personally signed the orders for these men."

"Appease me, please, General. Look at the list."

Stauffenberg ran his finger down the list, silently pronouncing each name as if in confirmation. He wiped his upper lip with an index finger. "They're all familiar to me, Comrade." Moshenko threw the paper on the desk then he heard Stauffenberg say, "I signed the orders for each of the nine men."

Moshenko's heart jumped and he grabbed the paper, his eyes zeroing in on the number of names listed. "General, did you say *nine*?"

"Yes, nine," Stauffenberg repeated. "Nine names, nine sets of orders."

"Do you have the name *Zeigler* on your list?"

Stauffenberg frantically scanned his list. "Uh, no. Should I?"

"Well, it's the tenth name on my list, General Stauffenberg... the tenth name. And your signature is at the bottom." Dead silence. "General, I'm waiting for an explanation."

"Comrade Moshenko, sir, I will make inquiries immediately and find out how this happened." Stauffenberg's face went from pale to beet red. Fear and anger consumed him at the same time. His left eyelid started twitching.

That's him, Moshenko thought. That was the name Steiner was using. He cleared his throat and eased back in his chair. "I have another inquiry, General." Stauffenberg groaned, bringing a brief smile to Moshenko's lips. "Tell me about Greta Verner? I believe you've misplaced her, also."

"I only know she worked at the university. Once the project began we had an order issued that we be notified when anyone was hired. Her papers were in order, and she had the experience."

Moshenko's voice boomed, "Are you trying to tell me you didn't know she and Brennar were lovers?!"

Stauffenberg blurted out, "No! I mean, not in the beginning. We only found out several months ago."

"Were you aware of the children?"

"Yes."

Again dead silence, only this time it was on the KGB agent's side of the phone. "Did you have them followed?"

"We didn't put a separate tail on the woman, but I saw to it that Brennar was always watched."

"You mean like the night he escaped?" Moshenko taunted.

Stauffenberg swallowed hard. It took all the willpower he could muster to prevent the contents of his stomach from spewing out onto his desk. There's no fucking with the KGB—and he'd just fucked up big time.

Moshenko leaned forward, resting his elbows on the desk, his eyes becoming mere slits. "And what about the FSG, General? Do you watch them as closely as you watched Brennar?" Moshenko wasn't expecting a reply. "I'm sure we'll see each other at tomorrow's meeting, General Stauffenberg. In the meantime, you will not—I repeat—you will not discuss our conversation with anyone. Am I understood?"

"Yes, Comr..." The phone went dead in Stauffenberg's ear.

Moshenko immediately dialed another number, this one to an office inside KGB headquarters located on the first floor and directly above Lubyanka Prison. "This is Colonel Moshenko. I want information on a Major Boris Zuyeva. Specifically, I want to know any unusual skills he may have." He reminded himself not to make his inquiry too obvious. "Oh, let's say, something that might help further his career. Also, see if you have anything on someone named *Heisen*." Moshenko spelled the name then added, "I'll expect the information in fifteen minutes." He hung up.

The KGB officer slowly rubbed his fingertips back and forth over the handset. He swiveled his chair around, then got up and went to the window behind his desk. He leaned toward the glass, tilting his head to see overhead. A scattering of clouds drifted across the sky. The sun's rays glared off the snow. Constant traffic along the roadway turned the once pure white snow into dirty black piles.

Was Stauffenberg being truthful? How could he not know more than what he admitted? Moshenko was rerunning the tape of the conversation he'd just had with the East German when he noticed the time. Grant and Joe should be on their way. That will give him some time to think this through. He was prepared to place a call to Grant in Gdansk later that day. The phone booth on the corner of Teatralny would have to be used. Talking to his East German comrades from his office was one thing, but talking to his American friend was quite a different matter.

He glanced at the horizon, a slight smile crossing his lips as he thought, Stauffenberg! A genuine sour Kraut! But his smile quickly faded. Something nagged at his brain, actually, two things—a movie projector and a folder with the name "Heisen."

## Chapter 16

### Gdansk, Poland

#### 1000 Hours – Day 7

The early morning storm dumped snow on Moscow but had by-passed Gdansk. Situated at the mouth of the Vistula River on the Baltic Sea, Gdansk's climate was much more favorable than its neighbor to the east.

Aeroflot flight 853 touched down on runway 21, smoke and debris flying outward as the screeching tires hit the concrete runway. It taxied toward the one-story terminal then came to a rolling stop about one hundred feet from the passenger entrance. Maintenance personnel rolled portable steps up to the open door of the aircraft.

Only ten passengers had booked reservations on the flight from East Berlin. A Russian businessman and an East German with two small children would be the last to leave the plane. Grant Stevens and Joe Adler had current passports identifying them as Yuri Borisov and Wilhelm Schwimmer.

A slim, dark haired stewardess dressed in a red jacket with matching skirt, stopped by the tall, handsome man. "I hope you had a pleasant flight," she smiled up at him.

He put on his black leather jacket and returned her smile. "Yes, thank you." He pulled an overnight bag from the shelf above the seat. "Are you from Odessa?" he asked, looking down at her surprised expression.

"Why, yes, well, actually, about eighty kilometers from there. How did you know?"

"Your accent," he smiled, as he started walking away.

She leaned against one of the seats. "Perhaps we'll meet again sometime."

"Perhaps." He took long, slow strides down the aisle toward the front of the plane, eyeing two men putting on their coats near the front row. He stopped next to the fourth row of seats behind the bulkhead. "Can I help you," he asked in broken German as he smiled, watching the man trying to bundle up one of two little blond-headed boys. Out of the corner of his eye, he saw the last passengers leave the plane.

"I could use the help," Adler responded in German. He picked up one of the boys and stood him on the seat, the little boy continued to gyrate and sing. He managed to put the boy's red jacket on him then he looked across the aisle as the man tried his hand at playing 'daddy' with the other twin.

Ha! Welcome to the world of kids, sir! Joe Adler laughed to himself.

Grant lifted the child off the seat and held him in the crook of his arm. "Ready?" Adler nodded, slid across the empty seat and then followed Grant down the remainder of the aisle. His hand gripped the brown handle of a ragged, brown leather satchel.

The Americans passed through security without incident. Adler filled out papers for a 1970 BMW, and fifteen minutes later they were driving through the High

Gate, which, for ages, was the main entrance to the city. From Royal Road they turned onto Długa, the main street of Gdansk. Official buildings of state, as well as apartments and hotels, maintained their late medieval and early Renaissance architecture.

Within minutes, the Americans located the Motlawa Hotel, parked the car in front then went inside to the front desk. The small lobby was decorated simply with two upholstered armchairs and a two-tier end table positioned in front of the plate glass window. On the far wall of the twenty-foot room was a coal-burning fireplace where a young boy knelt, scooping piles of gray ashes into a battered bucket.

Grant and Adler put their suitcases by the base of the desk then put the twins on the floor. Adler sniffed the air, recognizing the aroma of fresh bread and pan-fried breakfast sausage.

The sound of a woman's laugh made them turn, noticing a slender, smartly dressed, middle-aged woman coming down the steps and chatting with her male companion, who appeared to be in his early sixties with snow white hair. They glanced at the two men standing by the front desk, then they both smiled as their eyes fell on the two little blond boys, standing between the two. Josef shyly looked at them then wrapped his arms around Grant's leg as if for protection. She gave a little wave to the twins before leaving the hotel.

The office door behind the desk opened. A balding man, short in stature, came out, raising his head to look up at the two men standing on the other side of the desk. Leo Grobowski gave them a warm smile then asked in Polish, "Gentlemen, may I help you?"

The Americans picked up the twins. The hotel owner showed a brief moment of surprise then he nodded. Except for the young boy by the fireplace, the lobby was unoccupied, but even so, he quietly asked, "Grigori?" as he shifted his eyes between the two men.

Grant acknowledged with a nod. Grobowski reached into one of the slots of a wooden, pigeon-holed shelf that was positioned against the wall. He put a skeleton key on the counter. It had a thin metal ring through the hole at the top. Attached to it was a brass tag with the numbers "203" engraved on it.

Grant palmed the key, gave the gentleman a smile, then looked at Adler. "Ask him if Lampson's in."

Adler complied, and Grobowski responded in German, "Ya."

Grant pointed to the phone on the desk and Grobowski slid it towards him. Grant dialed the room, listening as it rang twice. Lampson barely got a word out, when Grant said softly, "Rick, unlock your door but stay in your room. We're on our way up." He immediately hung up then motioned to Adler. Both of them said "danke" to Grobowski before turning and walking up to the second floor.

Grobowski stood quietly watching, leaning over the counter till the men and children were out of sight. Then he went back into his office and closed the door.

At the top of the stairs, they followed the corridor to the right and stopped in front of the third door. Adler gave a look behind them before Grant opened the door. Lampson nearly lost his breath, not knowing what to expect after Grant's call.

He rushed toward them, scooping up the boys. "My God!" he cried, as he hugged the twins tightly. Grant and Adler stepped back, giving Lampson space. The twins seemed bewildered at first, then their little voices squealed in delight, finally recognizing Lampson. "Papa!" they cried. Lampson sat down on the bed, placing a child on each knee. He hadn't shaved since leaving Marie's. A blond, scruffy beard and mustache failed to hide the gauntness behind them.

Grant and Adler unzipped their jackets. Almost in unison, they sagged down on a two-seat sofa, nestled beneath a double window that faced Nowy Park. They shot a glance at one another and grinned. Both of them were near exhaustion. They'd been running a marathon for days on pure adrenaline, and the finish line still wasn't in sight.

Grant looked back at Lampson through half open eyes, knowing he had to tell him Greta was dead. He hoped that having the twins back would help ease the pain. "Rick, I think we need to get some food into those little guys."

Lampson jerked his head up, looking at Grant through reddened eyes. "What? Oh, yeah. Uh... I can run down to..."

"Think it might be best if Joe makes the food run," Grant interrupted. "Okay, Joe?"

"Sure," Adler answered as he stood up and stretched his fatigued body. He looked down at Grant. "We're getting too old for this, boss."

Grant nodded with a smile. He stood up and dug his wallet out of his pocket. "When you get back, see if you can get us a room, preferably next to this one. Lampson needs some time with his sons, and we need some rest." He handed Adler some bills. "Maybe Leo can tell you where to find some good chow. I have a feeling these kids need to get some nourishing food into them. And buy some milk, too, and anything else that looks good." Adler kept his hand out, and Grant slapped more bills into his palm.

"Yeah, like big, fat, gooey, double chocolate ice cream sundaes!" Adler laughed seeing Grant lick his lips. He slipped the money into his jacket pocket then reached for the brass door handle. "I'll try and get something for you, too, boss!" He left without waiting for a response.

Grant took off his jacket and dropped it on the back of the couch. He smoothed his hair then rubbed his face vigorously with both palms. He looked at Lampson, thinking he may as well not delay it any longer. "Rick."

Lampson looked up, a sudden expression of sadness showing on his face. "Something's happened to... her, hasn't it?"

Grant nodded. "I'm sorry, Rick. We... we found her at the flat with your kids." He saw Lampson's eyes fill with moisture. Grant suddenly felt a pang of guilt. If they had reached the flat just a few, short moments sooner, maybe they could have saved her.

He was going to drop the subject, but Lampson asked, "What... how did it happen, Captain?"

Grant lowered his head then folded his arms across his chest before responding. "It looked like one of Steiner's men had been ordered to..." He glanced at the twins then continued. "He'd been ordered to take them all out, Rick." Lampson listened, but nervously occupied himself by taking off the boys' jackets. He kept his eyes on them as Grant kept talking. "She put up a helluva fight; got him with a nail file

before..." He didn't have to fill Lampson in with any more details. Enough had been said.

The twins played gleefully in the room. Their little feet patted across the carpet while they looked at the knick-knacks on the dresser and made faces at themselves in the oval, beveled mirror. They spotted the window and ran to the sofa, struggling to climb up on it then pressed their noses and hands against the glass, watching children playing in the park.

Grant stepped closer to Lampson, then leaned back against the dresser. "Listen, Rick, I'm really sorry."

"I know, I know." He stared at Grant, finally noticing the fatigue showing on his face and pronounced dark circles under his eyes. "You got my kids, and I'll be indebted to you forever." He looked across the foot of the bed at the twins, as he asked, "What about Von Wenzel?"

"Don't know. Nobody was at the lab when I got there. I found a note that was addressed to the chief of police. It looked as if it had been scribbled in a hurry. Maybe I shouldn't tell you this, but near where I found it there was a stain on the floor that was most likely blood."

Lampson's body shuddered, then he said somberly, "Von Wenzel or Heisen must have written it. What did it say?"

"Steiner has the drug."

"Oh, my God," Lampson muttered.

"I had a... shall we say, run-in with one of his men. All he managed to tell us was that we were too late. That's gotta mean that Steiner is on his way or is already in Moscow." Grant stared at his black shoes that were in desperate need of a spit shine. Blowing a long breath through tight lips, he continued, "All we've got is your description." Once again he looked up at Lampson. "If he wants to get into that meeting tomorrow, he'll probably be wearing a uniform. Christ! I hope Grigori was able to get something more for us."

Both men turned their heads hearing giggles from the little boys. They had pulled Grant's jacket from the back of the sofa and were trying to hide underneath it. "You've gotta be thankful they've come through all this, Rick, and in good shape. They're a couple of tough little guys." Lampson nodded then got up off the bed, went over to the children, and sat on the floor near the sofa.

A sudden tapping at the door made Grant jump and automatically reach for a .45 that wasn't there. They had to leave their firepower with Manfred. The only means of protection they could rely on was the gun Lampson should have brought from Marie's. Grigori would have to supply them with everything else they'd need.

"It's me, boss," Adler whispered.

"You didn't forget anything, did you?" Grant smiled, glancing at the two bulging paper grocery bags filled to the brim.

Adler put the bags on the dresser and called to the boys. "Josef, Franz." They jumped off the sofa, falling on their hands and knees, but immediately got up and ran to Adler. He bent over and handed each of them a large sugar cookie. "Leo said the kitchen's available. I got us a couple of sandwiches."

"Sandwiches?" rant grunted, his voice obviously lacking enthusiasm. "I was hoping for a sixteen ounce T-bone."

"But wait! Wait'll you see the suckers! I asked the store clerk to load them up."

"Hope you got your Roloids," Grant grinned. He turned to Lampson. "Rick, do you know how many other guests are staying here?"

"Only people I've seen are a couple who checked in two days ago and a single, elderly gentleman. This isn't exactly tourist season."

"Okay. Why don't you take the boys downstairs and make them a hot meal. Joe, were you able to get us a room?"

"Next door, like you asked."

Adler handed Lampson one of the grocery bags. Lampson stopped at the door. "By the way, Captain...Colonel Moshenko is quite a man. And one helluva chopper pilot!"

"Yeah, I know; told you not to worry."

"Never thought I'd be saying that about a KGB agent. You won't tell my boss, will you?" Rick smiled weakly.

"My lips are sealed," Grant answered.

Lampson called to the boys. They ran to him, licking sugar from their little fingers. "You can lock the door. I've got my key."

"Rick," Grant called, "before you go... you have the firearm secured?"

"The suitcase is on the top shelf of the wardrobe."

"Okay. By the time you get back, we'll be next door catching some shut-eye."

Once in their room, Adler started removing his food stash from the paper bag. Individually wrapped pastries, overstuffed sandwiches on hard rolls, and bottles of Coke and ginger ale lined the top of the dresser.

"You want Coke? Skipper! Do you want Coke?" Getting no response, he turned. Grant was stretched out on one of the twin beds, sound asleep, his hands resting on his chest. The Coke fizzled as Adler popped the top with the opener. He carried it and a sandwich over to the sofa and sat down heavily, putting the bottle on the floor between his feet. Eat first, sleep later, he told himself. He glanced at the bed, hearing Grant's steady, deep breathing. "Don't worry, boss. I'll save you a morsel or two."

\* \* \* \* \*

The bedroom was in total darkness. Heavy, blue curtains prevented light from filtering through. Grant began to stir. He cracked open one eye and looked across the foot of the bed toward the window then he turned his head, seeing the dark shape of Adler's body sprawled out across the other twin bed. A muffled sound of voices made him bolt upright. Christ! What the hell time is it? He reached for the lamp on the nightstand.

Adler's body jerked, and he pushed himself up, shaking the cobwebs from his head.

"Reveille, Joe."

"Yeah, right," Adler groggily answered, his voice sounding husky from sleep. He rolled over on his back and rubbed the back of his hands across his eyes, squinting as he tried to focus. "What the hell time is it?"

Grant slid his legs over the edge of the bed. He held his arm up toward the light. "Sixteen hundred hours."

"Yeah, but what day?" Adler groaned.

"Continuation of the same one, I'm afraid," Grant answered as he stood up and stretched his arms overhead. "Think I'll skip sit-ups," he mumbled.

Lampson's room was as quiet as a tomb. There was the sound of a door closing somewhere down the hallway, followed immediately by a set of heavy footsteps pounding across the carpeting, then the distinct sound of those footsteps descending the staircase. Grant whirled around, hearing a piercing double ring of the phone. He shot a glance at Alder and motioned for him to answer.

"Ya?" Adler replied into the handset. He raised his eyes to meet Grant's, mouthing the word 'Grigori,' then handed the phone over. He slid off the bed and rubbed his face, feeling the scratchy stubble of beard.

With all the precautions being taken, Grant and Moshenko weren't about to assume their conversation wouldn't somehow be monitored. They'd leave out specific information and would again converse in Russian. Moshenko was in a phone booth that was nothing more than a three-sided glass enclosed box, making the background noises of car horns and clanging tram bells impossible to drown out. Grigori used a sequence of numbers to make the call, eliminating the need for coins.

"I'm here," Grant answered, as he watched Adler leave the room. His leaving wasn't to give Grant privacy, but to check out the lobby and office. He and Grant had made a sweep of their room before sacking out, and even though it was Leo who put the call through from his office switchboard, it was an extra measure of safety.

"My friend, I have some news."

"Hope it's good."

"Yes and no," Moshenko sighed deeply, turning his back to the traffic and pedestrians. The temperature was dropping. Ice crystals started forming on the thawed, mushy snow. He pulled fur-lined suede gloves from his coat pocket. "I have the name that our expected visitor will be using."

"Outstanding! That should eliminate the need for us to bring *papa* tomorrow, right?"

"Da."

Grant took slow, deliberate steps back and forth between the beds. "And now... the bad news?"

"Let me ask you a question first," Moshenko said, noticing a reflection in the glass of a woman wearing a long, sable coat passing the phone booth. He followed her with his eyes as he asked, "Did you find the woman?"

A picture of Greta, blood-covered, passed through Grant's mind. "She's out of the picture, my friend." Squeaking springs sagged along the edge of the mattress as he sat down heavily.

"Hmm. I'm afraid all I've been able to confirm is that she was employed at the university, which we already knew."

"Well," Grant said with disappointment in his voice, "at least you got what was really important."

Moshenko understood, then asked, "What time can I expect you?"

"We're leaving here tonight at eight thirty. I'll call when we get there."

"Safe trip, my friend. Do svidaniya."



"Do svidaniya," Grant answered, then he put the receiver into the cradle. He walked toward the window, scratching his head. He separated the curtains slightly. The sun had dropped below the horizon, leaving a deep shade of orange to paint the drifting clouds. Street lamps glowed. He hammered his fist against his forehead. "Think, Stevens! What the hell's wrong with this picture?"

There was a tap at the door before Adler walked in, balancing an oval tray on the palm of his hand that held two cups and a silver teapot. "Tea's served," he grinned while putting the tray on the dresser.

"Tea?" Grant asked, his nose wrinkling.

"Just kidding. I gotta tell you, though, this stuff's gonna kick start your heart."

Grant poured coffee into both cups, as Adler reached for one and asked, "Grigori have any good news?" He sipped slowly from the cup, while he walked over to the bed and sat on the edge.

"He's got the name Steiner is using to get into the meeting, but he couldn't find out any more on our mysterious Greta. Shit! That woman's like an apparition who appears out of the blue, with no traceable past."

"Think we need to forget about her? I mean, she's dead, boss."

Grant shook his head while he swirled the coffee around in his mouth, the bitter flavor rolling over his taste buds. He wasn't satisfied. Ops weren't over till all the puzzle pieces were in place.

"Hey, Skipper, can we change the subject for a minute? It's been bugging me and I've gotta ask you... you still plan on reaming Lampson's butt because of that message he sent to Von Wenzel, you know, the one that could've screwed up a perfectly good mission?"

"I was ready to, right up until we walked into his room. I don't know, Joe, especially after telling him about Greta and then seeing him with those kids..."

"Yeah," Adler said quietly. "You don't think we're turning soft or something, do you?"

"Who? Us? Hey, you hungry?"

"Does a bear shit in the woods?" Adler laughed.

"It sounds like Lampson and the kids are still sacked out. Why don't we grab an early dinner? Our flight doesn't leave for three and a half hours."

"Follow me!"

Vehicle traffic had thinned. Most of the residents were already home from work. Narrow sidewalks lined both sides of the side street. Jewelry stores displayed objects made with Gdansk's native treasure, amber, the stones ranging from deep yellow brown to yellow.

The cafe was located on a corner. Grant and Adler walked in and Adler requested a table near a wall where they could keep an eye on anyone coming and going.

Old habits are hard to kick, Grant sighed to himself. Better to purposely sit with your back against a wall, than having your back up against one.

The two Americans ordered from the menu, then sat back and let their eyes roam across the front door and from table to table. Five couples, all different age groups, were seated throughout the dining area. Sitting at a table about fifteen feet away was a young couple in their early thirties, who were getting ready to leave. The man reviewed the bill then removed his wallet from his brown tweed jacket.

The woman dabbed a white napkin at the corners of her mouth then she removed something from a small handbag.

Grant couldn't see what it was until she began using it to apply her pink lipstick. Adler caught Grant's expression out of the corner of his eye but remained silent, seeing him chomping down on his teeth, the muscles in his jaw tightening.

He silently thought: Uh oh. Boss has his wheels spinning again.

Grant finally turned his head then stared straight at Adler. "She's not dead, Joe," he said with what was slightly more than a whisper.

"Who? Whoa! You don't mean Greta?"

"Yeah... Greta."

"But we saw..."

"Did you check for a pulse?"

Adler shook his head. "We'd already spent enough time in that place. Besides, the blood..."

"And we saw what she wanted us to see." He tapped his index finger on the table as he continued. "I found something outside the lab and just shoved it into my vest. Didn't think too much about it; thought it was some type of gun casing."

"And... it wasn't?"

"No. It's one of those single shot, 4.5mm's that looks like a tube of lipstick. She's the one who fired that shot at me while I was in the lab."

"Jesus! But why didn't she grab the Luger from the guy she killed and use it instead?"

Grant rubbed his chin. "I didn't say she used the 4.5. I said she fired one shot."

"Then why didn't she try and finish you off with the Luger?"

"It's likely she snatched her belongings from the bedroom in a rush, knowing somebody else would be coming back. That East German... what was his name? Victor?" Adler nodded. "She had to have heard him coming down the stairs, that's why she hauled ass. Besides, she didn't know it was me in the lab. They only light was from my penlight. She could've thought I was one of Steiner's men."

They cut their conversation short as a waiter arrived with their meals. Once he'd left, Adler said, "Ya know, you just can't buy those 4.5's in a candy store."

Grant picked up his knife and fork and started slicing through the thin piece of beef. It wasn't a one inch T-bone but at least it was beef. He jabbed a piece with his fork then held it in front of his face, smelling the aroma. He kept his attention on the meat as he said, "I know. I'm working on that. And before you ask... I don't know why she didn't let on she was alive, especially when she knew we were Americans, and we were taking her kids."

"Maybe she wanted us to take them," Adler commented, while he sprinkled salt on a side dish of roasted potatoes.

Grant rolled the idea around in his mind. "Good thought."

"Is that gonna take us back to the question whether the kids are Lampson's?" Adler asked, while he pulled a hard roll apart with his fingers then slathered butter on both halves.

Grant shoved a piece of meat into his mouth, savoring the distinctive flavor as he chewed and chewed. He shook the fork in Adler's direction. "Look, all this thinking is giving me one helluva headache. You mind if we just eat?"

"Is that an order?" Adler asked facetiously without bothering to look up from his plate of Polish sausages.

Grant blissfully chewed another piece of meat and shrugged his shoulders. "What the hell difference does it make?"

### **Moscow – 2145 Hours**

Crystal icicles hung like sharpened daggers from window ledges and roof overhangs. The temperature had started dropping steadily since early evening, leveling off at minus six degrees Celsius. At the horizon, a black sky blended with the earth.

Moshenko sat quietly, with his index finger tracing a pattern along the edge of the white, porcelain top table. He raised his eyes, glancing at the ceiling, hearing Alexandra's footsteps in their bedroom. A radiator under the window hissed as steam escaped from the side valve. He pushed his chair back then walked to the room's only source of heat. He'd just started turning the round handle to adjust the flow of steam, when he jerked his head to the side as he heard the sound of his phone. Taking quick strides to the study, he practically lunged for the phone. "Da!"

Grant was at a phone booth, speaking the brief, coded message in Russian. "Is this two N three two?"

"No," Moshenko answered.

"I'm sorry to have disturbed you." Grant broke the connection.

Moshenko placed the receiver back in its cradle. With hardly any conscious effort, he deciphered the sequence of numbers. *Two N* meant Grant and Adler would be at the second entrance of the airport terminal on the north side of Domodedovo Airport and *three two* indicated the last two numbers on a license plate belonging to a white panel truck. They'd wait till they spotted the truck then backtrack to the men's room.

\* \* \* \* \*

At 2215 hours a white panel truck pulled up and parked outside the second entrance of the air terminal. A man got out and walked around to the back, opening one of the doors. He was dressed in painting coveralls with a white cap pulled down nearly covering his eyes. He lifted out two large paint buckets, locked the door and headed for the building. Out of the corner of his eye he spotted a uniformed guard standing at the corner of the terminal smoking a cigarette.

In less than fifteen minutes, three men walked out through the same door, each dressed in paint-splattered, long sleeve overalls and caps. Under the tarp draped over their shoulders, Grant and Adler had their suitcases concealed. Moshenko led the way.

The guard turned then took several steps in their direction. Grant immediately started talking loudly in Russian, complaining about the long hours he and his partner had been asked to work that day. Grigori Moshenko shouted back, as they threw the paint buckets and tarps into the back of the truck. The arguing continued as the three men slid onto the front seat. The passenger and driver

doors slammed simultaneously. Moshenko started the engine. The truck stalled. Adler glanced in the side mirror at the guard stepping off the curb, walking toward the rear of their vehicle. Moshenko turned the key again. A backfire sent a puff of black smoke out the tailpipe, and he immediately threw the gearshift into first. The guard stopped dead in the middle of the one-way road as the truck lurched forward. Another disturbance at the front of the terminal between two taxi drivers made him quickly turn his attention from the truck. Moshenko kept driving.

Lights from passing vehicles glared through the windshield as Moshenko weaved the truck in and out of traffic. A normally twenty minute drive had taken nearly forty-five minutes as he took side streets and alleys, in an attempt to shake off anyone that might be following. He turned onto Pokrovo, then at the second block turned into an alley that was flanked by two-story buildings. He shut off the headlights, leaving only the parking lights on, then slowed down. The sound of hard-packed snow crunching beneath tires was clearly audible inside the truck, as it drove across patches left untouched by wider vehicles, probably delivery trucks.

A side door of a building off to the right opened. Something was tossed directly into their path. A thick gruel-like substance splashed across the truck's hood. In his rearview mirror Moshenko noticed a man stepping into the alley who was holding a bucket. He briefly looked in the truck's direction then turned and reentered the building that housed a stolovaya, a Russian workers' cafeteria serving what could only be described as cheap slop. Daily fare would be a dish of rice topped with pieces of fat and a ladle of grease. Adler rolled down the window, trying to rid the cab of the foul smell.

They'd traveled the equivalent of three blocks when they reached the end of the alley, where a row of run-down, vacant garages beneath abandoned stores lined the right side of the road that was in itself barely more than a wide bicycle path. Moshenko stopped the vehicle and Adler immediately jumped out and pulled one of the door's open, its rusted hinges barely holding it in place. He had to grab the edge and lift up, walking backward with it until it was fully open. Moshenko drove in and pulled alongside his Volga.

Somewhere in the distance a sound of howling stray dogs generated an eerie sensation on human minds and souls. The lamenting cries continued as the pathetic animals searched for food in dark, cold alleyways. Adler glanced in the direction of the howling, trying to see beyond the darkness through squinted eyes. He closed the door.

Very few words had passed between them during their hectic journey, allowing Moshenko to concentrate on his driving.

Finally, Grant grabbed Moshenko's outstretched hand tightly. "Nice ride!"

"Colonel Moshenko, sir," Adler said.

Moshenko reached for Joe's hand. "Joe! Welcome to my country," he laughed.

"Thanks. Too bad we won't have time for sightseeing, though."

"Ahh, yes. But, maybe next time," he winked. He reached under the driver's seat and pulled out a flashlight, then opened the Volga's trunk. "You might need these," he commented, as he reached in and lifted out two heavy, black parkas. "They may be more cumbersome than what you are used to, but they will keep you warm."

Grant and Adler took them, Grant saying, "You know us California boys pretty well. We freeze if the temperature drops below twenty Celsius!"

Moshenko removed a briefcase then led the way up a set of wooden ladder-type steps then through a heavy door. He directed the beam of light around the makeshift safehouse, settling it on a kerosene lamp hanging from a hook on the far wall.

Adler glanced around, seeing boarded up windows at the front of the building and three straight-backed wooden chairs placed near the kerosene lamp.

Grant laughed, watching Adler's expression. "Not exactly home, but it's safe to talk." He pulled a chair around and sat backwards, resting his arms on the backrest. "We've got a busy day ahead of us, Grigori."

"We do indeed... a busy and perhaps dangerous day."

"You said you have the name Steiner will be using?"

Moshenko reached inside his coat pocket and handed Grant a piece of paper. "It's the last name on the page. General Stauffenberg could not identify it, and he confirmed his original list only had nine names. As you can see, the list sent to me has ten. We will find out who from Stauffenberg's office has helped Steiner."

"Right, but we need to stick to this first," Grant said as he glanced at the paper, seeing the name *Zeigler*. He handed the paper to Adler, commenting, "This is sounding way too simple."

Adler tapped Grant's arm with the paper, handing it back to him, saying, "Simple, as in notifying the guards at the Kremlin's entrances to keep an eye out for someone carrying ID papers with the name *Zeigler*?"

Grant nodded, "Yeah. But we've gotta hope that he hasn't somehow found out his cover's been compromised. If he has, we're up shitcreek."

Moshenko withdrew a cigar from his pocket. He stuck it in the corner of his mouth, but didn't light up, as he stated matter-of-factly, "We have to go with what we know for the moment. Do you think he'll try and get the drug into KGB Headquarters today, also?"

"With all the top dogs at the Kremlin, I'd say that's gonna be his main objective."

Adler asked, "What if there's more than one of 'em with the drug, one person for each location?"

"I don't think so, Joe. According to Lampson, Steiner doesn't trust anybody. His profile fits an egomaniac's perfectly. He'll want all the glory. Besides, I'd say we took care of most of the top echelon of the FSG, leaving just the worker bees."

"You mentioned Lampson before," Moshenko said. "The children... they are alright?"

Grant smiled. "Yeah, they're okay. They're good little kids." He suddenly went silent, seemingly staring right through the Soviet.

Moshenko looked hard at Grant. "What is it, my friend? You are thinking about their mother perhaps?"

Grant stood and rubbed his forehead. He propped his foot on the chair. "I don't think she's dead, Grigori."

"Didn't you say..."

"I know, I know. Look, from the very beginning we suspected there might be more to this woman than anyone knew about. She's got no past history; she appears, disappears then reappears. And now..." He cut himself off, before finally

continuing. "Grigori, before the meeting gets underway, can you check with your black ops..."

"You actually think...?"

"Please, just check. We've gotta look at every angle at this stage of the game."

"When he gets a wild hair, sir, there's no stopping him!" Adler laughed.

"Wild hair?" Moshenko frowned.

"I'll explain some other time," Grant said. "Will you?"

"Of course. But there will be very little time for me to do it."

"I know. Just do your best."

"This may or may not mean anything," Moshenko said, first looking at Adler then up at Grant, "but I met someone in Alexei's office, a Major Zuyeva. They had just finished looking at a movie that the major eventually stashed in his briefcase. Then Alexei introduced Zuyeva as an interpreter." Grant and Adler hung on every word, hoping that whatever Moshenko offered up would help them figure out the puzzle. Moshenko continued. "During this same time, I noticed a folder on the desk labeled with the name *Heisen*."

"What?!" Grant responded in amazement. "Not the East German scientist?"

"So, you have heard the name," Moshenko answered.

"Not just the name. According to Lampson, the man's deaf, uses sign language, right?" Grant sat down on the edge of the chair, shaking his head slowly. "Lampson had been so certain Heisen could be trusted."

"Well, it seems Major Zuyeva reads sign language, my friend, and..."

"They were 'reading' a movie Heisen sent them," Grant interrupted, smacking his fist into his palm.

"Bingo!" Adler uttered sharply.

Moshenko shot a glance at Adler, then back at Grant. "Alexei knows about Steiner," he sighed heavily, "and by now he has figured out why I met with him." Moshenko stood and walked behind the chair, resting his hands on its splintered, wooden back.

Grant stared at his friend, who suddenly looked drawn and worried. "Look, the question now is, how the hell is Stoyakova involved?" Grant rubbed his palms together slowly. "Come on, Grigori, think about it. Why wasn't he setting up an agenda to stop Steiner himself? This shit's been going on for nearly two years. That tape couldn't have been the first one he's seen. With what he knew, and in his position, you'd think he would have brought it to the table before now. Right?"

Moshenko barely nodded his head then he turned and walked into the shadows, his footsteps heavy on the wooden planks. The two Americans watched him closely, concerned.

Adler intertwined his fingers, then rested his hands on top of his head, saying under his breath, "This is getting pretty heavy, boss."

Grant slid around to the side of the chair and called, "Grigori." Moshenko didn't respond. "Look, I know you've been trying to work this out in your own mind, probably since you met with Stoyakova. Let's hash it out, okay?"

Moshenko's head was bowed, but he slowly raised it, as he turned and walked back. "You are right," he finally responded, once again becoming an intelligence officer, searching and probing for answers. "Some people wish for power. I think Alexei is wishing. He does have his own agenda."

"Keep talking," Grant said, motioning with his hand.

"We can't be certain if Alexei has been in contact with Steiner."

Grant shook his head slowly. "Probably not. If he was, there wouldn't be any reason for Heisen and his movies."

"Right, boss," Adler said. "And from our intel on Steiner, he's not one to share the glory that he's hoping for."

"Alright," Moshenko agreed, his voice controlled again. "So now we have two individuals to be concerned about."

Grant stood. Puffs of breath escaped into the cold air as he thought out the problem. "Okay," he finally said, raising a finger, counting each statement. "First, we've got Steiner who's got the drug; second, we've got Stoyakova who wants to take over. So, does Stoyakova wait till Steiner's drugged the liquids, or, does he make an implied threat?"

"Either way," Adler said, "that means somebody else is involved."

Moshenko stood nearby, recording all the data in his brain, and at the same time trying to determine who the other party was. "Whoever it is has to know what Steiner looks like, no?"

Grant and Adler shot looks at one another. Grant replied. "Only one person we can think of, Grigori, and that would be our mysterious woman, Greta."

"Christ! The more we think we know about her," Adler said, exasperated, "the more we don't!"

Moshenko's words came out slow. "More are involved."

"Well," Grant answered, walking in and out of shadows, "Stoyakova may have backers, but two to one they'll shrink away if anything goes wrong."

Adler snickered. "Sure as shootin' when Stoyakova takes the fall, he'll be dragging down those so-called backers."

"So then," Moshenko sighed, "we remove three, and the rest will be taken care of in the scheme of things."

"Roger that, Grigori," Grant answered with a slight curve to his mouth.

"Only problem is, how the hell do we remove the three?" Adler questioned, rocking back and forth on the back chair legs. "I mean, we don't even know where Greta is."

"Our main objective's gotta be stopping Steiner, Joe. Without him or the drug, Stoyakova's got squat."

Moshenko finally sat down. He pressed his broad back against the chair, folding his hands in his lap. "Let's discuss what has to be done."

Grant nodded. "Do you know if traffic will be limited to certain entrances?"

"Yes. Spasskaya Tower. All others will be secured and guards posted."

"Wait one, sir," Adler piped up. "Aren't there some tunnels under one or two of the towers?"

Moshenko nodded, adding, "There are several so-called *secret* passages beneath Spasskaya Tower, but only one of those travels under street level beyond the Kremlin walls. I believe it exits at... hmm, let me think." He closed his eyes, picturing the tunnel, but his mind followed the path above at street level. "Yes, yes, it exits at a storm grate just beneath the highest part of the wall at St. Basil's Cathedral." The cathedral, with its multi-colored, onion-shaped towers, was positioned at a twenty-five degree angle from Spasskaya Tower and Red Square. A

gray-colored wall formed a half-circle around the grounds. It started level with the cobblestone street then gradually rose to a height of approximately thirteen feet at its halfway mark.

"We've gotta cover all bases in case Steiner somehow knows about the tunnels and manages to slip by you," Grant said. "Look, you can't be in more than one place at the same time, so guess Joe and I will have to situate ourselves somewhere. I don't think the guards would welcome these two Americans with open arms," Grant answered, moving his thumb side to side. "We'll have to try that tunnel. So, we'll leave the hotel well before daybreak then hope we can climb down into that thing without being spotted. Did you bring us any firepower?"

Moshenko pushed the briefcase with his foot toward Grant, who picked it up and put it on the chair seat. He pressed the latches outward and the locks popped open. Inside were two Makarov 9mm PMs (Pistolet Makarov), chambered for Soviet 9x18mm cartridges. Four extra fully loaded clips, two throat mikes with earpieces, and two hand-held radio transceivers—one for him, one for Moshenko. They were resting on thick, black protective foam.

Grant handed a Makarov to Adler along with two extra clips and a throat mike. Adler glanced down at the gun in his palm. A five-pointed star was centered in the grip.

After checking the clip that was already loaded in the weapon, Adler asked, "Time to get out of these?" He tugged on the front of the oversized coveralls.

"Do it," Grant answered, as he unzipped the overalls then stepped out of them. They slipped the firearms into the waistbands at the small of their backs, readjusted their heavy sweaters and leather jackets, and finally put on the parkas. Grant took a transceiver from the case and confirmed the number they'd be using to transmit. "Okay, time for us to go to the hotel. You've got the address, right?" he asked Grigori, who nodded. The hotel was located a half mile from the garage. "Let's do the synchronize thing with our watches. It's 0015 hours. Grigori, what time will you be leaving for the Kremlin?"

"I should be on my way at 0700."

"Can you swing by the cathedral, say around 0715? That should give us clear reception. Contact me over the radio."

"I'll be there at 0715," Moshenko said as he led them back down to the garage. He got into his car while Adler cracked open one of the garage doors, then eased through sideways, checking to see all was clear. As he pulled the door open, Moshenko started the engine.

Grant leaned closer to the open window, putting a hand on Moshenko's shoulder. "This is it," he said, his voice low and deep, filled with obvious concern.

"Yes, my friend. Do not worry. We will find him in time."

## **Red Square, Moscow**

### **Day 8 – 0545 Hours**

Even though the moon was hidden behind heavy cloud coverage, bright floodlights cast long shadows across Red Square. Around the base of St. Basil's Cathedral, white lights directed their brilliant glow upward onto the colored



domes. The streets were nearly deserted, except for city buses and taxis. But the conditions were still less than perfect for Grant and Adler.

Trying to conceal themselves was becoming increasingly difficult. They stayed close to the buildings on their way to the river, ending up across from the southeast corner of the Kremlin wall. Their timing would have to coincide with the movement of the guards around Spasskaya Tower and Lenin's Tomb. From the river to the cathedral was all open territory.

They stood in an alley with their backs flattened against a building. Adler poked his head around the corner, judging the distance to the grate to be about seventy-five yards. He talked softly into his throat mike. "Seventy-five yards; open ground."

Grant's eyes shifted from Adler to the corner of the wall. Adler jerked his head around, seeing a city bus coming toward them that was preparing to make a left turn. He gave a thumb's up. As the bus made the corner, the two men took off, staying as low as they could, then they jumped onto the back bumper, desperately trying to gain a handhold along the protruding taillights. Following the curving road around the cathedral wall, the bus leaned slightly to the right. Grant motioned with his head and they both jumped off the bumper, doing a touch and roll as if they'd completed a parachute landing. The thick parkas were awkward, slowing their progress, but they were warm and offered some protection from the rough cobblestone. Staying on their bellies, they hugged the ground as if they were crawling under barbed wire. Crabbing their way along the dirty pavement another ten feet, they reached the wall around the cathedral, in direct line with the grate.

Grant cautiously got up, staying close to the wall. His eyes continuously scanned their surroundings. Overhead, barren, drooping branches of shrubbery rustled against the wall. Suddenly, harsh sounds of voices made the Americans go stone-still. Guards, Grant thought. The voices gradually grew weaker as the two Russians made their way inside the short tunnel leading to Spasskaya Tower.

Adler got on all fours then reached for the grate and pulled. It didn't budge. He reached between the bars with one hand, trying to grasp the slide bolt Moshenko had told them would be there. It was stuck. Shit! He quickly reached for his belt, stripping it off. He folded it in half, formed a loop, and gingerly reached in again, slipping the loop over the slide bolt's handle. Giving a quick look around and seeing it was clear, he jerked hard on the belt. The bolt slid back with an abrasive sound. Gotcha! He grabbed hold of the grate again. With a jerk, he pulled it from the ground, laying it to the side of the opening.

Grant scrambled around him and climbed down the steel ladder backwards, jumping off when he was about six feet off the ground. Adler climbed down just enough so he could slide the heavy grate over his head, feeling it settle into the lip of the opening. He met Grant at the bottom. Their eyes quickly adjusted to the darkness as they moved farther away from the opening.

The wall was damp and rough; small protrusions caught on their clothing. Grant finally pulled his penlight from his pocket and shined the light on his watch. Oh six hundred hours. They had about a hundred fifty feet to go before they'd be at the tower. Grant whispered the time to Adler, then, "We'll wait here till we talk with Grigori." Adler nodded.

The members of the People's Congress would start arriving in another couple of hours or so, unwittingly setting the stage for the plan. Moshenko indicated the

conference was to be held in the Meeting Hall of the Supreme Soviet, part of the same building as the Grand Kremlin Palace. Located opposite Spasskaya Tower, the hall was on the southwest side of the Kremlin, facing the Moskva River. With a history of revolution and war, the Soviets strived to protect its members of the Politburo. Beneath each building a shelter had been constructed, each one linked to a passageway leading to Spasskaya Tower.

Moshenko would be wearing civilian clothes. The only indicator that he was KGB was a small lapel pin. He'd wait alongside the guards at the checkpoint in Spasskaya Tower, already having given them specific orders to exam every identification more thoroughly. They were to be on the lookout for an East German named 'Major Zeigler.' Once he was identified, they were to give a signal to Moshenko. As KGB, Moshenko's reasons for his request would not be questioned. He would then follow Steiner, whether by car or foot, making contact, if possible, before he entered the Meeting Hall of the Supreme Soviet.

Grant's radio sounded. He answered, "Da."

Moshenko responded, continuing in Russian, "I am at the Tower. When I have the perpetrator, I will bring him to you." Exiting back through the main Kremlin entrance with Steiner might draw too much attention, so Moshenko decided to use one of the shelter accesses leading to the tunnel. Once Steiner was in Grant's hands, Moshenko would return to get his car, then drive it back outside the Kremlin walls, parking near the grate. The three men would crawl out then get into it without being seen. He counted on normal, everyday tourist and citizen activity for them to blend into the scenery.

Grant's voice went low. "You contact me if you run into trouble."

Moshenko smiled to himself. "My friend, just being here you are taking enough of a chance. Be patient."

A strange feeling went through Grant as he answered, "Keep me posted."

"Do svidaniya."

Grant switched off the radio, checked his watch, then tapped the radio against his forehead. "I don't know, Joe."

"Problem, sir?"

"Let's move farther down the tunnel."

There was silence between them as they made their way along the corridor, trying to sidestep puddles of filthy water. Rancid smells overpowered their senses at times. Their pace slowed as the penlight beams moved from the pavement to a heavy metal door twenty feet ahead.

Adler asked, "You think something'll go wrong, Skipper?"

"Odds aren't exactly in our favor, Joe." He switched off his penlight. "I can't put my finger on it," he said as he shrugged his shoulders. "We've gotta be ready for anything."

"So, what's new?" Adler grunted.

In their homes, the people of Moscow began to stir, struggling to get out of warm beds, then dressing and eating typical breakfasts, all before bundling up and taking to the streets.

While the hustle and bustle of everyday life was taking place at street level, two Americans waited in the filth and stench of the Moscow underground. As cars and

buses drove by Red Square, their exhaust fumes descended into the tunnel where they waited, cold and hungry.

Grant was pacing while Adler picked out a dry spot on the floor next to the wall, making himself as comfortable as possible, trying to pull his parka down far enough to cover his butt.

"Can't you keep that thing quiet?" Grant chided.

Adler patted his growling stomach. "Mmm, want food! Need food!" he grinned.

Grant squatted down next to him. "Well, then, it looks like you're gonna have to catch something down here."

## Chapter 17

### Spasskaya Tower – 0810 Hours

A thin layer of ice began forming along the banks of the Moskva River during late October. For the past week, the gray thickness stretched itself outward like an icy hand, reaching toward the opposite shoreline. Along the riverbanks the ice was already three inches thick, thinning down to only one inch at the midpoint of the river. The yellow-white light of the morning sun hung like a shield, covering the eastern horizon. Shadows created by the spires of St. Basil's Cathedral began to stretch toward the Kremlin wall.

Two guards, dressed in full length, olive drab coats with AK47s slung over their shoulders, were stationed on either side of the portal. Their assignments were to keep back curious onlookers. Two others stood farther inside, sheltered somewhat from the cold morning air, but they wouldn't consider themselves luckier than their counterparts. It was almost impossible not to feel the cold, penetrating eyes of Colonel Grigori Moshenko watching them as they diligently checked papers.

Moshenko stood in the background, keeping himself in the shadows on the south side of the entry. His arms hung relaxed by his sides, but his gloved hands convulsively flared open and then clenched, the anxious gesture unnoticeable to others. An overhead spotlight was directed to shine into the windshield of vehicles entering. As each vehicle was stopped, Moshenko would lean slightly, trying to get a glimpse of each driver and passenger.

A 1971 black, two-door Volvo paused momentarily a few feet from the guards, as a group of four Russian officers crossed in front of it. Gray white smoke rose from the car's exhaust pipe as it idled. Finally, a guard waved the car forward then held his arm out, waiting for the vehicle to stop. He leaned toward the closed window, motioning for the driver to roll it down. Noticing the East German uniform, the guard said one word in German, "Papers."

Klaus Steiner reached into his coat pocket, withdrawing a single sheet of paper, handing it to the guard through the half-opened window. Steiner sat very upright in the bucket seat, trying to keep his face out of being in direct line of the spotlight. His military cap was pulled down, hoping the brim would help shield his

eyes. Beyond the guard he spotted someone standing in the shadows but could only see the lower portion of a long, black leather coat.

Without giving any indication of recognition, the guard handed him his paper, then waved him through. Steiner folded the paper, put it back in his pocket, then slowly released the clutch and proceeded forward.

First Officer Chernov immediately stepped back, being careful not to make any motion that could be noticed by the driver in his rearview mirror. He turned his head and said over his shoulder, "Colonel Moshenko. That was Major Zeigler."

Without a word, Moshenko walked through Spasskaya Tower, glancing around the corner before stepping into the open. The Volvo was bearing left, following the road in a southerly direction. Moshenko dashed to his car, certain he wouldn't be seen by Steiner because of the car's angle. He already had his keys in hand as he reached the Volvo. Quickly sliding onto the seat he started the engine. He shifted into reverse then waited for a dark green Mercedes to drive past before backing up. He threw the gearshift into first. The rear tires spun on a patch of ice before grabbing hold of pavement. Moshenko stayed well behind the two vehicles.

As Moshenko drove, he made a last minute decision. He'd wait until he and Steiner had entered the hall. In the midst of the assemblage, chances were in his favor that he wouldn't be noticed when he confronted the East German troublemaker. He wondered what his plan was for using the drug. Will he dump it in the main water supply, or a more controlled method? His thoughts abruptly changed as he noticed the Volvo turning into a parking area in the shadow of the great hall. Moshenko followed the green Mercedes then drove past the Volvo before parking.

Two Russian officers immediately exited from the Mercedes, and slammed the front doors. As they passed the Volvo, one of them glanced at Steiner through the rear window. He made a comment to his fellow officer, both men erupting into loud laughter. Steiner glared at them in the rearview mirror.

Moshenko looked through the passenger side window of his car, trying to catch sight of Steiner. After a few moments, Steiner finally exited the car and readjusted his cap. He slipped his hand inside his coat, feeling the case concealing the two vials of SD-7, at the same time looking up at the three story, gray concrete building. He turned on his heel and followed the walkway leading to the doors facing the river.

Getting out of the car, Moshenko felt for the Makarov in the side holster, all the while, his eyes never leaving Steiner. As he made his way to the corner of the building, a sudden, icy wind blew from the northwest. He glanced up at the gray, overcast sky. Storm clouds, driven by the wind, rushed toward the horizon and quickly concealed the sun. A sign of the day ahead? he wondered. He grabbed the brass door handle just as the first flakes of snow began falling.

The grand main entryway, with thirty foot ceilings, echoed with the sound of voices, both Russian and German. The walls and ceiling glittered with gold leaf. Three large archways paralleled one side of the wide marble staircase. Above the arches was a hallway, forming a balcony leading to two separate meeting halls.

Steiner stood on the lower steps of the staircase, resting his forearm on the smooth white marble banister, slowly swiveling his head from side to side. Cold, ruthless, calculating eyes swept over a sea of faces in front of him. He unbuttoned

his coat, then turned away and started up the staircase, falling in among the strangers.

No one but Grigori Moshenko noticed the look of malevolence on the East German's face. Staying close behind, his eyes focused on the back of his "mark." Following Steiner's lead, he left his coat on, his firearm tucked under the right side of his civilian suit jacket. He did take off his thick brown sable hat, stuffing it into his pocket.

At the second floor landing everyone was directed toward the left, following the red carpeted balcony to the opposite wall. Two Russian guards stood on either side of opened, double doors that were eight feet in height, made of heavy, carved oak. Moshenko pushed through several people in front of him. He was now directly behind Steiner, close enough to see the red rash along the East German's hairline. Probably a dull razor, mused the Russian.

Inside the meeting room long tables with white tablecloths formed a U around the perimeter. The meeting participants mingled just inside the entryway, except for Steiner and Moshenko. Steiner wove his way in and out of the small groups, making his way toward a large, rectangular table placed at the very back of the room. Moshenko looked beyond Steiner, seeing silver coffee and tea pots, clear pitchers of water, and bottles of vodka. White coffee cups and saucers were stacked at one end, with tall, crystal goblets and shot glasses at the other. It was only in such gatherings of the powerful that brought out fresh fruit. Grigori noticed a large orange, and as he past, started to reach for it but then decided against the temptation.

Steiner walked back and forth in front of the table as if trying to decide what he wanted to drink. As he reached for a shot glass, he felt someone brush against his arm.

"Herr Steiner," Moshenko said, leaning closer to the German.

Steiner froze in disbelief then he backed away from the stranger, a stranger who somehow knew his true identity. For what seemed like an eternity, the two stared at each another until Moshenko said in a low voice, and in German, "I believe you have something that belongs to us, Herr Steiner."

Steiner instinctively started to reach for the pistol behind his back. Moshenko opened his coat then tucked the edge of his jacket behind the holster, exposing the Makarov. "Not an intelligent choice, Comrade."

Steiner merely glanced at the weapon, his face remaining unchanged. For him the word fear didn't exist, he only showed total arrogance and contempt. Suddenly, his eyes darted toward Moshenko's right shoulder.

Moshenko looked at him quizzically, then turned his head ever so slightly, as his hand felt for his pistol. His peripheral vision picked up someone stepping closer to them.

"Colonel Moshenko," a soft voice said.

Moshenko looked at a tall, young woman, wearing the Russian winter uniform of a jacket and slacks, both dull green in color with red epaulettes. Her light brown hair was pulled into a bun at the nape of her neck. Her cap was tucked under her arm.

Moshenko wasn't taking any chances with Steiner. He moved toward the German, grabbing hold of his arm with bone-crushing strength. Steiner winced, but quickly regained control of himself.

"And you are?" Moshenko asked of the woman.

"Lieutenant Natasha Ostrova," she replied, coming to attention momentarily, showing her respect to the KGB officer.

Moshenko rolled the name around in his mind. Is it possible? he thought in surprise. Then he remembered Grant's request. He said one word to her: "Black?"

She hesitated briefly then nodded her confirmation. Here, standing before them, was Natasha Ostrova, aka Greta Verner. She shifted her eyes to the East German. "Herr Steiner knows me personally, don't you, Klaus?"

Several Russian officers started making their way toward them. "I think we should find a place to talk. Come with me," Moshenko said, then as he squeezed Steiner's arm, he added, "I don't have to remind you that you are not among friends. No one can, or will help you, for that matter. Now, let's go."

As they were leaving the room, Natasha gave one last glance around, her eyes making contact briefly with a silver-haired man of medium height, standing behind the head table. He and the two men he was with were dressed in plain, dark suits. He continued his conversation and occasionally sipped his vodka. Until Natasha disappeared behind the door, his dark, solemn eyes never left her, except for a quick glance at the two men leaving with her—one he knew to be Colonel Grigori Moshenko, KGB.

Passing several small groups still lingering along the balcony, Moshenko stayed just off Steiner's left side, Natasha to his right. They descended the staircase, and once on the first floor, Moshenko pushed Steiner through one of the archways then followed the passageway toward the rear wall. Natasha took the lead. She stepped close to the wall under the stairs where the light had diminished somewhat. After checking that no one was watching, she pressed a narrow, half inch wide button concealed beneath the molding. As the panel swung inward, a musty dampness escaped into the air.

Moshenko gave Steiner a rough shove, then immediately drew his Makarov. The East German nearly lost his balance, falling against the passage wall. Immediately, Natasha closed the panel then followed the two men further into the secret passageway, checking her watch as she did so.

Outside the building, Alexei Stoyakova waited for Major Boris Zuyeva to open the door for him then they proceeded into the lobby. He paused by the stairs, looking up toward the balcony. The last few stragglers were entering the meeting hall. Keeping his eyes focused overhead, he removed his leather gloves, put them in his coat pocket then removed his coat, handing it to Zuyeva. He put one foot on the bottom step, taking another look outside. "It appears all the participants are inside, Major." Zuyeva nodded, and followed Stoyakova to the conference.

### **In a Passageway beneath the Kremlin**

Overhead, single fluorescent lights, spaced thirty feet apart on the concave ceiling, illuminated the narrow passageway. Natasha stepped closer to Moshenko

as he stopped near a small alcove that housed electrical boxes. She removed a Makarov from her side holster.

Moshenko grabbed Steiner's shoulder and spun him around, slamming him face first against the wall. After a quick pat-down, he pulled the Walther from Steiner's back waistband, then slipped it into his own pocket before jerking Steiner back around. He shoved the East German against the wall, pressing a forearm across the man's throat. Reaching inside Steiner's jacket, he felt the case, withdrew it then stepped back before opening it. His eyes settled on two glass vials surrounded by cotton, each filled with a clear liquid. The hard case snapped shut inside Moshenko's broad hand. "You'll no longer have any use for these," he said, holding the case in front of Steiner's face a moment before sliding it into his own jacket pocket.

Steiner fixed an angry stare on Natasha. "You bitch! I should have taken care of you myself."

"We have to go," Moshenko said, while motioning with his free hand, indicating straight ahead.

The sound of their footsteps reverberated in the tunnel as they started down a steep incline. It was one more level that had been built below the earth as an extra measurement of safety.

Steiner seemed more interested in Natasha than the drug or his own fate, and he asked over his shoulder, "And what about your bastard kids?"

"My children are probably safe by now."

Moshenko wondered if he should tell her that her children were safe and with Lampson? She was an intelligent Russian officer and would more than likely make the connection between him and the Americans. He decided to keep the information from her.

Another passageway, feeding in from the Palace of Congresses, joined up with theirs from the left. They kept walking. Moshenko pictured the grounds above, tracking their route. They should be under St. Vladimir Hall. The building was one quarter of the way to Spasskaya Tower.

"And what about Brennar?" Steiner said, as he turned his head slightly, trying to see the woman he knew as Greta. "Don't you know he's a goddamn American?"

"Yes, I know," she answered quietly.

"And you have two bastard children fathered by an American spy!" He laughed a low guttural laugh that was short lived. He'd barely spit the words out, when Natasha swung her arm, delivering a blow to the side of his head with her pistol. He stumbled then fell to his knees.

She stood over him while he wiped blood from a cut near his temple. Her words and behavior reflected a person who'd been consumed by hate. "You're the bastard, Klaus! They're not Eric's children! They're yours! Unless you've forgotten, and I doubt you have, you raped me!" Steiner slowly regained his footing, staggered then steadied himself against the wall.

For a split second, Moshenko's eyes went from Natasha to Steiner, as he remembered Grant suggesting such a possibility, that the children weren't Lampson's. Suddenly, he heard a faint sound but he wasn't able to distinguish where it was coming from.

She noticed him watching and she took a step back, reached into her pocket and pulled out a small radio. Moshenko's eyebrows lifted in surprise, immediately recognizing the voice of Mikhail Antolov, Director of the KGB.

Antolov repeated, "Come in, N1."

Natasha brought the transmitter toward her mouth, keeping her eyes on Moshenko. "N1."

"Report."

"Goods and courier in hand without incident." She switched off the radio then handed it to Moshenko.

He slipped the radio into his pocket as he asked, "What is happening, Lieutenant Ostrova?"

She turned her head slowly, settling her cold, blue eyes on Steiner. "Comrade Antolov will soon have Minister Stoyakova under arrest, and I have him," she said while gesturing with her pistol toward the East German. She held the Makarov steady, aimed at Steiner's heaving chest.

Moshenko worried. Antolov knew that he part of this game. He motioned forward with his firearm. "We must go." He shoved Steiner ahead of them. "How did all this happen?" he asked Natasha.

For the time being, Natasha didn't concern herself where Moshenko was leading them and she continued her story. "I had been selected personally by Comrade Antolov to go to East Berlin and monitor the scientists and their progress on the virus and drug. I gave Comrades Antolov and Stoyakova monthly reports on the progress of the experiments. It was when Comrade Stoyakova requested an additional one million roubles to expand the project that Comrade Antolov became suspicious of him.

"Not long afterward, Herr Steiner and his organization came into the picture. Klaus still didn't have any of the scientists helping him yet, and he knew I had access to their documentation. Several times he approached me, always with a threat, trying to obtain information. Then, one night, he followed me and tried again. When I refused, he..." Moshenko lightly touched her arm, while Steiner listened and waited for the right opportunity to try and escape. Natasha's voice faltered momentarily. "I let Eric believe he was the children's father. He loved them and he was able to provide for them."

Moshenko started walking faster, shoving Steiner ahead of him. "And what of Stoyakova?"

"I intercepted one of the films Professor Heisen was sending to him just a few weeks ago and forwarded a copy to Comrade Antolov."

"Was Heisen threatened by Stoyakova?"

"His twenty-year old son was taken. He's being held at Lubyanka under an assumed name."

Moshenko shook his head. "This game we play," he said softly. She looked at her watch again, and he asked curiously, "What is supposed to be happening, Lieutenant Ostrova?"

"Comrade Stoyakova has assumed that Klaus has contaminated the water supply system and the refreshments in the meeting hall. He was to make a speech to the meeting participants that unless they take an immediate vote putting him in power, he will withhold the antidote for the drug."



"Antidote?" Steiner laughed over his shoulder. "There isn't any antidote."

"Of course, there isn't, Klaus," she replied condescendingly. "But they don't know that, do they?"

Moshenko again poked Steiner in the back with the Makarov. This time Steiner swung around, but Moshenko jumped aside, catching the East German with a fist on the side of his neck. Steiner went down. Moshenko grabbed him by the scruff of the neck, jerking him to his feet. "That's not wise." He shoved him ahead.

Natasha continued as if nothing had happened. "Comrade Antolov made the decision to entrap the minister and would do it by allowing him to proceed with his plan. I was instructed to follow Klaus and see to it that he was stopped." Somehow she anticipated Moshenko's question and responded, "I persuaded Comrade Antolov to allow me to do this. He knows what Klaus did to me. He knows about the children." She gave a hesitant smile to Moshenko, trying to understand how he became involved. "But you, Colonel, why are you here? How did you...?" Her hand holding the gun dropped by her side, her pace slowed as she stared at Moshenko's back as he proceeded ahead. "You... you're working with the two Americans!"

"Someday we may discuss the matter," he answered, while he kept walking. Then, suddenly he reversed his previous decision. "But what I will tell you, Lieutenant Ostrova, is that you do not have to worry about your children."

She caught her breath and rushed up to him again, but immediately she realized he would tell her nothing further. The heaviness that had weighed upon her heart vanished. She felt the kind of relief only a mother could know. She refocused on the East German with renewed vengeance. She had the upper hand now and persisted in her attempt to destroy the arrogance and viciousness she loathed. "Klaus, you have been nothing more than a pawn. Shall I tell you what the Americans did to your lab, to all your hopes and dreams? In fact, there is very little left of the entire building." She didn't wait for a response and goaded him further. "Or would you prefer instead to know what I did to Karl or what happened to Victor and your precious brother?"

A low growl rose deep from within Steiner. Moshenko's reaction was a split second too late, as the East German dove at Natasha, shoving her gun hand up. A single bullet fired, ricocheting off the concrete walls, the sound traveling through the tunnel. Moshenko took aim but couldn't get a clear shot off, as Steiner and Natasha fell to the floor then rolled as one down the incline.

Natasha's back hit the wall, knocking the wind out of her. Steiner wrestled the gun from her hand then raised up and fired at Moshenko who dove into an alcove, ducking underneath water shutoff valves. Moshenko could only watch as his transceiver flew out of his pocket and skidded somewhere into the darkened alcove.

Steiner grabbed Natasha by the arm and yanked her to her feet, then immediately grabbed a handful of her long hair that had fallen loose from the bun.

Moshenko leaned toward the edge of the wall. Another bullet whizzed by his head. Steiner pushed Natasha, making her run in front of him while he kept a death grip on her hair.

Moshenko rolled into the passageway. Laying on his stomach, he took aim and fired but the bullet careened off the concrete floor next to Steiner's heels. The

Russian jumped to his feet and started running. His mind raced. The only way for him to go is the door where Grant is, the Presidium tunnel, or the passage used by maintenance. That passageway ran parallel to the Kremlin wall, just inside the grounds. The distance to Grant was at least fifty yards. Moshenko didn't know how soundproof the tunnel walls and door were. Did Grant hear the shots?

Steiner and Natasha were still in sight. Up ahead was a slight curve to the left, just before the Presidium passageway. He lost sight of them as they made that curve. He pulled up slightly, no longer hearing their running feet. Hugging the wall, he cautiously walked around the curve, the gun grasped in his right hand.

Steiner was plastered against the opposite wall just past the Presidium passage. He was using Natasha to shield his body. He pulled her hair, roughly jerking her head back. Thoughts whirled through his mind. How many rounds were left in his weapon? There could be three... or none. He had no idea where he was but had to assume the tunnel was an escape route and probably exited beyond the Kremlin walls. He shot a glance up the Presidium passage, quickly determining from its angle that it led where he didn't want to go. Why was the Russian taking me this way? Could someone else be waiting? He had to keep Natasha alive, at least until he found a way out.

Beyond the wall, Grant and Adler were growing anxious. Adler stood under the street grate. Large snowflakes fell between the bars, settling on his upturned face. He wiped the melting snow from his cheeks then pulled his watch cap down over his ears. A howling wind rushed across the grate. A strong gust swirled a layer of snow from the street, thrusting it down into the tunnel. Adler jumped back, then he quickly went back to where Grant was pacing.

Adler clapped his gloved hands together. "Jesus! It's a helluva good thing the colonel got us these jackets, otherwise we'd be frozen like popsicles! But if this show doesn't get on the road pretty soon, nobody's gonna find us till the spring thaw anyway!"

Grant walked past him. "Something's wrong, Joe. It shouldn't be taking..."

The sound of gunfire interrupted his words. They grabbed their weapons from their waistbands. Grant took up a position to the right of the door, Adler to the left. They had no choice but to wait because gaining entry to the tunnel from their side was impossible. The door was locked from the other side.

Steiner pressed the Makarov against Natasha's temple. She tried jerking away, but he pulled her hair, nearly snapping her neck. A weak cry caught in her throat. Steiner shouted to Moshenko, "You know what will happen if you make a move closer to us! Tell me how to get out of here, and I'll release her once I'm outside!"

Moshenko said under his breath, "I am sure you will." He continued aiming his gun directly at the two. He had to count on Grant and Adler. His voiced thundered in the enclosed space. "There's a door straight ahead. On the other side is a tunnel that will lead you to the street above, next to St. Basil's Cathedral." If Steiner ignored him and decided to take the maintenance tunnel, they'd have to go like hell to catch him on the other side.

Slowly, Steiner started sliding his back along the wall, ensuring Natasha shielded him. Moshenko stayed back, but kept the same distance, putting himself in a very vulnerable position. Why hasn't he fired? Moshenko thought back and

started counting the number of shots Steiner fired. Three. But how many does he have left?

In the blink of an eye, Steiner fired at the Russian. An explosive pain went through Moshenko's left shoulder. His knees started to buckle.

Natasha screamed, "Colonel!"

That was all the time Steiner needed. He spun Natasha around and started running at breakneck speed through the tunnel. Within seconds he saw the steel door. He started running faster.

Moshenko felt warm blood running down his arm. He quickly assessed the damage and determined the bone wasn't broken. He looked down the passageway, no longer able to see Steiner and Natasha. Slipping his left hand gingerly into his jacket pocket to help support his arm, he started forward again.

Grant and Adler heard the shot, giving each other a grim look. All they had going for them was the element of surprise.

Steiner pulled Natasha's hair, making her come to an abrupt stop about ten feet from a door. Her arms flailed out, trying to grab his arm to prevent herself from falling. He snapped his head to the right, seeing the maintenance tunnel. There was a small shaft of light casting down onto the pavement. "Your colonel," he whispered to Natasha as he pointed the gun towards the steel door, "was perhaps sending me into a trap." He took off running into the maintenance tunnel, dragging her alongside.

Moshenko knew he had to be getting close to the end of the tunnel, and within seconds the steel door came into view. He stepped over to the wall, cautiously edging his way closer to the end. Hearing footsteps coming from the maintenance tunnel, he could make his move safely.

Grant and Adler froze, as the steel bar slid back and the door started opening. Then they heard Moshenko's voice, "It is me!"

Adler pulled the door open. Moshenko nearly went sprawling until Grant caught him. "Hurry!" Moshenko said loudly. "He's going down the maintenance tunnel."

Grant noticed the blood dripping from Moshenko's hand. "Are you okay?"

"Yes! Yes!"

"Joe, take the tunnel! I'll go this way and try and head him off!"

"Wait!" Moshenko yelled, grabbing Grant's arm. "The woman is alive. He is holding her hostage. She is one of us!"

"What?!" Grant shouted.

Moshenko pushed him away. "Go after them! Save her!"

Grant motioned to Adler, "Go!" Adler disappeared around the corner, as Grant raced toward the ladder.

Moshenko yelled after him, "I have the vials!"

Something's gone right! Grant thought, as he lunged for an upper rung on the ladder. With a grunt, he pushed the grate up, moving it from the lip, and then shoved it across the snow. Scrambling through the opening, he stayed low, scooting close to the wall before standing up fully. There was little activity around the cathedral. Vehicles still had on their headlights.

Moshenko was dragging himself through the opening. "To the right! To the right! Go around the cathedral! There's an exit from the tunnel there!"

Grant started running, trying to keep his balance on the slippery surface. The wind drove snow into his face, stinging his cheeks and eyes. As he started for open ground, getting closer to the Kremlin wall, he saw a man and woman running toward the river. Adler scrambled up through the opening and caught up to him just as they were halfway to the end of the south wall where it turned right onto Kremlyovskaya. That's when Steiner and Natasha disappeared.

The Americans couldn't run any faster. When they finally got to the corner, their feet skidded across the compacted snow. They reached for the wall, trying to slow their forward progress. Making the turn, they strained their eyes, with Adler finally grabbing Grant's arm. He pointed to a parked taxi. A checkered pattern on its sides made it easily identifiable.

Steiner flung open the taxi door and yanked the surprised driver from the vehicle before pushing Natasha onto the front seat. He jumped in, landing on her ankles. She screamed, and pulled them from under him. He gunned the engine, but the wheels just spun wildly. He threw the gearshift into reverse, then immediately back into first. Somehow, the tires found a patch of pavement and dug in. The car leapt forward.

Grant and Adler ran down the sidewalk next to the four-lane road. Their weapons, grasped tightly in their hands, hung close to their parkas but were nearly out of sight, tucked up inside the sleeves. A horn suddenly blared behind them. They snapped around and saw Moshenko behind the wheel of a commandeered taxi, its windshield wipers swishing back and forth, trying to brush aside snow. First Adler, then Grant jumped into the front seat without even allowing Moshenko to completely stop.

It was all Steiner could do to keep the car from heading into oncoming traffic. A set of headlights, blurry in the falling snow, appeared in his rearview mirror. He knew he was being followed.

Natasha pressed herself against the passenger door, trying to steady herself, while her eyes stayed fixed on Steiner. She eased her hand into her left pants pocket, feeling the metal case. Gingerly, she worked off the cap with her fingers.

"He's straight ahead!" Adler shouted, pointing toward the windshield. Moshenko's fingers curled around the steering wheel as he pressed down on the accelerator, noticeably gaining on the taxi. The rear tires spun, whirring across sporadic patches of ice.

To the left and twenty-five yards ahead of Steiner's vehicle, a bridge crossed the Moskva River. He jerked the wheel, trying to make the turn, but the car started to fishtail. Seeing her opportunity and realizing it may be her last chance for survival, Natasha whipped the small purse weapon from her pocket, aimed it at Steiner's temple, and fired. The 4.5mm bullet struck him just above the ear. The involuntary blink of his eyes coincided with the slamming of his head against the side window. The muscles in his face started relaxing as his head slid along the glass, finally slumping toward his chest. Blood smeared the window.

Natasha flung herself toward the steering wheel, grabbed it, but was unable to regain control. The side of the car rammed into the concrete bridge abutment, crushing in the passenger door, the force of the impact hurling her back against it. The battered vehicle careened back across the opposite side of the bridge and directly into the path of an oncoming city bus. The taxi spun around like a toy top,

its front end jumping the low guard rail just as the braking bus slammed into its trunk. The taxi was launched airborne, high above the river. It began a slow arc toward the water, as the weight of the engine could no longer resist the pull of gravity.

Tumbling downward, hood first, it ultimately smashed against the ice. Steiner's lifeless body catapulted over the steering wheel and jammed into the area between the windshield and dashboard. With only seconds to react, Natasha had tried to take refuge under the dash as the impending crash loomed before her. The car collided with the ice before she could get all the way down. Her head smashed against the bottom edge of the dash, instantly breaking her neck. Cold water hit the hot engine, causing billows of steam to erupt under the fender wells, escaping around the jagged edges of ice.

Grant, Adler, and Moshenko jumped from their vehicle and ran to the corner where the bridge joined the road. Quickly spotting the black and white checkered cab, it was evident that the river's current and car's weight were taking their toll. Right before their eyes, the frozen river was consuming the battered vehicle.

Water rushed through the cracked windshield, dash, and floorboard. The hole in the ice widened as a large piece of the fractured edge broke free, enlarging the opening. The vehicle began to disappear as the cab started into a slow roll. As the trunk submerged, large bubbles, caused by rushing air, erupted from its sealed edge. The vehicle became dead weight, slipping below the surface of the frigid, murky water.

Out of the corner of his eye, Moshenko saw Grant's movement forward. He reached out and grabbed his shoulder, pulling him back. "It's too late. She's dead, I'm sure."

Sounds around the three men faded into the background, as they stared at the empty, bubbling space for what seemed like several long minutes. It was Moshenko who spoke first after finally hearing the hi-low pitch of the two-toned police sirens. "We'd better go, my friends." He placed a hand on Grant's snow-covered shoulder. "There's nothing left for us to do here."

Grant glanced over his shoulder one more time before following Moshenko and Adler back across the road. More and more curious onlookers were rushing toward the bridge. Sirens became louder.

Grant spoke softly. "Who was she, Grigori?"

"You and Joe were right all along. She wasn't who she pretended to be." For several minutes Moshenko repeated the story Natasha Ostrova had told to him.

"And Lampson never knew," Adler said, surprised.

"She was very good at her job, Joe," Moshenko responded. "Although she didn't tell me, I am sure she loved him."

Grant thought out loud. "The uncle's farm."

"What about it, Skipper?"

"Russian setup, Joe. That's why we didn't find anything. Antolov was taking care of her."

They walked along the south Kremlin wall with the Moskva River in full view to their right. The ribbon of frozen water, stretching through the city, seemed oblivious to the fact that it had just become an icy grave. Grant stopped suddenly

and looked squarely at his Russian friend through compassionate eyes. "There must be something you can do for her, Grigori."

"I will see to it that her body is recovered. She will receive the recognition she fully deserves."

Grant shoved his gloved hands into his coat pockets, as he walked with his head down, finally saying to Moshenko, "You're going back to the meeting, aren't you?"

"It would be best if I did. 'll have to confront Antolov and explain my position." He reached into his pocket, withdrew the eyeglass case then handed it to Grant.

Adler leaned closer, remarking, "So that's the stuff that dreams are made of."

Moshenko answered quietly in English, quickly assessing that no others would hear. "Yes, Joe."

Grant snapped the case closed and handed it back to Moshenko. "You're gonna need this in case there are questions. We've got Lampson and his brain."

Moshenko glanced at the case in his palm, slipping it back into his pocket before continuing his original thought. "Of course, after seeing me leave with Natasha and Steiner, Antolov probably has put everything together. And, if he had Stoyakova's office bugged..."

"If he did? Hell! You know he did, Grigori," Grant responded emphatically. "When you went through the proper channels, everybody knew. You guys aren't any different than us in that regard. And in the end, you were the one who prevented Steiner from carrying out murder."

Moshenko gave a wry smile, as he brushed a snowflake from his dark eyelashes. "And shall I tell him about the minor role you and Joe played?"

"Your discretion," Grant laughed. As they rounded the south corner, heading back toward Red Square, he asked with concern, "You think the powers that be will pull the plug on the project?"

Moshenko spread his hands out in front of him. "Only time will tell, Grant. We were very lucky this time. I will do my best to drive that point home. But even if they decide to pull it out from under the East Germans, that is not to say the project won't continue here."

"And pretty soon," Grant said, shaking his head with disgust, "the CIA will have Lampson. Jesus! We're back to the old standoff routine, aren't we?"

"With any luck, my friend, maybe it will go away and we won't have any more secrets."

Grant answered, "That'd work for me." He glanced up ahead, seeing Spasskaya Tower and the guards at Lenin's Tomb. "Let's go over there," he pointed to an area to the side of the cathedral. "We'll take a taxi back to the hotel when we're finished. Then we'll try and get a flight out of here." He looked up as his eyes tried to penetrate the blur of snow, hoping to spot a patch of blue sky.

"Russian planes fly in all weather!" Moshenko boasted with a grin.

"Yeah, but do they stay up?" Adler mumbled.

Once out of the path of traffic and away from curious guards, Grant reached into his pocket, withdrawing the firearm. Adler followed with his, and they inconspicuously handed them to Moshenko.

"If it weren't for you, my friend," Grant said, "many of your comrades wouldn't be around to enjoy the remainder of your white winter. It could have been a red one."

Moshenko acknowledged with his head slowly bobbing up and down. "You are the ones who deserve the credit."

The three men looked at each other, knowing that true professionals have no ideological stamps on their hearts. This was their true reward—success, and nothing less than victory. It's their "warm and fuzzy," their reason for being who they are. When the warning order comes, it's men like these—the Stevens', Adlers and, Moshenkos—who can quietly and quickly close the book.

Moshenko extended his hand toward Grant who grasped it firmly. He stepped closer to Moshenko. "Spaseeba, my friend." They threw their arms around each other, slapping one another on the back.

Adler reached out for Moshenko's hand. "Take care of yourself, sir. Thanks for your help."

"Joe, maybe one day you will be able to tour my country freely."

"I'd like that, sir."

Moshenko turned away. His large bulk trodded through the snow as he headed for the Kremlin grounds.

"Let's go, Joe," Grant immediately said, as he glanced out of the corner of his eye, seeing Moshenko walk into the alcove and disappear under Spasskaya Tower.

### **Motlawa Hotel Gdansk, Poland**

Grant and Adler walked away from the parked rental BMW. As they reached the steps to the hotel, Adler touched Grant's arm. "Are you gonna tell Lampson about Greta?"

Grant looked down momentarily at the scuffed and cracked ground before responding, "Yeah, Joe. He has a right to know who she was and what she did for her country, maybe even the world. I'm sure he'll want to tell the kids one day." He stepped toward the door, reached for the handle, then said quietly, "The kids are Lampson's, right, Joe?"

Adler studied Grant's eyes, noticing a sadness in them, as he responded, "Yes, sir. They are."

They checked in with Leo at the front desk, who informed them that Lampson and the twins were in the park behind the hotel. After dropping their luggage in the room, they walked to the park.

"I've gotta say, Skipper, that it'll sure be good to step back onto good old U.S. soil."

"Roger that, Joe."

Their flight from Gdansk would take them to Tegel in West Berlin, where Torrinson had booked all of them on a Pan Am flight to Dulles in Washington, D.C. Two special agents would be waiting to pick up Lampson and the boys.

As they rounded the corner of the hotel, there was a sound of children's laughter. Grant and Adler stepped onto dirt and coarse, brown grass at the edge of

the park grounds. They spotted Lampson, sitting on a black wrought iron bench beneath a bronze statue of a horse with rider. Lampson leaned back then stretched his arms across the backrest. Playing in front of him were Josef and Franz, who laughed in delight as they kicked a red, rubber ball.

Adler glanced at Grant, detected the setting of the square jaw. "I'm with you, Skipper." They stood quietly, seeing a father reveling in the pleasures of being with his sons.

Feeling someone watching him, Lampson turned. He spotted the two men, and without saying a word, the most heart-filled "thank you" passed between the trio.

Grant looked at Adler and gave a half smile. "Time to fill in Lampson's *dance card*, Joe. This one's over."

Adler attempted to lighten the moment. His face erupted into a grin as wide as a Halloween pumpkin's, and, propping his hands on his hips, he laughed, "Don't you just love this happy ending shit?"

