

Breaking Moscow Charter

Prolog

Spring 2019, Hanna's House, Palo Alto, California

"Hanna, Hanna, come, you must see this," Hanna's friend Helen called her.

Hanna snatched her drink off the kitchen counter and rushed into her living room.

"You should see this," repeated Helen, leaning forward in her chair. Hanna perched on the arm of the couch.

On the screen, a well-known anchor described the French TV footage which appeared on many networks around the world. "A TV station's helicopter was returning from an assignment in the South of France. The helicopter was over the Mediterranean, not far from the coast, east of Saint Raphael on the French Riviera. The cameraman unexpectedly filmed a small boat shooting at a luxury yacht. He captured the entire scene." A photo of an elegant yacht appeared to the right of the anchor. The caption said, 'Russian oligarch Ivan Tompov's yacht.'

"We understand that it all happened very fast," said the anchor. "A small, fast motorboat, with what looked like a mast-type contraption with a machine gun attached at the top, sprayed the yacht's deck with bullets."

The network showed the clip. One couldn't see anybody on the deck of the shooting boat. The camera's point-of-view moved and focused on the yacht's pool for about thirty seconds.

Hanna still held her glass. She forgot to drink her Diet Pepsi.

The people on the yacht lounging around the pool were apparently the target. After shooting, the boat sped away as fast as it had approached the yacht. It was all over in less than a minute. Several people, probably security, fired from the yacht, but it was unclear who they were aiming at. Nobody was topside on the small boat. It was surreal.

Carnage reigned on the yacht's deck by the pool. When the shooting began, a man rushed towards a woman and two children. Another man traversed the deck to the other side of the pool, where a man lay face down. A woman crouched beside him. The camera also captured a woman sitting on the floor of the deck. She held her arm and looked to be bleeding.

The film clip ended there.

The anchor came back on the screen. "The TV station reported that their helicopter followed the small boat. On the boat, two people appeared topside and dismantled the shooting contraption. The boat rounded Pointe des Moines and docked at the marina. Three people got off the boat with a large bag and jumped into a nearby car. The car drove off into the town and then into an underground parking garage between Rue Waldeck and Rue Alphonse Karr in Saint Raphael. At this point, the TV helicopter had to take off," said the anchor. "Apparently, the news channel received the video right after the TV crew filmed it. The channel put the clip on the air and only then reported to the police."

"That isn't how it's usually done, right?" said Hanna, looking at her friend.

Helen raised her hand and said, "Wait, the anchor is interviewing an 'expert.'"

“From what I can gather, we just saw a modern contraption called a gimble – an electro-mechanical stabilizer – in action. On the TV helicopter, the cameraman used the gimble to stabilize the camera. The shooters controlled the gimble attached to the machine gun on the small boat, keeping it on target. They guided the contraption remotely from below,” opined the expert.

Hanna swiped her auburn hair from her eyes, trying not to miss any news details. She took a sip of her drink.

“The shooters missed Tompov and his wife but killed one of the guests and injured another who is in a stable condition. So far, the police haven’t traced the stolen boat or the car to the perpetrators,” said the anchor.

The expert returned with a lot of talk about the Russian ‘businessmen’ contract killings in the 1990s. He opined that their current president had since ended that practice in Russia.

“But it didn’t apply to France,” said Hanna.

“Yeah, got all the unfriendly oligarchs earlier, and now he is bumping off ex-Russian spies in London,” declared Helen.

“Yes, he is.”

“Are you sure you want to go on this Russian business trip?” asked Helen, an awkward smile on her face.

“Since I’m just a sales exec and not yet an oligarch, I think I’m safe,” Hanna tried to joke, still somewhat shocked by what she had seen.

Wednesday, May 22, 2019.
Day 1

Chapter 1

Hanna glanced at her email for the fourth time. The lawyers were late finishing the contract.

Oh, thanks. So, now it turns out I came a day too early.

This was just a two-day trip, and she had planned some sightseeing tomorrow.

I’ll have to rejiggle the order.

Hanna Arnol was the VP of Sales and Business Development of a mid-sized Silicon Valley outsourcing company Sereve Inc. In addition to managing the sales department, she led a few pursuits where she had distinctive knowledge or a client relationship. The Moscow deal was one of those. She knew the country and the language. Her small Business Development group was responsible for alliances and potential investment or acquisition targets. She enjoyed both sides of her job. Part Swedish on her father’s side, the heritage showed on her tall, slim frame. Her deep green eyes came from her mom’s side of the family. The long neck and slight snub nose she attributed to her grandmother.

PSY, a real estate development company in Silicon Valley, had needed some custom work on their facility management software. Hanna had suggested several American software companies for the project. PSY, however, had wanted to work with Rusment. Multiple companies in their industry had used Rusment, and PSY had preferred to use this Russian company.

This morning, at Rusment, Hanna toured the company. She met with the people she had worked with remotely while developing the deal. Afterward, she headed to a Starbucks for a cup of coffee.

Hanna had been to Moscow before and, as a history buff, she liked the city.

It was a nice, sunny spring day. Happy to get rid of their heavy winter garb, the young Moscow ladies were delighted to show off in their lighter clothes.

Rusment was near Garden Ring circular road. Like most old cities, Moscow had grown in circles, and after the small Kremlin ‘circle’ came the next full ring – Garden Ring. Garden Ring followed the course of the 17th century city ramparts. The road had some green patches, but the rest was a busy six-lane road, plus four lanes of access roads. Very noisy.

Reaching the Ring, Hanna turned left, following Google Maps directions. After a couple of blocks, at the corner of the Garden Ring and Tsvetnoy Blvd, she found Starbucks. The shop windows looked out on the access road. She entered. It was also quite noisy inside. Looked and sounded just like any other Starbucks at home, except the baristas called out patrons’ Russian names.

Hanna ordered a decaf, non-fat Grande latte, also known as a ‘why bother.’ She looked around. In the café, there were standard tables and high, bar-like tables. As she sat down at a standard table, she chided herself. At least she could have ordered a low-fat cup. Calories were no problem! She smiled.

After a while, two young guys walked in. They looked like techy guys. Jeans, open shirts, no ties. They got their order and sat at the high table behind her.

One of them raised his voice, very deep, and said, “When you get there, you only need to convince your friend to deliver the AI algorithm for ...” Hanna missed the word. But then she heard “vehicles.”

A cup clinked behind her.

The voice said, “And both of you will hit the jackpot. That’s all. You remember the process, right?”

They lowered their voices, and Hanna strained to hear.

“Yes,” said the other man. He had a higher pitch voice.

They were quiet for a while.

Hanna got up, took her cup, and moved to the table on the other side of the two guys, her back against their table. This better audial position removed some of the background noise.

“But I don’t have to get close to this company near Palo Alto, right?” came the higher pitch voice again, sounding anxious.

Hanna knew that at that time, the most ‘visible’ AI or artificial intelligence work was in autonomous vehicles or, more precisely, in self-driving cars.

Palo Alto? AI algorithm? Must be industrial theft in Silicon Valley.

AI algorithms were at the heart of self-driving cars, some of the main IP (intellectual property) pieces of those projects.

Most of the large automakers worked on developing this software internally. They didn't publicize what they outsourced to small talented AI companies in the Valley. Prestige in solving this type of problem within their organization was important.

The obvious automaker suspects aren't near Palo Alto. Maybe it's one of their satellite offices or a small company they're working with?

The actual market results were still few, but many automakers and others had projects related to it. Eventually, on the line was a multi, multi-billion-dollar market.

Hanna sipped her latte. She happened to be a board member of the Silicon Valley AI Association. After what she had just heard, and because of the Association, she felt particularly concerned.

This young guy is obviously an amateur.

Suppose he managed to steal the software. Then he somehow got caught, and it hit the news, it would publicize poor security at the AI firms.

Not good.

Or what if his friend refused to deal with him? Then someone at the friend's company shared this publicly instead of going to the police or the FBI.

Again, not good.

It would suggest AI companies around the world were trying to steal IP from each other. And, given enough uproar, this theft could undermine America's global AI leadership.

For a while, she couldn't hear what they were saying, but then the baritone spoke up again.

"Exactly. ... When you're there, let me know, all right?"

"Right," said the other man, sounding unsure.

When the two men got up to leave, Hanna turned to the left in her chair to watch them as they walked towards the door. They continued talking passionately with hand gesticulations. When they turned to exit, she could tell who was supposed to steal the AI and who was instructing him to. They paid no attention to her.

The baritone was tall and on the dark side. The one with a higher pitch was light, slightly shorter, and had a round face.

Hanna got up and walked to the window. She looked out as the men said goodbye. The taller one turned right on the Ring.

She wanted to follow the guy tasked with stealing the algorithm. She walked outside.

A motorcycle at the curb was about to leave when the young man riding it called out: “Do you want a lift to the office?” The man Hanna wanted to follow ran to the curb, jumped on, and they were gone.

Damn.

She turned the corner towards the metro station Tsvetnoy Boulevard to return to the hotel. When she reached the station, she saw the man with the baritone voice. She decided to at least see where he was heading. With his long gait, even a tall woman like Hanna had a hard time keeping up.

God, I hate high heels.

With a name like ‘Tsvetnoy,’ meaning colorful boulevard, one would expect something bright and full of color. Not this station. Among many interesting and colorful Moscow metro stations, this was a rather simple one.

After several metro line changes, they reached the Aeroport station. That one had a modern design. It had the shape of a tunnel with angular wall patterns. The station was not far from the city center. The name Aeroport referred to the first Moscow airport, Khodynka Aerodrome. The airport used to be there in the 1930s.

The man exited the metro.

I think he is an amateur. But what if I am wrong? Moscow isn't the place to get into any trouble.

Hanna waited until the man again was at least thirty yards ahead before starting to follow him. Thankfully there were many people on the sidewalks in the area. After a couple of blocks, he entered a small building. The sign on the building read ‘CyberStena Cybersecurity.’

A cyber company.

Two months ago, Sereve Inc. had sustained a major customer service interruption. A cyber-attack had brought down a remote customer support network. It had caused all kinds of problems for her clients. The company was still dealing with the potential financial penalties related to ‘Quality of Service’ contractual obligations. The cyber security engineers traced it to an as-yet unidentified entity in Russia.

Last year, Hanna’s Cornell classmate Rob Scott had invited her to join the board of the Silicon Valley AI Association.

“You’ll love it,” he had said. “It promotes the goals of the AI community in the US and internationally. And your computer science experience will come in handy.”

“Very funny,” Hanna had laughed.

Rob and Hanna had taken an introductory course in computer science together during their undergraduate days at Cornell University. She had wanted to know what the subject was all about. Especially because Cornell had an excellent computer science program, one of the best in the field.

Hanna found it very interesting. She got a good overview of the subject. In the end, she could even do a bit of C++ object-oriented programming.

As Hanna moved on with her history studies and then on to Stanford for an MBA, Rob stayed with computers. He then completed his graduate work.

Several years ago, Rob assumed the position of CTO (Chief Technology Officer) for one of the Valley companies, and his family moved to Palo Alto. She saw them for lunch now and then. Rob also took on a role on the board of the Silicon Valley AI Association.

“But seriously,” he said. “We are working to support American leadership in the global AI and automation industry. Your frequent international travel and knowledge of languages will be handy for the Association. It would be great for you to join the board.”

She had thought it would be fun and eventually agreed. She had already made a couple of presentations in Europe about the business side of the Valley AI activities. It felt exciting to advocate for this new and fascinating industry.

After following the Starbucks guy to CyberStena, Hanna returned to the metro, slowly pondering what she had just heard and seen.

Those two guys had been talking about industrial espionage.

Yeah, I know what you're thinking. Why should I get involved?

But you signed up for the AI Association. Yeah, but I didn't sign up to chase IP theft across several continents. Okay, I should at least get in touch with the part of the FBI dealing with this type of thing.

Let's sleep on it. Okay, not sleep – give it a couple of hours, then decide.

Chapter 2

Dimitry Kotin, whom everybody called Dima, got up from his chair and moved his generous body around his desk to stand by the window. He did his best thinking while looking through the room's large window.

It was a dreary London day. In the cul-de-sac below, the trees and grass of the garden square were immaculately manicured. The benches were always well-kept. Light poles illuminated the garden in the foggy weather.

Dima worked in his office in the house next to Ivan Tompov's residence in Knightsbridge, in London. Only someone like Ivan could afford to have his security organization's offices in such an expensive neighborhood. He connected the two fashionable four-story 19th century houses on the first floor, allowing easy security team access.

In his fifties, Dima had lost much of his hair. To the point where his younger kids had suggested he start shaving his head. They thought he would look 'cool' and younger.

Dima ran his hand over his bald head and smiled. He thought of them often. The pictures of his children graced the top of his large side table.

It had been almost twenty years since he had left the GRU (Glavnoye Razvedyvatelnoye Upravlenie or Russian Military Intelligence), and Ivan entrusted him with his security organization. Since then, on numerous occasions, he had been able to preempt security breaches and keep Ivan and his family safe.

Ivan, his wife Mila, and his children Peter and Marina lived in London most of the time. As foreign travel increased, the size and scope of Ivan's family security organization also expanded.

The team conducted intelligence work to be aware of all possible threats. But it had been the first time they faced this type of sophistication.

Dima kept himself in good shape and hadn't lost his focus. But he blamed himself for not preventing the boat attempt. He had resolved that after solving this case, he would hand over the reins to someone younger.

Lately, he had assigned more and more management functions to Anton Ostrovsky. The man became the de-facto second in command. Bright and deliberate, he had just the right character for a leader. Dima relied on him a lot.

It had been several weeks since the boat fiasco, but neither his guys nor the French police had gotten close to the perpetrators.

The day after the shooting, Dima had brought some of his people together in the conference room.

"I am forming a Pursuit Group to hunt for the people on the shooting boat." He scanned the room. Everyone looked eager to get started. His team sat around a large conference table in a finely decorated room. Tall ceilings, wall-to-wall windows, and plush chairs. Not the usual environment for a security office, but these were Ivan Tompov's security offices.

"I know, the first question on everyone's mind is: Who ordered it?"

People around the table nodded in agreement.

"Could have been a Russian oligarch who had a grudge, or one of the Western companies which didn't appreciate some of the work Ivan's companies were doing."

He stroked his bald head.

"Western companies don't operate like this. If it was an oligarch, he risked the president's wrath since, as you know, that's a no-no in today's Russia. But if one would still attempt it, he wouldn't use his own people but hire other professionals. Everything tells me that finding the person who ordered the hit may be extremely difficult and time-consuming.

"You have a different task. I want this Group to concentrate on the perpetrators. This is your task."

Dima had a good range of experience in his organization. He was proud of his large, tightly knit unit. He and his people took time vetting and selecting new members. Most of the guys were ex-Russian military. All spoke good English, and a few also spoke other languages.

The Group started by profiling the three attackers. They decided that at least one had the gimble and remote-control knowledge. And from the remaining two, one or both were French or, at least, knew the environment well. Dima assigned several people to address the gimble angle.

"The French military is reducing the size of the Foreign Legion. The boys there are looking for other employment. Could have been some of those. We should look into what is going on with the ones who left the Legion," said one in the Group.

“Good idea,” Dima agreed. He assigned a couple of guys to look into the Foreign Legion. He then let the Group go and returned to his office.

He thought about any other angles they might explore. They traced the boat – it was stolen several days before the shooting.

The guys from the Pursuit Group made a couple of visits to outfits selling and renting complex gimble and remote-control equipment to TV crews in France. They also looked at shops that could have rigged the mast for the device. They even dug up an old French film stuntman and asked for his advice.

A surveillance equipment dealer in Amsterdam told Dima’s man about a guy who purchased a very sophisticated remote-control gizmo. The device could potentially be used for controlling a large gimble. He described the guy, but no one was sure if the man had been disguised or if the dealer avoided providing a true description.

Dima had told Ostrovsky to personally concentrate on Holland.

Dima’s large body tensed. No, he concluded, as far as perpetrators are concerned, they had covered the bases. For now.

He recalled speaking with Ivan after the boat event. Ivan had been leaving his office, and Dima caught him before he could step outside.

“Ivan, before you leave, I have a few questions.”

“Of course.”

“About the boat shooting, I know I already asked you, but maybe you have some new ideas about who might be behind it?”

“Not really.”

“Were there any complications with recent Phillipieon projects which could have led to the event?”

“No.” Ivan had thought for a moment and then said with a grim smile, “But maybe Anatoly, who hates my guts, has finally decided to get rid of me.”

Dima kept looking out the window.

It has been almost thirty years since the start of this animosity. How long does it take to get over that? I guess some people just can’t.



Dima’s second in command, Anton Ostrovsky, sat on a long bench with two Belgian plain-clothes policemen. It was late in the evening, and most people had left the small tree-lined square in the center of Brussels. Springtime in Brussels was chilly.

Ostrovsky had tracked the guy who bought the remote-control gizmo in Amsterdam to Brussels.

He felt sure the guy was one of the boat attackers. He had worked with the French police to identify him from the French Riviera video clip. All three men on the boat had been wearing masks and gloves until they reached the car. The clip only had a few frames of one of the guys without a mask. There were also exactly two frames of another guy's left wrist. In these two frames, there was something that could have been a small part of a tattoo.

It had been a lot of work to extract decent still images from the video. The first guy, who was without the mask for a few frames, was half-turned. The image resolution from that distance was low, and the camera shook as the helicopter hovered. But the combination of the image processing work in an outfit in Moscow, and that of the French, had finally yielded a discernable image. The tattoo thing was a dead end.

Ostrovsky remembered Dima's comment, "Those guys prepared the hit very well. There should have been nothing for the police to go on. They couldn't foresee the TV crew with a camera and a gimble over their heads."

After some additional work, the French had identified the guy without a mask. The guy had a short but serious record. In the last twelve months, he had been a part of several shootouts in France, costing two policemen their lives.

The French had insisted the Brussels police could capture this trigger-happy guy alive.

"They're very good over there," the French police contact had told Ostrovsky.

The bar was on the southern side of the square. There were only small alleys connected to the four corners of the square. No car passages.

The bench with the policemen and Ostrovsky was in the middle of the square. The other plain-clothed policemen leaned on the rails near the bar entrance.

"Stay put when the action starts," one policeman had told Ostrovsky.

The boatman came out of the bar door. The rail group moved to grab him. But, as they went towards him, he managed to avoid their grasp and started running towards a corner alley. Four policemen ran after him. One radioed the police car on the street at the end of the alley to be ready.

As the boat guy reached the corner of the alley, he swung around and fired two shots. One of the policemen fell. The guys on Ostrovsky's bench rushed to their man on the ground. When the rest of the policemen disappeared around the corner, Ostrovsky heard three more shots, and then it was over.



The head of the Pursuit Group opened Dima's office door and said, "Brussels police got the Amsterdam guy. But they shot him."

"Is he dead?"

"Yes."

"Shit," Dima punched his desk hard.

Chapter 3

Vadim Pyatkov looked out of the third-floor office window on Sophia's Embarkment. The embarkment was across the Moskva River from the Kremlin.

It was an unbelievable view. Each time he entered his boss' office, especially on a sunny day, he wanted to stand by the window and look out across the river. It was breathtaking! The Kremlin, with its towers, churches, and palaces reflecting the sun, looked glorious. As he marveled at the view, he was sure that renting offices in this building cost a pretty penny.

The large office itself had towering ceilings with delicate moldings. It had discreet light-green colored walls. Otherwise, it was a no-nonsense, modern office, probably like the other offices in the building. A large, stainless-steel-framed modern desk was almost in the middle of the room. Two visitor chairs stood at the desk. Four other chairs encircled an oval table to the right of the desk. The only decoration in the room was a large painting of his boss' dacha on the Black Sea. Pyatkov knew his boss was proud of that place.

Pyatkov had been a young, skinny computer engineer when Anatoly Krepko had hired him at CyberStena.

At that time, the company worked on different software projects while providing Anatoly's businesses with IT support. As Anatoly's empire expanded, a dedicated company took on IT support. CyberStena first moved into the cyber security business, but then some foreign clients offered large sums for industrial intelligence. In effect, it was espionage. These very lucrative projects became CyberStena's main business. The company became known as one of the best in the business and grew fast.

As Russian relations with Western countries worsened, CyberStena also took on some foreign political 'influence' and disinformation projects. SVR (Russian Foreign Intelligence) oversaw that part of the company's work.

It had become clear that Pyatkov hadn't only been an excellent software engineer but also a good leader. With time, Anatoly had entrusted Pyatkov with running the company.

A tall, brown-haired man blew into the room. His tailored, blue suit concealed his slight build. With him came a heavy dose of aftershave.

"Yeah, it has been many years, but I still stare at this view. Looks like a beautiful painting, doesn't it?" He briskly shook Pyatkov's hand. "Sorry, I'm late."

Not waiting for a response, Anatoly walked around his desk and sat down.

"Hi, Anatoly." Pyatkov took a seat across the desk in a visitor's chair.

"Let's start," said Anatoly while logging into his computer. "I read your report on the three current industrial intelligence projects. It's good and comprehensive."

"Thank you."

"Now, how are the US and European election projects going?"

"As we planned. Pretty good. I just wish some of those Europeans would stop having so many. Would take a break or something," Pyatkov said, smiling. "Would make it easier on my guys."

“You should be happy the Ukrainian presidential election is over. That was a lot of work. And next year will be like 2016 in the US again.” Anatoly furrowed his eyebrows in memory.

“Let’s hope the guys at SVR decide to handle that one by themselves.”

“Definitely would be nice, but I don’t think so. You and I both wish these projects wouldn’t interfere with our main business. As much as we don’t like them, they ultimately give you and my other companies the freedom we need,” said Anatoly.

“Yeah, I know.”

“What else?” asked Anatoly, now distracted by what he was reading on his computer screen.

“I have some excellent news today.” Pyatkov displayed an ear-to-ear, satisfied smile.

Anatoly turned his attention back to Pyatkov. “I love those. What?”

“Remember we decided to take on a related project for the autonomous vehicle client?”

“Yeah, the sensors.”

“Right. My guys have outdone themselves. They stalked one of the best US developers of LiDAR sensors.”

“The 3D laser scanning radar everyone is talking about?”

“Exactly. It took them a good while. They even instituted, what they called, a ‘twenty-four-hour watch.’ It paid off. Last week they got everything. The schematics, the software, the user manual, the whole kit, and caboodle.” Pyatkov pulled out a large binder and a small external hard drive. “It’s all here. I also wrote an executive summary.”

“You’re right. That is good news. I’m almost sure the client will be happy to have the sensor info. Those things have multiple applications in their work. Multiple applications,” Anatoly repeated. His square face, with its sharp, cleft chin, displayed a smile.

“Are you planning to ask for a separate fee?”

“You bet your derrière. Definitely, I will. And if they go for it, you and your guys will get a fat bonus.”

“Bonus is nice, but let’s first see what they say.”

“The day is looking up already. Well done!” exclaimed Anatoly. His mood tended to change in an instant, and now it became almost jovial.

Pyatkov smiled, “It’s all great, but as far as interesting projects, it was clearly more fun to work on that designer women’s negligee deal. Who would have thought bra design and marketing plan info would be that valuable?”

Anatoly leaned back in his Aeron chair.

“When you told me about that job, I recalled a famous American movie. It was a superb comedy.” He stopped for a moment. “You were probably too young to see it. The title was ‘It’s a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World.’ It had many famous actors of the time. If I remember, Spencer Tracy, Mickey Rooney, and Buddy Hackett were in it. In the movie, a British actor, I don’t remember his name, commented on the American preoccupation with female breasts. He said something to the effect that, ‘If the brassiere industry disappeared in America, the American economy would collapse.’”

They laughed.

“Vadim, even though the client will like the LiDAR sensors, we still need the info from that Silicon Valley company for which they hired us. What about that project?”

“It’s slow,” then he said. “But I warned you about it. It’s a long shot.”

“Yeah, yeah. I know you guys will do the best you can ... Maybe this fellow who’s going there can get somewhere. He certainly has a good ‘in’ as it’s called. You know, the amateur hour sometimes works out. Maybe this is that ‘sometimes.’”

“I’m cautiously optimistic,” said Pyatkov. “He’ll give it a shot, I am sure.”

“One more thing. Several months ago, you hacked into the target company’s personal emails, thinking they may bring some work home – no luck with that. You should try it again. Who knows?”

“Good idea.”

“By the way, remember not to discuss this project with Frolov at SVR. I’ll do that. If it pans out, everyone will get kudos.” Anatoly looked at Pyatkov. “And we should be doubly careful during the project.”

“Right,” said Pyatkov.

“As you know, Rusment is getting ready to work on a project for an American company. And, by the way, this American broad, Hanna Arnol, is here. People involved in the contract work told me that she asked a lot of questions during negotiations. She is their VP of Sales and Business Development. As far as we know, there’s no communication between employees of Rusment and CyberStena, but we need to be twice as careful,” repeated Anatoly.

Anatoly’s big hands started deftly typing on his computer. He had a hard time sitting still.

Pyatkov closed his binder. “Have you heard of Tompov’s heart attack?” he asked.

Anatoly looked up. “Yes, I heard about it,” he said, no expression on his face.

Pyatkov rose. The meeting was over.

He reached the door when Anatoly started up again, “About SVR.”

“Yes.”

“There was talk about reorganizing the department we are dealing with, but, in the end, they left it as is.”

“Will we still coordinate with Frolov’s group?”

“Yes, and Philippeion with Kitonin’s. They will both still report to Ilyushin.”

“Right.”

“But next year, Ilyushin retires.”

“Yeah, he finally gets out of SVR headquarters in Yasenevo and maybe can move to his place on the Black Sea,” responded Pyatkov.

“And now Frolov and Kitonin are both jostling for his position. It’ll be fun to see who ends up on top ... See you soon,” Anatoly said, returning to his work.



From his window, Anatoly gazed out over the Kremlin.

Ivan? I am sorry for his family, but it couldn't have happened to a worse person.