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*Note to reader: The detailed map at the rear has been designed for ease of use. As you read, you can locate many of the places described in each chapter. You can also download a free digital version by scanning the QR code on the inside rear cover.

PATRONYMICS

Russian names consist of first name, patronymic and surname. The patronymic, or middle name, is derived from the father's first name. For example, general secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union Brezhnev's middle name, Ilyich, comes from his father's first name, Ilya. Russian ballerina Ekaterina Sergeevna Maximova gets her middle name, Sergeevna, from her father, Sergey. In formal speech, first name and patronymic are standard. The use of formal speech is established throughout this book.

1 ARRIVAL



INTO THE LINE OF FIRE

I stood shivering in knee-deep virgin snow behind a woodpile outside the diplomatic apartment building, awaiting my forbidden Russian contact. It was Friday night, 5 December 1969, and I was thirteen years old.

Steppenwolf's 'Born to Be Wild' was still pounding in my head. I'd been partying with Salamat Rehman – Sal for short – the son of a pompous, high-ranking military attaché stationed at the Pakistan embassy in Moscow when I had to sneak away for my clandestine rendezvous. The perimeter fence of the Gruzinsky compound, my temporary home, was a three-metre-high affair. There were no alarms, but we residents knew that we weren't free as such. There was a distinctly terrifying deterrent close by: a *Militsiya*. Nikita Pavlovich Valenski was armed and standing inside his little guardhouse.

Nikita was the loyal gatekeeper of the gulag. Nothing got past him. He reported everything and everyone. Everyone, with one glorious exception – the children. We weren't considered dangerous, so we had total freedom to come and go. I'd already befriended him long ago. It was an illicit liaison. Verboten. We were not allowed to mix with the locals. All embassy staff and associates were explicitly discouraged from consorting with the civilian population.

I was young, but I was wise. I watched and listened – I sensed the undertones and was intrigued by the danger. For me, it added to the spice of the stratagem. Without this hotchpotch, embassy life would have been a constant bore.

As I stood in the cold, watching my breath and checking my watch, it felt as if a decade had passed since that uneventful day when I first met the man who would become my greatest confidant, my teacher, my philosopher. He was a contriver, a manipulator, and by way of fate, a

possible mortal enemy – Alexander Nikolayevich ‘Evil Eye’ Kuznetsov.

‘Just call me Sasha’, he’d said to me on our first encounter a year previously. It had seemed like good fun at the time. Easy money. How was I to know that the contrived meeting would eventually rob me of my childhood? Unfortunately, I needed him now more than he needed me. I had commitments in England that I needed to honour. I knew what I was doing was illegal and that he’d gladly backstab me anytime. Fortunately, I also knew how to keep him at a safe enough distance in terms of wheeling and dealing, as opposed to providing a stabbing opportunity. I also knew how much he needed my Western products. I never discovered how many couriers he had under his wing, although not for lack of trying. He was just too cunning and never let anything slip.

We’d done this several times already and were likely to carry on doing so in the future. Our meeting tonight was critical; I was fully loaded. At my feet was my shabby-looking and well-travelled suitcase. It had served us both well. Its mediocre appearance was its boon, its strength, its fortitude. I didn’t want it suddenly busting apart on the hazardous journey, spilling all its precious contents.

A slightly icy breeze suddenly touched my face, and I noted the odour of *papirosa*, a foul Russian cigarette with a long hollow tube that could be pinched in the middle with the thumb and forefinger to form a pathetic, flimsy filter.

Although I couldn’t see him, I knew that Sasha was on his way. My gaze scanned the darkness outside the perimeter. I glanced towards the guardhouse to see if Nikita was still inside. I caught sight of his head, tilted upwards, and the glowing cigarette lodged in his hand as he raised a shiny container to his lips.

Nikita’s eyes had nearly popped out of his head earlier that day when I’d presented myself, bowing graciously before him with gifts in hand: a litre of single malt and a conspicuously shiny silver hip flask containing a superior French cognac, of which I’d just caught the fleeting glimpse.

I’d arrived that same day at Nikita’s hunting ground, direct from London via Sheremetyevo, been met by an embassy chauffeur and driven in a limousine to Gruzinskiy Pereulok. The drop-off took five

seconds, and I continued up to the home of the lord, lady and master of the manor, namely my dear socialite mother, Brenda Margaret, my loyal-spy and bend-over-backwards-for-your-country father, Keith, and my younger brother, Andrew Paul.

The sight of Nikita kissing his elixir boosted my confidence and gave me a hefty flow of adrenaline to continue with my criminal act.

Before embarking on tonight's escapade, I'd done weeks of reconnaissance during my previous trips to Moscow, following Nikita's habitual actions many times from my parents' sixth-floor apartment balcony. I needed to know all his possible routes. He normally took a short walk from his sentry post to just outside the perimeter fence on the main walkway. Then he moved back through the vehicle entrance and returned to his sanctuary. On other occasions, he would take a brisk walk near all the building's main doorways to check on some of the vehicles' licence plates.

Diplomatic home life at the Gruzinsky building was usually uneventful. Embassy staff kept themselves busy indoors, especially during the long, cold winter months. The compound and surrounding streets were always deserted after dark. Muscovites were forbidden to loiter on street corners, except for the odd KGB sniffers. Diplomats and staff were advised to steer clear of any such contact and to keep themselves occupied at home. The *Militsiya* often became lazy and unobservant in the boredom of inactivity. It created ideal conditions for my night-time mischief.

In all the time I had spent observing Nikita, I never once saw him approach the area where I now crouched, behind a large stack of two-by-fours and debris left by the carpenters and labourers working at the apartments. Even so, I couldn't guarantee that he would never have the urge to relieve himself somewhere in the vicinity of my hideout.

Illicit daytime activities around Gruzinsky would have been too dangerous. Nikita knew that I was travelling back and forth between Moscow and London. He would have reacted suspiciously to my walking out in daylight with a bulky suitcase without the presence of official airport transportation. This would cause unnecessary intrigue – and possible questioning from a KGB informant as to my reasons for transporting such baggage around the streets of Moscow. True, as a child of a diplomat, I had the freedom to come and go. But because I was

involved in illegal activities, I didn't want to draw too much attention. A game of tactics and survival was in play.

Danger came also from the others in the area: local people would willingly inform on anybody acting suspiciously or about anything unusual. These informers, comprising a tentacular network, were encouraged to report their neighbours or even their friends, especially if they felt these people could be of interest to the authorities. It was all part of the system: be a good, faithful citizen and serve your party well. Jealousy and envy between family and friends could well prove to be the downfall of any Muscovite, even more so for an innocent, honest and hard-working soul. Siberia beckoned with a one-way ticket.

Judging by Western media and the general consensus at the time of the Cold War, the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) was a very bad place. Such places can have a formative effect on the person who is sent to them. Maybe I was a little unruly. I could be a bit of a pest at times. But I was also kind and considerate, with an ever-present spark of optimism. There were those who appreciated my company, but there were just as many who truly despised me. I shrugged it off as the difference between the freethinkers and the conformists.

Another highly menacing danger was the KGB foot soldiers, who were constantly playing cat and mouse with foreign nationals. Residents of the Gruzinsky multinational diplomatic building were routinely under observation and followed, scrutinised, booked and bugged, from morning to night. Even in those deepest of hours in dreamland, the tapes were rolling, waiting for that one gorgeous snippet of juicy information.

'Let's stick with our nocturnal activities', Sasha had once said to me. 'Too risky for daytime gaiety', he'd added, giving me his usual, sinister smile. Locals were in a constant scurry when out. They always had an agenda and would never idle around unless queuing for staple goods.

My feet were cold. The temperature was well below zero. It had taken me a long time to gain the ability – and to obtain the balls and know-how – to stand exactly where I was at that moment.

Thoughts of Sal's warm, comfortable bedroom sprang to mind. I dearly wanted to return to the serenity of that spacious room. Three humongous, comfy beds lined the walls. Sal's was the one on the right

side of the front window and was close to the minibar. The one on the left, next to the stereo and vast LP collection, was mine. The third was along the rear wall just to the right of the doorway. It was slightly larger than mine and was reserved for Sal's entourage of Russian girlfriends: Ekaterina, Tatyana and Juliya. There was plenty of room for all three to lounge – to drink, smoke and read the latest fashion magazines, purchased at Heathrow Airport that day by their faithful courier and delivered to their elegant, pale hands. What an absolute dream it was to fritter away the hours together! Sometimes it was quiet, each of us engrossed in a fantasy. Other times the music was almost full blast and we were dancing and jumping on the beds with our glasses raised, toasting our quest for freedom – and in celebration of our separation from the mundane mediocrity outside Sal's front window.

Sal, a fellow commuter to Moscow, attended the prestigious Eton College boarding school in the town of Windsor, on the River Thames in southeast England, where he was captain of the cricket team, worshipped like a king and had a myriad of younger boys at his beck and call (known as *fagging* in the school hierarchy). We'd met mid-air over the Baltic Sea on a flight from London to Moscow, meandering towards kinship since first eye contact. His attitude was of the literary aristocrat central to *Oblomov*, by Russian novelist Ivan Alexandrovich Goncharov. To him, life was solely for pleasure, for recreation, for relaxation and plenty of it. Work never entered Sal's mind. Whereas I was machete-clearing my way through the Amazon of life, Sal was simply floating on air, drifting along effortlessly on the path of least resistance. This extreme contrast ended up bringing us together in friendship.

Sal had his own servant, Amid. He was a peculiar man with a rather large posterior: it looked as if he had a cushion stuffed down the back of his pants, which I'm sure he did. Amid loved to bring us tea and honey, and with even more frequency when the girls were visiting. But if Amid spent too much time fussing and pampering, Sal would jackknife off the bed with the agility of a trapeze artist and viciously kick Amid up the backside. Amid would cry out with a high-pitched squeak and scurry away, whimpering on the way back to his camp bed in the kitchen. Sal's stooge always had a pleasant demeanour about him, but his duties were definitely not pleasant.

Even though Sal had never mentioned to me where the girls came from or what they did for a living, I knew they were all in on the game. Gruzinsky's host of bachelor diplomats attracted an army of ladies of the night, all in pursuit of hard Western currency. Nikita, our crafty watchman, had a stake in the enterprise and, cap in hand, cunningly accepted his share of the bounty as the posse of broadly smiling, business-minded young ladies left the compound. Not that it mattered to me. It felt as though a group of angels had descended to Earth to spend time with us. It was an enthralling experience just to have them there and a unique opportunity to study them without feeling any reproach. It was a mutually comfortable agreement ... and an education of epic proportions for an adolescent. I paid careful attention to my studies, gazing at the way they reclined, sat or danced together. The way they'd straighten out their dresses and tug at their stockings, pulling them up from the knee towards the thigh and revealing a lace-edged garter, was a sight. They were generally soft-spoken and sometimes communicated only with their eyes, quickly glancing at Sal and me, then back at each other, before giggling and smiling amongst themselves at the secrets they kept from us. All my teachers put together would never come close to these three opulent tutors.

They all had immense respect for Sal, careful not to approach him, cautiously averting their eyes if he stared over at them, if their chattering disturbed him. As for me, I got the feeling that they knew they could twist me around their little fingers. And why not let them exploit me? I had nothing to lose and only a wealth of experience to gain at such a pivotal moment in my life. In any case, I'd be in Moscow for only a fleeting moment. They would, in all probability, remain constrained here for the rest of their lives.

They would nod to each other when they'd had enough of us, and after saying thank you and farewell, they'd be gone. But they'd be back again the next day or the day after. They were reliable fallen angels on the take.

The pumping of my adrenaline soon dissolved all these thoughts, and I was back in terror mode standing in the snow. Most of the compound had been cleared of the recent snowfall, barring the woodpile area. The compound could accommodate approximately a hundred vehicles, all belonging to diplomats, military attachés and

various embassy staff. It was a regular beehive of activity during the day, with everybody watching everybody else. But at night, at present, there wasn't anyone around.

I'd come prepared with an array of tools: a penknife, a torch and in each front trouser pocket, a custom-built aluminium S-hook. I'd made sure to separate them because I didn't want them clinking together when I slipped cautiously past the guardhouse. After silently clearing a small section of snow from a designated part of the perimeter enclosure, I produced the two hooks and delicately positioned them on either side of the hinged cat flap, at the bottom of the diamond-wire fence. I then cautiously pulled up the flap and hooked both sides firmly to the upper section of the fence. It was Sasha who a year earlier had set up this ingenious cat flap, spending the better part of three nights perfecting the camouflaged mechanism.

After clearing away more snow, I positioned the suitcase face down with the handle pointing out, towards where Sasha would eventually appear.

Squatting and pushing the bottom of the suitcase carefully and as silently as possible, I lodged it approximately three-quarters of the way through the flap. Sasha could then grab the handle and comfortably extract the case upwards without disturbing too much of the snow outside the perimeter. He'd have to kick back some surplus to cover the bottom part of the fence, then I'd remove the hooks on my side and repeat his filling-in procedure.

The smoke from his cigarette moulded itself around Sasha's head and torso, giving him a ghostly appearance. His front teeth, including a single gold incisor, were peeking just ever so slightly from behind his sly grin, and the cluster of yellowish plaques around his eyelids made him appear even more formidable. 'Hello, Keyveen'.

Sasha had never accurately pronounced my Christian name, but I had never corrected him. I knew better than to imply that he'd said something wrong. I'd witnessed his violent outbursts before. On one unforgettable occasion, I'd had the privilege of meeting one of his clients. The man was purchasing the Rolling Stones' *Beggars Banquet* album at the time. During the speedy negotiation, Sasha had attempted to pronounce some of the English words on the rear of the cover. The client had sniggered and endeavoured to correct Sasha's atrocious

pronunciation. Sasha immediately reared up and growled like a Russian bear, claws ready to swipe at the jugular.

‘Do you want the goods or not?’ Sasha roared.

A meek, nervous and courteous ‘Yes, please’ was the reply.

‘Then cough up, you pathetic bastard, before I break your ruddy neck!’

It was at that moment I realised my comrade-in-arms was, without a doubt, a dangerous psychopath. Sasha came from the real world, where it was survival of the fittest.

I myself had sprung from a myth. A make-believe world. A righteous world. My mind had been shaped and gently manipulated by armed forces schooling. I would rather have had the truth and been given the chance to build up a realistic inner belief. All the guff that I’d been made to digest was a complete waste of time and energy. I was taught to obey, to never question. I was encouraged to drop any illusions of grandeur. To be seen but never heard. Bamboozled into constantly thinking of others before myself. Not exactly an effective recipe for getting ahead in life.

Teachers and preachers always had nice, wide, confident smiles when applying this instruction.

Why in the hell would they want to hold us back? Hold us back from what? Where was the logic? It seemed they were more concerned with discipline than freedom of artistic expression and creativity. However, it did occur to me on a couple of occasions that it might mean *more* for them and *less* for us. Or perhaps they felt that no one got anywhere in life, so they were damned if they were going to help us surpass their minor accomplishments.

I let these thoughts go because of my immense respect for my elders. In other words, I assimilated more dogma.

I wished I’d been taught to fight for every morsel of progress in life, as Sasha had. I sorely lacked the good dose of social awareness that comes from learning first-hand that nobody is giving anything away. In the real world, I was learning that nobody really gives a damn about anybody.

Ultimately, Moscow and Sasha had presented me with the truth: I was the *only* one on my side, and there was no snowplough ahead clearing my path. I would have to dig my own way forward in life.

I now knew that I'd been presented with a unique opportunity. I would never again experience such favourable circumstances. This was a once-in-a-lifetime event. What a profound moment of realisation! This experience could set me up for life, not necessarily in economic terms – although there were some delicious pickings to be had – but certainly regarding practicality, calmness under pressure and creative mental ability. I was at the perfect age. Most of my contemporaries were either too young or too old for this kind of jeopardy. But I was thirteen, a most favourable, optimal age. I was not too young, but I was still without much experience. In other words, I was ready to dive into the deep end without much thought. I also had a convenient lack of parental care for a sufficient period of time, which allowed me to develop a taste for self-confidence, combined with a lust for high-risk adventure. With practice, I had developed into a shifty son of a gun.

Sasha had sneaked up to the perimeter with the grace and agility of a panther and in the process made my heart skip a beat. Directly after his terse, contemptuous greeting, he grabbed the suitcase while I was still crouching, kicked some snow up through the fence so that it hit my face and was gone before I could utter a single word. On top of the snow that I had to brush away from my head and shoulders, Sasha had left the butt of his reeking *papirosa*. He'd also left a grubby envelope stuffed part way through the diamond-wire fencing. Why were the Russians so different from anyone I'd ever known? And why did I find them so captivating?

It was time for me to make my way back to Sal's place through the vehicles that were tightly arranged around the compound, allowing me ample cover while I stayed well clear of Nikita, who had not budged from his comfort zone. In fact, I could swear I'd heard some singing coming from his direction. Perhaps the cognac had relaxed his mind, had conjured up memories of a former time or a young beauty he had once pursued.

As I passed my father's Moskvitch Delta 01-255, I etched in reverse three large Cyrillic symbols into the new snow on the driver's side of the windscreen: *MMP*. On the passenger's side, I did the same in English: *PEACE*. As I drew the uppercase letters, I could see that the surface of the window was smeared with winter mud from the streets of Moscow. Even if it started to snow during the night or early morning,

the text would be visible from inside the vehicle. Would my steadfast father understand the symbolism and the message it conveyed?

My father had chosen his side, but I was more hesitant. I loved the English, and I loved the Russians equally. I thought of the *race* in *human race*. Did it not mean unity? Or was it all about competition? If you're not going to join each other, then please do not ask me to choose a side: I won't. Instead, I'll exploit your stupidity. As far as I was concerned, *I* was the future and *they* were the past. I yearned for them to come together, Brits and Russkies. Put all their resources in a big pot and share them out equally. What a united power they would be! I knew it was viable, but then again, those who had the power and authority were themselves totally insane. The dreams and aspirations on both sides had been quashed long ago. A straitjacket had been placed on each and every citizen, and as a bonus, the wool had been pulled generously over their eyes.

On the other hand, every Russian I knew had a job, an apartment, adequate transportation, medical care and warm food in their belly. Communism was working. The only apparent element missing was the hint of a smiling face.

Russians are quiet people. They are gracious, serious and respectful, with a stalwart reliability. How could one not be drawn to this reserved, non-violent, non-abusive, not overly polite but civil and safe-to-navigate nation of hammer-and-sickle labourers? Of course, there were occasions when people would let their hair down and a delinquent or two would upset the apple cart. But generally speaking, the society was resourceful, humble and obedience oriented. I admired the Russians for their overwhelming dedication, persistence and tenacity. It was evident that the collective effort was paying dividends for most. Historians and provocateurs would undoubtedly question the regime and the spread of wealth. I myself could see no sign of neglect or public grievance.

So what had I learned a year ago, when my family first moved to Moscow? I had learned the value of the innocence of a child's face. Unbelievable! The greatest of the greats in every field of misconception, disinformation, deception and clandestine activity never suspected me. Nobody would know, they would have not a clue – not an inkling, zero, zilch, nada – that I should be watched. I had total

freedom to wander. I milked my delicate smile, the touching sadness of my eyes and my subtle frown, which gave me that lost and lonely look. And what happened? The adults came running, pampering, even coochy-cooing. I loved it! And I had a universal passport and ticket to enter through the doorway to a lucrative black market.

There were British military bases and embassies spread all over the globe. I'd travelled from northern Europe through central Europe to India and beyond, to the Far East. Packing and unpacking, from home to home, school to school, I migrated like the Roma.

I had my father to thank for all these wonderful opportunities. His involvement in Her Majesty's Armed Forces had taken me on a fantastic tour around the world. However, my life had taken a severe knocking the day he and I stood on the vast, empty airfield in Gütersloh, West Germany, his station just before he was posted to the USSR. We were on our way to RAF Northolt base in London, England.

With a four-engine prop Bristol Britannia idling on the runway in the background, my father looked down at me and said, 'Sorry, Kevin, you can't join us on our posting to Moscow. You must try and understand. You are at a difficult age, twelve going on thirteen. You are too old for the Anglo-American school in Moscow. Attending a Russian school is a possibility, but it may impede your English qualifications'. I didn't speak, so he continued. 'You have two choices. Boarding school, or stay with relatives and attend local school in England'.

That was it, then. I was twelve and out of the nest, packed off, relegated to the sidelines. I didn't fit the bill. The British embassy posting to Moscow was more important to him than family cohesion. A massive void opened in my gut. I was not able to comprehend the sudden feeling of despair. Perhaps this was akin to the pathos Shakespeare was so adept at conveying.

A watershed moment had occurred in my life. From here on in, I would drift away in quietude. My mother and father would ultimately become *Brenda* and *Keith* to me.

On board that aircraft on its way to England, with engines roaring around us, I was silent, but my mind was racing. Suddenly, everything in my body shut down. I had questions, but I didn't verbalise them. I was used to going with the flow and being the one who adapted, followed the rules, towed the family line. As a tear rolled down my cheek and

touched my lips, I closed my eyes and fell into a deep sleep. There were so many unknowns awaiting. *Why me?*

Now, it was so peaceful and exquisite in the compound. A light flurry of dancing snow coated everything in sight. I headed towards entrance number three. Sal's room was in the basement of his parents' spacious two-floor apartment. Approaching his window, I got down on all fours and peered through the opening between the curtains. I looked at Sal, who had the dark and handsome beauty of a leading-man film star. He was reclining magnificently on his sumptuous mattress with a magazine in one hand and a drink in the other. Music was playing. Trying desperately to recognise the tune, I had to turn my head slightly, shuffle through the snow a little closer to the window and close my eyes. I waited patiently for a few familiar notes. Then it hit me: 'Crimson and Clover', by Tommy James and the Shondells. As I turned back and opened my eyes, I caught sight of the girls slow-dancing together, arms around each other.

I was back in Soviet Moscow, home of the Olympics of shenanigans. No other city on the planet came close to these elitists of deception and manipulation. The triple-decker lines of medals seen on the jacket breasts of military generals on the Lenin Mausoleum every year on 7 November gave witness to this epic proclamation.

I'd departed from London at fifteen hundred hours, I'd had a successful journey, my baggage had arrived in one piece, Sasha was happy, and at zero one hundred hours I was alive and raring to go. Ten hours into the game, the score was forty love, in my favour.





BOY MOSCOW

Cold War Exploits and Adventures

BOY MOSCOW

Kevin Paul Scarrott



Kevin Paul Scarrott

It's the height of the Cold War. Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev is presiding over the country as general secretary.

Against this backdrop, a fourteen-year-old British boy roams Moscow unhindered. Adventure is the name of the game. Follow Kevin Paul Scarrott as he plays East against West, entangling himself in the tension and exploiting every opportunity.



The last time I saw Kim, during a performance of Swan Lake in 1971, he looked a little peaky. I wanted to mention the marvellous spa treatments down in Odessa and Yalta that Keith had told me about. Unfortunately, the third-call bell rang, and he was immediately whisked off, champagne glass still in hand, by his minders so they could take their seats before the curtain went up.

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In the meantime, in Moscow, two MI5 agents were ferreting around, dismantling fixtures and ripping up floorboards. Keith was ordered to stay at the embassy all day and late into the evening so as not to provide opportunity for the KGB Watchers to intimidate him.


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Autobiography: Cold War, historical, political & military

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