

The
Romanian
Connection

A NOVEL

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PROLOGUE

Mendl, Romania
March 5, 1995

Woerner Willenbacher, a West German Intelligence Agent, peered through his monoscope at what appeared to be an aviation control tower located in the middle of an ammunition depot. The tower was unusual because a dark plume of smoke was rising out of the top of it and it was not located near any runway for aircraft. Although Woerner was accustomed to seeing soldiers with binoculars in wooden, guard shacks at the corners of Romanian ammunition depots, this depot lacked both perimeter guards and guard shacks.

Looking outside from behind the tower's one-sided see-through glass window, Romanian Army Sergeant Stefan Enesco smiled as he focused the lens of his huge, tripod-mounted, Russian PNB-2 binoculars to obtain a better image of Woerner. Sergeant Enesco picked up his transmitter and spoke softly into it, "Our vacation is 178 degrees south of me or about 60 degree southeast of you." His voice traveled instantly downwards through a wire in a hollow post of the tower, 180 meters horizontally underground to the depot's barb-wired fence, 350 meters through the underbrush outside the depot, and then up a tree to a sniper's nest

where Private Matei Patina was calmly smoking a cigarette. Sergeant Enesco and Private Patina were the day-shift members of a six-man sniper squad responsible for controlling human pests observing the ammunition depot. For each sniper, the equivalent of ten American dollars a month, free slop-food, and the wooden planks of a sniper's nest's floor to sleep on wasn't much, but it was better than selling trinkets to foreigners on the streets of Bucharest. Besides, Enesco and Patina usually got a bonus for each of their kills. The current intruder provided them an opportunity for a good vacation.

Private Patina crushed his cigarette into a small, tin ashtray, raised the butt of his Russian Dragunov Sniper Rifle, and swung it around on its tripod. He fixed the cross threads of its scope on the chest of the green-clad intruder, knowing that the rifle's bullet would land a little high. The intruder, 275 meters away, was an easy target. Private Patina pressed his shoulder against the butt of his rifle and prepared to squeeze its trigger.

A large deer fly landed on Woerner's nose. Slapping it, he jerked his head out of the sniper's view. Private Patina quickly tried to reposition the scope on his target, but his target had disappeared.

Woerner had moved to a new observation point under the drooping branches of a huge fir tree. The branches blocked his view of the aviation control tower but still provided him a clear view of the entire ground in the ammunition depot. Between the barbwire, he could see four men with a crane, unloading a cone-like object from a cargo truck. He focused his binoculars, and the hazy picture of the men and the truck transformed itself into clear images of four gray-uniformed Romanian soldiers carefully lowering a SS-25 Soviet warhead

onto a metal pallet behind an East German, military cargo truck. To the right of the truck, five Soviet, wheeled, missile launchers were lined up next to each other. Each launcher had a Scaleboard missile on it. Woerner extended his radio transmitter's black antenna through the fir tree's branches and sent a coded message about the missile equipment's NATO designations to his point of contact in the nearby city of Brasov. His point man decoded the message as: "5 SS12B/-9P120 +?SS25" - five Scaleboard B Missiles, five 9P120 wheeled, launching vehicles, and a questionable number of SS-25 nuclear warheads.

Woerner stepped out from under the branches of his protective canopy to get a better view of the missiles. For an unknown reason, he looked up into the tree-line, searching for somebody who might be looking back at him. In the past, Woerner had seen fluorescent green tracer bullets in the night float through the darkness toward him and suddenly streak over his head. But this was different. There were no tracer bullets. In the broad daylight of the afternoon, Woerner saw a black streak coming toward him, but he didn't have time to respond as the bullet pierced his forehead and gave him the most terrible but briefest headache he had ever experienced in his life. When the bullet exited the rear of his scalp, it scattered his brain matter onto the brown, pine needles covering the ground.

"Vacation time," Private Patina yelled with delight. Sergeant Enesco whispered into the microphone, "Quiet. Go to the body and secure our belongings. I hope our catch has a lot of money for us. You can have his binoculars. I'll take his watch."

CHAPTER 1

March 10, 1995

Jack W. Hollingsworth drove north on Route 9, following the Hudson River into the Catskills Mountains of New York, retracing the route his wife had most likely taken after she had left JFK International Airport two days before. He tried to imagine how her trip ended up getting her killed. According to the county coroner, she was intoxicated at the time of her death. Her cold corpse, which had been retrieved from a creek, had a blood alcohol level of 0.24 percent, three times the legal limit for alcohol intoxication. Jack asked himself how she could have been drunk when she had just driven 150 miles from New York City. Perhaps she had stopped at an airport lounge or at a tavern, but this was unlikely considering that the only alcohol she had ever drunk was wine at Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners.

Jack stopped at every restaurant and other business establishment along the highway, showing people his wife's picture, but nobody recognized her. Finally he reached the accident scene, stopped his car, and got out of it. Jack thought how convenient it was that she had swerved off the road, crossed a boat ramp, and driven her car into Roelift

Creek. How convenient it was that this point of the road didn't have a fence or a guardrail. It were as if the hazardous conditions of automobile, alcohol, and an unguarded boat ramp had combined to preordain her death.

Jack stopped at the edge of the ramp and looked down into the creek which had taken his wife's life. Through the clearness of its water, he saw white and brown round stones lying on the creek bed. For a moment, he saw the image of his wife's face in the water, looking back at him. According to the coroner, the creek was only five feet deep, but its almost freezing water was cold enough to make anybody go quickly into shock. Given Cynthia's blood alcohol content, she didn't have a chance. Jack looked down into the clear, frigid water and tried to imagine how she had felt, sitting in her automobile, feeling the cold water seeping through its windows onto her legs, feeling the water slowly drawing her life away from her. The clear, lifeless water, the snow-covered shoreline, the desolate skeletons of trees, and the cold March wind blowing against Jack's face reinforced the fact that his wife was gone forever.

Jack asked himself, *Why here? Why not at the dangerous curve at Deathman's Bend or at the bottom of the icy hill near the town of Rhinecliff?*

Jack got back in his car and started driving home to Stuyvesant Falls. Up ahead was the Holy Grail, an old, wooden tavern with several motorcycles in front of it. It was an unlikely place to be looking for clues, but Jack decided it was a good place to drink a beer.

When he stepped into the tavern, he almost tripped because its floor was more than a foot below the bottom of its entrance door. Looking through the dim, smoke-filled room,

Jack saw several motorcyclists playing pool and drinking beer at the back of the room. In front of them stood four empty wooden tables. A huge man, wearing a black, leather vest, which didn't hide his hairy chest or his protruding belly, stood behind the bar, cleaning glasses.

"Can I help ya, buddy?" the man yelled.

Jack said, "I'll take a Miller draft."

The man handed him a glass of beer and Jack gave him two dollars.

"What else do you want?" the man asked.

Jack pulled out a picture of his wife and showed it to him. "Have you seen her before?"

"Yeah, I have. What's it worth?"

Jack pulled a fifty-dollar bill out of his pocket and said, "You give me the right information and this will be a start."

Placing the money in his vest pocket, the man said, "She was here Tuesday afternoon."

"Are you sure?" Jack asked.

"Listen, Mister, I'm sure. She was a classy lady, well dressed. We don't have her kind in here everyday."

Jack suddenly got excited. "What can you tell me about her? How was she dressed? Was anybody with her?"

"For another fifty dollars I can tell you everything I know and even help you to get more info," the man answered.

Jack handed the man another fifty-dollar bill, and the man continued talking, "She was wearing a light blue dress and high heels. She was also wearing earrings. She was with a man who didn't belong here either. He had a white shirt and a dark suit and tie. Normally bikers pick a fight with a man wearing a tie around here, but they left him alone. He sure was a ugly son-of-a-bitch. He looked like a big wrestler with a

deep scar in his cheek. He was probably packin' one too."

"What this guy look like?" Jack asked.

"As I said, ugly. He was about six-foot-two and husky. I mean 220 pounds and no fat. He had black or dark brown hair. It's hard to tell down here."

"How old?" Jack prodded.

"Ah, thirty-five, maybe forty."

"About what time were they here and what were they doing?"

"About two o'clock. I served them lunch right over there at the third table. They both ate steak and fries. The man had a beer and she had a cup of coffee."

"Did they drink anything else? Was she drunk?"

"No way, I would have remembered. She was a real fine lady worth watchin'."

May I take a look at your ladies room?" Jack asked.

"Go 'head. There ain't no women there now."

Jack went to the ladies room and carefully inspected it. There was no clue that his wife had ever been there. He then went back to the bar room and inspected the third table and its chairs with a small flashlight. Once again there was nothing unusual other than some graffiti on the table and bubble gum stuck under it.

"You know what they drove away in?" Jack asked.

"No. The last time I saw them they walked out the door about two-thirty."

"You don't remember anything about what they talked about, do you?"

"I'm sorry I don't. I could use another fifty. As I said, she was worth watchin'. What she's to you anyway?"

"My wife," Jack answered.

"Well, if I had a woman like that, I'd try to find her too."

Jack handed the bartender his business card and said, "If you find out anything else about her or that ugly son-of-a-bitch, you call me. I'll make it worth your while."

"I'll do that," the bartender said.

Once outside, Jack looked around the parking lot. The only unusual thing he found was a cold, half-smoked cigarette bearing the inscription "GAULOISES Blondes." Who had disposed of this French cigarette in the parking lot?

Jack had a lot of other questions. Who was the strange man who had accompanied his wife? How did Cynthia get so much alcohol in her blood? The coroner, using his wife's rectal temperature and the temperature of the creek water, had estimated that she had died at three-thirty in the afternoon. What did she do from the time she had left the Holy Grail Tavern until the time of her death an hour later? Why had she driven south instead of north to Stuyvesant Falls and home? What was she doing driving north a mile south of the Holy Grail when she drove off the road to her death?

Continuing his journey home, Jack drove through Cheviot, Hudson, and Stockport. He stopped at the gas stations, drug-stores, bars, and restaurants in all three towns, but failed to obtain any additional information. The last five miles to Stuyvesant Falls were lonely ones, filled with memories of his wife. Originally Jack had doubts about leaving his daughters Judy and Julie with his sister the day after his wife's autopsy. His sister asked him if the mental shock of his wife's death was forcing him to go on a witch hunt. The scant information he had gotten at the bikers' tavern, however, had made his witch hunt worthwhile, reinforcing the importance of prompt investigative actions while the crime trail was still fresh. Jack

had learned from his years of intelligence gathering never to accept any event as being coincidental. In a few days he would summarize his findings in a brief letter to the Hudson County District Attorney. For now though, he intended to pick up his children and drive them home. He intended to help his two daughters cope with the dreadful death of his wife as best as possible.

The mortician's assistant was proud of his efforts to present Mrs. Hollingsworth as a beautiful corpse. The chilling effect of the water had preserved her well. After the assistant sewed Mrs. Hollingsworth's teeth together, he used a thin line of glue to join her luscious lips. He covered her blue lips with a thick, rose-colored lipstick. He then carefully brushed her brown hair backwards, stopping for a second to look at a lump on top of her head, which impeded his brush. Carefully separating the hairs, he found what looked like a little, black butterfly pasted to her scalp. Upon closer inspection, he discovered that it was a Balkan Cross less than three-quarters of an inch in circumference. He pried the cross out of her skull with a small spatula. The assistant looked at the cross, which had a small screw on the back of it, and then at the clear fluid oozing from the small hole in Mrs. Hollingsworth's head. Acting frantically, he screwed the cross back in place as quickly as possible and then dabbed the surrounding hair with a wet cloth. *This is horrible*, he thought, *I've already shampooed her*. Five minutes later, he recovered from his mistake. The tint of the rouge he brushed on her cheeks was just perfect. Mrs. Hollingsworth was more beautiful than ever.

The next day, a beautiful, gleaming, copper burial casket reflected the dark silhouettes of the people mourning the death of Mrs. Cynthia Hollingsworth. Lying within the closed casket, ready to be lowered in the ground, Cynthia was finally hidden from the view of the loved ones and spectators who had come to give her their last gestures of respect. Jack would always remember her as the beautiful and gracious political science student he had met at New York City College in 1976. She had helped him in so many ways, teaching him that it was possible even to trust people involved in politics. Over the years she had become even more beautiful as the lines in her face testified to her contract of eternal trust. When Jack had heard the words at his marriage ceremony, "until death do us part," he considered them insignificant. His marriage vows were meant to go beyond the grave. How his heart was wrenched by the sight of the casket being lowered into the burial trench, separating him from the one he had wanted to love forever. Jack looked at Judy, his sixteen year-old daughter, and saw tears running down her cheeks. He felt his hand being repeatedly squeezed by Julie, his five-year old daughter. Julie and Judy were Jack's primary reasons to keep on living.

When he looked down at Julie, she cried out, "When's Mommy coming home?"

CHAPTER 2

The phone rang repeatedly. Jack finally picked it up after the twelfth ring. Jack was fed up explaining the gloomy details of his wife's death to his relatives and friends. He was also tired of the countless condolences that would not bring his wife back to life.

This caller was different though: "Hollingsworth, damn it, tell your wife to send me her manuscript via Federal Express. I shouldn't have to wait for it. If she doesn't come through, tell her she can forget about her Sanford deal."

Jack was tempted to tell the caller about his wife's death. On second thought, he decided to ask, "What are you talking about? Who are you? What do you want from my wife?"

"This is George Kawowsky, calling on behalf of Professor Sommerville, Sanford University. We don't need your dumb questions. We need your wife's revised manuscript."

Jack replied, "I don't know what you're talking about. I know my wife was thinking about writing a book, but she never showed it to me."

"Listen," George said, "I sent your wife a marked-up draft of her book ten days ago, using priority post, just as she suggested at our meeting here two weeks ago. She said she would have the revised text to me no later than last Tuesday.

Where's her revisions? Where's she?"

Jack thought about Tuesday, the day his wife was killed. Maybe the manuscript was lost somewhere in the U.S. Postal Service.

"Where did you send it to?" Jack asked.

"Wait a minute," George sighed. "Here, I sent it to P.O. Box 51, Hudson, New York 15067."

"I'll try to find it for you," Jack said. "Then what do you want me to do? I'm asking that question because I have power-of-attorney over my wife's belongings."

After a pause, Jack continued, "I hate to shock you. My wife died on Tuesday. She was involved in an automobile accident."

The phone was silent for a half-a-minute, then another voice came on the line. "This is Professor Sommerville. I'm sorry about your wife, but she more than anybody would still want us to publish her manuscript. It's a fine work which will shed some light on the internal workings of the Romanian government. There are, however, several incidents in that document which incriminate government officials in the Iliescu Regime. For purposes of liability, we wish to delete the names of those officials and refer to them merely as defense ministry officials, so they can't easily be identified by readers."

"I'm sure my wife provided you references and other evidence about the officials' actions, didn't she?" Jack asked.

"Yes, but some of the references were only hearsay. Others, including your wife, are now dead and unable to substantiate their claims."

"Professor," Jack insisted, "my wife isn't here, but I am. I spent over a decade in the Balkans, and I know my wife

wouldn't put anything a book, which isn't true. I'd even bet that the public in Romania considers most of your points of contention to be common knowledge."

"You're missing the point, Mr. Hollingsworth. What's common knowledge on the streets of Bucharest is not well known in the realm of international politics. You know the Romanians are still afraid to tell the truth to outsiders. Some scandalous details in your wife's book would be embarrassing to some powerful people in the Romanian government. The details could even damage some sympathetic diplomatic ties with the U.S. State Department."

"Hell with the State Department!" Jack yelled. "My wife's dead and all you care about is the State Department. What happened to scholarly honesty? I intend to publish what she wanted published. That's the least I can do for her."

"Mr. Hollingsworth, you're becoming irrational. A few missing details won't hurt the quality of your wife's book. I'm going to give you some time to calm down. Find your wife's manuscript and read it. I'll call you next week when I'm sure you'll decide to let Sanford be your publisher. Honestly, nobody else wants to publish a book about Romanian. Our press wants to publish your wife's book because it can contribute to the world's understanding of history and political science. We're your best bet and probably your only bet."

"Then I guess I'll hear from you next week," Jack said, hanging up the phone. Feeling a sense of renewed energy and relief come over him, Jack suddenly realized that he was probably going to find the true cause of his wife's death.

Fumbling through the government pages of the county phone book, he stopped when he saw the telephone number of the post office in Hudson. Hudson was fifteen miles away.

CHAPTER 3

Langley, Virginia
March 26, 1995

In a sound-insulated room in the basement of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) Headquarters, Hank Schreiber and his two senior advisers for the Balkan Area of Operations, Fred Maloney and John McClear, huddled over an oak-veneer table, discussing the options available to deal with their current crisis. The Directorate of Operations had just received a decrypted message from Pullach, Germany. The Bundesnachrichtendienst (BND or German Intelligence Service) reported that one of its agents had observed a possible SS-25 nuclear warhead and five intermediate-range SS-12B Scaleboard missiles on launching vehicles in Romania. The agent's last radio communication was transmitted three weeks ago from an area near Brasov. The BND officials had remained silent about this incident until they had concluded that the agent was dead. Given a lack of volunteers from Paris, Brussels, and London, the BND was now requesting assistance from the CIA to gather additional information about the missiles.

Hank Schreiber started, "This whole scenario doesn't make any sense. The Romanians have SCUDs. They've never had Scaleboards. Scaleboard missiles are Soviet weapons. Still it's unlikely that the German agent was mistaken. What if he really did see a SS-25 nuclear warhead?"

Hank continued, "I'm not worried about the boosters. They're too big to sneak out easily. I'm worried about the warheads and guidance systems. If Gaddafi gets them, he'll have a bargaining chip which we'll have to deal with. Maybe he'll use the warheads to blackmail Congress into changing its policy on Libyan oil imports. Worse yet, he might pass these weapon systems to some Shiite Muslim extremist group who'll actually use them to punish the West or the Saudi Royal Family. Those fanatics will do anything to prove their point."

"So what should we do?" Fred Maloney asked. "Should we wait forever and hope that the German agent is alive even though Bonn hasn't had contact with him for weeks? Face it, Hank, we need to insert another agent. HUMINT is the only way to go. SIGNINT and photo reconnaissance spy satellites won't cut it. We need someone on the ground to sniff out those missiles and identify the threat we're dealing with."

Hank agreed, "You're right. Signal intelligence is not going to get the job done. The National Security Agency monitors can target the comms systems of Romania, but they won't find the missiles if nobody is chattering about them. We need human intelligence to solve this problem."

Hank's other adviser, John McClear, pounded his fist on the table and blurted, "The Germans started this. They need to finish it! They need to send in another observer."

Hank responded, "The Germans want out. They've really developed sensitivity toward human life as a result of their guilt complex about the holocaust. The BND has no intention of giving up another agent's life until they're sure their last agent is alive. Due to the silence from Bucharest, we can assume he's dead. That means it's our ball game now and we need to do something about it. The National Security Adviser is scheduled to brief the President about our follow-up actions at 6:00 pm tonight. That means he wants a plan of action from the Director this afternoon. We have three options."

Fred asked, "What are they?"

Hank responded, "Option 1 - Alphonso Meleggra. He's our contact in Milan. He speaks Italian, English, French, Romanian, and Arabic. He has a degree in Physics from the University of Nice. He was particularly good for us in flushing out the scum who perpetrated the high jacking of the Kilimanjaro Cruise Ship and also finding for us the setup men of the bombing of the Le'Bell Discotheque in Berlin. The problem is that we don't know if we can trust him. The Ops staff is convinced that Meleggra's successful because he's a double agent. They've got a lot of prejudiced staff members who think every Italian can be bought.

"Option 2 - Theodore Eglin. He's a highly knowledgeable nuclear weapons and communications specialist who can easily recognize the SS-12B guidance systems and their launching vehicles and call in the killing forces to do them in. He speaks English and German. The problem is that he doesn't speak Romanian. He'd also stick out like a sore thumb in Bucharest. He's well known as a frequent speaker at international electrical engineering conferences. He's not a

good prospect for this mission."

"Then what's our last option?" Fred asked.

Getting philosophical, Hank continued, "The way you cross your legs, hold your coffee cup, sprinkle salt on your food, and use your knife to eat peas - all these subtle things would instantly give any one of us away as foreign agents in Romania. I know of only one man who can be inserted into Romania without causing the secret police's alarm bells to start ringing. He's a man whose every mannerism mimics that of a typical Romanian. He lacks the technical expertise to fulfill this mission, but otherwise he has everything we need, including Romanian connections."

"Who's that?" Fred asked.

"Jack Hollingsworth. His strongest point is that he already has a spy network in Romania in place. All he has to do is reactivate it. He has basic espionage skills, but he is tunnel-visioned because of working too long in the American Embassy in Bucharest. He's a good bookworm, but not one to defuse a nuke or do any really dirty work. The real downside of Hollingsworth is that he is a quitter. He retired from the Agency after the overthrow of Ceausescu. He didn't like how we sacrificed his contacts after the coup. I'm convinced he wouldn't betray us, but I'm not even sure we can get him on our side.

CHAPTER 5

After any great tragedy in life, one has to reflect on the worthiness of oneself and the worthlessness of one's petty accomplishments. So it was with Jack W. Hollingsworth that Sunday morning as he sat under the ceiling lights in the basement of Hudson Memorial Hospital, waiting to see his daughter. Feeling numb, more in delirium than in the real world, he looked up at the lights and saw them as isolated bulbs of glowing light in a dream-world he didn't want to experience. He remembered waiting for his wife to give birth to Judy some sixteen years earlier in the American Hospital in Paris; remembered the first time Judy walked, the first time he taught her how to bat a baseball.

A doctor was shaking his shoulder. "Mr. Hollingsworth, please, please, come in."

Jack stood up and tensed his legs to keep his knees from buckling under him as he walked through the morgue door and viewed the pale and stiff corpse of his daughter laid out on the pathologist's examining table. Her entire body, except for her face, was covered with a beige cloth.

Jack had not come to the hospital at nine o'clock as originally requested; he had come two hours earlier at the request of the attending physician in the Intensive Care Unit.

Judy had died that morning at 6:07. A blood clot in her brain had broken away and lodged in a blood vessel in her heart. Death was instantaneous. No, she felt no pain. She had never recovered from unconsciousness.

The doctor remarked, "Mr. Hollingsworth, I know this is hard for you, but we need to know. Is this your daughter, Judy Marie Hollingsworth?"

Jack gazed at Judy's pale, beautiful face; her blue lips; and the neat hole among the fine strands of brown hair on her scalp. He was furious that he would never be able to see the pink flush in her cheeks again.

"No, no," Jack cried, "This can't be. She's too young to die." Jack fell on his daughter, sobbing and trembling as he grabbed her. Resting his face on his daughter's chest, he let the tears streaming on his cheeks drip on the beige cloth covering her, leaving little, wet blotches on it.

The doctor pulled Jack upwards and said, "I'm sorry, Mr. Hollingsworth, we can't disturb her body. The District Attorney has ordered an autopsy, and we don't need your permission for it because this is a criminal case. We do need you to sign a form though, having you officially identify your daughter. A patient administrative person will also need you to sign some forms for your daughter's release from the hospital."

"To hell with your forms," Jack responded. "I want to be left alone with my daughter."

The doctor replied, "Okay, I'll leave you alone a short time with her, but you have to promise me that you won't touch her. Our autopsy will help the authorities identify the killer's weapon. I'm confident the authorities will find and prosecute the person or persons who killed your daughter."

Jack wiped the tears out of his eyes and protested, "Doctor, with all respect, you know nothing about international politics. The person who killed my daughter is beyond the reach of our authorities." Jack knew that he himself was the only person who had the will and social connections in Romania required to find and kill his daughter's killer.

"Okay, I, I promise," Jack stammered, "not to touch my daughter. Please, leave us alone."

Agreeing with Jack, the doctor said, "Okay, I'll leave you alone. Most importantly, I hope that you won't let your grief hurt your health and future happiness. It's hard for you to believe it now, but you still have a lot to live for. A patient admin' representative will soon be here to help you."

The doctor left the morgue's examining room through its rear door and entered his office, where he met a young man dressed in a white shirt and dark blue tie. The doctor immediately recognized the man as a representative of the Patient Administration Department (PAD). Both the doctor and the representative looked through the office's one-way, see-through glass window into the examining room and saw Jack, who was sitting and trembling on a chair with his hands covering his face.

The doctor remarked, "Poor guy, I feel for him. In another hour I'll crack open his daughter's skull, remove and examine her brain, and extract a bullet from it. Tell Mr. Hollingsworth his funeral home will probably be able to pick up his daughter this afternoon."

Maxim yelled something in Russian, which Ludvia chose not to translate.

"I really like rasp..berry meatballs," Ludvia said, accentuating the "p" in raspberry as only a foreigner would.

Jack stressed, "I really like rasp. . berries meatballs too."

Arm in arm, Ludvia and Jack strolled to the closest ice cream parlor. In spite of her small size, Ludvia easily pulled Jack in the right direction. Once they entered the ice cream parlor, they both sat down on two stools opposite each other at a small, round table.

"Please, Jack, you know I can't order. Please, order us spaghetti."

Jack ordered a two-person portion of "spaghetti" and also a bottle of sparkling Apa minerala water.

"What did you mean, 'It takes a pig to know a pig.?'"
Ludvia asked.

"You know, Ludvia. You have to be able think dirty before you think other people think dirty. In America a pig is a man who sexually exploits women and then calls them pigs for his actions."

"A pig is a dirty animal," Ludvia agreed. "but almost all spies are taught to think dirty. Are you a pig?"

"I was hell of a pig, sleeping on the floor last night."

"A sleepy pig?"

"You've missed the point. I'm not a pig. Even as a spy, I was never the operational type. Wallowing in the mud is something I always avoided. My work was in office areas, computer rooms, and photo labs."

"Since I've been the operational type, does that make me a pig?"

"Ah, even the operational types shouldn't ask a lot of questions. You know that most weapons scientists, politicians, and soldiers will give you the information you need while they get drunk. All you need to do is to sit in a bar like a rock and listen to them. Doing nothing is the best way not to draw suspicion. Getting someone else to do your bribing is also a good way. First, you ask your targets for useless information they'll gladly give you for money and then you tighten the noose by buying valuable information that will give them prison time if you report their activities to their superiors."

Ludvia asked, "What would happen if they would come to me in the bar and try to impress me with their knowledge? What if they would act like they would give me something personal if I would give them something personal?"

"Ludvia," Jack hinted, "I know that a Communist tactic is to use beautiful females to lure their Anglo-American targets into sex and then into blackmail."

"'Lure' - like fishing - is that what you call it? Why don't they fish European men into sex?"

"You know different folks have different strokes. What French, German, and Romanian married men do naturally and usually with pride, we married men of the English culture only do with prodding and some degree of guilt."

"Yes, tell me about it," Ludvia smiled, pointing her ice cream spoon at Jack's face. "Remember that it takes a pig to know a pig. How do you judge me?"

"I don't see any pigs around here. In fact, the only person I see is a very nice person whom I owe a great deal."

Ludvia inserted a large, round gob of frozen raspberries, a "spaghetti meatball," into Jack's mouth.

In return, Jack delicately removed the spoon from Ludvia's fingers and placed a smaller gob of raspberries into her mouth.

After swallowing, she asked, "Where did you learn to be so gentle?"

Jack answered, "From raising two daughters. Raising children teaches one to give and to treat others with sensitivity."

Ludvia remarked, "Don't apply your personal experiences to others, but please, Mr. Hollingsworth, please apply them to me."

Jack was suddenly caught off guard, realizing that he had strayed from his usual clandestine behavior as an intelligence agent and had unwittingly exposed himself as a human being.

Jack suggested, "Let's talk about the missiles."

"Yes, let's talk about the missiles," Ludvia agreed. Then she asked, "Are all American men like you? I like your face. Your quietness is nice too. You don't talk big or simple like the American men in television."

"You know I lived many years outside of America. Many here consider me a countryman, a Romanian."

"I hope you are not that bad. Many Romanian men treat their wives like property, like cows."

"Yes, Romanian men do own their wives like cows, but the treating of women like cattle is common in many countries, including Kazakhstan and Georgia, your ex-Soviet republics."

Ludvia smiled and remarked, "I've been told that American men are mothers' boys who end up as the property of their American wives. Are you a mother's boy, Jack?"

Jack grinned, "I guess I just have a little too much Romanian rubbed off on me. Still I don't believe in owning anybody. I'd rather have friendship, respect, and fidelity. Property no. I do admit though that I was pretty comfortable feeling that I was the property of my wife."

"Friendship, respect, and fidelity? What is fidelity? How about love?"

"As far as I'm concerned, fidelity is love. It is a concept in America that a man has only one woman and that he is devoted to her for life."

Ludvia chuckled, "It sounds like a mother's boy to me."

"Wow, what are we talking about? What does this have to do with the missiles?"

"Okay, back to the missiles. You can trust me, Jack. Tell me everything. Whom have you contacted to look for them? What will we do once they give you word about a location of a missile?"

"If I get word. You have assumed right that I have made contacts to find the missiles. My contacts will make other contacts, and they in turn others so that only a few will ever know that I am the originator of the surveillance network. The important thing is that I nourish the network with attention and money to keep it going."

Ludvia smiled. "You are like a silent spider, Jack, spinning the network you created many years ago. Am I right? How else could you spin a net in an afternoon?"

"You can make that conclusion. And what should I know about you? Isn't the game a little information for a little information?"

Ludvia asked, "How do I get in the net?"

Ignoring her question, Jack asked, "How did you get involved in espionage?"

"It's a long story," Ludvia started. "At first I was a student of gymnastics at a sports school in Minsk. I was really doing good. My trainer told me I would be a Soviet champion if I worked hard. But just after I won the Olympic semi-finals, I fell off the parallel bars and broke my leg during a practice exercise. How could this have happened after all my years of training? I dreamed every night for seven years that I would stand on the steps in an Olympic stadium, listening to the music of the Soviet anthem, and suddenly I was done. My dream was gone, and I was invited to find another way in life. The doctors said I would be able to run and even do spring jumps, but that I would never be a national champion. They said I could become a nurse, but the government gave me another chance, the chance to become what you call an informant. I had a skill for English and good political behavior. I was recruited and trained by the Russian Foreign Information Services to assist in operations requiring English interpretations."

"You mean you were recruited by the KGB, don't you?"

"No, it was later that I was transferred to the Russian Intelligence Service. In any case, my government did me well. At least I wasn't shot after I broke my leg."

"Why would they have shot you?"

"They wouldn't, but that is what they would have done in America."

"Nobody in America gets shot for breaking a leg."

"Oh, come on, Jack. I read in the *Pravda*. Mighty Sam was shot after he broke his leg in a race in Kentucky."

After a moment of thought, Jack blurted, "Ludvia, Mighty Sam was a horse! Didn't the *Pravda* state that?"

Ludvia answered, "It was a slight oversight. Anyway, if the Americans would shoot a horse, they would shoot sports people too. I have heard it is cheaper for Americans to shoot their workers than to pay them a pension. In any case, the animal control people in my country would have let Mighty Sam put his sperm in some young, female horses to continue his running tradition through his horse babies."

Jack realized that he would be wasting his time, trying to explain to Ludvia the animal rights concepts of the United States. He assured Ludvia, "No matter what, I will never let anyone shoot you under any circumstances, even if you break your leg."

Ludvia sighed, "Wouldn't you kill me if your President ordered you too?"

Jack thought of his draft-dodging President and answered, "Never, not even for my President. I owe you my life. I would never let anybody ever harm you."

Satisfied with Jack's response, Ludvia replied, "Jack, stop avoiding the subject. Let's get back to the missiles. If your contacts report them, then what? Are you going to call in the bombers?"

Jack was relieved that Ludvia was finally getting serious. He said, "A missile looking like SS-12's isn't good enough. The shell of these weapons are cheap. It's their inner propulsion and guidance systems that make them expensive. And let us not forget, not all of them have nuclear warheads."

Ludvia said, "Tell me about what you call the verification process?"

"It's a team effort," Jack said. "The satellites may detect the missiles, but they will probably first be noticed by our people on the ground. The word will get back to me, and I'll transmit a message through my channels to the CIA, telling them where satellite reconnaissance should focus its efforts. The National Reconnaissance Office will use synthetic aperture radar, infrared red, and X-ray surveillance techniques."

"You are not saying that your X-ray eyes can see the difference between uranium isotopes, are you?"

"No, I really can't say that, but the X-ray eyes may tell us if the uranium is there, and that's important enough. The X-ray analyzer may also identify the lead shielding for the plutonium, even if it doesn't detect the radioactive materials we're looking for."

Ludvia asked, "And what is synthetic aperture radar?"

Jack explained, "Synthetic aperture radar produces high resolution images by gathering the scattered radiation from a moving flight path. A satellite or plane antenna sends pulses of electromagnetic radiation to the earth, and the radiation scatters in numerous directions. The antenna then gathers the scattered radiation and a computer program integrates, interprets, and transforms the data into three-dimensional images."

Ludvia remarked, "That satellite spying sounds complicated. What else can you tell me?"

Jack said, "Air reconnaissance may also be necessary to get a close look at the prospective missile sites. In the end, all of our intelligence sources, including you and your friends, must come together to produce a mosaic of information which points to the conclusion that we have indeed found the nuclear warheads from the Scaleboard Missiles. The missiles

Sitting up on her massage table, with her bathrobe wrapped around her, Ludvia mockingly reiterated in English, "Yes, Olaf. The Prince won't like this. You better get out of here."

The young masseur turned around and left the room.

Jack looked skeptical at Ludvia for a moment, then said, "Yes, we better get out of here too."

After placing a ten-thousand Lei note on the masseur's tray, he accompanied Ludvia to the women's dressing room.

Ludvia asked, "Where are you going?"

Jack responded, "I'm coming with you. I don't intend to let you out of my sight."

"Ah, is this a new one, Mr. Hollingsworth? Do you want to possess me?"

Jack answered, "You're too valuable for me to lose now."

Ludvia concluded, "So now you know I can help you."

"Maybe I'm really concerned about your safety."

"Jack, don't worry. I did like how you defended me today, but I can take care of myself. I'll be right back out. Just for you, I'll scream before I beat up anybody who attacks me."

Jack knew what Ludvia was saying was true. In a one-on-one fight, she would probably beat the hell out of him. On the USS Manila, he discovered that he was just a paper pusher. No amount of hand combat training would make him an efficient killer.

Two hours later Jack and Ludvia were sitting once again in the Grenadier Bar, tolerating Maxim Stravloski's outlandish behavior. After Ludvia briefed her Russian comrade in Russian, the Russian pulled a large piece of paper out of his breast pocket and placed it on the table. He said something, which Ludvia translated as "This is the railway system and

the small pictures are maps of Romanian Army Artillery Command railway re-supply points. The maps with the stars show us locations where the big missiles are."

Jack whispered to Ludvia, "He should not have brought this here. It puts us all in danger."

Ludvia said something in Russian and then spoke softly to Jack, "Admit it. We have information you don't have. Your spy satellites and model airplanes do not tell you everything. We have 23 sites, some with missiles and some with no missiles. Our witnesses have seen missiles at some of these sites. Now, will you help us? How do we tell where the missiles are and if the missiles are nuclear?"

"Radar," Jack answered. "As I explained to you already, if you know the density of an object and its approximate depth, you can identify its characteristics by measuring the amount of radiation it absorbs, just like you can differ between a bone and muscle on a X-ray film."

"Can your satellites really do that?"

"Are you asking for yourself or for your country?"

Ludvia answered, "For my scientific curiosity." She gave Jack an angry look, indicating that she was disturbed about his lack of trust in her.

Jack added, "Our scientists are working on long distance X-ray absorption techniques." Jack knew that the scientists at the National Reconnaissance Office (NRO) had already developed this satellite spy technique down to a fine art, and that the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service was well aware of that office's capabilities. *Give a little, get a little*, thought Jack. *From this woman I don't want lies or intelligence data.*

CHAPTER 18

In a small Romanian village three-hundred miles from the Black Sea, up in the mountains where the Oltul River turns southward and a steep cliff overhangs its northern bank, the fragrance of laurel flowers fills the air every spring and summer, and the honey bees fly from flower to flower, pollinating them, perpetuating the cycle of fusing male and female cells in a way which has happened since the millennium. Observing this natural phenomenon and the consequential annual blooms of flowers, the Bishop of Ingeri had come out of his monastery twice a day for the last five decades to water and take care of his plants, to smell the perfume-like fragrance exhaling from his flowers, and to enjoy the buzz of the bees and the occasional sighting of hummingbirds. During the Nazi occupation of the Balkans, he had quietly fought against the *Fuhrer* by smiling at the Wehrmacht officers daily and reporting their activities via secret radio codes to the British on Cyprus at night. During the Ceausescu Regime, he had openly supported the beliefs of the Church and taught his congregation through parables that the intolerable Ceausescu would only be a temporary blemish in the annals of Romanian history. And here he was again, this time frail, afflicted by arthritis, and almost eighty-

years old, but still defiant, intending to support the forces of good against the forces of evil until his very end.

When Bishop Iacob heard the banging on the monastery's door, he immediately recognized it as a signal from somebody pleading for help. Opening the door, he saw a middle-aged man and a beautiful, young woman; their blue eyes and fair skins indicated that they were strangers in the region.

The woman said, "Father, we need your help, but do not wish to bring you danger. We are just looking for a way to flee the Romanian soldiers chasing us. We have done nothing wrong."

The Bishop turned to Jack and asked, "Tell me why you are really here?"

Looking into the dark, brown eyes of the Bishop, Jack replied, "Romanian Army officers have diverted several nuclear missiles from a weapons depot and are trying to sell them to Arab terrorists. We think the missiles are near Avrig. We're trying to find them to prevent them from being used against civilians. The soldiers are trying to find us to kill us before we report to NATO the location of those missiles."

Bishop Iacob laughed. He said, "Please, come in. Let us eat together. You are either escapees from a mental institution, fantastic story tellers, or God's lost children."