

Chapter 1

Boris Zinaiev was sitting at the side of the broad window of his hotel room behind the closed curtains with a worried face; from time to time he moved slightly the side of the heavy opaque curtain and threw furtive glances at the road and the hotel entrance below.

He has returned from the Café Pushkin at Tverskoy Bulvar, where he had lunch just some forty five minutes earlier.

He had that nasty feeling of being watched. He knew well enough that as a foreigner he is followed now and then, and he confirmed it whenever he checked surveillance; but after almost two weeks in this cold and hostile capital, he believed that he managed to convince them that he is clean.

He entered the country with a tourist visa and behaved as a tourist should behave by enjoying sightseeing, amusement joints, bars, nightclubs and he even saw a striptease show that ended up with a two hours visit in a brothel. He was not too fond of such establishments, but it suited his cover story of an innocent tourist.

But today at lunch time at the Café Pushkin it was not just an instinctive hunch, he sensed it and was sure of it; two additional waiters arrived suddenly a few moments after he sat next to his table.

He had no doubt that they were sent to check him. They were well trained waiters of course, but being a very experienced pro he noticed the minute differences in body language and behavior between these two and the three other waiters, which were present there several times already while he visited the place.

He did not lose his appetite and he did not pay unneeded attention to these two, except a slow glance now and then as if he was bored or watched them out of curiosity. What they would make out of it did not bother him.

During last week he had lunch several successive times at this same restaurant and walked on foot to his hotel, the 'Ist Vest Hotel' that was some seven hundred yards southward on the same street.

Walking back to his hotel on this certain occasion he checked very carefully surveillance in vain, and now sitting in his hotel room he realized how foolish it was to check surveillance on that short stretch, when they know exactly where he stays.

They could put a man or two on the roofs with binoculars, to verify that no passer-by makes some suspicious contact with me; say passes some documents stealthily to me under their noses, yes as simple as all that. He thought amused but moved away from the window for he realized that he might be caught peeping if they have someone on the opposite roof or behind one of the windows on the other side of the road.

He lighted up the small lamp as he sat next to the small desk in his room, and spread the city's map on the desk before his eyes. He thought of going out for a walk in the neighborhood, and plan how to reach a certain famous bar; but he was bothered and while he kept pondering he understood after a few seconds why he turned into a suspect, which had to be watched.

During the first week of his stay he ate in different restaurants be it lunch or dinner, and having visited Café Pushkin successively day after day during this week, has aroused their suspicions.

In any case his two weeks nostalgic visit ends up next Saturday, the day after tomorrow; he will fly back to New York and his mission would be over while he isn't supposed to know its purpose, and those who are sitting on his tail now have nothing against him. Thus he won't be detained, questioned or arrested God forbid, but he will fly back and that most important document or whatever it is, would be passed without his knowledge to his possessions at the last moment at the airport in some hidden way, or maybe his task in this mission is no more than to distract the other side attention; or more accurately be a blind courier, which does not know whatever he is supposed to carry, and when and how it would be in his possession...

It was an ingenious method indeed, particularly when he himself knew nothing about it.

He had enough time during his "vacation" to think things over and understand why he was chosen to this enigmatic mission. He was born in Smolensk Russia after all, and he immigrated at the age of seven years with his parents to Canada in 1982, as his parents were supposed to become sleeper

agents and serve the Soviet Union, when they'll be ordered to. His parents defected and that's how his fate was decided even before he reached maturity.

He lived with his parents in Montreal with a new identity of course, and there he was brought up and educated, at primary school, college and McGill University, from which he graduated Cum Laude. He was accosted by his country intelligence service agents, and before anything was summed up, they recommended him to the CIA.

Chapter 2

That's how it all began... He had a meeting with a stranger at the Café Victoria at Victoria Avenue. The stranger a tall middle aged wasp introduced himself as James, and told the astounded Boris that he is a CIA agent; he told Boris that he is offering him the best opportunity he could ever get.

Boris hesitated and preferred to think things over before deciding whether to accept the offer or not. He was twenty two years old then, had a Master of Arts degree in international relations and a Bachelor of Arts degree in psychology, he could get a job with the Canadian foreign office.

As a graduate of psychology and international relations, and a fluent speaker of Russian and French he was a rare find for any western intelligence agency. They did not reach him haphazardly; they received a full report on his background from the Canadian foreign intelligence service, as part of the cooperation between the two famous intelligence services.

The CIA talent scout that introduced himself to Boris as James mentioned in a few words the salaries and the conditions that a novice can get only in such a job, and realizing Boris worried face he suggested a second meeting in about a week's time, to which Boris accepted willingly. He was already tempted not by the incomparable conditions alone, but by the adventurous way of life that this job offers.

Thus at the next meeting Boris expressed his consent to join the CIA and was instructed to travel to Langley Virginia, where he will be recruited and sent to a training center.

He had to pass several tests including an interview with a psychiatrist, a test that was very unpleasant; but he was told that he passed the tests and was signed on a contract; and this good news wiped the unpleasant interview with psychiatrist off his memory.

It took six months before he reached the training center, and during that time he was installed in a small apartment in Washington with a computer, and he had to translate articles in Russian newspapers and magazines that were sent to him as email attachments, and this was of course the only mean of communication he had with them. He was free to come and go whenever he wished to dine or entertain himself in this bustling city, but he had to keep a low profile and he knew even at that early stage that he is checked under a magnifying glass. That was the real purpose of his first six months phase as a CIA novice.

The next stage was another six month period of training in a small camp not far from Langley, where he was taught most of his occupation's secrets in boring lectures, as how to identify surveillance and sneak away from individuals or groups that follow him, which was more interesting than the rest of his studies; while how to use sophisticated communication gadgets, weapons, guns with silencers, which excited his imagination and he hoped so much to acquire that certain knowledge were no more than dreams that did not come true.

His personal instructor, who was a very experienced pro, warned him at the very beginning and repeated it from time to time:

'It's a very dreary life that you've chosen and it has nothing to do with what you see in the movies, so get used to it or give it up! There's still time...'

Giving up his dreams and getting used to it, was the highest hurdle he had to cross at the beginning of his training course.

During the first couple of weeks when he stayed in his room in the evenings and read the books he had to read, he used to ponder whether the road he has chosen was "an exceptional opportunity", as it was termed by the talent scout that recruited him.

As he was the introvert type and the last relationship he had with a certain young maid in Montreal ended up to his regret, sometime after he was accosted by that notable talent scout; he got over his doubts and got used to this kind of life, and even liked it. With the passing time he realized that the road that he has chosen fitted him like a glove.

Chapter 3

He was sent to serve as a cultural or press attaché' in the US embassies of two ex Soviet Union countries, to operate the CIA local agents in these countries. He was sent there due to his fluent Russian and did rather well and acquired two more similar languages, which he learned by his own initiative.

He served three more years as a press attaché' in the U.S. embassy in Abidjan the capital of the West African state the Ivory Coast, which was the easiest job he ever had; and now here he is at the age of thirty one years in Moscow, on his first mission as an agent or as a secret courier with an ordinary U.S. passport; without the knowledge what he is supposed to achieve, except pose as a tourist on a nostalgic visit.

After a few moments of consulting the city map, he decided to take the metro to the Red Square visit the Kremlin and cross the road to the famous Okhotny Ryad shopping center, and have supper over there and then decide what else he wants to see; the best option is the recommended "B1 Maximum club", which is not far off or maybe he will visit some other joint at the same vicinity.

He dressed up with an overcoat and a fur cup, left his room and went down to the lobby. He did not forget to exchange a few polite words with the reception clerk and went out.

He walked at ease towards the metro station without checking surveillance of course or without acting haphazardly or fretfully with the intention to cut off contact, and that's how he carried on during the afternoon and evening. He enjoyed very much the B1 Maximum club, and stayed there up to three am in the morning and then took a cab back to his hotel.

On the next morning he woke up at eleven thirty with a hangover. The first thing he did was to take a cold shower, to recover as much as he could; and as he missed breakfast he went out on foot to the Pushkin Café, to have something to eat.

The café at these hours was not crowded of course except on weekends, thus he was led to a table without delay.

A moment or two after he sat down next to his table, a young couple entered and advanced towards his table straight away. They reached his table smiling and the young man pulled a chair for his escort from a nearby table, and they sat opposite him the two of them as if they were his closest friends.

The male was a good looking fair headed man about the same age as Boris, while the female was an exotic beauty a Georgian or from some other part of the Caucasus Mountains.

'Well what a night it was eh?' The young man said in Russian and both his guests burst out laughing. A smile appeared on Boris pursed lips but he had nothing to say to these two, he did not even dare to ask what they wanted and who they are.

'Do consult the menu and order for us too, if you don't mind.' The young man added and his two guests watched him smiling.

'Be my guests but you haven't introduced yourselves yet, and what is it all about?'

'Well this Vera and I'm Ivan, but we'll talk later we're hungry.' He said noticing the waiter that was approaching their table.

Boris ordered the dishes and the wine, and they sat in an embarrassing silence several moments till their orders arrived.

It was the strangest lunch he had ever had, but he was not annoyed or frightened he had no reason to be in such a state meanwhile. It must have been the presence of that exceptional exotic beauty the so called Vera, which made this strange encounter a pleasant one.

At the end of the meal and over the coffee, things started to clear up.

'Were you born in Russia or your parents were born in our country?' The so called Ivan asked him, he did not smile this time. The so called Vera watched Boris too with a stern look.

'No, but my grandparents were born in Russia.'

'Oh really and how come you speak fluent Russian?'

'When I was two years old my parents died in a car accident, and I was brought up by my grandparents. They spoke Russian at home.'

'I see, but when did your grandparents immigrate, when were they allowed to...?'

'I don't know they died one after the other about five years ago, and I never asked them.' He realized right away that he was facing an experienced interrogator, and he understood at the same time that there is a flow in his cover story; but he managed to answer Ivan in feigned indifference.

'That's very interesting indeed,' his guest noted. 'We've checked your ordinary passport and it's a genuine American one, but we do have copies of your diplomatic passports under a different identity; while you served as a cultural attaché' at the U.S. embassy at the Czech Republic, and as a press attaché' at the U.S. embassy in Poland, Mr. Pavel Bielsky.

'It must be some bizarre mistake on your part; it sounds like a bad joke I'm afraid to note.'

'Well I'll tell you what you're bound to fly back to New York tomorrow morning right? You'll have to delay your flight and come with us to our office... You do understand why of course.'

'I can't delay the flight I've to report at my office on Monday morning.' Boris answered him again in feigned indifference, but deep inside he was alarmed and worried.

'What were you supposed to do here during these couple of weeks Boris?'

'Nothing at all it's a nostalgic visit, that's all.'

'It's just a visit you insist some kind of a vacation and there's nothing else that you happen to know about, it isn't some kind of a mission?' The young interrogator wondered with feigned amazement.

'Yes it's just a visit and nothing else,' Boris admitted indirectly who he really is. He had no other choice, insinuating that though he was sent on some kind of a purpose, it did not succeed.

'We believe that you were born in Russia, in Smolensk if we're not wrong; but that's just our belief... We won't spoil your vacation at the last moment, but you'll owe us a favor. You do know no doubt who we're, and that's just between you and us. You'll be contacted in Washington.' The so called Ivan added clearing his throat with emphasize.

With these words said, the interrogator made it clear that the discussion is over.

'We've enjoyed your company our dear compatriot.' The interrogator summed up their meeting. They rose to their feet the three of them, and exchanged benevolent forced smiles; and then his two

"friends" turned around and left him.

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