

MILLION SELLING AUTHOR

# MARK DAWSON

## THE VAULT



# **PART I**

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Harry Mackintosh raised his binoculars and looked out over the Wall.

He was with Élodie Leroux and David Morgan on the fourth floor of an abandoned office block that still bore the scars of a Red Army shell from forty years earlier. There was no money to fix the building and so it had been condemned, left to the rats and roaches that scurried across the bare concrete floors and the bohemians from Schöneberg who came to party on the weekends. The windows had been boarded over, but Mackintosh had prised one of the planks away so that he could look out. The western face of the Wall was directly below him, and, as he looked down, he could see the graffiti that had been scrawled across it. The Wall was, in reality, *two* walls that sandwiched a swath of open ground. The walls were twelve feet tall and topped with coils of barbed wire. The death strip was in between them, an expanse that had been cleared when the East Germans had demolished the buildings on their side of the original wall. It was made impassable with tank traps and fakir beds, all observed by guards staffing a series of tall watchtowers. There was a tower a hundred feet away from Mackintosh's position; Mackintosh had been watching the guards through the binoculars for any signs of heightened activity, and had been pleased to see that they were apparently as bored and lackadaisical as ever.

Mackintosh was up high enough to be able to look over the second wall and see into the snow-covered streets of East Berlin. He was anxious, and for good reason. The crossing was dangerous, and, however hard he had worked to minimise the risks, there was still a chance that they would be

discovered. Mackintosh gritted his teeth. The prize was tantalisingly close and, with it, his career would be made.

“Anything?” he asked Morgan.

Morgan was standing at a second window with a pair of high-powered binoculars. He had a good view of Strelitzer Straße. “Not that I can see,” he reported.

Morgan had been in Berlin for a year longer than Mackintosh. Mackintosh had taken over when the head of station had been murdered in a knife attack in the East three months ago. Morgan—with more experience and five years older—had not taken the promotion well. Mackintosh knew it, too. He had told Morgan it was nothing personal, and that he would need the benefit of his experience and advice. Morgan was a professional and, whatever personal animus he held, he had not let it interfere with his work. He ran his network of informants on both sides of the border, submitted his reports promptly, and had proved invaluable with the intelligence that he routinely provided. Despite that, there remained an unspoken distance between the two men. They spoke of the job and nothing else. Mackintosh didn’t care. That was all he needed.

Mackintosh looked at his watch. “It’s nearly time.”

“Fifteen minutes,” Élodie said. “What is it? You nervous?”

“I need to be over there,” he said.

“That’s not what we agreed.”

“I know. Change of plan. I’m going to go across.”

“They know what they’re doing, Harry,” Morgan said.

“I want to make sure.”

“I’ll keep an eye out. Keep the radio on.”

Mackintosh had arranged for the team to have Magnavox AN/PRC-68 radios. His own unit—an olive drab brick that weighed two and a half pounds—was in the rucksack that he collected from the floor where he had left it. He made sure the unit was switched on and receiving and put it back into the bag. He took out his Beretta, popped the magazine and ensured that

it was loaded. He confirmed that there was a round in the chamber, pressed the magazine back into the port, and made the gun safe. He put the gun into its holster.

“RV back at base when we’re all out,” Mackintosh said.

“Good luck.”

Mackintosh gave a nod, swallowed down the anxiety that was boiling in his gut, and started down the stairs to the street.

Mackintosh came out of the building, checked that the road was clear, and then walked toward the Konditorei Buchwald bakery. There was a delivery van waiting there; the vehicle's lights were off, but the engine was on. Mackintosh walked by the van and looked into the wing mirror as he went by. He could see the driver: dark coat, pale face, eyes focussed forward. The plan called for the package to be removed from the vicinity of the Wall in the back of the van, out of view of the guards in the watchtowers that were visible over the lip of the Wall.

"Hey."

It was a hiss, not much more than a whisper, but he heard it and turned around. Élodie was hurrying after him. He frowned at her breach of protocol but indicated that she should join him in the bakery and went inside.

She reached him and grabbed him by the arm.

"What are you doing?" she asked.

"The plan's not right. I should be over there."

"They know what they're doing. You're interfering."

"No, I'm not," he protested. "I'm doing my job. PICASSO is too important."

She moved her hand from his elbow to his face and laid her palm against his cheek. Then, with the impetuosity that Mackintosh had al-

ways found so beguiling, and before he could stop her, she took a step closer and kissed him. He let her, then put his arms around her and drew her closer; her mouth opened as he returned her kiss. He lost himself for a long moment, drinking in the smell of her and the taste of her lipstick and the sweet tea that they had shared in the consulate before making their way across town.

Élodie had been responsible for developing PICASSO as a source. She had been operating in East Berlin as a language student and had heard about him from an acquaintance with experience of some of the seedier aspects of the local nightlife. She had approached PICASSO, confirmed his story, verified it as likely true, and then reported it to her superiors at the Direction Générale de la Sécurité Extérieure on Boulevard Mortier in Paris. The French did not have the capacity to exfiltrate PICASSO themselves and so, in a rare example of Anglo–French cooperation, they had proposed a joint operation with MI6.

Élodie was made Berlin liaison to the UK’s Berlin Station. Mackintosh had found her to be a superb agent, and their professional relationship had immediately been excellent. It was, perhaps, inevitable that it would become more than that. They had been in a relationship for several months, and those months had been among the happiest of his life. Their union was born from a confection of different motivations: greed, initially, then professional advancement, shared glory and, finally—he hoped—love.

The moment stretched, and he would have let it continue forever but for the squelch of his radio. He gently moved her a step back, took the radio and pressed the transmit button to send the single bar of static that acknowledged receipt. It was the pre-agreed signal from the other side of the Wall: everything was clear.

“See?” she said. “It’s fine. There’s nothing to worry about.”

“So where is he?”

“It’s not time yet. He’s not late. Relax, Harry.”

“I’m going to go across. I can’t just sit here and let it happen.”

“Fine. I’m going too.”

“No, you’re not.”

“He’s *my* agent—yes I am.”

He was about to protest, to tell her that was crazy, but she was French—stubborn and single-minded—and he knew that she wouldn’t take no for an answer. He could order her to stand down, but he did not have authority over her and, more to the point, he knew what she would have said when they were back in his apartment that night: he was a sexist hypocrite. She would have been right, too. He couldn’t bring himself to do it.

“Fine,” he said. “Got your gun?”

She patted the bulge beneath her left shoulder. “Yes.”

“We need to hurry.”

Mackintosh went down into the basement. MI6 had arranged for four SAS soldiers from the Berlin Regiment to be assigned to the mission, and two of them were waiting for them.

“Anything happening, sir?” the senior man asked him.

“Looks clear.”

“Fisher and Cameron are ready on the other side.”

“Very good,” Mackintosh said. “Leroux and I are going across.”

The soldier frowned. “Are you sure, sir? We’ve got it all under control.”

“I don’t doubt it. But I’d like to have a look for myself.”

The man knew better than to protest, and stood aside.

They had started building the tunnel two months earlier. Berliners had been tunnelling under the Wall for years, but most of their efforts were failures: the passages were either too unstable to use or were discovered quickly by the East German border guards. Western intelligence knew that covert access across the border would be a valuable asset, and they had advantages that the citizens of the divided city did not. MI6 had arranged for sappers from the Royal Engineers to come to the city and select promising locations for a tunnel. This bakery had been chosen as the site of the western entrance, with the eastern entrance emerging in the basement of an



apartment block at Strelitzer Straße 55. The sappers had slept in the bakery on week-long shifts, piling up the spoil in flour sacks that were then removed from the site by appropriately liveried delivery vans. They had cut a rectangular opening in the floor of the basement and then burrowed down eleven metres; once they were deep enough they had started to tunnel to the East, eventually constructing a passage that was wide enough for one person to pass through.

Mackintosh lowered himself into the opening until his feet found the rungs of the ladder. The tunnel was lit by lanterns that were placed at regular intervals. There was one at the top and another below him, and their combined light meant that the descent was into gloom rather than pitch darkness.

He looked up. "Ready?"

Élodie nodded.

He climbed down until he reached the bottom, Élodie following above him. The city had been constructed on soft foundations, and it had not been particularly difficult to excavate the route. The engineers had strengthened the walls with wooden boards and lattice girders that had been smuggled into the bakery under cover of darkness. The sappers had asked Mackintosh how long they had to construct the tunnel, and he had told them that time was not a luxury that they possessed. PICASSO was ready to be exfiltrated, and the longer they waited the greater the chance that he would be found by the Stasi. He couldn't tolerate that. The captain in charge of the dig had suggested that it would take them four months to complete the build. Mackintosh had told him that was unacceptable, and that he had three weeks. They had settled on two months, but the engineer had said that the compromise was that the tunnel would be rudimentary, cramped and claustrophobic. He had been right.

Mackintosh started to crawl and, as ever, he wondered if he could have allowed the sappers a little extra time to make the experience less unpleasant. The tunnel was narrow and the ceiling pressed down oppressively. The passage could only be negotiated on hands and knees and, after just a few seconds, Mackintosh found that his arms and legs were caked with wet

mud.

He tried to take his mind off the thought of the tonnes of earth above his head and thought about the operation. He had received intelligence that this part of the border would not be heavily protected tonight. It was Christmas Eve. Two-thirds of the guard were on relief, drinking schnapps and eating bratwurst at the barracks half a mile to the north. The intelligence had given him an opportunity and he had decided to take it.

He kept crawling. The way ahead was lit with more low-voltage lamps, but their light only travelled so far; the spaces between them were gloomy and, on occasion, almost completely black. It was impossible to know where he was in relation to the border; beneath the ramparts of the first wall, somewhere beneath the death strip, beneath the second wall. He kept going, ignoring the cramps in his back and shoulders and the gunk that was clinging to his clothes. He thought of PICASSO, the singular coup that they had been working to achieve for so long. These deprivations—the dirt and the damp—and the danger of his evening's work would be as nothing compared to the reaction he would receive in London once they had successfully exfiltrated the asset. The intelligence that PICASSO was bringing with him would be dynamite; it would cripple the Stasi leadership for months. Mackintosh knew that it would be the making of him.

He could hear Élodie scrabbling after him. "You okay?" he hissed back to her.

"Fine," she said. "Keep moving."

He became aware that he had moved onto an upward slope. He remembered the incline from his previous visits to the tunnel, the sappers who had come down with him explaining that the slope began beneath the second wall and became more pronounced as it approached the eastern entrance. He slithered up, feeling the ceiling against his shoulders and the back of his head as the passage lowered, and then, with the muscles in his back burning from the effort, he saw another lamp and pushed on toward it. The slope levelled out and he saw the ladder that led up to the basement of number 55.

He climbed until he reached the top of the ladder. The passage was

sealed to limit the amount of light that leaked out from the tunnel; Mackintosh knocked three times, waited, then knocked again.

He heard a voice, a hissed question that was only just audible through the boards. “Who is it?”

“Mackintosh and Leroux,” he whispered back.

He held onto the ladder for an extra moment until the board was removed and the dim light from the basement washed over him. One of the soldiers was above him; he reached down with both hands and clasped Mackintosh’s right wrist, helping him to climb out the rest of the way. The man was one of the SAS detail. His name was Cameron; he was a Scotsman, as hard as flint and with a deathly cold stare.

The basement was a medium-sized room that accommodated the boilers for the block above it. It was damp, with puddles of brackish water that reflected the glow of the shielded flashlight that Cameron shone in Mackintosh’s face before quickly extinguishing it again.

“Anything?” Mackintosh asked him.

“Not yet,” Cameron said, reaching down and helping Élodie to climb out of the shaft.

“Where are Foulkes and Fisher?”

“Upstairs. Waiting.”

Mackintosh swept his hands over his knees, trying to remove some of the encrusted mud, and then straightened up to work out the kinks in his back. “I won’t miss having to do that,” he said, indicating the entrance to the tunnel with a nod of his head.

“After tonight you won’t have to do it again,” Élodie said.

“Let’s hope so.”

Mackintosh took a shielded torch from a shelf and used it to light his way up the stairs. He climbed to the ground floor with Élodie following behind. There was an empty apartment with a door that opened directly onto Strelitzer Straße. There were two men waiting for them: Fisher was the other SAS warrant officer, younger than Cameron, easier to talk to, but similarly competent; Nicholas Foulkes was one of the other agents who worked Berlin Station.

“Christ, boss,” Foulkes said. “You gave me a shock.”

Foulkes had bright blond hair, almost white in the muted glow of the torch. He was in his late twenties and was dressed in heavy black trousers and an overcoat. His role was important. The West Berliners had a word for it: he was the *Fluchthelfer*, the ‘escape helper,’ positioned at the start of the escape route to start the process of crossing the border.

“What are you doing here?” he asked.

“Change of plan,” Mackintosh said. “I want to be here to get PICASSO across.”

“I tried to tell him,” Élodie said.

“It’s too important to take chances.”

Mackintosh realised that that might be taken as a lack of confidence in the abilities of the men he had deputed to run the eastern side of the exfiltration, but he was too on edge to worry about that. Foulkes brushed off the

perceived slight; he was on edge, too, and Mackintosh wondered if he had even registered it.

“Have you seen anything?” Mackintosh asked Fisher.

“No, sir. It’s quiet.”

“Guards?”

“No. Looks like the intelligence was right. We haven’t seen any.”

“We couldn’t have chosen a better night,” Élodie offered.

“Maybe.” Mackintosh took the radio from his pack and pressed the button to speak. “WINCHESTER,” he said. “It’s SALISBURY. Anything to report?”

“No,” Morgan replied from the vantage point on the other side of the Wall. “It’s quiet. I can’t see anything.”

“Copy that. SALISBURY out.”

Mackintosh put the radio back into his pack.

“I’m going to go outside,” he said.

Cameron stepped forward. “I don’t think that’s wise. We haven’t planned for it.”

“I’m going out,” Mackintosh insisted. “I know the area. And he should be here by now.”

He looked from the soldier’s face to Élodie’s. She was as concerned as he was, yet there was something else on her face, too. They had only been seeing each other for a short while, and they had managed—at least they thought they had—to keep their relationship private. He looked at her, saw the damp shine to her eyes, the hesitant upturn to her lips, and saw the affection there.

He couldn’t let that stop him. PICASSO was too important, his potential too great.

Élodie mouthed two words: *Be careful*. Mackintosh wanted to reciprocate, but while Foulkes had his back to Élodie and couldn’t see her, he was

looking dead at Mackintosh and he would see him.

“Eyes open,” he said. “I won’t be long.”

Mackintosh opened the door and stepped out onto the street. Strelitzer Straße was cobbled with two rows of four-storey apartment blocks that faced each other. Cars had been slotted against the kerb with their noses poking out, leaving enough space for two lines of traffic to proceed in either direction. An attempt had been made to soften the brutal architecture with the planting of a row of young elms, although the winter winds had long since plucked the last leaves from the branches. Mackintosh took a step away from the door and turned left and right to look for any sign that there was anyone else here with him. The street was heavy with snow, save a slushy stripe where the cars had been passing. Mackintosh looked left and saw the Fernsehturm, the enormous television mast in Alexanderplatz that was visible all across the city. He had always hated it; the Communists had erected it in an attempt to demonstrate their power, but it had always embodied their surveillance to Mackintosh, the sense that they loomed over everything and that nowhere was safe from their suspicious gaze.

Mackintosh started to the east, walking slowly across the compacted snow and ice. There was a builder's van parked on his side of the street. The locals were doing some work on a nearby building, fixing it up after what looked like years of neglect. The van was old and dirty, and it had a ragtag collection of equipment in the flatbed: a cement mixer, ladders, a wheelbarrow.

He had passed the back of the van when he saw movement at the junction with Rheinsberger Straße. He was fifty feet away, and the person he

saw was looking in the opposite direction. Mackintosh didn't think that he had been seen. He walked on and saw that the person was male, that he was wearing a fitted black overcoat and a Russian-style ushanka on his head. Mackintosh drew closer and saw that the man's hair, just visible under the lowered flaps of the hat, had been dyed a bright platinum blond.

It was PICASSO.

Mackintosh picked up his pace.

"Günter," Mackintosh said, his voice as quiet as he could make it while still being loud enough for the man to hear.

The man froze and then turned around to face him. His cryptonym was PICASSO, but his real name was Günter Schmidt. He was nineteen years old and he had pale skin and blue eyes that were filled with fear. Mackintosh reached out a hand; Schmidt took it and they shook.

"Is everything okay?" Mackintosh asked him in German.

"I'm scared," Schmidt said.

"You're fine," he said, smiling at him.

"I couldn't remember the number of the house."

"You're on the wrong street," Mackintosh said gently, taking Schmidt by the sleeve and angling him toward the junction. "It's over here."

Mackintosh glanced over at the young man as they walked. The coat he was wearing was the oversized herringbone that Mackintosh had bought for him a month ago. Günter had a fixation with David Bowie, and he had seen him wearing a similar coat in a photoshoot by Helmut Newton that had been published in *Sounds*. Mackintosh had brought him regular copies of the magazine as he had gently recruited him, a slow dance that had taken months to bring to fruition. He had smuggled the coat across the border to consummate their arrangement and had given it to him at their last meeting in Treptower Park.

"I'm frightened," Schmidt said.

"There's no reason to be."



“The border guards?”

Mackintosh shook his head. “None. It’s quiet.”

“But what about the tunnel?”

“It’s fine.”

“I get claustrophobic.”

“I’ve just come through it,” Mackintosh said, reminding himself to speak kindly. “It’s safe. A marvel of engineering. You’ll see.”

Élodie had arranged for Mackintosh to meet Schmidt. He had claimed to be in possession of evidence that would cause chaos at the very highest levels of the Stasi. Mackintosh had immediately seen how valuable Schmidt could be. And he had seen how recruiting the young man would add a layer of guilt to a career that had already been impressive. Mackintosh's tours of Belfast had seen him chop away at the leadership of the IRA, developing relationships with several informants including a man who had served on the infamous "Nutting Squad," the Provos's counter-intelligence and interrogation unit. He had used the informant's intelligence to pick off key players, and, in the process, had developed an aptitude for interrogation that had produced startling results while, at the same time, leaving him feeling as if he had been bathing in a sewer.

PICASSO, though, would be an order of magnitude above everything else that he had achieved, and the prospect of bringing him in was intoxicating.

Mackintosh had been meticulous about *everything*, and his tradecraft had been the most thorough of his career. He wanted to get a measure of the target before their first meeting and had followed him for a week. Each day had begun with a marathon surveillance detection routine, backed by a ten-man Franco-British counter-surveillance detail, to ensure that he was black before going anywhere near the target. He would pick up the young man as he ended his working day at five each afternoon and follow him on his walk home. His route was the same every day: he left the building on Nor-

mannenstraße, went south on Kynastraße, crossed the Spree and then made his way through Treptower Park.

Surveillance was backed up with extensive research on the subject, his *bona fides* and the credibility of the story he was offering to sell. The assessment from London and Paris was that he was telling the truth.

The offer Mackintosh and Élodie could make Schmidt would be difficult to turn down, but it would also be fraught with great danger. If Schmidt said yes and there was any misstep, his future would be bleak: interrogation in the basements of the Hohenschönhausen and then a bullet in the back of the head.

Mackintosh had almost had second thoughts about making the offer.

But who was he kidding? Here was an intelligence coup that might be priceless. Schmidt had offered to work with them after being submerged in the misery of his fellow Berliners all of his life. He wanted to do something about that, and, thanks to the unfortunate proclivities of the Minister for State Security, he had been given the means to do so.

Mackintosh had put him in a position to win his freedom.

They made their way back along Strelitzer Straße to the derelict apartment. Mackintosh allowed himself a buzz of confidence: it was going to happen. They were going to pull it off.

A woman emerged from the door, wearing a woollen hat that she had taken from the soldiers: it was Élodie. Mackintosh wanted to yell out that she should get back into the house, but he dared not. He would spook Schmidt, and there was no telling who else might be listening.

“Élodie?” Schmidt said hopefully.

“She wants to make sure you get out, too.”

Mackintosh put his hand on the young man’s back and nudged him forward. He smiled at him and told him that he would be fine, that the British government looked after those who were willing to risk their lives for the West, that everything—*everything*—would be fine.

“The tunnel,” Schmidt said. “It is dirty?”

He gestured down at Mackintosh’s trousers; Mackintosh looked and saw the streaks of mud that he had missed.

“A little,” he admitted with a smile.

“What about my coat? It’ll be ruined.”

Mackintosh smiled with indulgent patience. “I’ll get you a new one.”

Élodie came alongside. “Everything okay?”

“Yes. All fine. What are you doing outside?”

“We couldn’t see you.”

“Let’s get off the street.”

They were still thirty feet from the door to number 55 when a black van raced around the corner and came to a stop on the other side of the road. It was a Barkas B1000, the transport that the Stasi used to snatch people from the street. A man stepped out of the driver’s compartment, leaving the door open behind him. A second man got out.

“*Merde*,” Élodie hissed.

Mackintosh reached with his left hand, took Schmidt by the elbow and picked up the pace. He let his right arm hang loosely by his side, his fingers ready to reach around for the gun that was going to be pressed into the small of his back.

The men walked across the ice-slicked cobbles in their direction.

“*Achtung!*”

Mackintosh held onto Schmidt’s arm and kept walking. They were outside number 49, with just a few more paces to the door to 55. If they could get inside, maybe...

He heard the sound of an engine from behind him, the crunch of tyres across compacted snow. Mackintosh turned his head to look back; another black Barkas van had arrived, this one blocking the road behind them. A further two men had stepped down from the cab and were coming their way.

He swallowed down on a throat that was suddenly very dry.

*Ministerium für Staatssicherheit.*

The Stasi.

Border guards were dumb and predictable; they followed orders, did what they were told, shunned originality for rote. The Stasi were different. They were ruthless. They killed whenever they had the chance. Mackin-

tosh's former head of station had been gutted in the street as he lit a cigarette. His replacement's car had been fitted with a bomb and blown up while he waited to pick up a secretary at Tempelhof. They had eyes everywhere and they were slowly tightening their grip around what they saw as the hostile intelligence services ranged against them. They were implacable, ruthless, and driven by a cold ideological animus that could not be reasoned or negotiated with.

And they knew. Someone had tipped them off. Fear wrapped around him, icy cold. It tightened, forcing his breath from his lungs.

The two agents ahead of them were carrying Makarov PMs. Mackintosh recognised one of them: it was Axel Geipel, a colonel in the Hauptverwaltung Aufklärung, the Stasi's Main Directorate for Reconnaissance. Geipel had a reputation for brutality; Mackintosh had heard the stories of what happened to the men and women he took back to Hohenschönhausen prison. But worse than Geipel's reputation was that of his patron; Geipel worked for Karl-Heinz Sommer, and Sommer was a devil.

*"Get your hands up!"* Geipel shouted in English. *"Now!"*

Mackintosh stopped.

*Not like this. Not without a fight.*

Élodie stopped next to him. Her hand twitched toward her weapon.

"Don't," he whispered. "Not yet."

Mackintosh released Schmidt's wrist and held his left hand aloft, his open palm facing forward.

Geipel waved his gun. *"Both hands!"*

He raised his right hand, too, and stretched both of them above his head.

The ground floor window of number 55 exploded outwards in a cascade of glass shards. A submachine gun chugged as one of the soldiers unloaded the magazine of his MP5-SD. The two Stasi agents were diagonally opposite the window; the volley streaked across the cobbled street and detonated against the graffiti-scarred wall behind them. Chunks of plaster were blown into the air and a cloud of fine dust choked that side of the road. One of them fell; Geipel fired back.

Mackintosh knew their opportunity would last for moments and no more. He heard the gunfire from behind them, flinched with the expectation that he was about to be struck, but felt nothing. He grabbed Schmidt by the arm and dragged him into the cover offered by the front of the builder's van. At the same time, he reached behind his back, snagged the butt of the pistol, and yanked it clear so hastily that the iron sight scored a groove on his skin. He aimed at the two agents in front of him, but he could only see the unmoving body of one of them; Geipel had slipped into cover behind the black van.

He turned the other way, looking for Élodie, and saw blood.

Lots of blood.

He panicked.

Élodie was on the pavement, face down, arms and legs akimbo. Her head was turned in Mackintosh's direction and he could see her face. There was panic there. Terror.

“I can’t move my legs.”

He reached for her arm and dragged her, heedless of the risk that he was taking in coming out of cover and the damage that he might be doing by moving her. Adrenaline buzzed in his veins, gave him fresh strength, and Élodie wasn’t heavy; he hauled her out of harm’s way before the agents behind them could fire again.

She stammered something in French that he didn’t catch. Her hand was underneath body, clasped to her stomach and, when she held it up to look at it, he saw that her palm was red with blood. He could guess what must have happened: she had been shot in the back, the bullet passing through her spine and then exiting through her gut. She had been paralysed and, unless he could get her back to the West, she would bleed out. The impossibility of what he would have to do swamped him; how could he get her through the tunnel like this? Hopelessness turned to desperation and then became anger: it was *his* fault. He should have told her to stay on the other side of the Wall.

Mackintosh heard a whimper and drew his focus back. PICASSO was curled on his side, looking up at him. He wore an expression of surprise, the moment of shock that would quickly pass as pain overwhelmed it. Mackintosh checked him over, top to bottom, and saw the blood on his thigh. Schmidt was clasping his leg with both hands and blood was running out between his fingers.

Mackintosh was filled with a bubbling of dread; the only woman who cared for him had been badly hurt and the operation that would have made him a hero was turning to ash.

He heard the sound of another engine and saw a third van as it rumbled into the street, coming to a halt behind the one that was sheltering Geipel. The doors opened and four men dropped down, each of them armed with submachine guns. They stayed behind the van, using its bulk to cover them from the shooters in the apartment.

It was a standoff. The two SAS warrant officers could keep Geipel and the newcomers covered. The two men who had shot Élodie and Schmidt might be approaching from behind, but they would have to move with cau-



tion. They must have expected that Mackintosh was armed.

“I’m going to get you out,” he said to Élodie.

“No,” she said. “You can’t. You have to leave me.”

Her voice was weak, but there was certainty there, and Mackintosh knew that she was right even though it cut him to follow the logic to its only possible conclusion.

“They’ll fix you up,” he said. “They have to. You’re a diplomat. Tell them. I’ll speak to Claude. He’ll sort it out.”

She reached up with her hand. Mackintosh clasped it and held it tight.

He turned to Schmidt. “Do you think you can move?”

“My leg,” Schmidt said. “It hurts. And the bleeding won’t stop.”

Mackintosh gritted his teeth. It was finished. Even if he could get Schmidt into the apartment, how was he going to get him down the ladder? Even if he managed to get to the bottom of the shaft, the tunnel required effort to traverse; how would Schmidt manage that with one leg? He would have to ask the SAS men to stay behind and hold up the Stasi, but that would be a death sentence. It was impossible. They were done.

He was going to have to leave them both.

“*Herr Mackintosh.*”

He froze. The shout had come from behind the van in front of him.

“My name is Karl-Heinz Sommer. I’m sure you know who I am.”

Mackintosh *did* know who Sommer was; they all did. He was a killer. He was an interrogator and executioner, an officer so enamoured with his grim vocation that his victims argued he was more demon than man, an angel of death who left piles of corpses in his wake. Sommer had risen through the Stasi’s ranks to *Generaloberst* and now he was in charge of counter-intelligence. He operated a network of informers, traitors and turn-coats who supplied him with a flow of information that sometimes made him seem as if he had been blessed with clairvoyance. They called him *die Spinne*. The spider at the centre of a web that covered all of Berlin, East and

West.

“I know who you are,” Mackintosh called back, the butt of his pistol suddenly slippery in his sweat-slicked palm.

“Then you know that the game is up.” Sommer’s English was excellent, despite a heavy accent. “Tell your soldiers to throw their weapons out of the window.”

“I don’t think so,” he called back, trying to stall him, trying to think of a way out of this mess.

“No, Herr Mackintosh, they must do this, and then you and Herr Schmidt must come out with your hands above your head. I give you my word that you won’t be harmed.”

Mackintosh took out the radio and pressed the button to open the channel. “This is SALISBURY. Shots fired. ROUEN and PICASSO are both incapacitated, can’t move.”

“Herr Schmidt,” Sommer called out in German. “Günter. This doesn’t have to end badly for you. I know what you have offered to the British. You don’t have to sell it to them. Your experience is valuable to me, too. Let’s talk about it.”

“Ignore him,” Mackintosh said to Schmidt.

The radio squelched. “*This is NORWICH,*” came the reply from one of the two SAS men. “*Please confirm the enemy is behind you.*”

“Confirmed,” he said. “Two men, maybe more.”

“*Please confirm PICASSO and ROUEN are immobile.*”

He looked back to Élodie. She was pale, and the blood had pooled around her torso, a splash of colour on the ice and snow. Schmidt was the same. “Confirmed.”

“*And you?*”

“I’m fine.”

“Günter,” Sommer called out again. “I would rather this could be concluded on good terms, but you should know that I have sent agents to col-

lect your family. They will be arrested and taken to Hohenschönhausen. I would much rather we could just let them go again, but you need to help me if you want that to happen. Put your hands up and walk out to me. You have my word that you will be well-treated.”

The radio squelched again. “*This is what we’re going to do,*” the warrant officer said. “*We’re going to throw smoke. On my mark, you’re going to run for the door. Fix it in your mind—you won’t be able to see it when the smoke spreads. But they won’t see you, either. When you see the grenades, count down from ten and then run. Do you understand?*”

Mackintosh felt sick, but radioed back that he understood. He held the radio in his left hand and the gun in his right.

“I have an injured French citizen here. She has diplomatic status. You are obliged to treat her under the Vienna Convention.”

“Of course we will treat her,” the voice came back. “Tell your soldiers to throw out their weapons and put your hands up. You will all be treated well.”

Mackintosh turned to Schmidt. “I have to go now,” he said.

Élodie squeezed his wrist. He turned to look down at her.

She mouthed the words: *Je t’aime*.

Two green canisters were tossed out of the broken window, one aimed to the left and the other to the right. They bounced once, twice, and then rolled to a stop. Smoke poured out of them, a grey cloud that billowed up and out and filled the street. It wrapped around them, and Mackintosh could only just see Élodie’s face.

“I love you too.”

*Ten, nine, eight.*

“What do I do?” Schmidt pleaded.

“Your leg needs to be treated. Stay here and wait for them to get to you.”

*Seven, six, five.*

“But—”

Mackintosh interrupted him. “I’m coming back for you, Günter. I promise. I’m coming back.”

*Four, three, two.*

The smoke was dense now, and Mackintosh could only just see his hand in front of his face.

*One.*

He let go of Élodie, clasped the gun in his other hand and, breathing in a lungful of the acrid air, he ran.

The smoke was so thick that Mackintosh didn't see the edge of the kerb. His foot crashed into it and, before he could try to maintain his balance, he was flat on his face. The air was knocked out of his lungs as he crashed down to the ground and, when he gasped for more, he found that he was breathing in the thick, cloying smoke. He coughed, pushed himself to his hands and knees and then scrambled to his feet. He set off again, disorientated and unsure that he was still heading toward the door to number 55. He heard the sound of angry voices, shouts in German for him to stop and warnings that he would be shot if he didn't. He ignored them, running harder, reaching the wall of the building and fumbling for the door. He couldn't find it and, just as he was certain that he had gone too far and that there would be no prospect of him finding his escape before the smoke cleared, he felt strong hands grabbing him by the lapels of his coat and hauling him into the building.

The door closed behind him and he heard the key turning in the lock. There was less smoke inside and he was able to see Cameron and Fisher. Both of them had their submachine guns ready and Fisher was clasp ing another grenade.

"Get into the tunnel," Cameron said.

Mackintosh looked around. Foulkes was lying on the floor, face down. "What happened?"

"Got hit when they returned fire. Shot to the head. He's dead."

“Fuck.”

“*Herr Mackintosh*,” the voice from outside called again. “You should have stayed. I would have had your friend treated. But now? I think not.”

Fisher edged up to the window and looked outside.

“No,” he said. “Fuck, *no*—”

The words were interrupted by a single gunshot.

Mackintosh felt his stomach plunge.

“What happened? What did he do?”

Fisher’s face was white. “He shot ROUEN, sir. Executed. Point blank.”

Mackintosh went for the door; there was no reason for it, no logic, and it would have been death if he had reached it, but he couldn’t help himself. Fisher stepped aside and body checked him, sending him down to the floor. He heard the chatter of a submachine gun and the other window exploded, glass and fragments of the wooden frame scattering around. Tendrils of smoke reached inside. Mackintosh heard shouting and flinched as another volley rat-tat-tatted against the wooden door.

Fisher grabbed him by the shoulders, hauled him to his feet and man-handled him toward the back of the room. “The tunnel—*now!*”

Mackintosh allowed himself to be shoved out of the room, down the stairs and into the basement. The shaft was open and the bottom of the tunnel was still lit by the lantern. Mackintosh lowered himself so that he was sitting over the lip of the drop, and then put his feet on the rungs and started to climb down.

“Quickly,” Fisher said.

Mackintosh descended as fast as he could. The treads of his boots were stuffed with ice from the road outside and he lost his footing several times before he managed to reach the bottom.

“*Go, go, go.*”

He got down onto his hands and knees and scrabbled into the mouth of the tunnel, half crawling and half sliding down the incline as the passage

headed west. He heard the sound of a muffled explosion from behind him and knew that Cameron had tossed a frag grenade back out into the apartment to deter pursuit. They had to hope that the Stasi would be wary of booby-traps; if the Germans pursued them it would be a simple enough matter to fire into the tunnel. There would be little that they would be able to do to defend themselves.

Mackintosh gasped as he crawled, trying to fill his lungs with clean air. His eyes stung from the smoke and tears ran down his face. He thought of Élodie and the way that she had looked at him. He would have stayed with her, and she had known it; she had sent him away to save his life. Sommer had murdered her in cold blood.

He thought of Schmidt, too, and the future that his failure had bought for him: a tiled basement, a stainless-steel table, a groove down the middle of the sloped floor that led to a drain where blood and viscera would be washed away. He could anticipate the tender ministrations of the Stasi interrogators; probably Schmidt would warrant the attention of Sommer himself.

*How did he know?*

Mackintosh sliced open his palm on a sharp piece of rock, ignored it, carried on. He would find out who had betrayed him, deal with them, and then deal with Sommer, too. He swore vengeance, there and then, under the foundations of the Wall.

Sommer, and whoever else was involved, was going to pay.

## **PART II**

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Smiler clicked the transmit button twice, and Jimmy's radio squelched in response. It was the all-clear signal: time to move. Jimmy adjusted the balaclava on his head, the wool scratching against the stubble on his chin, and got out of the Vauxhall Cavalier. He went around to the back and popped the boot: six disposable oxygen cylinders; a specially-made fitting that enabled him to feed the gas through a quarter-inch tube; a series of five-eighth-inch hollow stainless-steel brake lines; and a ball of steel wool. The oxygen cylinders were designed for welding torches, and he had them packed in a black canvas bag. He put the bag on his shoulder, collected the rest of the gear, closed the boot and hurried across the empty yard to the warehouse.

They were on a trading estate three miles away from Heathrow Airport. A series of warehouses formed from a large brick building that was surrounded by a generous car park. Full-length up-and-over roller doors, painted in canary yellow, marked the entrance to each unit, each with a number painted in black. Smiler was outside number 11 and had opened the smaller door that was used by those entering and exiting the building on foot.

Jimmy hurried over to him.

"Any problems?" he asked.

"Sweet as a nut."

"Alarm off?"

“It’s all done. You’re good to go.”

Eddie Fabian had set the job up for them. He had paid off one of the security guards who worked on the estate. It was New Year’s Eve and the guard had said that security would be much more lax than would otherwise be the case; the landlord was tight, and not happy about the prospect of paying the usual four-man team triple-time to guard the estate. There were only two men on duty tonight, and Fabian’s contact had laced the communal coffee pot with the ketamine that Fabian had supplied. Both the contact and his mate would partake of the coffee, and both would be comatose for hours. Smiler and Jimmy had a generous window within which to work.

They had been given plans and photographs of the warehouse. The safe was in the office at the rear. Jimmy switched on his flashlight and made his way across the floor, passing through an aisle of racking that reached halfway to the eaves, six metres above. An office space had been provided in a temporary cabin, and Smiler had already opened the door. Jimmy put a gloved hand on the handle, pushed the door all the way open and went inside.

He swept the torch around the room: a desk, two chairs, and, in the corner at the back, a large safe. Jimmy had seen pictures of the safe and knew that it was a good one. It was constructed with a double-walled three-inch-thick tempered steel body that was, in turn, filled with barrier material to resist attack. It had a relocker that would render it inoperable if anyone tampered with the lock, and it was bolted to the floor.

Smiler followed Jimmy into the office.

“What do you think?” he said.

“Do you mean can I do it? Yes. I can do it.”

There were lots of ways to crack a safe. Jimmy had considered manipulation; you took a stethoscope and put it over the lock as if it were a beating heart. You turned the dial, listening for the clicks as the notches lined up on the series of interlocking wheels inside. Manipulation, though, was slow, and the information that Jimmy had been given suggested that this particular safe would be a challenge to open that way. Jimmy looked at the locks and agreed; he could have done it, but it would have taken a long while. His

way was better.

“Go and keep watch,” Jimmy said to Smiler. “I’ll radio if I need you.”

Jimmy wanted to open the safe as quickly as possible, and, with that in mind, he had settled on his homemade thermal lance. Industrial lances were large and expensive, and Jimmy had no wish to have a record of him purchasing one that could easily be traced back to him if a diligent detective thought to check. Instead, he had created his own version. He took out an oxygen tank and fitted the regulator to the top, making sure that the brake line was nestled tight within it. He took a handful of steel wool and stuffed it into the other end of the line. He lit the steel wool with his lighter and slowly opened the valve to release the oxygen; the wool started to burn, brighter and brighter, and then, when it was a bright white that lit up the room, the wool ignited the end of the lance.

The burning iron was hot enough to cut through almost anything. Jimmy used the flame to cut an aperture in the door of the safe, a liquid slag of iron oxides dribbling and splashing from the burning end of the lance and pooling on the concrete floor in front of the safe. He worked slowly and methodically, feeling the heat on his face where it was uncovered by the mask. The red-hot point sliced through the steel door: he started on the top horizontal, creating an incision and then turning off the oxygen as the brake line burned down to a quarter of its original length.

Jimmy was sweating into the balaclava. He removed the exhausted brake line, replaced it with a fresh one, and repeated the process. He worked on the long vertical, then the bottom horizontal. He changed the lance again and then finished the final right-hand edge. When he was done, he had sliced a neat rectangle into the door.

“Still clear?” he said into the radio as he moved the cutting gear out of the way.

“All good. How you doing?”

“Nearly there. I need to hammer.”

“Do it. There’s no one here.”

Jimmy took a hammer and a thick cloth from his bag. He fixed the cloth

to the top of the safe to deaden the noise and, with two powerful strikes, he struck the corners of the cut-out door so that it fell into the body of the safe. He grabbed the exposed end with both gloved hands and pulled, dragging out the panel that he had created.

The safe was open. Jimmy took his flashlight and shone the beam inside. He saw the neatly stacked metal boxes, took one out, thumbed the clasp that secured the lid, and opened it. The box was lined with velvet and contained a collection of uncut diamonds. The gems glittered in the light of the torch. Jimmy laid the box on the floor next to the glowing slag and took out another. He opened it: it contained more uncut stones. There was a wad of notes on a lower shelf. Jimmy took it, thumbed through them—twenties and fifties—and put them in his pocket.

“We’re in,” he radioed. “Come and help.”

Smiler made his way to the office and looked down at the open boxes. “Fucking brilliant,” he said. “I ever tell you I love you?”

“Not nearly enough.”

Smiler helped Jimmy take out the other boxes.

“There you are, you little beauty.”

Eddie Fabian had been told that the warehouse would be holding the gems. They had been flown over from Amsterdam the day before and were bound for onward distribution around the country. Jimmy and Smiler had each been promised fifty large if they could successfully hit the warehouse and get the stones. It was going to be a profitable evening’s work. Not a bad way to see in 1989.

Jimmy checked his watch. It was eleven.

“Let’s get a move on,” he said. “I’m supposed to be home for Big Ben.”

Smiler drove them away from the industrial estate, taking the Great West Road to Hounslow. He parked the Cavalier five minutes away from the guesthouse. Jimmy opened the door and stepped outside.

“Well done,” Jimmy said.

“Ditto.”

“See you tomorrow.”

“You will.” Jimmy paused and grinned as he shook his head. “Shit. I almost forgot. Happy New Year.”

Smiler laughed; the date had evidently slipped his mind, too. He reached across the cabin and clasped hands with Jimmy. “Happy New Year, you Irish prick.”

Jimmy went to the back of the car and opened the boot. Smiler was responsible for delivering the diamonds to Fabian. Jimmy was okay about that; he trusted Smiler, more or less, and Fabian was frightening enough that there was no way that Smiler would think about doing anything stupid. Jimmy took out the bag with his gear, slung it over his shoulder, closed the boot and slapped his hand on the roof of the car. Smiler held up a hand in farewell and pulled out. Jimmy watched him go. He would take the car out into the countryside and torch it before driving back in the second car that they had stashed there. They would meet up with Fabian tomorrow.

Jimmy walked the rest of the distance on foot. The Civic Guest House

was in an unassuming terrace on Lampton Road. He took out his key, opened the front door and made his way up to the room that he had booked on the second floor. It was cheap and not particularly pleasant, but he hadn't chosen it for its luxury. Instead, he had scouted the area for suitable premises and had settled on this one precisely because it was unremarkable, almost certainly available and within five minutes of the warehouse. The landlady lived downstairs in her basement flat and was almost blind, navigating her way around the property with the assistance of a white stick. That was a bonus; it would be difficult for her to identify him if the police were ever to put him in a line-up.

He locked the door and crossed the room to close the curtains. He took off his jacket and shirt and stuffed them into a black bin liner that he had brought with him. He took off his trousers and reached into the front pocket. His fingers found the sharp edges of the uncut stone that he had taken from the first box that he had opened. He knew a friendly jeweller in Hatton Garden and had decided that he was going to ask him to make an engagement ring for Isabel. They had been together for ten years and she had stopped dropping hints about how she would like to get married in the suspicion, perhaps, that Jimmy would never ask. Now was the right time, though. A big job like this would see them straight for months. He had been meaning to go straight, do something on the up-and-up with his life, and maybe now was the right time to do it.

He shoved his shoes, trousers and pants into the sack, knotted the bag and left it by the door with his gear. It would go into a landfill on his way home once he was finished here.

He went into the tiny bathroom and stepped into the shower, ignoring the mildew that had grown over the panes of glass and across the dirty tiles. The flow of water was as insipid as might have been expected given the state of the property, but it was sufficient. Jimmy stood underneath it for ten minutes, scrubbing himself clean with soap. He turned off the flow, wrapped a towel around his waist and went to the sink. He had bought a tub of Swarfega and he opened it now, scooping out a small amount of the dark green, gelatinous substance that always reminded him of his uncle Barney. He worked it onto his dry skin and then wiped it off. It was ubiquitous in

garages and machine shops and was much more effective than soap at removing grease, oil, ink or other persistent dirt from the skin. He wanted to make absolutely sure that no traces of the equipment that he had used to cut into the safe could subsequently be detected.

He went back into the bedroom, dressed into the clean clothes that he had brought from home, and checked that he was good to leave the room. He looked fine: clean and tidy, dressed in decent clothes, nothing to suggest that he had just been responsible for burning his way into a safe and ransacking the contents.

He picked up the bag of equipment and the bin bag, locked the room behind him and made his way down to the street to where his Ford Capri was parked. He put the bags in the boot, opened the driver's door and got inside. It was a second-hand 3.0S Ghia Mk II with automatic transmission, painted silver, just the same as Bodie's car in *The Professionals*. Jimmy slotted the Depeche Mode cassette into the player and looked at his watch. It was eleven-thirty and he had promised to be home for midnight. He was going to watch the fireworks on the TV with Isabel and Sean. He had planned to dump the bag in a landfill, but he didn't have time to do that if he wanted to be back for the New Year. Jimmy ground his teeth in frustration; he hated to leave himself more vulnerable than he had to, even if the risk was infinitesimal, but he hated disappointing his family more.

Getting rid of the bag could wait until tomorrow.

He started the car and set off for home.

Jimmy drove back to Valentine Road. He lived in a mid-terraced house, with a basement and two storeys above it. The house had been in a dreadful state before they had purchased it, but its decrepitude was the only reason that they had been able to afford it. Jimmy had spent six months licking it into shape: he had installed two new bathrooms and a new kitchen, had stripped and polished the floorboards, and had cleared the jungle that had been allowed to grow in the back garden. The house was nice now. It was the best on the street, although that wasn't saying much; the house to the left was a squat, the house on the right was an occasional brothel, and one of the houses opposite was used to sell heroin.

It was a rough street and there had been friction when Jimmy had moved in. The brothel had been a little too loud and the clientele had disturbed Sean's sleep. Jimmy had knocked on the door and explained why it was in everyone's best interests to show some neighbourly consideration. The muscle who oversaw the place was unimpressed, and so Jimmy had broken his nose. The man's boss had been unimpressed, too, but Jimmy had made him see the good sense of adopting friendly, neighbourly relations. There had not been any problems after that.

Jimmy unlocked the door and went inside.

Isabel met him in the hall. "It's five to twelve. I thought you were going to miss it."

"I promised the wee man I'd be here," he said, "and I am."



“How was it?”

“Good. We got lucky.”

“How lucky?”

He took out the thick wad of notes he had taken from the safe and gave it to her.

“Jesus,” she breathed. “How much is that?”

“Three grand. You still want to go to Benidorm?”

“Seriously?”

“Let’s book it when they open tomorrow,” he said. “Two weeks, not one—all right?”

Isabel reached for his face and pulled him down so that she could kiss him. “I still don’t approve.”

“I know, darling.” He changed the subject, too tired for an argument about his chosen profession. “Where’s the wee man?”

Isabel indicated the lounge with a nod of the head. “Asleep.”

Jimmy and Isabel had agreed to let their son stay up to see in the New Year. He had been asking all week and had told them that all his friends would be awake for the fireworks. It was about to be 1989, he said, nearly the end of a decade. Jimmy and Isabel had teased him, saying that he couldn’t, before bargaining with him: he could watch the changing of the year with them if he promised to clean his room. He had quickly agreed to their stipulations.

Jimmy looked in at Sean. “How long did he last?”

“Till just before eleven.”

“Bless him.”

Little Sean was seven years old and the apple of his father’s eye. He and Isabel had struggled to conceive and had almost given up hope; Sean was the miracle that they thought they would never receive. There had been no second pregnancy and they had settled for what they had. Sean was

everything they had wanted and more.

Jimmy went into the sitting room and tiptoed over to the sofa.

The phone rang in the hall. "I've got it," Isabel said.

Jimmy knelt down and brushed the blond fronds of hair away from his son's face. He was boisterous when he was awake yet, when he slept, he looked so fragile and helpless. Jimmy looked at him and felt the catch in his heart.

"It's for you," Isabel said.

He stood. "Who?"

"Smiler."

Sean started to stir and Jimmy went into the hall. Isabel handed him the receiver.

"What is it?"

"Where are you?"

"Home. About to wake up my wee lad for the fireworks on the telly." Jimmy knew the question was a diversion; Smiler had called for something else. "What is it?"

"We've got a problem." He sounded agitated.

"What kind of problem?"

"A Fabian problem."

"Can it wait?"

"What do you think?"

"What's wrong with him now?"

"Not on the phone, Jimmy."

"For fuck's sake," Jimmy muttered. "When?"

"He says it's got to be now."

Isabel had gone into the kitchen and now she returned with a bottle of

champagne and their two best glasses. She saw Jimmy's face. "What is it?" she mouthed.

Jimmy shook his head. Isabel knew him too well; she saw his concern and looked at him, an eyebrow cocked. He put his hand over the phone. "It's nothing," he said, hoping that his smile might persuade her not to worry.

Isabel handed one of the glasses to Jimmy, then sat on the sofa and whispered softly to Sean. The lad stirred, turned to look at his mother and smiled.

"You're in your jammies, Mummy," he said.

"It's almost midnight. We'll watch the fireworks and then we'll go to bed. It's been a long day." She placed a finger on Sean's nose, making him smile.

Jimmy loved that smile. He lived for it.

"*Jimmy?*" Smiler pressed.

He sighed. "Where are you?"

"Charlie Chan's."

Isabel sensed him tensing; she turned toward him, dipped her head and looked at him over the rim of her glasses.

"I need you here," Smiler said.

Jimmy sighed. "I'm going to watch the fireworks with my lad first. Give me twenty minutes."

He hung up the phone before Smiler could protest.

"Tonight?" Isabel said with a weary sigh. "It's New Year's Eve."

"It's only a wee bit of business, love. I'll be careful."

"It's New Year's Eve," she repeated. "You said—"

"I know, but it can't be helped. I don't want to go."

"So don't."

“You know it doesn’t work like that. I’m sorry.”

Sean was sitting up now, his legs hanging over the side of the sofa, still too short to reach the floor.

“Right, wee man,” Jimmy said, sitting down beside him. “You ready for the fireworks?”

The little boy got up onto his father’s knee. Isabel put on the television and pushed the button for BBC One. They sat on the sofa together, watching the fireworks over the Thames. The broadcast cut back to Michael Aspel in the studio. He wished everyone a happy New Year and the broadcast came to an end. Sean was already asleep again. With great care, Jimmy got to his feet and walked up the stairs with his child in his arms. His wee boy. The blond bombshell, Isabel called him. A sweet kid. Sean loved his dog and his family and kicking a football in the nearby park. Jimmy would take him out for a game in the morning. He had promised him.

He tucked his son into bed, kissed him on the forehead and went downstairs. He grabbed his leather jacket from the back of the chair. The national anthem was just finishing and the screen cut to the test card.

Jimmy’s car keys normally sat in a dish on the hall table, but Isabel had them in her hand.

“Be careful,” she said, wrapping her arms around his neck.

They kissed and she gave him the keys. Jimmy put them in his pocket.

“Not that old thing again?”

Jimmy looked down at the coat. It was battered, with scuff marks and tears that had been patched up. He thought it gave him character.

“I told you I’d get you a new one.”

“And I told you that I like it,” he said with a smile. He opened the front door. “I’ll be back as soon as I can.”

He went outside, closed the door behind him and then zipped up the leather. The jacket had belonged to his uncle Barney. The old man had bought it on the Crumlin Road years ago and he had never replaced it. Jimmy had taken it from Barney’s flat after the old man had died. It was

older than he was, but he didn't want to change it. It reminded him of his uncle and the things that he had learned from him.

And he had learned plenty. Barney was a legend in Ardoyne, Ballysillan and Ligoniel. He had been a safe cracker with a series of jobs to his name that had made him a legend in the underworld and a thorn in the side of the police. Wee Jimmy, as he was then, had looked up to his uncle. He had wanted to be him, to the everlasting dismay of his mother, and it had been inevitable that he would eventually walk in his footsteps. Couldn't fight nature.

Jimmy made his way across the path to the end of his short garden, opened the gate, and closed it behind him. The night air chilled him. It was invigorating. He loved the feel of cold air on his skin. He looked back at the house. It wasn't anything special, but it was his. He was the first person in his family to own a house; even Uncle Barney had only ever rented. He saw the light go on in the bedroom and knew that Isabel would wait up for him. He told himself that he would be as quick as he could. He would speak to Fabian, figure out what was happening and work out how best to deal with it. And then he would come home and forget about work for the rest of the weekend.

Jimmy cruised west, enjoying the rumble of the Capri's V6, feeling the vibrations against his back through the sport seat. He thought about the car and the house and how far he had come. He had come off the boat with nothing and now this. He was making progress. Slow and steady progress. Barney would have been proud.

Jimmy had two talents in life: boxing and burglary. He had arrived in London and indulged both. He made his first money on the underground boxing circuit, taking on all-comers in bare-knuckle bouts that were arranged in underground car parks and empty warehouses. He had developed a reputation for viciousness and, after a couple of opponents had ended up in hospital, he had found that it was more difficult to set up future bouts. The money had dried up and he had gone back to the profession he had learned at his uncle's knee. He started with domestic burglaries but, as he realised that the proceeds did not bear the risk of acquiring them, he had looked at bigger scores. He had only one rule: he would only do a job if it could be done without hurting anyone. Boxing was one thing—both participants knew the risks, and agreed to them—but Jimmy had no interest in hurting anyone in the process of doing a job. He had turned down big scores that involved violence; he had to go home at the end of the day and he knew he wouldn't be able to keep his discomfort from Isabel. He had a conscience, he loved his girlfriend and his son, and some things were more important than money.

He thought about Smiler and the job that they had pulled off that night.

Jimmy had known him from his local pub and had quickly grown to like him. His real name was Hammond, although everyone preferred his nickname on account of his mouthful of gold teeth. Smiler had a betting shop in Hackney and he had found himself in a spot of bother with a family of local hoodlums who were demanding money in return for protecting the business. Another betting shop down the road had been firebombed when the owner had refused the brothers' offer, and now Smiler was worried that he would suffer the same fate.

Jimmy had offered to intercede and, all out of options, Smiler had agreed.

Barney had taught Jimmy how to control his temper, but there were occasions when he let the reins slip just a little. The brothers—Michael, David and Stephen Connolly—were local faces with reputations. Jimmy tracked them down: he found Michael feeding the ducks in Victoria Park; David was with his mistress in a Mayfair hotel; Stephen was inspecting the underside of a Fiesta XR2 that he was thinking about buying. Jimmy knew that there would be no point in asking them to clear off, so he decided to show them why it would be in their best interests to leave Smiler alone. He broke Michael's nose and tossed him in the lake; he threw the naked David out of the first-floor window of the hotel; he kicked out the jack and let the Ford drop on top of Stephen.

Smiler had been grateful. His morals were fungible, and when he had realised that Jimmy shared the same attitude toward making a living he had suggested that he might like to help him with a job that an acquaintance had put together.

The friend's name was Edward Fabian. Jimmy met him and Smiler in a pub in Islington and found that they got on well. Fabian had had his eye on a warehouse near Heathrow where, it was said, foreign currency and diamonds were kept after they had arrived at the airport and before they were sent on their way around the country. Fabian had bought off one of the security guards and said that he could get them inside. The security at the warehouse was lax, he said, and they would be able to get in and out with minimal fuss.

Fabian had been true to his word.

Jimmy was worried now. The plan had been to meet tomorrow. Why did he want to meet before then?

He pressed his foot down on the accelerator. The Capri's engine growled and the car jerked ahead. He would find out what was bugging Fabian and then he would get home. He was tired and he wanted his bed.



Jimmy reached Charlie Chan's. The nightclub was part of the Walthamstow greyhound stadium. Jimmy found a space in the car park and left the engine running so that he could listen to the end of the last song on the album. He drummed his fingers on the steering wheel and wondered what was so important that Fabian wanted to see them tonight.

Jimmy had been reluctant to take the job. He was careful, and that was born of experience. There had been a time, back in Belfast, when he had accepted a place on a crew that was planning to hit a bank. Jimmy had gone on the job and had walked away with ten grand. He'd found out after the fact that the job had been put together by a senior IRA man, and that the proceeds had gone to fund a shipment of arms from Libya. Jimmy had bailed. There was talk of a second job, but Jimmy had told them no. The man had been persistent, and Jimmy had said no a second time. The man didn't give up, and Jimmy had lost his temper and put the man on his arse. Not a good idea. It was the reason he had had to leave Belfast.

Smiler had vouched for Fabian, but it was once bitten and twice shy as far as Jimmy was concerned, and he had done a little research of his own. The old man was in his seventies and one of the most influential figures in the underworld. The legend was that Fabian had inveigled himself into the Costello family, a syndicate that had held sway over London during the war, and then taken them over from the inside through a mixture of deception and force. Fabian was old school and had maintained his position for four decades. To maintain his position all this time, with the underworld becom-

ing a more dangerous place each passing year, was impressive. Jimmy had resolved early on not to underestimate him.

And now he found himself doubting the good sense of working with him, despite the successful job that they had just pulled off. His intuition had told him to be careful, and he had ignored it.

The song came to an end. Jimmy switched off the ignition, withdrew the keys and dropped them into the inside pocket of his leather jacket. He opened the car door and stepped out.

Signs outside the club advertised a New Year's Eve party and Jimmy could hear the muffled bass of the new Jive Bunny song. Jimmy was well past the time of life when going to a nightclub was an attractive proposition, and the prospect of going into this one tonight—he knew it would be filled with drunks, and evidence suggested that the music would be awful—was not one that filled him with enthusiasm. He cursed Smiler again and promised himself that he would stay only as long as was necessary before he went back home.

The nightclub was as busy as Jimmy had feared it would be. The place was a dive: the interior had just been refreshed, and now it looked like a Duran Duran video shot in Pablo Escobar's bedroom. The decor was a mixture of reds and blacks with gold brocade. There were artificial plants in china pots that were supposed to look like something out of the Ming dynasty. There was a grand piano in one corner behind a velvet rope. Jimmy looked around and shook his head: it felt like a party in a Chinese restaurant. The dance floor was packed. He saw men in shell suits, stone-washed jeans and white trainers eyeing up girls in mini-skirts, leg warmers and fingerless gloves. He saw three lads smoking dope in the corner and saw two drunken girls helping their even more drunken friend back on to her heels after she tripped down the steps to the dance floor.

"Excuse me," Jimmy said, hopping out of the way just in time as a young woman vomited her Indian takeaway all over the monogrammed carpet.

Jimmy reached the door that led to the office on the floor above. There was a bouncer barring the way.

“All right, mate,” Jimmy said.

“What you want?”

“I’m here to see Mr Fabian.”

“What’s your name?”

“Jimmy Walker. He’s expecting me.”

“He’s in the office,” the man said. “Up you go.”

Jimmy climbed the stairs to the landing. There was a plain wooden door; he knocked on it and heard a voice from inside telling him to come in. He opened the door and went through.

It was a medium-sized room with a table and five chairs, a water cooler and a television resting on an old credenza. The neon sign that advertised the club was outside the window and it pulsed on and off, casting alternating flickers of red and blue into the room. There were two people sitting at the table: Smiler and Edward Fabian. There were three glasses and a bottle of Scotch on the table, together with the boxes of diamonds from the raid. One of the boxes was open, the stones inside glittering in the pulses of light.

The men looked up at him as he came inside.

“Evening,” Jimmy said, shutting the door behind him.

“Hello, Jimmy,” Fabian said. Smiler nodded his acknowledgement. “Take a seat.”

Jimmy sat down. “What’s up?”

“Thanks for coming,” Fabian said. “I appreciate it’s late, but this is important.”

Fabian took the top off the bottle, stood up and poured out two measures of Scotch.

“How was the job?”

Jimmy looked at Smiler. “You haven’t told him?”

“I wanted you both to be here,” Fabian said.

“It went well. In and out, just like we planned.”

“The safe?”

“I cut it open. No problem.” He nodded down to the open box. “You’re happy with the stones?”

“Very happy,” Fabian said.

“Good,” he said. “I’m glad.”

“Smiler said you were good and he was right.”

“So why did you want to see us tonight? I thought we were meeting tomorrow for the cut-up?”

“There’s someone I want you to meet,” the old man said.

Fabian went to the door. Jimmy had a blast of apprehension and pushed his own chair away from the table. Fabian opened the door and stepped to the side. Four men were standing on the landing: cheap suits, scuffed shoes, bad hair. The first man came inside and, as the three behind him shuffled forward, Jimmy heard the sound of feet on the stairs.

“Evening, gents,” the man said.

“Who the fuck are you?” Smiler said.

“I’m Detective Inspector Kennedy. Flying Squad.”

Smiler got up so fast that his chair fell back against the wall. “What the fuck?”

“You’re both under arrest for robbery.”

“You *what*?”

“You heard me.”

“Bollocks to that,” Smiler protested. “We ain’t done nothing.”

Kennedy came inside and Fabian took the opportunity to step out onto the landing. The policeman went to the credenza, turned the TV around and carefully pulled away a wire that had been fastened to the back of the case.

He held it up for them all to see: the top of the wire ended in a small microphone.

“We’ve got you all on tape, lads. We can have a listen back at the station. You’re coming downstairs.” He pointed at Jimmy. “You first, son.”

Jimmy looked around the room. Smiler was open-mouthed, just slowly realising what was happening to them. Edward Fabian, stalwart of the London underworld, was selling them out. Here they were, caught with their pants down and thousands of pounds of stolen diamonds on the table. Jimmy ignored him and looked for the exits. There was no other door, and the only other possible way out was the window. He thought about it, then dismissed it; they were on the first floor and the Old Bill would have men down there in the event that anyone managed to get by the blokes on the stairs, not that that was very likely.

Kennedy stepped aside to let the other men come inside. The next officer to come through the door was big, built like a prop forward and, as he stepped from the gloom of the landing and into the light of the office, Jimmy saw that he was carrying a rubber cosh.

“Leave it out,” Jimmy said.

“Turn around. Hands behind your back.”

Jimmy did as he was told.

The big policeman took out a pair of cuffs. “You don’t have to say anything unless you wish to do so but it may harm your defence if you don’t mention, when questioned, something you—”

Smiler surged at him, drilling him with a right hand and shoving him back against the wall.

All hell broke loose.

Jimmy grabbed the bottle of Scotch from the table, took a half-turn and made for the door. Kennedy tried to block him, but Jimmy crashed the bottle down on his head. It had a heavy base and it didn’t smash; instead, Kennedy dropped to the floor, spark out. There were four more men outside and another on the stairs. They were all over six feet and heavy with it.

They were taller than Jimmy and they outweighed him. But Jimmy was as hard as nails, not afraid to fight dirty, and desperate.

He swung the bottle at the nearest man, but the officer got his arms up in time and deflected the blow. Jimmy drove his knee into the man's gut and, as he instinctively dropped his guard, backhanded the bottle over his head. This time the bottle smashed, liquid and glass and blood mixing over the man's scalp.

A second man grabbed Jimmy around the neck and tried to drag him down to the floor. Jimmy grabbed the man's fingers and pulled back, two of them snapping like twigs as his grasp was broken. Jimmy grabbed the man's jacket with both hands and butted him in the face. The man howled as his nose was broken, blood pouring from his nostrils.

Jimmy dropped the officer as he felt Smiler behind him. He lowered his shoulder and charged into the remaining men at the top of the stairs, trying to force them apart so that he could make his way to the exit. He didn't get far; he felt a crack on the back of his head and then a starburst of pain. His legs went weak, he fell to his knees and, as a second blow careened off his skull, he fell back to see the big officer with the cosh standing over him.

The man raised the cosh above his head and swung it, for the third time, at Jimmy's head. Jimmy ate the carpet and felt another blow as the lights in the room dimmed and then faded away.

The new year dawned bright and clear, and Mackintosh decided that he would begin it with a gentle walk through the park near his home in St John's Wood. The streets around the park were quiet, with just a handful of children out and about. He paused to watch a couple of bright-eyed boys trying out brand-new bicycles and, as he broached the park, a father and his daughter flying a kite overhead.

The air was crisp and he felt invigorated as he returned to his house. He looked at his watch; it was eight, and he was due to take a breakfast meeting in an hour. He went inside to collect his leather satchel, then went back out and flagged down a black cab on Wellington Road.

"Where to, guv?"

"The Athenæum, please. Whitehall."

"Right you are."

He felt a buzz of apprehension as they pulled out into the light traffic. The meeting had the potential to be a portentous one. He needed it to go the way he wanted; he had spent the last week thinking about Élodie and about how he was going to avenge her. He thought about PICASSO, too, about where he might be and what might have happened to him, but it was really all about her.



MACKINTOSH HAD PREVIOUSLY LABOURED under the illusion that the seat of British power and influence lay in Whitehall, but now he knew better. The Palace of Westminster contained both houses of government: the House of Commons and the House of Lords. Those august institutions were found on Whitehall Road, along with the headquarters of the Civil Service, but he had swiftly been disabused of his misapprehension after he joined the secret service. Power was displayed in these theatres; the *real* power was wielded in the private gentlemen's clubs that were found nearby.

The taxi stopped on Pall Mall. The home of the Athenæum was a grand building with three imposing tiers and a portico supported by a row of double Doric columns. A frieze had been included around the outside of the building that reminded Mackintosh of the Elgin Marbles. Mackintosh had never been inside the building before and felt momentarily intimidated as he gazed up at the wide double doors at the top of the steps. He clutched his satchel and ascended, nodding his thanks to the member of staff who directed him through to a waiting room.

Another immaculately dressed staff member told Mackintosh to take a seat in a studded leather armchair before a roaring fire. He put the satchel down beside him, adjusting the thick folder that protruded from the top. He had worn his best tweed suit and had paired it with newly shined brogues. His old school tie accompanied a crisp, white shirt. He looked smart but, as elderly male members of the nobility were shown into the dining room for their breakfast, he still felt like an intruder.

An elderly waiter in full topcoat and tails beckoned Mackintosh to follow him. He got up and followed the old man into what appeared to be a small library. There were books stacked to the ceiling on every wall. A fire burned down in the grate, and two armchairs had been set facing the fire. In between the chairs rested a table with a decanter and two small glasses. The waiter filled both glasses, gave a subtle bow and left the room, closing the door behind him.

One of the chairs was occupied. The man, dressed in a three-piece suit, did not acknowledge his presence; instead, he picked up one of the glasses,

murmured, “Good health,” and then took a delicate sip. “Happy New Year.”

Mackintosh stayed where he was. He wasn’t sure what he was expected to do.

“What’s the matter?” the man in the chair said. “Too early for you? It’s bloody freezing outside.”

“It is.”

“It’s sherry—a good bottle, too. It’s festive. Get it down your neck and sit down.”

Mackintosh took the glass and sipped the sherry. He took off his jacket and sat down in the empty chair. The man facing him in the other chair was Vivian Bloom, and he was legendary within the intelligence establishment. Bloom was in his early forties, although he could easily have been mistaken for much older than that. His suit might have been expensive once, but now it was showing the signs of wear and tear; the waistcoat was missing a button, the elbows and knees looked as if the fabric was starting to thin, and there was a stain on the jacket that had been removed with only partial success. His hair was thinning at the sides, with a tuft in the centre of his crown, just above his forehead, that looked as if it had been glued there. He had a long forehead, untrimmed eyebrows and a languidly expressive face that looked particularly apt for sarcasm. Bloom had worked for MI6, although his role had become more and more nebulous as time had passed. He had become a link between government and the intelligence services, and had, over time, accrued significant power and influence. That was the reason Mackintosh had lobbied for this meeting. Bloom had the power to give him what he wanted.

“What do you think of the club?” Bloom asked.

“Very grand,” he said.

“Did you see the frieze outside?”

“Yes.”

“Cost five per cent of what they spent on the whole bloody building. The Secretary of the Admiralty at the time was a man called Croker. He was

one of the founding members and he insisted, said they had to do it. Other members said that it would be better to spend the money on an ice house to keep the place cool in summer, but he wouldn't hear of it. They made up a rhyme about him: 'I'm John Wilson Croker, I do as I please; instead of an ice house, I give you—a frieze!'" Bloom chuckled, a gravelly sound that rumbled up from his stomach. "I know," he said. "Awful joke. Apologies."

Mackintosh had never met with a senior government official before. Bloom was evidently eccentric and the experience was unnerving.

"How's Berlin?"

"Terrible, sir."

"Ready to go back?"

"I am."

"You've recovered from what happened?"

"I have, thank you."

"You lost an agent?"

"Yes, sir. Foulkes."

"And the French liaison?"

He felt a pulse of anger that Élodie was being dismissed so glibly. "Yes, sir."

"Fucking Stasi. Still—we were getting busy on their patch. No doubt we would've done the same to them."

Mackintosh swallowed, trying to nudge the conversation along. "Thank you for meeting me, sir. I'm grateful for your time."

"Pleasure's all mine. I've kept an eye on your career, Harry. Very impressive. Time in Ulster, then an impressive foreign tour. Berlin's the only real blot on the copybook, isn't it?"

"Can I ask if you've had a chance to read my memo?"

Bloom turned away from the fire and met Mackintosh's gaze. "Of course. Why do you think you're here?"

“Might I ask what you think?”

“I think that it’s an interesting idea.”

“Thank you. Can I—”

“It’s an interesting idea and I’ll certainly look at it for the future.”

“But, sir, with respect, one of my agents was killed. Berlin Station is... well, there barely *is* a station anymore. It’s been hopeless for a long time... what happened just goes to show: the Stasi are laughing at us. The new men I asked for—I need them, very badly.”

“You need new men,” he said. “We can agree on that, and you’ll get them. But I’m not sure you need *those* men.”

“Sir?”

“Soldiers, Harry? *Assassins*? Really?”

“We have to do something. We can’t compete with them with what we have.”

Bloom exhaled. “I can see the merit. Times are hard at the moment. The Soviet Union is beginning to crack, the Baltic states want to leave, and the Kremlin is concerned, as well they should be. And the East German government is desperate. Given the damage that PICASSO could have done, it’s not surprising they did what they did.”

“There are rules—you don’t kill the other side.”

“I understand the convention,” Bloom said patiently. “I’ve done my time in places like that—*worse* than that. But I don’t think that we can complain about it. They know we won’t make a fuss about it given that they caught us with our fingers in the till.”

Mackintosh fidgeted and had to work to keep the angry outburst from his lips.

“My dear chap,” Bloom said. “I *am* sorry. Foulkes was an excellent agent. His sacrifice cannot be underestimated, and he will be replaced. But what you’re asking for is simply impossible. You understand why, surely?”

Mackintosh felt a bead of sweat on his brow. The fire was warm and his

tweed was thick; he regretted wearing the suit, but it was too late for that now. Bloom's inability, or unwillingness, to see the urgency of his request was something that he was finding difficult to accept.

"Sir—"

"Vivian," Bloom said. "Please—call me Vivian. No need for formality here."

"Vivian," Mackintosh started again, smiling through his impatience. "I know he'll be replaced, but I don't need another five men with degrees in modern languages from Cambridge. I've still got three of those and they're useless. Their spelling and handwriting are impeccable, but, with the greatest of respect, I need men who can pull a trigger instead of pulling an oar in a fucking boat race."

Mackintosh regretted his choice of language at once, but it had been almost automatic. He looked up at Bloom, waiting for a rebuke and got, instead, another throaty chuckle.

"Don't mind me," he said, still chuckling. "Please—go on."

Mackintosh bent down, gathered the files from his satchel and placed them on his knee.

"I need fighting men. Soldiers. Trained to kill. The Stasi is filled with men like that, and we are outmatched. I don't need translators. I need killers."

"Indeed. You've made that point."

Mackintosh's mouth felt like sandpaper. He might have spoken out of turn, but, in truth, he didn't care. He knew he was right and Bloom needed to hear it. Something needed to be done; the status quo was not sustainable. He watched Bloom for a reaction, watched as he sat quietly and finished his sherry. He put the glass back on the table and crossed his hands on his lap.

"There's passion in you, Harry. That's why you were chosen for this post. The military background, too—that's another reason. This, though, is not a military operation. Say I gave you your assassins—what would happen if one of them was caught or killed in the East? It wouldn't take the

Stasi long to work out who they really are, and then you have a member of the British armed forces captured or killed in what can only be described as an act of aggression. I understand why you're asking, but if I give you what you want you could just as easily start a war. And I'm afraid I can't allow that."

Mackintosh looked down at the thick Indian rug, letting his eyes trace the patterns. That was it. He had blown it. He couldn't operate with the staff that he currently had; they might as well fold up the tent and go home. The Stasi had won. British intelligence would cease to function in Berlin in any meaningful capacity. The botched operation to exfiltrate PICASSO would be his epitaph. His tour in Berlin would be curtailed, and even a junior officer knew that a short-of-tour expulsion would be the end of his career. His reputation would suffer, and his future promotions and assignments would be affected. He wondered where the mandarins might send him instead. The Shithole Tour: Third World countries in Africa and Asia.

"Why are you looking so glum?"

Mackintosh looked up. Bloom was smiling at him. "I'm sorry?"

Bloom took one of the files that had been stacked on the table next to his chair. He handed it to Mackintosh.

"Of course," he said, "if you were to recruit someone from *outside* the intelligence services and *outside* the military, and if that person were caught in East Berlin, well, we could say that we knew nothing about them. That might be something that we could get away with."

Mackintosh took the file, opened it and began to read.

"The man in that file is dangerous," Bloom said. "He's intelligent, ruthless, and he's been on MI5's watchlist ever since he got off the boat from Ireland. A man like that could cause all sorts of havoc in Berlin. We'd just need a good legend for him, something plausible, and then, if he's discovered, or captured, or killed, there would be no way to trace him to us. He's completely expendable."

Mackintosh scanned the page.

The waiter reappeared and refilled the sherry glasses. Bloom waited un-

til the man had stepped away again before continuing.

Mackintosh closed the file. "He's a common criminal. A burglar."

Bloom shook his head. "We're going to have to disagree there. He's not common—he's *exceptional*. And he finds himself in rather an awkward predicament. He was arrested earlier this morning. The Flying Squad pulled him in for robbing a warehouse at Heathrow. It was a setup, of course. I wanted a reason to take him off the street. He's Irish and he has experience working with the Provos. Between you and me, I was thinking about putting him to use over there. But then you made your request and I thought that maybe there's another purpose we could put him to."

"Sir—"

"This is it, Harry. The best I can do. He's in a cell in New Scotland Yard. Go and see him."

"Does he speak German?"

"I'd be very surprised."

"He's not trained?"

"Not formally."

"He's...he's completely unsuited for what I'd need him to do."

"If you want someone who speaks German, I've got a number of Cambridge candidates, but you've already told me what you think about that. This man is never going to be an oarsman. He's never going to speak Latin. He doesn't know his Cicero from his Seneca. On the other hand, he has a history as a street fighter. He put three nasty local scumbags in hospital after they tried to extort a friend of his. Dropped a car on one of them and broke his legs. It took four officers to subdue him last night. *Four*. And two of them have been signed off duty for a week after what he did to them. And if you're concerned about fallout, then please let me be plain. You will not be held responsible for his actions."

Mackintosh got to his feet.

"One more thing," Bloom said. "PICASSO—do you know where he is?"

“I’m asking around,” Mackintosh said. “But I can guess.”

“Having his fingernails extracted at Hohenschönhausen?”

Mackintosh nodded.

“Shame. You were unfortunate, Harry. Bringing him out would have been a feather in your cap. But he’s gone now—let it go. Use the Irishman to give the Stasi something else to think about.”

“And if he dies in the process?”

“Then he dies. Men like him are ten a penny. There’s plenty more where he came from.”



Jimmy woke up in a room he didn't recognise. The walls and floor were bare concrete. There was a single metal door with no window. There was a bucket in the corner—Jimmy guessed it was the toilet—and a camera had been fixed up in the corner, next to the ceiling. A red light shone from the body of the camera, suggesting that it was recording and that he was being watched. He was lying on a thin mattress. His muscles ached and his head felt as if it was about to split. He put his fingers to his scalp and felt scabs of dried blood.

He remembered what had happened and groaned.

Fabian had set them up. Jimmy couldn't get his head around the thought of it. The old man was a pillar of the criminal community; to conspire with the police to have two men arrested would be the end of his reputation. No one would ever trust him again.

He sat up, and immediately wished that he hadn't. The headache throbbed and he remembered the man with the cosh. God knows how many times he had struck him while he was on the floor. He pulled up his shirt and looked down; there were black welts on his torso and on his arms, and, from the ache in his legs, he guessed that he had been beaten there, too.

He heard footsteps outside. They stopped outside the door to his cell. Jimmy glanced up at the camera and saw that the red light had blinked off. The door was unlocked and opened. A man stood in the doorway, looking in at him. He didn't look like a policeman: early forties; wearing a tweed

suit that was patently more expensive than any policeman could afford; ditto on the handmade shoes; a white shirt and an old school tie. He had a leather briefcase and looked down at Jimmy through a pair of large, black-rimmed glasses.

“Mr. Walker.”

“That’s right. Who are you?”

“I’d like to speak to you.”

“Be my guest. I’m not going anywhere.”

“No. Very true.”

“Who are you?”

The man pointed up to the camera. “I’m not here,” he said.

“Are you police?”

“No.”

“So where am I?”

“New Scotland Yard.”

“So if you’re not a copper—”

The man interrupted him. “I’m here to make you an offer. Given your present circumstances, you should give it careful consideration.”

“I should?”

He smiled. “If you take it, you can walk out of here with me as soon as we’re done.”

“Just like that?”

“Just like that.”

The man stepped into the cell and an officer closed the door behind him. He put down his briefcase and held out a hand. Jimmy took his wrist and turned the hand over, making sure that it was empty. He had heard of police coming into the cells with evidence in their hands; they palmed it, got your dabs on it, used it to fit you up. This man’s hand was empty. Jimmy released

his wrist.

“You still haven’t told me who you are.”

Still the man did not answer. He reached down and opened his satchel, removing a manila file.

“James Sean Walker,” he said, reading from the file. “Born in the Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast. Raised by Barney Walker after both parents were killed in a pub bombing in seventy-two. Studied—or *not*, as the case may be—at Saint Francis of Assisi School. Left with no qualifications, so I’m guessing it was the latter.” He palmed through the pages. “Boring, boring, boring. Let’s jump ahead. Went off the rails a little, got into breaking and entering. Worked with the IRA team that turned over the Allied Irish Bank five years ago.”

Jimmy almost told him that he hadn’t known the Provos were involved in that job, but shut his mouth just in time. He was in a police cell, and no one had ever been convicted for that heist; the last thing he needed to do was to give them something to suggest that he had been in on it.

The man turned more pages. “Left Belfast soon after with the IRA *and* the RUC on your tail. Don’t need to go into your résumé in London. In a relationship; Isabel, isn’t it? One child—Sean. Decent boxer. No gainful employment and yet a house in Hackney. The police know about your nocturnal business, although you’ve been clever enough not to give them anything to go on. Until now, of course. Arrested for suspicion of a diamond heist in Heathrow last night.”

“I’d like to speak to my lawyer about that,” Jimmy said.

“I’m sure you would, James.”

“It’s Jimmy,” he said, leaning back on his bed.

“*James*,” the man said. “You’re in a spot, aren’t you?”

“Been in worse.”

“Really? The police found a bag full of equipment in the back of your car. I’m not an expert, of course, but I’m told it’s a homemade torch for cutting into safes. A bag of clothes, too. Balaclava. Gloves. All very suspi-

cious.”

Jimmy shrugged.

“I’m your best friend right now, James.”

“And yet you still haven’t told me who you are.”

“I work for the government—”

“Then you can fuck right off.”

The man shook his head. “James—really. *Please*. Just listen. We have a position open that would suit a man with your talents.”

Jimmy put his head back slowly and rubbed his eyes. “No thanks, mate. I’m all right here.”

“Really? You want to stay in prison for the next ten years?”

Jimmy sat up. “*Ten* years?”

“The police say they can tie you to a string of jobs across London and the southeast. Armed robbery, James. What do you expect?”

“Wait a minute,” Jimmy said. “Who said anything about guns?”

“The police found an unregistered shotgun in the back of your Capri. They say it looks like the same shotgun used to threaten the driver of an armoured car last month.”

Jimmy groaned. “I’ve never done an armoured car.”

“You would say that, James.”

“They’re fitting me up.”

“Armed robbery is a serious offence. The minimum you’re looking at is ten. The *minimum*. You could get more.”

“All this to get me to work for you?”

“It happened that I was looking for some help and I was given the chance to look at your file. I have, and I think you could help me out. You scratch my back, James, I scratch yours.”

Jimmy was ready with another protest, but he stifled it. They had him

with his back against the wall, out of options, and he hated it. He hated the fact that he had been deceived, hated the fact that it had taken him too long to see through it, and *hated* the fact that his options had all been taken away.

“You still haven’t told me who you are.”

“I’m a second chance. I’m your get-out-of-jail card. And your new boss. If you do as you’re told, you won’t serve any time. You have my word.”

“Is this some kind of trick?”

“It’s an offer. And it’s walking out the door in ten seconds. Up to you, James. Make up your mind.”

Jimmy stared at the floor, his mind spinning. He thought of Isabel and his son.

“How long before I could see my girlfriend and my boy?”

The man smiled. “You can go and see them now.” The man looked at his watch. “It’s ten o’clock. Traffic should be acceptable. We could probably be there in half an hour.”

“Really?”

“We have a flight to catch this afternoon—if you say yes, of course. You can see them until we need to go. If you don’t say yes, you’ll be staying here. I suppose you’ll see them when they come to visit. Won’t be easy to cuddle your boy through a screen, though. I think my way is best.”

Jimmy stood up, wincing from the aches down his back and legs.

“Who are you?”

“My name is Mackintosh,” he said. “Are you saying yes?”

“What choice do I have?”

The man put out his hand again and, this time, Jimmy took it.

He smiled. “Welcome to the secret service.”

It took ten minutes for Mackintosh to take care of the formalities of arranging Jimmy's release. His coat, shoelaces and car keys were returned to him by the officer whom he had butted in the face; the man's nose was held together by a piece of tape.

"Sorry about that," Jimmy said, pointing to his nose while delivering a wide grin.

"Piss off."

Mackintosh led him out of the back of the building to a car park and took him over to a brand-new Jaguar. He told Jimmy to get in and, without needing to ask for the address, drove them both to the house in Hackney.

"You've got ten minutes," he said.

"Ten minutes?"

"The flight leaves at one. We need to be on it."

Jimmy put his hand on the door handle, then paused. "What do I say?"

"Tell them you're going away on business for a week or two."

"You haven't told me where."

"You'll find that out when we're on the plane."

"So what do I say now?"

"I don't know, James. She's your girlfriend. Think of something suit-

able.”

“Lie to her, you mean.”

“I’m sure it won’t be the first time.”

Jimmy opened the door and stepped out. It was cold, his breath fogging in front of his face. He looked at the downstairs window and saw Isabel’s face. Jimmy found that his mouth was dry and his stomach was unsettled. He zipped the jacket up, went through the gate and across the small garden, and opened the door.

Isabel was waiting for him in the hall. She seemed paler than usual, and her eyes were red, just as they always looked when she hadn’t had enough sleep. Jimmy opened his arms and embraced her. He held her for a long moment until he knew that he wasn’t going to cry.

“I’m sorry,” he said, a catch in his throat.

“Where have you been?”

“I had a bit of trouble last night.”

“I waited up. All night, Jimmy—I haven’t been to bed. Sean was beside himself when he woke up. You were supposed to be playing football with him this morning.”

“I know I was, darling. I’m sorry. I’ll talk to him—where is he?”

“He’s not here, Jimmy. He’s gone over to Sonya’s house.”

Sonya was Isabel’s sister. They had a boy, Logan, who was the same age as Sean. Jimmy swallowed again; he wanted to see his boy before he left, but now it wouldn’t be possible. It wasn’t Isabel’s fault; it was his own. His own stupidity and credulousness had landed him in this mess.

He held her by the shoulders and looked into her eyes. “I was arrested. The man I was working for—he fitted me up. I woke up in Scotland Yard.”

She reached up to touch his cheek. “They did that to you?”

“We had a little difference of opinion,” he said. “I was trying to get home. They didn’t want me to.”

“But you sorted it out?”

“What do you mean?”

“You’re here now. You’ve fixed it? Nothing’s going to happen?”

“Not quite.”

“What does that mean?”

“I’ve got to go away.”

“Where?”

“Scotland.”

“Why do you need to go to Scotland?”

“A man came to see me in the cells this morning. He works for the government. He said the charges against me would be dropped if I do some work for them.”

“What kind of work?”

“I don’t know,” he said honestly.

“For how long?”

“Two weeks, then I’m home again and we can go back to how we were before.”

“What do I tell Sean?”

“I don’t know,” Jimmy said. “Maybe that I’ve a job to do, and I’ll be back as soon as I can—tell him I’ll bring him a present.”

“You’re going to buy him something and hope he forgets you’ve left us for two weeks?”

“Come on, darling,” he said. “I’m doing my best. I don’t want to go.”

“So don’t.”

“I have to. If I don’t, they’ll charge me. They got me bang to rights and they’ll throw the book at me. I’m sorry—I have to go.”

She looked away, turning her face to the side so that she could wipe



away the tears without him seeing that she was crying. “This has to change,” she said. “I can’t do this any more. I worry; every time you go out to work I worry that you’re not going to come back. I thought something had happened last night. I thought you’d been hurt or worse. I...”

The words petered out, replaced by a sob. Her shoulders juddered as Jimmy pulled her against him, wrapping his arms around her and holding her tight until the crying subsided.

“It’s going to stop,” he said. “It’ll be different when I get back.”

“You’ve said that before,” she said, her voice raw.

“I mean it this time. No more jobs. I’ll go straight. The house is paid for—I’ll get a job. Something kosher. I promise.”

He heard the blast of a horn from outside.

“Who’s that?” Isabel asked.

“The man who got me out this morning. I have to go with him now.”

She held onto him tighter, burying her face into his neck. He could smell her tears. He gently reached down and removed her arms from around his shoulders. Her face was streaked with moisture; he reached down and wiped the tears away.

“I don’t want you to go.”

“And I don’t want to go, but I have to. Tell Sean I love him. I’ll be back as soon as I can.” He held her face with both hands and kissed her. “I love you,” he said.

He turned away from her before he changed his mind, opened the door and walked across the garden to the pavement. He could feel the wetness in his eyes and blinked it away; he didn’t want Mackintosh to see him crying. He got to the Jaguar and opened the door.

“Ready?” Mackintosh said.

Jimmy nodded, not trusting himself to speak without the emotion choking his words.

Mackintosh put the car into gear and pulled away. Jimmy watched in the

mirror as they nudged into the traffic. Isabel was at the door, watching him leave.

Mackintosh took the coffees to the table that Walker had selected. He put them down and lowered himself into the spare seat. He looked at Walker. He had given the Irishman a change of clothes and he had put them on in a bathroom when they arrived: a black sweater with black jeans and boots. He had been assessing the Irishman during their drive to Heathrow and he watched him now. Mackintosh hadn't spent time in the secret service, stationed in some of the most hostile and dangerous cities in the world, without developing the ability to quickly size a person up. Were they trustworthy? Frightened? Would they do what they had promised to do? After a while, he had not even needed to go through the process of a formal evaluation; he just *knew*.

Walker looked distracted now. There was a window next to the table and it offered a view of the runway. He was staring at a jumbo as it sped up and, gradually, rose into the air.

"James."

He was distracted, even a little wistful.

"James. *Jimmy*."

Walker looked away from the window.

"You're coming back," Mackintosh told him.

"Two weeks," Walker said, parroting what Mackintosh had told him earlier. "Why don't I believe that?"

Mackintosh didn't answer. It was possible that they would be able to do what he intended in two weeks, but there were variables. And, of course, coming back again assumed that they were successful. There was certainly no guarantee of that. His plan was audacious, very dangerous, and, if he was honest, the odds were against it.

But he couldn't tell Walker that.

"So where are we going?"

"Berlin."

"*What?*"

"West Berlin, to be precise. You haven't been there before, have you?"

"I've never been outside the country."

"I know," Mackintosh said. "You don't have a passport, do you?"

"Never needed one."

"Here."

Mackintosh reached into his pocket and took out an envelope. Walker opened it and took out a brand-new passport. He flipped to the back; he looked at his own photograph.

"Where did you get this?"

"I pulled some strings."

Walker opened the envelope and emptied it: two more documents and a wad of bank notes.

"There's a boarding pass for the flight," he said.

Walker examined it. "One way?"

"We'll sort the return out later."

Walker held up the final piece of paper. "The Berlin Hilton," he read.

"You've got a reservation there." He laid his finger on the bank notes. "And a thousand Deutschmarks. Enough for everything you need. When you land at Tempelhof, get a taxi to the hotel. Check in and make yourself

comfortable. I'll come to your room tonight and we can talk about what we're going to be doing tomorrow."

"What are we going to be doing?"

"A little reconnaissance. We'll talk about it tonight."

"Why am I going to Berlin?"

"You're going to have a meeting with a man. You'll take the meeting, find out what I need to know, and you'll be on your way back home again with a clean record and the thanks of a grateful government."

"That's it?"

"Mostly," Mackintosh said.

"You're full of it," Walker said with a derisive chuckle. "What else?"

"I'll brief you tonight," Mackintosh said. He decided to change the subject and pointed to the coffee. "Finish that and go to the gate. You're leaving in thirty minutes. It's two hours to Berlin. Did you sleep last night?"

"Not much."

"Try and get some on the flight. You're going to be busy."

## **PART III**

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The ticket to Berlin was in his name and the woman behind the counter at check-in processed him with the sluggish boredom that one might expect from someone who had repeated the same monotonous task over and over all day. He made his way to the gate and saw that the flight had been delayed for an hour. He had seen a bar on his walk through the terminal and so he returned to it and ordered a pint. He drank it quickly and ordered another. The customers around him were unremarkable: couples travelling together, businessmen discussing the meetings that they would take in Paris, Milan, Vienna and Bonn. Jimmy sat at the bar and concentrated on his pint. He felt out of place and uncomfortable. Mackintosh had been right; he had never had a passport before. He had never even set foot on an aeroplane. The prospect did not concern him, but it gave him a feeling of inferiority that he found difficult to ignore.

He finished his second pint, ordered and drank a third, and, finally beginning to feel the effects of the drink, made his way back to the gate. Boarding had commenced and, after relieving himself in the bathroom, he presented his boarding pass and passport to the member of staff who was working her way through the queue and made his way down the air bridge and onto the jet.

THE FLIGHT WAS UNEVENTFUL. Jimmy had a seat in economy and it was too uncomfortable for him to think about sleeping. He took out one of the ten-Deutschmark bills that Macintosh had given him and bought a gin and tonic. He drank that, ordered another, and then picked at the tasteless sandwich that the attendant had brought him.

He looked out of the window as they passed over Europe and wondered what Isabel and Sean would be doing. He had hated to leave his girl like that, and had hated the idea of leaving without seeing Sean even more. But what choice did he have? The police would have been able to have him convicted if that was what they wanted. He had been done up like a kipper; they had him on tape discussing an armed robbery, and there was evidence in his car that would be impossible for a jury to ignore.

Jimmy knew, too, that what Mackintosh had said was true: men like Mackintosh would be able to drip their poison into the ear of the judge responsible for sentencing and would be able to ensure that Jimmy received punishment at the upper end of the tariff. Ten years? Fifteen years? Jimmy was not prepared to countenance that. He was thirty now. The thought of throwing away the best years of his life and missing the chance to see his son grow up was something that he could not bear to contemplate.

He had no choice.

He looked down at the lights that prickled the landscape below and tried to imagine what the next few days might bring. He was finding it difficult to process what had happened to him since he had left his house earlier that morning. Mackintosh had him exactly where he wanted him. Jimmy didn't know what would be required of him in Berlin, but he knew that there was no going back now.



The flight landed ninety minutes behind schedule. Jimmy thanked the winsome flight attendant who had flirted with him as she delivered his drinks and then disembarked and made his way into the terminal. He had no luggage to collect and so went straight to immigration, where he presented his papers to a taciturn man working the queue from inside a glass-fronted cubicle.

“What is your business in Germany?” the man asked him in staccato English.

Mackintosh hadn’t told him what to say. Jimmy found himself unusually self-conscious. “Business,” he said.

“Where are you staying?”

Jimmy remembered the papers. “The Berlin Hilton,” he said.

“You have a one-way ticket.”

“I’m not sure how long I’ll need to be here for,” Jimmy said. “Probably a week.”

The man looked down at his passport, looked up to his face again and then, without another word, stamped the empty page and handed the document back to him. Jimmy thanked him and, before the man could say anything else, made his way between the booths and into the baggage collection area. He continued through the terminal, following the illustrated signs until he located the taxi rank outside. He waited in line and, after five

minutes, stepped into a car.

“I don’t speak German,” he said as the driver pulled out into the traffic.

“No problem,” the man said. “Where do you want to go?”

“The Hilton,” Jimmy said.

The driver set off, plotting a route into the heart of the city. Jimmy watched as the landscape changed: they passed through an industrial area into streets that were lined with residential buildings and then a central area with hotels and office blocks.

The Hilton was a spectacularly ugly building. It was almost as if it comprised two separate buildings: the first was beige concrete, a slightly taller structure that was topped with the hotel’s name in bold, confident capitals; the second, main part of the building was decorated like a chequerboard, white concrete slabs alternating with black windows to create an eyesore that loomed over the hotel’s parking lot and the road, Mohrenstraße, that ran alongside it.

“Here we are,” the driver said, pulling off the road and parking next to the entrance.

A bellboy appeared from the foyer, his breath misting in front of his face. He opened the door and Jimmy got out, putting his heels down and immediately skidding on a sheet of black ice. He lost his balance, but managed to stay upright by grabbing the car and the bellboy’s shoulder.

“Nearly,” Jimmy said.

“English?” the bellboy asked.

“Irish.”

“It’s a cold one tonight.”

“I’ll say.”

“Any luggage, sir?”

“No.”

“Very good. This way, please.”

Jimmy followed him inside. He handed his reservation to the receptionist, checked in and followed the woman's directions to the lifts. His room was on the eighth floor, facing out onto a bleak block that still bore the scars of the war. The building had been struck by a shell and the damage had not yet been repaired. Smoke rose from vents at the top of the building and there were lights in the windows, suggesting that, despite the poor condition of the building, it was still occupied.

He closed the blinds, took off his coat and shoes and sat down on the bed. He was tired and alone, a stranger in a strange city, his family hundreds of miles away.

He found the minibar, poured himself a drink and waited for Mackintosh.

Mackintosh took a later flight. He would be recognised at the airport and he didn't want to risk the chance that Walker might do something stupid and compromise operational integrity. The Irishman had no experience, no tradecraft, and Mackintosh couldn't take the risk.

He landed at ten, took a taxi to the consulate to read the latest intel reports and then found a pool driver to take him to the Hilton. The driver knew not to go directly to the destination, and went in the opposite direction until he reached the subway. Mackintosh hurried down onto the platform and got on the first train heading East. It was late and the carriage was empty. He didn't think that he was being followed.

He thought about the intelligence reports that he had just read.

They were *appalling*.

Foulkes was dead. The remaining agents were inexperienced, and their assets were a mix of businessmen, bureaucrats, lowlifes and border rats. The rats were Berliners who flitted back and forth across the border. Some of them were good at it and had even managed to smuggle East Germans across. But their information was nearly always old, and, on the occasions when it was fresh, it never proved to be wholly reliable. Mackintosh needed to shake things up. And he had a plan for doing that.

"Last stop in West Berlin," the guard announced.

The line passed for a short time beneath the Wall and into East Berlin.

Mackintosh gazed out of the window as the carriage passed through one of the Geisterbahnhöfe, or “ghost stations,” with an armed guard peeking at the train through a narrow slit in a bricked hut. The train accelerated and they were gone, turning back into the West once more.

His thoughts turned to Walker. He knew that he would need to test him soon. There wasn't going to be a comfortable period of settling in. There would be no acclimatisation; there was no time for that. SIS needed to assert itself against the Stasi and PICASSO was the means that had been chosen to do that. There was an unwritten rule that the men and women of the intelligence services—on both sides—were off limits. The rule had held the line for years; there would be a bloodbath without it. What Karl-Heinz Sommer had done was intolerable. Mackintosh was going to stamp down hard on him and the Stasi and teach them that there were consequences for the things that they had done.

Easier said than done? Perhaps. But sitting back and taking it was out of the question.

The train rumbled into Stadtmitte. Mackintosh collected his bag and got to his feet, holding onto the leather strap that hung down from the roof and waiting until the train came to a stop. The doors opened with a wheeze and Mackintosh disembarked. The hotel was a short walk from the station. Mackintosh set off.

Jimmy heard the knock at the door. He padded across the carpet on stockinged feet and looked through the spyglass: Mackintosh was standing outside the door, his face distorted by the fisheye lens. He turned the handle and left the door open, making his way back into the room. Mackintosh came inside and closed the door behind him. Jimmy turned back and watched as he went to the radio and switched it on, turning the volume up. Jimmy frowned at him; Mackintosh put his finger to his lips. He took out a piece of moulded black plastic and pulled out an extendable aerial from the top.

Mackintosh flicked the dial on the face of the machine to switch it on.

“What is *that*?” Jimmy asked, pointing at the plastic box.

“A radio frequency detector. The room’s clear.” He turned the volume down as Yazoo was replaced by Tears for Fears.

“You think it could’ve been bugged?”

“The Stasi make it a habit to leave them in rooms where visitors might stay.”

“But this is West Berlin.”

Mackintosh looked at him as if he was stupid. “You know how many active officers they have? Agents, informers, people supplying them with information? One hundred thousand, James. They’re everywhere. The cleaner who does your room? Maybe she’s getting a little on the side for

keeping an eye on western guests. The bellboy? The same. The receptionist, room service, the valet downstairs.”

“I get the picture.”

“Assume the worst. That way you won’t be surprised.” He switched off the device and put it back into his bag. “I’ve got something for you.”

Mackintosh took out a photograph. He handed it to Jimmy. It was of Isabel and Sean. They were on Well Street Common, near to the house. Sean had a ball at his feet and had been captured in the act of kicking it. Isabel was smiling at him, but there was a sadness in her face.

Jimmy felt a sense of wistfulness. “Where did you get this?”

“It was taken this morning, while you were still in the cell. I thought you might like it while you were over here.”

The melancholy became anger. “You had someone watching my girlfriend and kid?”

“Only for this.”

Jimmy took a step toward Mackintosh, grabbed the lapels of his jacket and drove him back against the wall. “Stay away from them,” he said, his mouth close to Mackintosh’s ear.

“Relax,” Mackintosh said. Jimmy saw the fear in his eyes.

“I don’t want you or anyone else who works for you anywhere near them.”

“Fine,” Mackintosh said, grabbing Jimmy’s wrists and gently lowering his hands. “*Fine*. It didn’t mean anything. I just thought you’d like a photo.”

Jimmy put the photograph in his pocket and went to the window. He looked down onto Mohrenstraße and saw a gang of youngsters idling at the junction with Markgrafenstraße. Drinkers gathered outside the bar there. The sky was dark, with a thick canopy of cloud blocking out the moon and the stars. Snow was falling, a thin dusting that settled on everything. It almost looked festive.

“So why am I here? What do you want me to do?”

Mackintosh put his bag on the bed and sat down next to it. “There’s a man I’m interested in,” he said. “I’d like you to follow him.”

“Who is he?”

Mackintosh took a folder from his bag and put it on the bed. He opened it and slid out a large black and white photograph.

“His name is Morgan. He works for me at the consulate.”

Jimmy looked at the photograph: the man was in late middle age, with curls of thick black hair atop a rounded face, with thick rimmed glasses.

“So he’s a spy?”

“He’s an agent runner. But, yes, you could call him a spy.”

“So why am I following your own man?”

Mackintosh exhaled. “I had an operation in East Berlin on Christmas Eve. It was compromised and two of my people were killed. Someone betrayed us to the Stasi.”

“And you think it was him?”

“I do.” Mackintosh glanced away, his thoughts temporarily focussed on something else. When he looked back, there was fresh determination on his face. “He was born in Cairo. Son of an Austrian mother and a Jewish father. They sent him back to Austria and he was there when the war started. His family fled and travelled to Britain. They were naturalised and he joined the Navy before he was recruited by SIS. He’s been all over the world: he interrogated U-boat captains in Hamburg, went to Seoul under diplomatic cover to get intelligence on the North. He was captured when Seoul fell and was held near the Yalu River. If we’re right, and the Soviets turned him, I’ll bet it happened there.”

“And you’re sure?”

“Not completely. I hope I’m wrong, but that’s where you come in. I’m going to tell him something tomorrow morning that will give him cause for serious concern. I know what Morgan is like—he’s a coward, James. If I’m right, he’ll run straight to his handler. He doesn’t know who you are—no one knows. I want you to follow him.”



“And how am I going to do that?”

Mackintosh took a key from his pocket and put it on the bed next to the photograph. “There’s a Mercedes parked downstairs in the car park—a red 190E Cosworth. I’ve written the plate on the paper. This is the key. There’ll be a safe house somewhere in this part of the city. That’s where he’ll go. You’re going to find it for me.”

“Where do I find him?”

“There’s an address on the paper, too. That’s the consulate. Be there tomorrow morning at nine. I’ll speak to Morgan just after that—he’ll be frightened and I don’t think he’s got the guts to wait it out. He’ll make an excuse and run. There’s a car park opposite it. He has an Audi Quattro. Follow him.”

“Anything else?”

Mackintosh reached into his bag again and took out a pistol and a spare magazine. He put both items on the bed.

“Seriously?”

“Just in case you need it.”

“You said you wanted me to follow him.”

“I do. But he’s probably going to go and meet a Stasi agent and I’d rather you had a weapon and didn’t need it than need one and not have it.”

Jimmy reached down and picked up the gun.

“Have you used one before?” Mackintosh asked.

“Never,” Jimmy said.

Mackintosh put out his hand and Jimmy gave him the gun. “Don’t point it at anyone you don’t want to kill. When you want to shoot, click the safety off, look at the target, grip the handle in both hands, press the gun toward the target, pull the trigger. Repeat until dead. Got it?”

“Got it,” he said.

Mackintosh flicked the safety on and gave the weapon back to Jimmy.

“You’ll need some loose change. When you find out where he goes, find a payphone and call me on this number. I’ll be there as soon as I can.”

Jimmy took the piece of paper that Mackintosh handed him. “All right,” he said.

“Tomorrow morning, James. Be in the car park at nine o’clock. Don’t be late. We’ll only get one chance at this. They’ll try and get him into the East. We’ll never see him again if that happens.”

“What are you going to do if it is him?”

“He’ll need to be persuaded to answer a few questions. But you won’t need to worry about that—it’s my responsibility.”

Mackintosh told Jimmy to get some sleep and left the room. Jimmy sat down on the mattress. He was tired. He brought out the photograph Mackintosh had given to him and looked at it again. Isabel was smiling in the picture, but it wasn’t a real smile. He wondered: what would happen if he didn’t make it back home? What if something happened to him here, in this shithole? The thought of Sean kicking a ball in the park with no one there to kick it back to him... that thought threatened to overwhelm him. He felt a burning in his chest, like a hot poker slowly sliding through his body. The tears came, and he wiped them away. They never helped.

## **PART IV**

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It was a continuing source of disappointment to Generalleutnant Karl-Heinz Sommer that his office was not located in House One of the Ministry for State Security. The vast complex that housed the Ministry stretched across the Ruchestraße and was responsible for the operation of the Stasi as well as facilitating its huge network of informants. The Ministry's purpose was simple: the preservation and protection of the state. Sommer's purpose was the attainment, consolidation and exercise of power. It was a pity that his position, although significant, was not enough to move him into the executive offices. That was where he wanted to be; that was where the *real* power was located. But there were consolations to make up for the disappointment. The luxury of his building bore no comparison to the drab furnishings that were found in the building that housed the head of the Ministry, for example. Herr Pabst made do with threadbare carpets, walls painted in municipal green, and furniture that was utilitarian, at best.

Sommer had located this building himself. It had been a wreck, used and abused by a garrison of Russian troops and then left to rot. It had been a vicarage before the war, hundreds of years old, and still retained architectural features that marked its age, worn as badges of honour. Sommer had lobbied the Administration Division for a budget to make it whole and had taken his time to make sure that it was done right.

There was a suite of private rooms on the top floor where he lived during the rare occasions when he wasn't working. There was space for his staff on the three floors beneath: offices, briefing rooms, a typing pool. Be-

neath that, the basement had been excavated and constructed to his exacting requirements: his interrogation room was there, a place where he had derived hours of the most exquisite pleasure. He had specified everything: the precise cant of the floors, a shallow V that met in a trough that led to a drain in the middle of the room; the stainless-steel table, with leather straps, that could be angled up or down by way of a pivot, better to allow for blood and viscera to be sloshed clear; the selection of tools that were hung from hooks on the wall, arranged just so. Next to that was the water cell, another of his designs. Suspects who fell into his hands were subjected to what he termed ‘immersion interrogation.’ The cell had been equipped with a five-foot pit that was then filled with freezing water. He found that the fear of drowning was often more effective in procuring information than other more traditional techniques.

And then there was the vault. It was his pride and joy. He was the only man alive who knew how to get inside. It was the fulcrum of his power, a repository for the files and audio recordings and compromising evidence—and yes, the loot—that he had acquired over the years.

Sommer was in his private office on the third floor. He looked around and reminded himself that whatever he lacked in prestige, he made up for in aesthetic pleasure. A thick blood-red carpet covered the office floor. The furnishings were classic: an antique walnut desk, a roll-top bureau, a sofa in the old French style, and gold-base lamps with muted silk shades. Sommer adjusted his tie in the rococo mirror and then shrugged on his jacket. The Stasi officer’s uniform boasted a remarkable similarity to the first uniform that he had worn: that of the *AllgemeineSS*. This jacket did not have the Wehrmacht-style narrow braided silver shoulder boards, but it was double-breasted, just the same, cut from rich black cloth with gold flashes on the lapels.

He looked into the mirror again, examining his uniform, reminding himself of how similar it was to the one that he had worn forty years ago. He closed his eyes. He had not tried to expunge the memory of what had happened to him. Why would he want to do that? He revisited it often. What had happened to him in Berlin had been his motivation, the reason for his drive, the crucible in which his character had been forged.

It was the day of his nineteenth birthday when Sommer saw the first Russian tanks rolling into the streets around the Chancellery. He was serving in the SS 12th Panzer Division *Hitlerjugend*, and had been involved in the massacre of one hundred and fifty Canadian POWs in Normandy one year earlier. The Division had been recalled to assist in the defence of the capital, but it had quickly become clear—even to the young Oberstammführer Sommer—that the Wehrmacht was being overrun. He could see the tectonics of the situation shifting, could foresee what the next weeks and months might look like, and had started to plot his survival. But the tanks had rolled in faster than anyone had anticipated, and he had had to think quickly.

He concocted a plan and moved quickly to put it into effect. He swapped his SS uniform for the clothes of a dead man who he had found in the rubble on the first floor of a ruined house. Then, he took a knife that he found in the kitchen and sliced into the skin just above his scalp, encouraging the blood to flow. It did, a crimson mask that slid down his face and dripped onto his clothes.

He made his way south, where he was picked up by Russian infantry. He feigned amnesia. He said he was a civilian and that he remembered sheltering inside a building and then that building being shelled. He said he remembered masonry falling onto him and then nothing after that. His memories were a narrow envelope; he couldn't remember his name, who he was, or where he was from. The soldiers took him to Beelitz-Heilstätten, the

hospital that had once treated Hitler during the Great War. It was hideously overcrowded, with soldiers and civilians filling beds in the wards and corridors and overworked staff flitting between them. The nurses didn't have time to speak to Sommer properly; they concluded that he must have been struck on the head, treated him as best they could and then admitted him.

He had time and that was all he needed. He constructed a story for himself, furnishing it with lavish detail. The Russians were searching for SS officers who were fleeing the city in disguise; a military intelligence officer came to quiz him. Sommer said that he was a young Austrian farmer and told the officer about life on the farm, of how he had worked with his father in the fields. He explained how his father had gone off to fight in the war and how he had died on the frontline at Stalingrad and how his mother had drowned herself after hearing the news.

What had happened to Sommer's mother and father was easy to tell: it was all true.

The rest of what he said was not.

Sommer told of how German soldiers swept over his village in search of a Jewish family who were being harboured there. He told him that he had watched the soldiers arrive and had heard the crack of their rifles as they lined the family up against the wall of the barn and shot them.

The story had elicited sympathy from the officer, but it wasn't entirely true. He had omitted several key details.

The soldiers *did* come to the village and they *did* find the family, but it was not a matter of chance. The day after Sommer buried his mother, he walked ten miles into the town and reported that his neighbour was harbouring Jews in his loft. The SS officers congratulated Sommer. He liked their uniforms. One of the officers gave him a chocolate bar. It was the first that he had ever seen, never mind eaten. He remembered the taste of the chocolate, eaten as he sat on a fence and watched the soldiers execute his neighbours and the young family that they had been hiding.

Sommer was given money and a train ticket to Berlin. He was instructed to join the *Hitlerjugend*. He did so, and, after showing particular aptitude, he graduated to the SS as one of their youngest officers.

The Russian officer believed Sommer. He was sent out of the city with the refugees who had no wish to be immolated on the pyre that was being created for Hitler and the Reich. Sommer had ended up in Luckenwalde, had stayed there for a year, and then had drifted back to Berlin again, sucked back by the opportunities that he knew were swirling around in the vortex that had been created by the clashing armies, all of them squabbling over the spoils. There was confusion everywhere, and Sommer knew that he could profit from it. He joined the Socialist Unity Party. He applied to join the police and, in 1950, when it was instituted, he transferred into the Stasi.

He had survived. More than that: he had done well. In all wars, both cold and hot, there were survivors. Those who were destined to make it out alive no matter the odds, no matter the pain, no matter how many lives they had to take.

Sommer was one of them.



Sommer's telephone rang. He picked up the receiver and cradled it to his ear as he adjusted the cuffs of his shirt.

"Who is it?"

"Major Hoffman, sir."

"What is it, Major?"

"There has been an incident at our station in West Berlin."

"Which station?"

"Kreuzberg. It's been attacked, sir."

Sommer took a gold-tipped fountain pen and made notes in a small black book. "Go on."

"LEXIKON called and said that he had been exposed. He was told to report to Kreuzberg for debriefing and possible exfiltration. Colonel Geipel was to conduct the debrief himself."

"And?"

"And they were attacked. LEXIKON, Stabsfähnrich Grossman and Stabsfähnrich Vokes were found in the apartment. All shot. Unteroffizier Beckman was found unconscious on the ground floor. He said that he saw four men going into the building—one of them attacked him and knocked him out. He didn't recognise any of them."

“And Colonel Geipel?”

“He is missing, General.”

Sommer underlined Geipel’s name, repeating the stroke until the nib of the pen sliced through the paper.

“Does anyone else know about this?”

“The *Bundespolizei* were called.”

“And would they be able to identify the dead men?”

“They are unlikely to have anything on Grossman. LEXIKON, though—I think it is possible.”

“Find out. And tell no one else of this—do you understand, Major? No one.”

“Yes, Colonel,” said Hofmann, and hung up.

Sommer stood, put on his jacket and left his office.

SOMMER WALKED down the corridor to the elevators. He called the lift and selected the ground floor. He got out and walked over to the second elevator that would take him down to the basement. It could only be operated by those with the correct key; he took his from his pocket, pushed it into the keyhole and turned it. The door slid\*open; he got inside and selected the button for the basement. The machinery clanked and whirred and eventually brought him to a dark lower level, lit only by caged bulbs dotted along one side of a long, damp brick wall. On the opposite side was a row of heavy steel doors.

A guard was stationed in an enclave three-quarters of the way along the corridor. The men on duty here smoked and drank thick stewed coffee from steel mugs. The smell of human sweat, cigarette smoke and briny coffee was heavy in the air. Sommer went to the third door and called for the guard to open it. The man put out his cigarette and took a bunch of keys from a steel ring that had been fastened to the wall. He opened the door and stood back.

There was no light from the room; thick darkness lay within. The quality of that blackness never went unnoticed. It was a dense nothingness, save the small area near the door where the nearest bulb extended its feeble glow. Sommer heard footsteps and then a man—young, pale skin, blue eyes—stepped into the half-light.

Sommer looked at the sores on his skin; there were red marks on his arms and neck, abrasions on his ankles and chest. The guard stepped away from the door and went back to the alcove. Sommer noticed that the man's teeth were yellow, and his lips were cracked and bleeding. He could not look at Sommer and Sommer knew why: he was terrified of him.

With reason.

Sommer smiled.

“Günter,” he said. “How are you enjoying your stay?”

The man said nothing.

“Silence? Really? But our last chat was *so* interesting.”

He looked away.

“I’m afraid I can’t help myself, Günter—we’re going to need to have another.”

Sommer was almost disappointed. *Almost*. Günter Schmidt was so frightened that there was no need for him to indulge himself in order to get him to speak. Sommer enjoyed his more obdurate prisoners; persuading them to talk was one of his pleasures in life, and something that he was particularly good at. He consoled himself with the knowledge that there would be other opportunities for that. For now, he needed to know what had made Schmidt so interesting to the British.

Schmidt had been in the cell for days, ever since Sommer had intercepted him on his way to the tunnel under the Wall. There had been no human contact save for the meals that were passed through the slit in the door. It had been a deliberate ploy. Sommer knew the power of the imagination, and he wanted Schmidt to have as long as possible to consider the awfulness of the treatment that he might expect once the questioning began. Confounding those expectations could be effective. He brought Schmidt up to his quarters on the top floor. There would be no stainless-steel table, no surgical instruments, no hooks in the ceiling for him to be upended and hung from his ankles. Those would come later, perhaps. Instead, there was a comfortable room, a jug of coffee and polite questions.

Sommer knew it would work.

“I’m sorry to have kept you down there for so long. I hope that won’t be necessary again.”

Schmidt looked at him; he reminded Sommer of a cornered rabbit.

Sommer took the jug and poured coffee into two mugs. “Do you take sugar?”

Schmidt nodded, and Sommer added a heaped spoonful, stirred the brew and slid it over the table. Schmidt put the mug to his lips and sipped the coffee, his eyes on Sommer as if he expected some trick.

Sommer drank from his own mug and then placed it on a coaster. “I’m curious, Günter. The British went to a lot of effort to get you out. They dug a tunnel, sent senior personnel here at considerable risk. Why would they do that? What did you offer them?”

Schmidt swallowed, his larynx bobbing in his throat.

“Please. There’s no need to be frightened. If you have something of value to them, it’s likely to be of value to me, too. I’m a pragmatic man. Perhaps we can work together.”

Sommer smiled, reached down for the plate of biscuits and slid it closer to Schmidt.

“My work,” Schmidt began, then paused, uncertain of how to proceed.

“Go on. Your work?”

“I am an escort.”

“A prostitute?”

Schmidt flinched, as if he found the word distasteful.

“An *escort*,” Sommer corrected himself. “Of course. Please—go on.”

“A year ago,” he said, “I was at a party in Friedrichshain. There were some men there from the Party. At the end of the night, one of them came up to me and said that he would like to see me again.”

He stopped speaking and took a drink from his mug of coffee. Sommer noticed that his hand was shaking.

“Go on, Günter,” he encouraged him. “You’re doing well.”

“I said yes, and arranged to meet him in Café Warschau the next day. He said that it would be impossible to meet in a public place and suggested that

I should come to his apartment. I did and..." He paused again, looking into his coffee. Sommer gave him a moment and, after Schmidt had found the right words, he continued. "We started seeing each other. It wasn't a professional relationship, not like the others were. I thought we were in love. He said that he loved me, anyway. He looked after me, gave me nice things and told me that he would look after my family, too. And he did. There was enough money for me to move them into a house outside the city. He even gave me the money to buy them a holiday. My mother and father hadn't been outside Berlin for years. They couldn't afford it. They went to the Baltic Coast."

Sommer regarded him shrewdly. Schmidt spoke openly, and there were none of the tell-tale signs that might have indicated duplicity. Sommer was an excellent judge of character, and of veracity, and he believed that Schmidt was telling the truth.

"What happened then?"

"He broke up with me. A month ago. Didn't tell me why. I went to his apartment and he wasn't there. I tried to get in but the locks were changed. I went to find him at his office but the guards took me away and beat me. They told me if I came back they would kill me. I didn't do anything wrong. It's not fair. It's not fair that I've been treated this way. All I wanted to do was to have him tell me what I did to deserve this. But he wouldn't. He wouldn't tell me. I want him to know that what he did was wrong."

Sommer leaned forward. "This man," he said. "Who is he?"

Schmidt looked up at him, his face pale and beginning to dampen with perspiration.

"It's fine, Günter. You're doing well. But I do need to know."

"Stanislaus Pabst."

Sommer was not often lost for words, but now he was struck dumb. Pabst was the head of the Ministry. He was a general in the East German army and a member of the Politburo. He was responsible for the Stasi, and for the maintenance of security in the GDR. He was also the main impediment to Sommer's own ascent through the party apparatus. Sommer had al-

ways tried to be civil with Pabst, but the general had made it known that he didn't like him and that Sommer would never reach the heights that his talent deserved while he remained in control.

Sommer could see now why the British had gone to such lengths to exfiltrate Schmidt. The damage the young man could do... it was incalculable.

"You told the British about this?" Sommer asked.

"Yes. I went to the consulate and told them what I knew. They told me to come back. I did. I met a man from the government. He said he would bring me into the West. My family, too."

"And this man's name?"

"Mackintosh."

Sommer already knew that Harry Mackintosh was responsible for the operation. Sommer had been tipped off by LEXIKON; the tip was how he had been able to prevent the exfiltration from taking place. The actual nature of the intelligence that Schmidt was selling had never been revealed; Mackintosh had kept that close to the vest, and LEXIKON had not been able to uncover it.

But now Sommer knew.

"Can you prove any of this?"

Günter looked away, too late. Sommer saw through him.

"Please, Günter, I would like to be your friend. But I can only be your friend if there are no secrets between us. Your story is interesting, but without something to substantiate it, well, it is... just a story."

Günter bit his lip.

"Come, now. I feel you are withholding something from me. Friends don't do that."

"I have told you my story," he said. "That is it."

"And now you are lying to me."

"I am not—"

“I have a friend in MI6, Günter. Do you think I don’t know?”

He looked away. “I have photographs.”

Sommer felt a buzz of anticipation run up and down his spine. “You do?”

He nodded. “Of Stanislaus and me.”

“I would dearly like to see them.”

“I can’t,” he said. “They are my guarantee.”

Possibilities spooled through Sommer’s mind and he was unable to prevent the grin that cracked his face. The Russians called it *kompromat*. Leverage. The British would have wielded it for their own purposes, bending Pabst to their will and damaging the institution that he ran and the Party that depended upon it. Sommer did not care about any of that. If he did, he would have taken Schmidt to Pabst and alerted him to the danger that had been averted. That was still a possibility. Pabst might be grateful. He might reward him for his diligence and tact. But, Sommer knew, he might just as easily have him shot in order to guarantee his silence.

He had a better idea. The *kompromat* would not be of benefit to the British alone. He could hold onto Schmidt, keep him safe and out of the way, ready to be deployed at a moment of his choosing. Homosexuality had been decriminalised in the East for twenty years, but the suggestion of it would still be enough to bring Pabst down. The stench of it would cling to him. The Party would not approve.

Sommer would consider how and when to use the knowledge, but one thing was certain: Pabst was done, and Sommer could put himself in position to take his place.

He turned back to Günter. “What was your plan? You would wait for Mackintosh to do what he promised and then tell him where to find the photographs?”

Günter nodded.

“That’s very wise. But it is unnecessary now. Tell me where they are, Günter. I will send someone to get them.”



The young man shook his head. He had found strength from somewhere. “You need to help me get over the border.”

Sommer was prepared to be patient; the prize was worth it. “Perhaps,” he lied. “But you need to cooperate with me.”

“Get me into the West and I’ll tell you where to find them. I swear it.”

“No,” Sommer said. “That isn’t going to work. Do I need to remind you where you are? You’re not in a position to make demands. You are being treated with kindness because I want to be your friend. But there are other ways that this can be done. I would not recommend them.”

He sat down opposite Schmidt and stared at him. He smiled his most reassuring smile. “Where can I find the photographs?”

## **PART V**

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Jimmy followed the directions that Mackintosh had given him and arrived at Uhlandstraße at seven in the morning. Mackintosh had explained that the British government had maintained three offices in Berlin: the political adviser to the British Military Government had offices at the Olympic Stadium; the commercial offices were leased in the International Trade Centre Administration Building on Georgenstraße; the consulate-general was in leased premises here on Uhlandstraße. This office of the consulate-general was just as the older man had described it: a bland building, most likely infill from the sixties that had been constructed out of the wreckage of the war. It was modest, not particularly attractive and compact in size. The consulate took up two floors, and there was office space above it. There were two entrances: one at the front, beneath a Union Jack that fluttered from a flagpole, and a plainer entrance that was reached via the alley that ran between the building and its neighbour.

There was a parking lot on the other side of the main road, and Jimmy parked his car there; he was able to see both entrances while maintaining enough distance from the pedestrians and traffic that passed ahead of him to minimise the chances of anyone seeing him in his car and deciding that he was suspicious.

Jimmy got out of the car and looked over the roof at the other cars. There were only a handful at this early hour, but one of them stood out: a cherry-red Audi Quattro. It was the model with the five-cylinder turbocharged petrol engine. Jimmy thought the paint job and the brick-shape

design was ugly—he preferred Porsches when it came to German engineering—although the car looked as if it was reasonably new, if a little garish. Morgan was hardly trying to blend in; Jimmy wondered whether that was the behaviour of someone who had something to hide. Maybe Mackintosh had the wrong man?

The morning was bitterly cold, with a freezing wind that was ushering a procession of leaden clouds in from the East. The snow on the ground had frozen overnight, and as Jimmy looked up at the darkening sky he could see that more would be falling before the day was out. He got back into the Mercedes, turned the key in the ignition and flicked the switch for the heater; the unit was old and it spluttered, emitting a pathetic gasp of warm air.

Jimmy pulled the zip of his leather jacket all the way up to his neck and thought of Isabel: he should have taken her up on her offer to buy him something more substantial.

He took the photograph of Morgan and stood it on the dash, propping it against the windshield.

He settled in to wait.

A man came out of the side entrance just after nine. Jimmy looked at the photograph on the dash and compared it to the man; it was Morgan, he was sure of it. Late middle age, a full head of dark hair, a moon-like face and heavy dark glasses.

Most of the consulate staff completed their journeys to work in thick coats with scarfs wound around their faces or with substantial hats pulled down low. Morgan hurried outside with his coat still undone and without a hat. He tried to zip up the coat as he made his way along the alley, lost his concentration and almost skidded over on the frozen ground. He regained his balance and paused for a moment as he fastened the zip. Jimmy put both hands on the wheel, waiting for him to cross the road to him.

Morgan jammed an ushanka onto his head and made his way across the road. He hurried to the Audi and got inside. Jimmy heard the rumble of the engine and watched as the car rolled out. Jimmy put the Mercedes into gear. The Quattro rolled to the east, the engine rumbling. Jimmy followed.

Jimmy didn't know Berlin, and was quickly lost as he followed the Quattro through the city. Morgan stayed on main roads, but drove a little over the speed limit. Jimmy hung back as far as he could while still staying close enough to keep the Audi in sight. The snow was all around, scraped up and piled onto the pavements by ploughs. Jimmy could feel the compacted ice crunching beneath the tyres. The surface was treacherous, and Jimmy braked early and gently as he approached a set of red lights. The

Audi pulled away when the lights went green, and Jimmy followed.

Morgan drove on Lietzenburger Straße, switching onto Schöneberger Ufer and following the curve of the Landwehr Canal. They passed through a commercial district with shops opening for the day, queues of Berliners waiting to scour the shelves for provisions, and continued east into a residential area. There were tall apartment blocks, rows of three-and four-storey buildings that had been carved up into flats. It was cheap and run down, with rubbish spilling from bins, blowing up against drifts of snow. They turned again and the Wall appeared, a massive slab of concrete topped with coils of razor wire. It was twelve feet tall and, when Jimmy looked ahead, he could just see the roof of a watchtower poking up over the top of it.

Morgan slowed and parked the car against the kerb. Jimmy drove on, took the first left and parked. He opened the door and stepped out, hurrying back to the main road. Morgan was walking away from his car. Jimmy crossed over, looking straight ahead, and paused to fiddle with his shoelace as Morgan continued along the pavement on the opposite side. Jimmy waited and watched; Morgan walked for fifty yards and then turned on to a narrow path that cut across a patch of snowy ground to the entrance of a particularly ugly block.

The Wall loomed to Jimmy's left, a brutal slab of concrete that reached high overhead. He knew that there was no way he would be able to follow Morgan inside the building; he was fortunate that he hadn't been made so far, and to push his luck any more would be asking for trouble. He waited a moment to see whether Morgan would re-emerge and, when he didn't, he retraced his steps to the payphone that he had seen on the street near to where he had parked the car and called the number that Mackintosh had given him.

Mackintosh took Jimmy's call, noted down the details, and put the phone down. He opened his Rolodex, found the number for the Berlin Infantry Brigade, and called it. He had a brief conversation, left clear instructions, and put the phone down again. He left the consulate in a hurry, got into his staff car and headed east, fighting against his impatience and driving with the care and attention that the icy streets demanded. It would do him no good at all to slide into the back of another car on the way. On the other hand, he knew that his impatience was warranted; the building that Walker had described included an apartment that was known to western intelligence as a Stasi bolt-hole. If Morgan was going to run, they would exfiltrate him from there. And if they did that before Mackintosh arrived, then the traitor would be in the wind and all of Mackintosh's plans would be for nothing.

He couldn't allow that to happen.

He arrived in Kreuzberg and saw the red Audi parked next to one of the big blocks. The building was grey and uninviting. It was four storeys tall, pocked with mean little windows and communal balconies. The Wall was close, and anyone above the second floor would be able to look out over it, across the death strip and into the East. The building was as ugly as its neighbours, scarred with graffiti, its windows dark and unwelcoming. Banners had been hung from the upper windows, high enough to be seen from the East. One of them had an obscene cartoon of Erich Honecker and Mikhail Gorbachev.

Mackintosh drove on; he turned onto a side street and recognised the Mercedes that he had arranged for Walker. He parked behind it and hurried back on foot.

There was a small children's playground on the opposite side of the road. Walker was waiting there, partially hidden from the entrance to the block. He saw Mackintosh and stepped out so that he could see him. Mackintosh crossed the road and joined him next to a broken swing, the seat hanging down from one chain.

"He went in there," he said, pointing at the block.

"Has anyone else gone inside?"

"I haven't seen anyone. Why?"

"There's a Stasi safe house on the fourth floor."

"How do you know that?"

"Because we had it under surveillance last year."

"And you haven't done anything about it?"

Mackintosh spoke with exaggerated patience. "What good would that do? They'd just move it somewhere else and then we'd have to find it again. It's useful to know where it is so we can keep an eye on it."

Mackintosh saw two men approaching them from the other side of the street. Mackintosh gaped at them, and then pulled Walker farther away from the street. The men stopped opposite the door to the block. One of them went inside and the other one stayed on the street.

"Who are they?" Walker asked.

Mackintosh didn't respond; he felt a flash of anger that he thought might overwhelm him.

"Who *are* they?" Walker pressed.

Mackintosh paused until he had regained his composure. "The man who went inside is Axel Geipel. He's a colonel in the Hauptverwaltung Aufklärung, the Main Directorate for Reconnaissance."



“And?”

“He’s the most senior Stasi officer in West Berlin.”

“And the two of you don’t get on?”

“We have unfinished business,” Mackintosh muttered.

“And the one waiting outside? His bodyguard?”

“Yes. Probably from the Dzerzhinsky Regiment.”

Mackintosh took a step forward and looked at the building again. It loomed over them, a grim and disfigured monolith, hundreds of people—thousands of people—swallowed inside it. The second man still stood on the street, the tip of a cigarette glowing as he inhaled on it. The man stomped his feet against the cold; Mackintosh stepped back again.

“Morgan’s been in there thirty minutes,” Walker said.

“I frightened him—he thinks he’s about to be blown. He ran straight to Geipel, probably to ask him to activate his exfiltration plan. They’ll be getting him ready to cross the border.”

“So what’s the plan?”

Mackintosh frowned and rubbed his forehead. “We wait.”

“What for?”

“Backup. It should be on the way.”

Walker gazed up at the building. “What is it that you need from him?”

“I want to know who he’s working for.”

“And now you do—he’s working for Geipel. What else?”

“I want to know how to get to two people: Günter Schmidt and Karl-Heinz Sommer.”

“Who are they?”

“Schmidt is an asset I wish to recover. Sommer is a man I want to kill.”

“And once you have Schmidt and Sommer is dead, you’ll let me go home?”

Walker stated the impossible with such blissful ignorance it was almost charming. “If that happens I’ll take you home myself. You have my word.”

Walker nodded, turning back to the building.

“How easy will it be to get to Geipel?”

“He’s a Stasi officer. Not easy at all.”

“How many men do you think are inside?”

Mackintosh exhaled. “A small operational team. They’ll have Stasi officers in the flat—a couple, perhaps. Geipel makes three. The bodyguard makes four. Morgan makes five.”

“All armed.”

“The Germans—very likely. I doubt Morgan is.”

“Which flat is it?”

“414.”

Walker reached into his jacket and took out the pistol that Mackintosh had given him. “You got one, too?”

“No, James—this is too dangerous.”

“You have a better idea? They don’t know we’re coming. Come with me or don’t—it’s up to you. But I have no choice. I’m not doing a twenty-year stretch in Wormwood Scrubs. But I’m not going to do a twenty-year stretch in this shithole either.”

Walker put his hand with the gun into the outside pocket of his coat and set off toward the entrance to the block. Mackintosh reached for him and snagged his shoulder just as a car rolled slowly by them.

Mackintosh recognised the driver.

Walker saw the car, too. “Who’s that?”

“Backup.”

Mackintosh signalled for the car to turn down the road where he and Walker had parked and led Walker there to meet them.

Mackintosh opened the rear door of the car and got inside. Walker went around and got into the other side. Cameron and Fisher were in the front.

“Thanks for coming, lads,” Mackintosh said to them.

Cameron turned around and nodded at Walker. “Who’s this?”

“He’s working with me,” Mackintosh said.

“Who are *you*?” Walker asked, staring the man out.

Cameron eyeballed him right back. “You got a problem, pal?”

“I don’t know. Do I?”

“This is Walker,” Mackintosh said. “He followed Morgan for me. Walker, this is Cameron and this is Fisher. They’re soldiers. We’re all on the same side so, if it’s all right with the three of you, do you think you could shut the fuck up and *listen* to me?”

The outburst broke the ice. Walker looked satisfied and the two soldiers didn’t press things.

“Aye,” said Cameron, holding Jimmy’s eye for another beat before relaxing and sitting back in his seat. “Fine.”

“Soldiers?” Jimmy asked.

“SAS,” Mackintosh explained. “The Stasi ambushed us a week ago—

Sommer and his men killed two of my agents, and nearly killed us, too.”

“And we’re not too thrilled about that,” Cameron said.

“They’re going to help us get to Morgan and Geipel.”

Mackintosh had kept in touch with the two men after the ambush. This wasn’t an official deployment. They would be court-martialled if their involvement in Mackintosh’s plan ever came to light, but they had seen what Sommer and his men had done—opened fire on unarmed civilians, executed a diplomat rather than take her in for treatment—and they said they figured payback was in order. Mackintosh had been grateful, and knew that he was fortunate. The two of them were experienced killers. They had both been on the SAS team that had wiped out eight IRA on-the-runs, Republican heroes who hid in the Irish border counties. They were the kind of men Mackintosh would have dearly liked to have on his team, but Bloom had nixed that and so he had been creative.

Mackintosh noticed that Fisher had a plain black bag on his lap. Fisher unzipped the bag and took out a small submachine gun. Mackintosh recognised it: a Heckler & Koch MP5-SD 9mm, the model with the integrated suppressor. Fisher removed the magazine, checked that the weapon was not charged, pulled the charging handle and locked the bolt. He inserted the magazine, slapped it home, released the bolt and then engaged the safety. His movements were smooth and practised, as though he were shelling peas.

There was a similar bag next to Walker in the back. Cameron turned around again. “Pass me the bag.”

Walker did as he was told and watched as Cameron prepared his own weapon.

“What’s the SP?” Fisher asked.

Mackintosh nodded to the apartment building. “Morgan sold us out—we know that now. He’s in a Stasi safe house on the fourth floor of that building with at least one other man, and probably more. There’s also a guard inside the entrance.”

“And you want us to take them all out?”

“Everyone but Morgan and a man called Geipel. He went up there ten minutes ago.”

“We know Morgan,” Fisher said. “Describe Geipel.”

“Thirties, six feet tall, black hair.”

“Wearing?”

“I didn’t get a good look.”

“He had a coat down to his knees,” Walker said. “Beige trousers. Black boots.”

“That’ll do,” Cameron said. “You want us to do it now?”

“Yes, please,” Mackintosh said.

The entrance to the block was set within a recess, with a wide porch extending its roof out over the pavement. Cameron and Fisher went first, with Mackintosh and Walker a few feet behind them. Mackintosh saw the bodyguard who had delivered Geipel standing just inside the door. He was big, well over six feet tall and heavy with it. Mackintosh saw a flash of orange as he put a lighter to the cigarette in his mouth; the man put his back against the wall and inhaled.

Mackintosh turned to check behind him. Walker was there, ten paces back. There was no one else on the street. No one ahead, either. The only man he could see was the guard outside the building. The two soldiers slowed down. A car turned into the street. They waited until it had passed by before picking up the pace again.

Cameron reached the building first. The guard's head turned as he heard the sound of his boots. The man looked him up and down, his cigarette poised to go back to his lips.

"Excuse me," Cameron said.

He used English and the man's forehead crinkled in confusion. Cameron drove the butt of the MP5 into the man's face. He stumbled back, defenceless, and Cameron followed up. He grabbed the man by the scruff of the neck and brought the butt of the gun down, cracking it against his skull. The guard slumped forward; Fisher came forward and helped support the man's weight. Cameron slipped around behind him so that he could loop his arms

beneath the guard's arms and they dragged him inside.

Mackintosh followed them into the lobby and looked around: it was wrecked, with paint peeling from the walls, puddles of water, and piles of trash that had gathered around the edges of the space, rustling in the wind that blew in through broken windows. Cameron dragged the guard across the floor, his heels scraping twin trails through the grimy slush that had been trodden inside.

Mackintosh quickly scanned the rest of the lobby. There were elevators, but the doors were covered with wooden boards. The fire escape was to the left, a set of stairs that ascended to the other floors. Cameron dragged the man through the door to a half landing where he would be out of sight of passers-by, and dropped him there.

“Ready?” Cameron said.

Mackintosh nodded.

“We’ll take the stairs. Walker—stay here with this guy. Keep him quiet. We won’t be long.”

Walker nodded.

Cameron turned to Mackintosh. “Do you have your weapon?”

Mackintosh opened his jacket to show his holstered Beretta.

“Take it out. We’ll go in first, but don’t hesitate if you need to use it.”

“Understood.”

“Let’s go.”

Cameron and Fisher started to climb with Mackintosh close behind them.

First floor.

Second floor.

Third floor.

They reached the fourth floor. There was a door and he pushed it open and stepped through onto the corridor beyond. There were windows along

the right-hand side of the corridor. Mackintosh glanced through the first one that he reached and saw the Wall, the death strip and the watchtower that he had seen from the street. There were two guards in the watchtower, both armed with rifles.

The left-hand side of the corridor had a number of doors set along it. Cameron reached the first one, saw that it had the number 400, and then continued along until he reached 414. He paused outside the door and leaned closer so that he might be able to listen to the noises from inside. Mackintosh listened, too. He thought that he could distinguish three separate speakers: Morgan, Geipel and one other?

Cameron raised his hand and held up three fingers, confirming Mackintosh's count. The soldier held the MP5-SD in both hands, right hand on the pistol grip and left hand cradling the receiver, took a step to the right, and then turned so that he was just off square with the door. Fisher came up and stood next to him, straight on with the door handle.

Cameron whispered: "Three, two, one, *breach*."

Fisher drew back his right foot and kicked the door just beneath the handle.

The thin plywood splintered around the lock and the door flew back into the apartment. Cameron aimed forward, his elbows bent slightly. Mackintosh was in the corridor and couldn't see inside, but he heard the report of the MP5-SD as Cameron fired it. The suppressor deadened the sound a little, but it was still loud. There was a short pause and then the gun chattered again.

"Clear," Cameron said.

Fisher went in next, and Mackintosh followed. He scanned his immediate surroundings. He was in a sitting room: there was a large window directly ahead and a door to his right. There was a beige sofa and two matching armchairs to his left and a coffee table to the right. The apartment was heated with coal that was burned in a free-standing ceramic oven. Cameron saw a pile of dusty briquettes in the space next to the window.

There were three men in the room: Geipel was sitting on the armchair at



Mackintosh's nine and two men he didn't recognise were on the sofa at his eleven. Both of those men had been shot. Cameron's gun was aimed at Geipel.

"How many others?" Cameron asked in German.

"One," Geipel replied, his eyes going to the only other door that led off the sitting room.

Morgan was the only man who was unaccounted for.

Fisher approached the door. "Come out," he called.

The door flew open to reveal a small, unpleasant bathroom. Morgan was standing there, a small pistol in his hand. He was four feet away and couldn't miss. Fisher fired a three-shot burst and all three rounds found their mark. Morgan was struck in the throat and chest, a cascade of blood splashing out to spray over the stained porcelain and the dirty tiled floor. He fell back, stumbling over the toilet bowl and yanking down the mildewed shower curtain as he slumped to the floor.

Mackintosh looked back to Geipel. The Stasi officer was wearing a white shirt with exaggerated lapels, a red cardigan and beige slacks. Cameron frisked him, removing a Makarov from a clip-on holster. He hauled him up and pushed the colonel back so that he was up against the wall.

"All yours," Cameron said.

Mackintosh followed in, pressing the muzzle of his Beretta between the man's eyes.

"Speak English?"

Geipel couldn't nod with the muzzle pinning his head against the wall. "Yes," he said. "I speak it."

"We're going back downstairs," he said. "If you do anything stupid, we'll kill you. I'm not bluffing. Say that you understand."

"I understand," he said. His eyes flickered between pain and fury.

"Good."

Cameron put his hand on Mackintosh's shoulder. "You go down first.

Make sure it's clear. Get Walker, go to your car and bring it to the front. Where do you want to take him?"

"I've rented a space in Marienfelde," he said. "We need to get him there."

Cameron grabbed a fistful of Geipel's cardigan. "Let's get him out."

Mackintosh nodded and started for the door. Cameron took a moment, yanked Geipel away from the wall and propelled him to the door, following close behind.

Mackintosh found Walker where he had left him. The unconscious guard was still on the floor; he hadn't moved.

"Let's go," Mackintosh said. "We're getting out of here."

Walker followed him out of the building. "What happened?"

"Morgan is dead. They're bringing Geipel down. I need to get my car."

"Then what?"

"We're going to take him somewhere quiet."

They made their way to the side road. Mackintosh told Walker to follow him, got into his staff car and drove back to the front of the building. He waited, fumes rising from the exhaust. He saw Fisher, Cameron and Geipel in the lobby and reached back to open the kerbside door; Cameron shoved Geipel, urging him outside and across the pavement. He pushed him into the car and slid alongside him, the gun pressed against his ribcage. Fisher hurried around the car and got in through the opposite door so that Geipel was pinned between the two SAS men.

"Go," Cameron said.

Mackintosh set off, the wheels slipping on the ice and the rear end sliding out until the rubber found traction.

"This is a bad idea," Geipel said.

Mackintosh replied without looking back. "Shooting my agents was a bad idea."

"I'm a serving officer in the State Security Service," he said.

"I don't give a shit what you are. You must have known there would be consequences."

Mackintosh drove them south through Schillerkiez with Walker following behind. He saw the usual evidence of frantic building work, with construction sites still replacing buildings that had been damaged during the war. The skyline bristled with cranes, and heavy vehicles lumbered across patches of open ground, the snow melting into slush and mud. Mackintosh took a left and, eventually, they reached Marienfelde. Mackintosh drove into a street that allowed access to a row of warehouses and industrial units. The buildings nestled tightly together, with narrow streets cutting between them.

He pulled up against a wire fence that prevented access to a small warehouse. Walker drew up behind him. Mackintosh stepped outside, shivering in the sudden cold, unlocked the padlock and slid the gate to the side. Walker drove in first, and Mackintosh followed. The two cars pulled up outside the warehouse.

"What are we doing here?" Geipel said.

"I need to spend a little quiet time with you, Colonel," he said. "We have a lot to talk about."

Mackintosh opened the door and stepped down to the icy pavement. The snow had fallen heavily and he hadn't been here to clear it away for several days. He crunched through it, cracking the icy crust, the snow reaching up to his calves as he stomped over to the warehouse. He took the keys from his pocket and found the one to open the door. He pushed it back, turned to signal that the two soldiers should bring Geipel, and then went inside.

Mackintosh had done this before. He had served in Northern Ireland during the height of the Troubles, and had broken Provos who would rather have sold out their mothers than confess to a Brit. They had their own meth-

ods—baseball bats, hurley sticks, or cudgels spiked with nails; he had had to be inventive, to find new methods that would frighten even them. It had taken practice but, eventually, he had become very good at it. He hadn't had to revisit those days for a long time, but he found that he wasn't daunted by the prospect of what might come next. He focussed on Geipel and the role that he had played in Élodie's murder. He thought about what Geipel could tell him, the things that he needed to know. They were worth a few hours of unpleasantness and much more besides.

Mackintosh had been renting the warehouse for six months. He had decided that it wasn't safe to run this particular operation from the consulate, or from any of the other premises that were available to him. He was acutely aware that there was a mole problem in MI6, and he needed to be sure that his work here remained secret, now more than ever. The warehouse comprised two rooms: the first was an office, furnished with a table and three chairs. He had fastened cork boards onto three walls and had pinned a map of Berlin to one of the boards. The rest of the space was taken up with pages of written notes, newspaper clippings and index cards on which he had recorded his contact notes with PICASSO and, more recently, the details of the men he suspected of being involved in the ambush. Alex Geipel had his own card. There was a large photograph next to the map. It showed four men, each dressed in the black formal uniform of a Stasi officer. The photograph had been taken by an agent in East Berlin a year previously. It was a formal occasion, everyone done up to the nines. Geipel was one of the group. Karl-Heinz Sommer was standing next to him.

The second room was adjacent to the first. Mackintosh unpinned the photograph, put it in his pocket and went through. There was a naked lightbulb hanging from the ceiling in the middle of the room. It cast its light down on Geipel. The colonel had been trussed up, his wrists tied to the arms of the chair and his ankles tied to the legs. Jimmy Walker was standing in the shadows, the gloom obscuring his face. Cameron and Fisher had gone.

Mackintosh went over so that he was standing in front of Geipel. “How are you feeling?”

Geipel didn’t reply.

“We need to talk, Colonel.”

“Do we?” His English was accented and the words dripped with sarcasm.

“You know who I am, don’t you?”

“I do,” Geipel said. “You should have stayed in London. Coming back here was unwise.”

“We’ll have to disagree about that. I need you to help me with some information.”

“I don’t think so.”

“Really? I was hoping this could be civil.”

Mackintosh stepped back and made his way to the edge of the room. There was a table there, and laid out across it was a selection of industrial tools. Mackintosh had thought about how he might like to conduct the interrogation. There were several ways he could go about it. He could be patient and try to explain to Geipel why he would, eventually, have to cooperate. But he didn’t have the time to go that way; he had no way of knowing where Günter was, and the longer he waited, the harder it would be to find him. But expediency was not the only motivation that Mackintosh was considering. He knew himself well enough to acknowledge that revenge was part of it. It was an itch that he had felt all week, a sensation that he couldn’t remove, one that he dearly wanted to scratch. Élodie was dead. Geipel had played a part in that.

And why just the one motivation? He would get the intelligence he needed, and he would get a measure of vengeance, too. Not enough, but a start.

He ran his fingers across the tools: a drill, a hammer, a chisel. He considered them all, but, in the end, decided that he would work up to the more unpleasant techniques at his disposal. He picked up a pair of small bladed

pliers and clicked them open and closed, so that Geipel could hear them.

“I’ll be honest, Colonel,” he said. “I’m going to enjoy this. You’re going to tell me what I want to know and I’m going to punish you for what you did. I’m going to hurt you and, by the end of it, I’ll have what I want and you will wish you had been somewhere else at Christmas.”

He walked forward again until he was next to the chair.

“James,” he said. “Could you hold the colonel’s arm for me, please?”

Walker stepped out of the shadows. Mackintosh knew that Walker was a hard man—his file made that plain—but he fancied he saw a little uncertainty in his face as he approached the chair. He made his way behind Geipel and reached down so that he could secure his forearm.

Geipel struggled, but it did him no good; the bindings were tight, restricting his movement, and Walker was strong and had the benefit of leverage. Mackintosh took the colonel’s hand and isolated his index finger. He looked down at the nail; it was chewed, with a half-moon of dirt underneath it. Mackintosh took the pliers and fastened the teeth around the nail. He gave a hard yank and loosened the nail from the bed. Geipel screamed, but it didn’t matter; no one would hear him. Mackintosh gripped the finger more tightly, and yanked again. The nail was torn out of the bed and blood immediately bubbled up in the space where it had been.

Mackintosh waited for Geipel to stop screaming.

“I have some questions,” he said. “You’re going to answer them.”

“Fuck you,” Geipel said.

Mackintosh ignored that. He selected Geipel’s middle finger and closed the pliers around the nail.

“Where’s Günter Schmidt?”

“*Fuck you*,” Geipel repeated. “English dog—you were lucky to get away before. You won’t be so lucky—”

Mackintosh yanked again, tearing the nail out with just the one stroke. Geipel couldn’t staunch the scream. His face was pale, the blood drained away. He panted, gulping in air, and stared down at the bloodied ends of his



fingers.

“It doesn’t matter what you do to me,” Geipel said, his voice thin and reedy. “There are hundreds of men who will take my place. You’ll be driven out of Berlin. You, and everyone else like you. You’ll go home and wish you’d never been here.”

“Where’s Schmidt?”

Geipel hawked up a mouthful of phlegm and spat it at Mackintosh’s feet.

“Fair enough,” Mackintosh said. “Something else, perhaps.”

He went to the tools and picked up the drill. He plugged it into the socket and brought it over to the chair. He looked Geipel up and down: wrist, elbow, knee, hip. He decided on his knee, and pressed the bit against the bone. He pulled the trigger and the drill whined, chewing through the fabric of Geipel’s trousers and into the thin layer of skin.

“All right!” Geipel yelled. “Stop!”

Mackintosh pulled the drill back and let go of the trigger. “Where is Schmidt?”

“Roedeliusplatz.”

“Sommer’s place?”

“Yes.”

“Tell me about it.”

“He lives there—it’s an old building; he had it rebuilt. He has rooms on the top floor, office space beneath, then the basement.”

“What’s in the basement?”

“The cells, interrogation rooms, and his vault.”

“You’ll draw me a plan?”

“Yes,” Geipel said.

“What else? Has he questioned him yet?”

“Yes.”

“He knows about Schmidt and Pabst?”

“Of course.”

“What about Schmidt’s photographs?”

“He wouldn’t tell him where they were. He says he wants Sommer to get him over the border first.” He laughed, the sound distorted by his pain. “That will *never* happen—he’s deluded if he thinks he’ll ever be let out again. Sommer doesn’t like being told no. He’ll interrogate him himself and he’ll take his time over it. Schmidt will tell him after the first minute and then Sommer will keep going to punish him for his insolence.”

“When will he do that?”

“Sommer wants those pictures. He won’t wait long.”

“Ready?”

Jimmy nodded.

“On three.”

He held onto Geipel’s ankles while Mackintosh held his wrists.

“One.”

They started to swing the body, back and forth. They had weighted it with a chain that Mackintosh had found in the warehouse, wrapping it around the man’s waist and then padlocking it in place. They had put the body into the boot of the car and driven to the Teltow Canal.

“Two.”

The body was heavy now and Jimmy was careful to make sure his feet were anchored on the icy platform that jutted out into the canal. It was dark, with no one to be seen. There was a cemetery on the other side of the water, its tombstones silhouetted by the occasional sweep of lights from the cars that passed beyond it.

“Three.”

Geipel’s body reached the apogee of the swing and they let go, watching as the dead man arced up and then plunged down, splashing into the glossy black water and vanishing beneath the surface. They both stood there for a moment, regaining their breath, watching it steam in front of their faces.

There was a bridge fifty yards to their left and a night train rumbled across it, the lights in its carriages glowing through the struts and stanchions until it reached the other side and disappeared.

“Done,” Mackintosh said. “Let’s go.”

The evening had taken an unexpected turn. Geipel had decided that the pain—and the prospect of more of it—was not worth his silence. He had answered Mackintosh’s questions and had agreed to draw him a plan of the building where Günter Schmidt was being held. Mackintosh brought him a piece of foolscap paper and Jimmy watched as Geipel scrawled out a rough diagram of each floor. His cooperation had not bought him his life. Mackintosh had taken out his pistol and shot him at point blank range.

“The building,” Jimmy said as they trudged back to the car. “The one where Schmidt is being held.”

“What about it?”

“He said there was a vault.”

“And?”

“Is it true?”

“I don’t know. I’ve heard rumours before.”

“What’s inside it?”

Mackintosh looked back at him, shaking his head in wry amusement. “What’s this, James? Professional curiosity?”

“I just wondered why he would need a vault.”

“A man like him hoards secrets. You don’t last as long as he has without leverage.”

“A vault, though? Why not a safe?”

“I don’t know. Perhaps he has a lot of secrets.”

They ascended a treacherous bank to the road where they had parked the car. Jimmy decided to let the matter of the vault rest for now. He looked back at the trail in the snow that they had carved out as they dragged

Geipel's body to the canal.

“What now?” Jimmy said.

“I have some arrangements to make. I'll drop you back at the hotel.”

Mackintosh parked the car and followed Jimmy up to the room. He had brought a briefcase from the warehouse and he put it on the bed and opened it.

“What’s that?” Jimmy asked him

“There are a few things you need to know.”

Mackintosh hefted two thick files from his briefcase and gave them to Jimmy. A name was written on the side of each file. The first one was Günter Schmidt. The second was Karl-Heinz Sommer. Each bore legends on their covers that marked them as Top Secret.

Jimmy opened the file for Schmidt and flicked through it. There were reports, some typed and some in neat script. As well as the reports, there were a number of photographs, each of them featuring the same man. He was young, in his late teens, and had blond hair, pale skin and blue eyes. He wore a troubled expression in each photograph, as if the world were about to come crashing down around him.

“Remember him. Memorise his face. You’re going to be helping me to get him out.”

“This is the man with the photographs?”

“That’s right.”

Jimmy put the file aside and took up the one marked Sommer. He

opened it.

“And this guy?”

“*Generalleutnant* Karl-Heinz Sommer. In charge of counter-intelligence for the Stasi. They call him *die Spinne*.”

“Meaning?”

“The Spider. Much of his history is disputed. Some say he was in the Hitler Youth. Some say he was in the SS.”

“I thought the Nazis were all rounded up after the war.”

“Don’t be naïve. Most of them? Of course. But not the intelligent ones. They went to America and Britain, at our invitation, to build our rockets and nuclear power plants. America wouldn’t have set foot on the moon without the Nazis. Sommer found a good home for his skills.”

“Which are?”

Mackintosh got to his feet and stared out of the window over the city. “He’s a master manipulator. He’s the spymaster in a city full of spies. He serves no cause; he’s only interested in power and personal gain. You’re going to kill him, James.”

“Really? How am I going to do that?”

“His greed. That’s how you get close to him.”

“You’ve lost me.”

“Sommer doesn’t know who you are. None of them do. You won’t appear on any of their records. Your legend is solid—it’s been carefully worked on. Everything stacks up if they think to check. You’re going to meet him and then you’re going to offer him a lot of money.”

“For what?”

“For guns. You’re going to tell him that you’re buying arms for the Provos.”

“Are you crazy?”

“It’s a nice match. You’re James Walker. You’ve had an MI5 file for

years, ever since you robbed banks for the Republicans.”

“That was a misunderstanding,” he protested. “I didn’t know—”

“It doesn’t matter. Your MI5 file says that you were responsible for finding the money to pay for a Libyan shipment. The RUC records back that up. We have a woman in London who has persuaded the Stasi that she works for them. She doesn’t—we use her to feed them misinformation from time to time. They’ll ask her to check you out. We’ll make sure that she has access to your records.”

Jimmy shook his head. “This is ridiculous.”

“I disagree. That’s the beauty of it—your file already exists. There’s corroboration. You’ll tell them you work with their quartermaster, and your file will back it up.”

“Why would Sommer even take a meeting with me?”

“Because he is a greedy man. He gets paid a commission *and* he can tell himself he’s advancing the cause. The Stasi have supplied weapons to the Irish before.” He turned away from the window and pointed down at the two files. “Trust me, James, Sommer won’t be able to resist. Now—read the files. You need to be prepared.”

“What are you going to do?”

“I have to speak to someone about getting you across the border.”



Mackintosh got into his car and drove through the night-time streets of West Berlin. The nightclubs at the centre of the town had long lines of young people waiting to go inside. The bars were filled. Music drifted to him from every street corner. Berlin was a city that had suffered, one that had been torn asunder, and yet life went on.

He pulled in by the side of the road. A pink neon sign blinked over the door of the club across the street. Fifty Berliners stood in line waiting to enter. The young women in the line wore long furs and stamped their heels on the cold ground. The men huddled in their black leather jackets and wrapped their arms around themselves for warmth. Mackintosh got out of the car, found his scarf on the back seat and wrapped it around his neck. He joined the back of the line and waited.

The queue shuffled forward and, after ten minutes of shivering, Mackintosh was able to enter the club. He went down a set of dark steps to a basement that rang with dance music and was drenched in neon. He went by the vodka bar, which was crammed with customers trying to get a drink, and squeezed through the crowd that had gathered around the VIP area at the back of the club. He went to a second room, this one a little quieter and a little less busy. There was a bar at the end of the room and Mackintosh walked up to it.

A woman was waiting for him. She was tall, dressed in a close-fitting black dress that drew attention to her slender figure. It revealed her

shoulders, and tattoos that were partly concealed by the fabric. Her hair was blonde, almost white, and her lips were full, the lipstick accentuating them.

“I ordered you a Scotch,” she said as Mackintosh settled at the bar next to her.

“Thank you.”

Her name was Oksana Baranova, although Mackintosh had only referred to her in his reports by her cryptonym: SNOW. A tiny cohort in MI6 knew her real name; he had made sure of that. She was a rare asset: a working KGB double agent with connections on both sides of the Wall. The risks that she had taken on his behalf had put a target on her back. Both her own agency and the Stasi would have given much to discover the identity of the traitor who had been feeding the British secrets for the last eighteen months.

There was a couch in the corner of the room and Oksana indicated that they should sit. Mackintosh followed and watched as she lowered herself onto the couch and tucked her legs beneath her. He stared again at the deep red of her lips, at the contrast with her bone-white skin. Her blue eyes were crowned with mascara.

Mackintosh sat down next to her. “You look the same as ever.”

“You look older.”

“A side effect of being shot at by the Stasi.”

“I heard about Günter. And your agents.”

Élodie’s face flashed across his mind; he tried to ignore it. “They knew we were coming. It was a mess from start to finish.”

“I am sorry, Harry.”

Her accent had always proven difficult for Mackintosh to pin down. The English was perfect, but it was freighted with a mix of Eastern European tonality that he couldn’t quite define.

“If I had known that Sommer had found out...”

He nodded. “I know. You would have warned me.”

“I am disappointed, too,” she said. “It would have been quite something

for Günter to have told his story. It would have caused the Stasi incalculable damage.”

“Have you heard anything about him?”

“Günter? No. Nothing.” Oksana cast her gaze down to her drink and then sipped at the clear liquid before resting the glass on the table that had been placed in front of the couch. “I thought he was in Hohenschönhausen,” she said. “I have contacts there. Stasi guards. Prisoners, too—I would have heard.”

“He’s not in Hohenschönhausen. I know where he is.”

“Really? The Ruchestraße?”

“Not there, either. Sommer has him in Roedeliusplatz. Do you know it?”

“He has a building there.” She lit a cigarette and inhaled deeply. “It was an old wreck from the war. A *Pfarrhaus*—a vicarage. He said he wanted a separate headquarters for his administration.” Oksana shook her head. “He is not in good graces with the leadership. Many believe he maintains his position with *kompromat* that he has gathered. The spider spins his web and many flies fall into it.” She stared at him through the cigarette smoke. “How did you find out where Schmidt is?”

“I had a conversation with Alex Geipel.”

“*Did* you?”

“I dangled some bait to see what might happen. He scuttled out of his hole and took it. I had him picked up. He told me that Sommer had Günter and where he was keeping him.”

“And where is Geipel now?”

“At the bottom of the Teltow Canal.”

Oksana gave a low chuckle. “You English. So polite and reserved and yet so ruthless. You are not so different from the KGB.”

Mackintosh sipped the Scotch. “What about Sommer?”

“He is an ambitious man. If I were minded to place a bet, I would guess

that he will use Herr Schmidt as leverage for his own advancement. His story will be documented, evidenced, and consigned to Sommer's vault. And then? Sommer will put him in the canal next to Geipel."

She drained her glass.

"No, he won't," Mackintosh said.

"He won't?"

"I'm going to get him back."

She smiled at him. "Come, Harry. Don't be foolish. He is lost."

"I don't think so."

"How are you going to do that?"

"I need to arrange a meeting with Sommer."

"You are going to ask him nicely if he would return him to you?"

"*I'm* not meeting him. I have someone else in mind."

She narrowed her eyes. "Really?"

Mackintosh took another sip of his drink. "I have a man. I've arranged a legend for him: an arms buyer for the Irish Republicans. He will say that he wants to buy weapons from the GDR for use on British soil. He has history with the IRA, and I'll arrange for his file to be leaked. The Stasi have done business with the Irish before, and Sommer is a greedy man with the right connections. He'll take the meeting."

She wrinkled her nose. "Maybe."

"You know him. You can make the introduction."

"And then? Assuming Sommer agrees to meet?"

"I have a few ideas."

Oksana laughed. "You're not serious."

Mackintosh drained his Scotch.

"You *are* serious."

“My man isn’t trained, but he is effective. And this is *so* unorthodox—”

“So *foolish*,” she corrected.

“So *unorthodox* that Sommer couldn’t possibly expect it. I think it has a chance.”

“And if it doesn’t?”

Mackintosh shrugged. “My man is a nobody. A petty criminal I picked up off the street. If he dies, he dies. He wouldn’t be missed.”

She looked at him and then laid a hand on his wrist.

“As I said, my dear Harry—*ruthless*.”

Jimmy's sleep was fitful that night. He imagined himself back in the warehouse with Geipel tied to the chair and Mackintosh taking the drill and pressing it into his knee. He woke up sweating, his pulse racing. He looked at his watch: it was five in the morning. He kicked off the sheets and lay naked in bed, the sweat drying on his skin, and closed his eyes. He saw flashes of the warehouse, after-images, and reached out for the photograph of Isabel and Sean that Mackintosh had left for him. He concentrated on their faces, and, quickly, the tone of his memories changed. He was back with them both: playing football with his boy, eating dinner with Isabel, a happy family once again. He drifted back to sleep with a smile on his face.

HE AWOKE to a knocking on the door. He looked at his watch: it was nine. He had slept in. He got out of bed, pulled on his clothes and padded over to the door on bare feet. He opened the door an inch with the security chain in place, and looked out.

\*

"Open the door, James."

He closed the door, removed the chain, and opened it again so that Mackintosh could come inside.

"Did you sleep well?"

"Not particularly."

"It'll have to do. You'll be crossing the border this afternoon, all being

well. You'll meet with Sommer. It'll be your opportunity to find Schmidt."

"And kill Sommer."

"That would be ideal."

There was a basket of tea bags on the bureau. Jimmy held it up. "Want one?"

Mackintosh nodded.

He switched on the kettle.

"You're still ready to do this?" Mackintosh asked.

"Like I have any choice?" Mackintosh didn't reply. "Whatever. The sooner I get this done, the sooner I get to go home."

Again, Mackintosh didn't reply. Jimmy looked at him: there was hesitation on his face. He poured hot water into a mug, added a tea bag and handed it to Mackintosh.

"*Right?*" Jimmy pressed.

Mackintosh put the mug down on the bureau. "We have to be able to trust one another, James. I won't be able to keep tabs on you once you're over the border. I'll have to trust that you will do what you've been asked. And you'll have to trust me."

"You want *trust*?" Jimmy said. "I don't trust you as far as I could throw you. You don't get my trust because you have something on me. You don't get my trust because you forced me to work with you. Trust is *earned*."

"I'm sorry you feel that way."

"This isn't about trust. I don't have to trust you. I have to weigh up the consequences. I know what happens if I don't do what you want. I'll go to prison. I understand that. But there are consequences for you, too."

"Really?"

"I'm a man of my word. I'll do what you ask, but I need you to know that if you mess me about, the next time you see me you'll wish you hadn't."

Mackintosh went to the window and, for a moment, they both stared out toward East Berlin. “Let’s hope it doesn’t come to that.”

“Aye,” Jimmy said. “Let’s.”

Mackintosh pointed at the Wall, visible from up high, cutting its way across streets like a scar.

“I’m arranging a passage across the border for you. There’s someone who can help with that. You’re going to meet her this morning. Her name is Oksana and she works for the Russians—at least, that’s what they think. She works for us, too. If she tells you to do something, I recommend that you do it. No deviation. Freelancing will get you shot. It’ll get her shot, too, and I won’t forgive that.”

“Fair enough,” Jimmy replied.

Mackintosh turned away from the window. He locked his gaze on Jimmy. “You need to be very, very careful. If you try anything at the border, if they think there’s anything about you that’s suspicious, if you do anything that makes them uncomfortable, they’ll shoot you both dead. I’ve seen it happen.”

Mackintosh went to the chair where Jimmy had laid his jacket. He picked it up and tossed it over to him.

“Ready?”

“Now?”

“No time like the present.”



Jimmy kept his head down, eyes on the pavement as they marched toward the café, and went over his instructions with Mackintosh one more time.

“So,” he said. “I order coffee, take a seat closest to the back of the café, and wait. A woman with pale skin and blonde hair will approach me and ask if I had a good trip.”

“And you say?”

“It was fine apart from the weather and the food.”

“Good,” said Mackintosh. “Oksana has arranged a meeting with Sommer. Take your time with him. He might be greedy, but he’s shrewd. Don’t rush him, or he’ll smell a rat. His building is lightly guarded. Once you’re inside, you’ll have a chance. Find Schmidt, kill Sommer and Oksana will get you out.”

“And then we’re done.”

“We are.”

There was no handshake, and nothing else to say. Jimmy didn’t trust Mackintosh, but he knew that he had no choice. He walked away toward the café without glancing back. He would need all the luck he could get. He’d never felt farther away from home, farther away from his family. He tried to push those thoughts from his mind, but all he could think about was holding Isabel and little Sean in his arms. He reached back in his memory and found

a moment that vividly replayed. He was in a summer field; Isabel was in a white dress, Sean was in his shorts with his football not far away.

His throat felt tight. He began to panic.

The noise from the café reached him. Loud voices and clinking glasses. He looked up at the sign above the door, swore once, then went inside.

THE CAFÉ WAS SMALL, with dark mahogany chairs clustered around tables in the middle of the floor. Green velvet banquettes lined one corner of the room and served as seating for five tables. Jimmy found a back table and put his bag down on the floor. He sat down and pretended to look at the menu, but, instead, he eyed the clientele. There were a couple of Asian tourists fiddling with a huge camera at the table beside him. Two men in suits were eating scrambled eggs while they watched the Asian couple and two women in long coats at the window seat. The two women were checking out the tourists opposite them: blond, tanned guys with long hair and American accents. Everyone was watching everyone else.

A song by Heaven 17 played on the radio. A waitress with short brown hair and an order pad approached the table.

“Coffee and water, please,” said Jimmy.

She wrote down his order and left.

The waitress had been blocking Jimmy’s view of the front door. Now that she had left, he saw that someone had walked inside. He looked away, blinked, then looked back, still using the menu to disguise his eye line.

It was a woman. She stood in the doorway, took off her coat and then looked around. Blonde hair, pale skin. She saw Jimmy, then glanced away from him as she scanned the rest of the room. Jimmy sat a little straighter. The woman walked over to the table.

She was tall and she had a pale face, light blue eyes and full red lips. She had a long black coat held over the crook of her elbow and wore a trouser suit and heels. Her face was framed by blonde hair that fell down beyond her shoulders.

Her eyes were focussed on Jimmy. She crossed the room to him.

“How was your trip?” she said. The English was perfect, but there was an accent that lent the words an exotic richness.

“Fine,” he said. “Apart from the weather and the food.”

“Welcome to Berlin.” She leaned in close, embracing him. He froze, his arms hesitant to touch her. He placed his hands gently on her shoulders. She kissed him on the cheek and then whispered into his ear, “We need to leave. My car is outside.”

THE AIR WAS much cooler outside and a damp mist had descended, closing around them and reducing the visibility so that he could only just see to the end of the street. The woman got into the passenger seat of a black Saab and told Jimmy to get in the driver’s seat. He did, putting his bag on the back seat and closing the door. \*

“We couldn’t talk in there?” he asked.

“There were people listening for the Stasi,” she explained.

“I didn’t see anyone. Who?”

“They have a hundred thousand people working for them,” she said. “Easier to say who isn’t working for them.” She put out her hand. “I’m Ok-sana.”

“Jimmy.”

“How much has our mutual friend told you?”

“About you?” She nodded. “A little.”

“That’s for the best.”

“I know you work for the Russians.”

“That’s right. The *Komitet gosudarstvennoy bezopasnosti*.”

“The KGB?”

“Very good, Jimmy.”

“And you’re going to arrange a meeting with Sommer.”

She nodded. “I am. And, let me say, you’re a brave man.”

“I don’t know about that.”

“Sommer is a dangerous man.”

“It might be brave if I had a choice.”

“I see. Our friend didn’t explain your relationship.”

Jimmy wondered if he had said too much. “Our relationship doesn’t really matter. He said you could arrange it.”

“And I have,” she said.

“When?”

“Tomorrow evening.”

“You can get me over the border?”

“That’s the easy part. I have papers for you.”

She reached for the glovebox, opened it and took out a bundle of papers.

She handed the bundle over.

“You already have your passport. I arranged the visa. It is a *Tagesvisum*—a day visa—good for twenty-four hours.”

“I’ll need longer than that.”

“You will,” she said. “A *Tagesvisum* is the easiest to arrange. You will need to go to a *Reisebüro* office tomorrow and arrange for an extension. It will be a formality. You must also change a minimum of twenty-five Deutschmarks into *Ostmarks* for every day you are in the East. You will also need to register with the *Volkspolizei* so that they can add a residence stamp in your passport. Again—you need to see to that tomorrow. The hotel concierge will do that for you.”

He flipped through the papers and found a typed letter. It had been signed with an extravagant stroke of the pen. The name beneath the signature was KARL-HEINZ SOMMER. “What’s this?”

“It’s from the general’s office, noting your meeting with him. It should smooth the way, should you need it.”

“Are you coming with me?”

“Not now,” she said. “It would be difficult to explain why a KGB agent took a British citizen over the border. I’ll meet you at the hotel. The address is in your papers. Drive straight there as soon as you have made the crossing.”

There was a road atlas in the glovebox, and Oksana took it out. She flipped the pages until she found the one she wanted.

“We are here,” she said, laying a finger on the map. “The crossing is here, on Friedrichstraße. It’s the only gateway where the GDR allows westerners to pass across. Checkpoint Charlie.”

Jimmy looked: they were close.

“There are two agencies who guard the border. Both wear the same uniform, but they sometimes have different agendas and they don’t like each other. The ones without weapons work for the *Kontrollseinheiten*. They are part of the Stasi. The others are border guards, from the Ministry of De-

fence. There can sometimes be clashes of jurisdiction. You just need to be respectful and do as they tell you and everything will be fine.” She looked over at him. “Any questions?”

Jimmy shook his head. He had plenty, but he would ask them another time.

Oksana gave Jimmy the key and he started the engine and flicked on the headlights. Jimmy realised he couldn’t take his eyes off her. She was seductive in a way that made him feel uneasy. Like he didn’t trust himself around her.

“I will be at the hotel when you arrive.”

She opened the door and stepped outside. Jimmy glanced at her reflection in the mirror as he pulled out; she had already turned and was walking away.

Jimmy set off, following the route that Oksana had shown him. It wasn't far, and as he turned a corner, he saw it. Checkpoint Charlie. The crossing was marked by a grey hut in the middle of a wide road. He couldn't see much beyond that with the mist, but he saw the sign on the right-hand side of the road.

YOU ARE LEAVING THE AMERICAN SECTOR.

The crossing didn't feel American to him, even when he saw the men in US military uniforms crowded around the hut. He looked out of the wind-screen at the border ahead. There was a row of guards and a watchtower beyond them. The guards were all armed and he had no doubt that there were snipers in the tower. Getting across the border was one thing; getting back again might be a challenge.

There was a line of cars at the grey shed and Jimmy pulled in at the back. There were separate windows in the shed, each marked by the flag of the country that operated it. Jimmy saw the Stars and Stripes, a French tricolore and the Union Jack. A soldier indicated that Jimmy should wind down the window and Jimmy did as he was told.

"Where are you from?" the man said.

"Belfast."

"Papers."

He held out his passport and visa.

“You know you’re at risk if you go over there?”

“I do,” Jimmy replied.

“No support if you get in trouble.”

“I understand.”

“Your funeral.”

The soldier handed him back the passport and visa and waved him on.

Jimmy rolled forward along the road until he reached the border. A barrier blocked the way ahead. Jimmy waited in line as the two cars ahead of him were checked. He saw a dozen soldiers in greyish brown uniforms, some of them armed. They examined the cars and spoke to the drivers, eventually allowing both vehicles through.

A soldier with an AK-47 beckoned Jimmy forward. Jimmy remembered what Oksana had said: he was a border guard. He trained the rifle on him and called out that he should stop.

Jimmy pulled up at the barrier and waited as a second soldier, this one with ginger hair, stepped out of a guard hut. The red-haired man was unarmed; he made a circular gesture with his fist, indicating Jimmy should wind down the window.

Jimmy looked ahead. The guard was still aiming the rifle at him.

The red-haired officer waved for the border guard to lower his weapon. The younger man did as he was told, bringing the weapon down. He held it ready, his finger close to the trigger.

Jimmy wound down the window.

“English?”

“Irish.”

“Passport and papers.”

Jimmy handed the papers to the red-haired man. He took them and stepped back, examining each one in turn.

The tension was thick and cloying. Jimmy felt a long way from home.



The guard leaned down. "Step out of the car, please."

Jimmy opened the door and stepped out with great care. He turned his back to the red-haired officer and put his hands on the roof. A group of armed border guards appeared and began to inspect the car. They opened the rear passenger doors and got in; the boot and the bonnet were thrown up. Jimmy felt a hand on his shoulder, easing him backwards. He raised his hands and went with it. More guards appeared and got into the front of the car.

Jimmy felt like he was back in Belfast. He had been stopped by the British at checkpoints before. He tried to relax. It wasn't easy. He sensed someone to his left, and when he looked, he saw the young border guard with his rifle pointed at him again.

Jimmy clenched his fists. He looked at the cobbles, biting down on his lower lip.

The search of the car and its contents, including Jimmy's bag, went on for several minutes. One of the guards came over with a sniffer dog. The hound was led through the vehicle, its nose poking into every crevice. A guard used a long telescopic pole with a mirror on the end of it to inspect beneath the vehicle. Another unscrewed the fuel cap and inserted a long dipstick into the tank, ensuring that the stick went in far enough.

They were thorough.

The red-haired agent handed the passport and visa back to Jimmy.

"You can go," he said.

Jimmy climbed back into the driver's seat and put his hands on the wheel to stop them from trembling.

He was over the border. Beyond the Iron Curtain.

He was in East Germany.

Mackintosh went back to his small apartment in the streets behind the British consulate. He had lived here for the last two years. The apartment had been provided to him by the government and was functional rather than comfortable. He had no problem with that. He had always preferred a Spartan life and, save a few photographs and books that he had shipped over when he had been given the posting at Berlin Station, he had done very little to soften the bare white walls and the polished floorboards.

There were a few concessions to sentimentality.

He had framed the only photograph he had of himself with Élodie and had placed it on the table. They had had it taken in Austria when they went to visit Hochosterwitz Castle; the story was that it had inspired the castle in Snow White, and Élodie had told him of her childhood love of that film. The picture was taken on the funicular railway that brought visitors up the mountain to the top.

They had taken ten days' vacation for that trip. They had started in Austria and then driven south to Venice, then Milan, then finally north into Switzerland. Their final day had included two hours at Lombard Odier, the famously secretive bank on Sihlstraße in Zurich. Mackintosh had opened a private account and had deposited the two hundred thousand francs that the DGSE had paid him to provide what they euphemistically referred to as 'updates' on British intelligence across Western Europe.

Mackintosh picked up the photograph and looked at it. Élodie had been

the agent who had recruited him. It was professional at first, but she had told him that it had grown into more, and he had believed her. She had been so happy on that trip; he had been happy, too. She had been the one good thing in his life, the suggestion that he might be able to forget the things that he had been asked to do in Belfast, the men he had broken, the lives he had ruined... and now she had been taken from him.

He shuddered, swallowing down on a throat that was suddenly thick and blinking away the tears. He put the photograph face down. What was the point of torturing himself?

He went into the kitchen, took a dirty saucepan from the sink and washed it under the tap. He dried it off, opened a tin of soup, poured it into the saucepan and warmed it on the stove. He wondered how Walker was doing. Mackintosh had taken a table in Café Adler, the establishment near Checkpoint Charlie that offered a view of the crossing. He had seen the Saab that Oksana had provided, and had watched with barely concealed trepidation as it had slowly made its way over the border. Mackintosh had been too far away to make out what had happened as the Saab had paused outside the East, and had hoped that the delay was just another routine check. He had allowed himself a sigh of relief as the car had continued on its way. Now, though, Mackintosh had no real idea what was happening. Oksana had not reported back to him, and further intelligence would be sparing, if there was any at all. Walker really was on his own.

The plan was a punt. Would it work? The odds were against it, but he had to try something.

Mackintosh poured the soup into a bowl, took a hunk of stale bread and a spoon and went back into the sitting room. He rested the bowl on the mantelpiece and took down one of the framed photographs. It was a picture of his mother and father. They had both been dead for years and he had no siblings. There was an uncle in Brunei, but that was it; he had been left with no family. He had no friends either, the acquaintances he had made during his university and army years quickly lost in the wilful obfuscation that had followed his transfer into the secret services. Mackintosh did not mind that. He had never been a particularly sociable man, and had always found the most satisfaction in solitude. Living here, in the enforced secrecy of West

Berlin, suited his temperament. Élodie had offered something hard to find, the understanding that another spy could offer, and now that was gone.

He heard noises outside the door. The sound of footsteps. He wondered whether it might be his neighbours until he caught the briefest snatch of whispered conversation. He knew what was about to happen, but, before he could do anything, the door to the flat exploded inwards in a cacophony of noise: twisted metal as the hinges buckled, splintered wood as the lock tore through the frame, and a volley of shouted orders from the three men who burst inside.

The men were all armed. Mackintosh backed away and raised his hands above his head, very aware that they would shoot him if he gave them any excuse to do so.

“Don’t shoot,” he said. “I’m not armed.”

“On the floor!” the man in the lead bellowed. He spoke in English, heavily accented with German.

“Okay,” Mackintosh said. He lowered himself to his knees and then onto his stomach. The three men came all the way inside, converging on him and forcing his arms behind his back. He felt the pinch of cuffs as they were fastened around his wrists and ankles. His right shirt cuff was torn open, the button spinning away onto the floor boards, and the sleeve rolled up to his elbow. He knew what was about to happen, and knew that there was no sense in trying to fight it. One of the men produced a syringe and pressed the needle into the vein on the inside of his elbow. Mackintosh did not know which anaesthetic the Stasi were favouring—fentanyl, carfentanil, sufentanil—but felt it as it ran up his arm to his shoulder. His veins throbbed as though they were full of ice and his body pulsed with a dull ache until the light started to fade and his eyelids became too heavy to hold open.

## **PART VI**

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Jimmy followed the directions that Oksana had given him. The streets were dark and grey, with buildings decorated with Soviet propaganda. He passed a large cinema on which had been hung a portrait of Stalin in full military regalia. Banners alternately extolled the benefits of socialism and derided the West.

He drove to an old hotel in a district where bars and cafés were plentiful. The hotel itself was reasonably impressive, at least by the standards of its neighbouring buildings. It was flanked by red stone columns with a flight of steps that led up to a grand entrance. He parked the car on a nearby street and walked back with his bag slung across his shoulder. He climbed the steps into the lobby. The space was lit with oil lamps and furnished with rich green leather couches, antique tables and cabinets. The carpet on the marble floor was an inch thick.

Jimmy stepped inside and saw Oksana. She glanced over at him and then looked back down to the magazine that she was reading. He went to the desk.

“Hello,” he said. “Do you speak English?”

“Certainly, sir.”

“I’d like to check in.”

“Of course. Could I see your papers?”

Jimmy handed over his visa and reservation and waited as the man filled

out his information on a registration form. Jimmy noticed the small details that belied the hotel's grandeur. The collar of the receptionist's shirt was frayed and worn, and looked as if it had been sewn back on in the recent past. The floors were clean but unpolished. The flowers in the vases were plastic and dusty. Every member of staff—from the receptionist to the bellboy waiting to attend to Jimmy's bag—looked as though their clothes were just a little too big for them.

“Very good, Herr Walker. We have a junior suite ready for you. Breakfast is in the restaurant between six and ten. The restaurant is open now or we'd be happy to send room service up to your room. There's a telephone in the room. Please just call.”

The bellboy asked to take Jimmy's bag. The man was older than Jimmy would have expected for the position, in his late fifties and with eyes that drooped in exhaustion or apathy. Jimmy declined and reassured the man that he would be fine holding his own bag. He asked for directions to his room and the man obliged, pointing to the lifts and telling him that he would need the sixth floor.

Jimmy opened the door to his room with a large iron key. The space inside was generous: there was a living room, a small dining table, a large marble bathroom and a bedroom with a huge four-poster bed. The suite was perfectly pleasant, if a little worn around the edges.

He dumped his bag on the bed and sat down next to it. A wave of lethargy washed over him. He realised that he had been mainlining adrenaline for the last couple of days, and that this was the comedown. Mackintosh's antics had taken it out of him.

He heard a quiet knock at the door. He opened it and saw Oksana standing outside. She put her finger to her lips and came inside. Jimmy frowned, and then remembered where he was; she went to the window and opened the French doors so that she could go out onto the balcony. Jimmy followed her. It was cold outside, the wind whipping the drapes. Oksana shut the door behind him.

He cocked an eyebrow as if to ask whether it was safe to speak.

"We're fine out here," she said.

"But the room's bugged?"

"Of course. Audio only, though. I had a colleague stay here last night. He's very good at finding devices. The bedside lamp, the telephone, the light fitting in the bathroom—they've all been tampered with. But no cameras, and nothing out here."



He put his forearms on the stone balustrade and gazed into the dismal street below.

“What a dump,” he said with a long sigh.

“Welcome to the East. And well done, by the way. You did well.”

“It wasn’t straightforward. They had me out of the car.”

“I saw.”

“You were watching?”

“I was behind you. And it happens. I told you—they’re unpredictable. But you’re here.”

“I am. Any idea how I’m going to get back?”

“We’ll deal with that later.”

“What now?”

“You should rest.”

“I could sleep for a month,” he admitted.

“Then sleep. Remember what I told you to do tomorrow?”

“Go to a *Reisebüro* office and arrange for an extension.”

“And?”

“Ask the hotel to register me with the *Volkspolizei*.”

“And?”

“Change Deutschmarks into Ostmarks.”

“Very good,” she said, and smiled.

“When am I meeting Sommer?”

“Eight o’clock. Spend the day in the city. I’ll come and get you at seven.”

Jimmy let her out. He unpacked his bag, took out his spare cash, stuffed the notes into a sock, and put the sock on the top of the wardrobe. He realised he was hungry. He picked up the phone and dialled for room service.

There was a menu by the phone.

“I’d like a steak, please.”

“I’m afraid steak is off the menu,” said the man on the other end of the line.

“No steak?”

“We have tomato salad.”

“How about the chicken?”

“We do not have chicken. The tomato salad is—”

“The lamb, then.”

“The lamb is not available—”

“What *have* you got?”

“We have tomato salad.”

Jimmy cursed under his breath. “I’ll have that, then, seeing as how I’ve heard so much about it.”

He put the phone down and looked around the room. There was a TV in the corner. He switched it on and watched a man giving a speech in German, then, bored, he switched over. There were four channels. Three of them were showing the same speech. The fourth channel showed a documentary that seemed, to Jimmy’s untrained ear, to be about the rise of socialism. He turned off the TV.

There was a knock at the door.

Jimmy opened it to an elderly man in a tuxedo pushing a serving trolley. In the centre of the trolley was a plate hidden beneath a silver cloche. The waiter took his time to set the table with a faded linen tablecloth, a stained linen napkin and scuffed silver cutlery. He invited Jimmy to sit. Jimmy sat down while the waiter poured iced water. He put the plate on the table in front of Jimmy, and, with a flourish, removed the cloche.

Carefully arranged tomatoes covered the chipped porcelain. A single lettuce leaf, browning at the edges, had been placed at the side together with

a few slices of raw onion.

“Enjoy your meal,” said the waiter.

Dawn broke, sending grey light in through the dusty panes of the window in the bedroom. Jimmy had been lying in bed, awake, for almost an hour. He was thinking about his family, about how Isabel and Sean were. Were they snuggled up in bed together? Were they worried about him? What had Isabel told his son?

He got up, showered and changed. He wore a black t-shirt under a thick black woollen jumper, black Levi's and his Dr. Martens laced up to the top. He left the room and went downstairs for breakfast. He saw the menu, remembered the meal last night, and decided that maybe he could get a better breakfast in one of the cafés that he had seen as he had driven in from the crossing last night. It was coming up on seven now, and the streets were beginning to get busy. The proprietors of the cafés were setting out their boards on the street. Jimmy entered the largest one he could find and sat down to look at the menu.

Another diner was eating sausages. Jimmy went to the counter and pointed at the man's plate, then pointed to a large urn that steamed with fresh tea. He sat down and watched the city come to life through the window. The food was delivered and Jimmy demolished it, sending the plate back and asking for another. He ate this a little more slowly, enjoying the sausages and washing them down with the tea.

He paid the proprietor and went outside. The other pedestrians were scanning the shop windows, reading the signs tacked up outside or the writ-

ing on the windows. There didn't seem to be much food or choice of clothes in any of the shops or cafés. Times were evidently hard. The fabric of the buildings was similar to the West, but this was very much a poor cousin of its counterpart on the other side of the wall.

The roads were busy with traffic and yet everyone seemed to be driving the same car: a Trabant. A friend in London had imported one, told him—after Jimmy had ribbed him about its appearance—that it was German and built to last. The roads here were full of them in both available colours: beige and black. Jimmy remembered looking at his friend's car. It had a plastic body attached to a steel frame and was powered by a 500-CC engine. Jimmy had laughed, telling his friend that he had been ripped off, that he had paid a grand for a spark plug with a roof. His friend had demurred, arguing that the car would work for years because there were no real working parts that would break.

He glanced around as he walked, looking for tails. Would he spot one, if he was being followed? He wasn't sure. He saw a man behind him whom he thought he remembered from before and decided to check. He crossed the road and took a quiet turning, heading into a residential area with less foot traffic. The man followed, seemingly unconcerned that Jimmy might have noticed him. Jimmy stopped; the man stopped. He started again, picking up his pace; the man picked up his pace, too. Jimmy was tempted to turn around and walk straight at him, maybe say something, but decided against it. What was the point? He turned left and left again, re-joining the main road. He saw a black car pull away from the kerb; the driver and his passenger eyeballed him dolefully as they went past.

Jimmy had noted down the address of the *Reisebüro* and walked across town to extend his visa. He found the office. It was dilapidated, and had evidently not been renovated since the war. The green paint was peeling off the walls and patches of brick showed through the plaster. There was a line extending out of the door with West Germans and international visitors seeking to extend their visas. Jimmy waited his turn, eventually reaching a desk inside that was staffed by a harassed and irritable clerk. There was a stack of forms to fill out—Jimmy didn't understand them, and didn't ask for them to be translated—and then he was issued with a fresh visa allowing

him to stay for a week.

He folded the paper and slipped it into his pocket. *A week.* He hoped that wouldn't be necessary. The place was alien and unwelcoming, with a sense of unease everywhere. People walked with their heads down, frightened to make eye contact, swallowed up by grey municipal buildings that all looked the same. He hoped that the meeting with Sommer happened tonight, as Oksana had suggested. He had no plan, other than to rely upon the fact that what Mackintosh had proposed was audacious and could not possibly be expected to succeed. He knew that he would have to adapt to the circumstances as he found them. If there was an opportunity to achieve the goals that had been set for him, he would take it.

He was nervous, but he was here now and what was the point in dragging it out?

He wanted to leave.

Jimmy did an hour of exercise—sit-ups and press-ups—and then took a bath. He dressed, made himself another cup of coffee, and then went down to the reception. He took a map from the concierge and set off to explore the city.

He went to a bank and, as Oksana had instructed, exchanged fifty Deutschmarks for fifty *Ostmarks*. East German marks were worthless outside of the country, and the government required foreigners to exchange a set amount of hard currency for every day of their stay. The minimum was twenty-five Deutschmarks per day, but Jimmy paid for two days so he didn't have to come back tomorrow.

He followed the map to Alexanderplatz and the *Fernsehturm* TV tower that dominated the skyline. He went to the Palast der Republik and found himself gazing up at a canvas that covered one side of a building. It was a picture of Lenin, with men in Stasi and military uniforms marching in front of him. A woman with brown hair and a threadbare coat walked along the pavement below the sign. She glanced up at it, shook her head and kept walking. She looked like she was on her way back to work after a lunch break. Her shoulders slumped forward and she looked down at the ground. She looked beaten.

He continued to the Brandenburg Gate, walled off by the Berlin Wall. He walked to Karl-Marx Allee and found Kino International, the state-sponsored cinema, where he bought a ticket and took a seat in a sparsely

populated auditorium for a film in German that he didn't understand. He sat and let the images play out on the screen, breathing in the smells of the room—bratwurst, dust, hot celluloid, sweat—and eventually closed his eyes and allowed them to take him back to London and the cinema in Hackney where he and Isabel had gone to watch films before Sean's birth made it more difficult to be spontaneous.

The film finished and he made his way out into the grim afternoon; a bank of cloud had settled over the city. It deadened the daylight and promised snow.

He had an early dinner in the restaurant near the hotel, and then went back to his room.

Oksana was waiting by his door.

"Where have you been?" she said.

"Went out to get dinner. Why?"

"You have a meeting to go to."

"You said eight."

"They brought it forward"

"Sommer?"

"No," she said. "Not yet. Come on—I'll tell you in the car."



Oksana led the way to a car with diplomatic plates that marked it as the property of the Soviet Union. She got inside and Jimmy followed. Snow had started to fall, fat flakes that drifted down, suffused with gold as they fell through the beams of the headlights.

She nodded up to the sky. "There's going to be a blizzard. They're forecasting a foot of it by tomorrow morning."

"I like Berlin more and more," he said.

They pulled out.

"What did you do today?" she asked him.

"Explored the city."

"And?"

"And I'm really looking forward to leaving."

"It's worse than it's ever been," she said. "There's no money. No jobs. The system doesn't work. The people are suffering."

Jimmy turned to look at her. "I thought you were KGB," he said.

"That doesn't mean that I think the old way is the only way. There are people in Russia who would like to see a change. Here and at home."

"Gorbachev?"

"Yes, and others. There are many people who support what he is trying

to do.” She stared darkly through the windshield. “Many who oppose him, too.”

There was a junction up ahead and Oksana braked carefully, rolling to a stop next to the red light.

“Can I ask you something?” Jimmy said.

“Of course.”

“I heard that Sommer has a vault. Is that true?”

“He does.”

“Why would he have a vault?”

She glanced over at him. “Have you heard about Nazi gold? They looted valuables during the war. The Stasi did it, too.”

“What kind of loot?”

“Think about it: you had East Germans who crossed before the Wall went up, thousands of Jews who were deported to the camps or fled and never came back. They left safe deposit boxes, vaults, and safes, and the Stasi emptied them all. It was state-sanctioned mass theft. I’ve heard of rooms full of jewels, gold and silver, antiques, sculptures, paintings. Savings books. Life insurance policies. Cash. They loaded it all into trucks and drove it all away.”

“And Sommer has something like that?”

“I know he has a vault, I don’t know what’s in it. But he’s greedy. It wouldn’t surprise me. And money’s one thing, but he’s always been interested in information, too. Those boxes they opened wouldn’t just have held things with financial value. Letters between secret lovers. Compromising photographs. Evidence of crime. Sommer lives for that. For secrets. Things he can exploit.”

Jimmy thought of what Geipel had said, and the plan of the building that he had drawn. He wondered whether he should say anything else, but decided against it. Oksana didn’t need to know. What good would that do?

“So I’m not meeting him tonight?”

“No. One of Sommer’s deputies. His name is Müller. You’ll need to persuade him that you are serious. He decides whether you see Sommer or not.”

“And how do I do that?”

“By being convincing. Remember your legend: you’re a member of the Irish Republican Army. You’ve dealt with men like Müller before—he might try to browbeat you, but you mustn’t show that you are worried.”

“Easier said than done,” Jimmy said. The uncertainty of what he was being asked to do was not far from the front of his mind.

“You’ll need that bag,” she said, nodding to the sports bag in the footwell.

“What’s inside?”

“Fifty thousand Deutschmarks. Sommer will want something as a sign of good faith. A down payment. Give it to Müller when he asks for it.”

“Just like that?”

“It’s not your money, Jimmy. Mackintosh provided it. He can deal with the consequences if it goes missing.”

Oksana indicated and pulled over, parking next to a bar. It couldn’t have looked any more different to the bars and nightclubs that Jimmy had seen in West Berlin. On the other side of the Wall it was all designer clothes, cocktails and neon-lit marble with the latest avant-garde electronica blasting so loud you couldn’t hear the bartender asking for a week’s wages in exchange for a vodka martini. This bar could have been an illegal shebeen back home. A low, single-storey building that had been built within the empty footprint of a building that must have been torn down after the war, it looked as though it was entirely constructed from concrete breeze blocks, haphazardly attacked with a brush and white paint. There were four windows that were so dirty that Jimmy doubted they had been cleaned in years. The wooden entrance stood open.

“Müller should be waiting. Inside, at the back. He knows what you look like.”

Jimmy opened the door and stepped outside.

“Good luck,” Oksana said.

Jimmy nodded an acknowledgement and shivered in the cold.

*Good luck.*

That was right.

He was going to need luck, and a lot of it.

A doorman stood outside the bar in a leather jacket and leather gloves with a woollen hat pulled down tight over his round head. They called those hats “jolly begs” in Belfast, and the memory made Jimmy smile. Isabel hadn’t understood it, and Jimmy had to explain that “bag” was pronounced “beg” there. She still didn’t get it, and, in fairness, neither did Jimmy. He had no idea why they were called that, but he liked the idea of having a familiar name for things. He liked that even in the cold of East Berlin, a place so alien to everything he knew, so different from the sum of his experiences, there were still things that could remind him of his past and an innocent laugh that he had shared with the woman who would one day, he hoped, become his wife.

The doorman clapped his hands together and rubbed them for warmth. His breath came in a mist as he said something to Jimmy by way of a greeting. Jimmy didn’t understand, but nodded in response as he stepped up onto the pavement and approached the entrance.

The doorman stepped across to block his way.

“I’m here to see a man,” Jimmy said.

The doorman shook his head; Jimmy doubted that he understood him.

“Müller,” Jimmy said. “I’m here to see Müller.”

The man registered the name and stood aside. Jimmy went inside. The smell of sweat hit him like a five-pound hammer as soon as he crossed the

threshold. The place was packed. It was lit with red bulbs that lent it a crazed, hellish air. The customers were all men. Most of them were drunk. A dozen crowded the bar, leering menacingly at the barmaid with money proffered in their fists. In the other half of the room, on the left and closest to the windows, were ten round tables that were big enough to accommodate three or four chairs around them.

Jimmy looked around at the faces of the men until he saw a man at one of the tables. He was short and squat and obviously powerfully built. His hair was cropped short, right up against the scalp. He was wearing a black leather coat and a dark turtleneck sweater. He was clean shaven. He looked like a soldier. Jimmy thought back to the SAS men in Ulster, shorter than you would expect, less physically imposing, but they held themselves with a certain bearing that was impossible to miss once you had recognised it. This man looked just like that: confident, competent, in control.

And staring right at Jimmy.

He squeezed through to the back of the room and reached the table: the man stared up at him, hard-faced and with a dull hostility in his eyes.

“Müller?” Jimmy asked.

“Yes,” he said.

“I’m Jimmy Walker.”

Müller nodded. “I know.”

“Good to meet you. Mind if I sit?”

Müller shrugged and flicked his fingers at the empty seat.

Jimmy sat down.

When Müller finally spoke, his voice was quiet, his English heavily accented. “How are you enjoying Berlin?”

Jimmy smiled at him. “There’s nothing in the shops, what little food there is doesn’t agree with me, the people are miserable, the propaganda murals are well drawn, and the weather’s shite. It’s just like home.”

Müller stared at him and, for a moment, Jimmy wondered whether he

had taken his comment as an insult.

“You are a funny man,” he said at last, without the slightest hint of a smile.

“I aim to please.”

“I know a little about you, of course.”

“All good, I hope?”

“You are from County Louth.”

“Belfast,” Jimmy corrected. “You trying to catch me out?”

Müller didn’t acknowledge Jimmy’s grin. “Born in 1960. Joined the IRA, responsible for oversight of the organisation’s arms caches.”

“All spot on, so far.”

“Now you live in London with your girlfriend and son.” Müller stared at him. “Isabel and Sean.”

Jimmy managed to suppress the involuntary flinch of panic. He had no idea how Mackintosh had constructed his cover story. He had assumed that most of it would be original but now, with the names of his girlfriend and son still hanging in the air, he realised that that was not the case. They had woven strands of his real life into the façade that they had constructed for him. He knew why: the more of it that was legitimate, verifiable, the better the deception. It still caught him cold, though, and he felt a buzz of anger that Mackintosh would do that without telling him.

“What is it?” Müller asked him.

“Why would you mention my family?”

“To demonstrate that we conduct careful research into the men and women that we meet.”

“It sounded like a threat to me.”

“It’s not a threat—”

Jimmy spoke over him. “If you mention the name of my girlfriend or child again, we’re going to have a problem. Do you understand?”

Müller eyed him. “Calm down, Herr Walker. I’m not threatening you or your family. You checked out. You wouldn’t have been allowed to meet me otherwise. Now—can I get you a drink?”

Jimmy nodded to the empty steins on the next table across. “One of those,” he said.

Müller called out something in German, pointed to the steins and held up two fingers. Jimmy turned around to see a man who had been standing at the bar, presumably watching in the event that he was needed. The man glared back at him, then turned to the bar and whistled to summon the barmaid.

“You like German beer, Herr Walker?”

“I prefer stout.”

“Ah, yes. Guinness.”

“You can get that here?”

“Of course not. But I have worked abroad before. London.”

The man from the bar returned to break the silence, depositing two steins of lager on the table.

“This is Kirchers Pils from the brewery in Drebkau. It is the best in the DDR.”

Müller took his stein and held it up. Jimmy did the same, and the two touched glasses and drank. Müller watched him as he drank; the beer was decent, if a little warm, and Jimmy finished half.

“You like it?”

“Not bad.” Jimmy put the glass to his lips and sank the rest, replacing the stein on the table and wiping his lips with the back of his hand. “You want another?”

Müller finished his stein and put it down next to Jimmy’s. He held up two fingers again, and the other man went back to the bar.

“So what is it you want?” Müller asked.



“I’m here to buy some goods. You know who I represent. We share a common enemy with you. And my enemy’s enemy is my friend—understand?”

“I do understand, Herr Walker, but we are not friends.”

“Really? Colonel Gaddafi was our friend, and he made a lot of money with us, but he can’t supply us any longer. Transport routes from Libya have been closed. We are looking to replace him as our supplier.”

“What kind of goods do you have in mind?”

“I have a long list. For now, I need RPG-7s. Soviet-made, not cheap Southeast Asian knock-offs. Anti-armour and anti-personnel grenades, maybe PG-7VLs. A hundred and fifty grenades and let’s say fifty launchers.”

“That’s a lot of ordnance.”

“That’s just to start. If all goes well, we’ll reorder. Two hundred and fifty RPGs and five hundred grenades, plus automatic weapons and ammunition.”

“Anything else?”

“Semtex and blasting caps.” He looked at Müller. “Are you going to remember all this?”

“I’m sure I’ll manage. But tell me—why should we sell to you?”

“Herr Sommer will be well paid for his troubles. I’m not a fool—the weapons won’t cost him anything. They’ll come out of central supplies and he’ll pocket all of the purchase price. And good for him. I don’t give a shit.”

“And you think he is motivated by money?”

“There are other benefits, too. How about a much smaller British intelligence staff in Berlin? Would that be helpful?”

“Go on.”

“Do you remember the attack on the government in 1984? In Brighton.”

“Of course. The hotel bombing.”

Jimmy smiled. "British intelligence was gutted for a year. Agents were called back. Every MI5 and MI6 agent who could be spared went home to find the culprits. Imagine what it would be like if we went after London, Manchester and Birmingham with RPGs. A dozen mobile units, all trained and highly mobile, hitting and running, hitting and running, again and again. Those units are all over the country right now, waiting for those weapons. Tell me that's not in your interest."

"But only if they could not be traced back to us."

"I'm sure the general's deals are all off book. You can file the markings off the weapons if you like. How could they be traced? We can be as careful as you like."

Müller sucked his cheek as he considered the offer.

"So?" Jimmy said. "Yes or no?"

"The general will want a deposit. Something to show you can meet your side of the deal."

Jimmy took the bag from the floor and put it on the table. He unzipped it and opened it up so that Müller could look inside.

"There's fifty thousand in there," he said.

"*Ostmarks?*"

"Deutschmarks."

Müller looked into the bag and then stared at Jimmy, sizing him up.

"Well?" Jimmy said. "It's a simple yes or no. If you don't think your boss would want to sell to me, that's fine. Just tell me now and I'll get on a plane to Moscow. The KGB will be tripping over their fur coats to work with us."

Müller zipped up the bag and lifted it from the table. "I will be in touch."

"And?"

"If the general wants to meet, I'll let you know."

“Fine. One thing, though. I’ll want to see the goods before I do a deal. If he wants to meet, tell him to have samples for me to inspect. Launchers, grenades, explosives and detonators.”

“Go back to your hotel, Herr Walker.”

Jimmy got up early. Snow had fallen all night and the streets were choked, some of them impassable. Workmen in bright red overalls were spraying chemicals on the road, and ancient snowploughs, some of them barely running, cleared the drifts and cut channels between parked cars that had been entirely submerged beneath the blankets of white.

Jimmy stomped through the snow, his boots quickly overtopped and the cold icing his feet. He thought back to last night and the meeting with Müller. Oksana had driven him back to the hotel and had debriefed him in the car. Jimmy said that he felt the meeting had gone well, but that he had found it difficult to get a read on Müller. She said that she would contact him to find out whether the general would pursue the deal.

Jimmy was on his own again until that happened. He went to the restaurant for breakfast, noting that the same people that had been there yesterday were there today, eyeing the weather with baleful expressions, grumbling about the latest inconvenience that they would have to face. Jimmy ordered sausages and tea, the same as the day before, and sat down to eat. He looked up to see the man who had been following him yesterday in the doorway. The man—Jimmy guessed that he must have worked for the Stasi agency deputed to deal with the monitoring of foreigners—stomped the snow from his boots and came inside. The proprietor looked at him warily, most likely very much aware of whom he represented, and prepared a mug of coffee. The man sat down at a table on the other side of the room, seating himself so that he could watch Jimmy.

Jimmy had had enough. He picked up his plate and his mug of tea and crossed the room. The man watched him as he approached, his eyes widening as he realised that he was headed straight for him.

“Morning,” Jimmy said. He nodded down at an empty chair. “You mind?”

The man didn’t speak, and it wouldn’t have mattered if he had; Jimmy put his plate on the table and sat down.

“Jimmy Walker,” he said, holding out his hand. “Who the fuck are you?”

The man replied in German.

“Don’t know what you’re saying, mate,” he said. “But I bet you understand me. I know you people are following me around. I don’t suppose there’s much I can say to get you to piss off, so I’ll just say this. You’re so bloody obvious I almost find it insulting. You might try and make a bloody effort, that’s all. It’s embarrassing. You’re giving the Stasi a bad name.”

Jimmy stabbed the last piece of sausage with his fork, put it into his mouth, and washed it down with the rest of the tea. He got up, went to the counter and paid for both his meal and the man’s coffee, leaving a generous tip.

“See you tomorrow,” he said.

The proprietor looked away, unwilling to endorse a customer who had just confronted a secret policeman like that.

Jimmy turned to the man who had been following him.

“Coming?”

He went back outside and looked through the window. The man was on his feet, hurriedly pulling on his overcoat. Jimmy paused on the threshold until the man had buttoned it all the way up, gave him a cheery wave, and then set off back to the hotel. He knew that he ought not to have done that, but he couldn’t resist it. And, he admitted to himself, while it might have been childish and ill-advised, it was still enjoyable.

JIMMY WENT BACK to bed and ~~sleep for another~~ three hours. He would have slept longer, but the ringing of the telephone roused him.

“Hello?”

“It’s me. How are you?” \*

Jimmy remembered what Oksana had told him last night. The room would be bugged. The telephone would be bugged. He had an audience and now he had to perform for them.

“I’m getting impatient,” he said. “Have you heard from them?”

“Yes,” Oksana said. “The general wants to see you this evening.”

“About bloody time. I was beginning to wonder if my money wasn’t good enough for him.”

“It’s good enough.”

“What about the shopping list?”

“He says it can be done.”

“Good. When and where?”

“I’ll pick you up tonight at eight,” she said. “The meeting will be at the general’s premises.”

Mackintosh woke up and struggled to open his eyes. He was in a dark room. There was almost no light, save a thin sliver that leaked in beneath a door a few feet ahead of him. Everything else was pitch black. He was sitting on a chair that had been bolted to the floor. His arms were behind his back, secured by cuffs around each wrist. His legs were similarly restrained, with the cuffs shackled in turn to the legs of the chair. He was unable to move his limbs more than a few degrees. The ache in his muscles suggested that he had been left in this position for some time. His neck, in particular, was stiff. His head had been lolling to one side, and he grimaced with pain as he tried to lift it back into its normal position.

It took him a moment to remember what had happened to him: the three men who had burst into his flat, how they had restrained him and then drugged him. He found that his mouth was dry, and tried to summon a little saliva so that he might moisten it. It was fruitless; he badly needed a drink.

“Hey!” He yelled out. “Hey!”

There was no response. He tried to free his wrists, but the shackles were securely in place and all he managed to do was chafe the skin.

“I’m a British diplomat! You have no right to hold me.”

He heard the sound of footsteps approaching from the other side of the door. A spy hole slid open and let in a shaft of artificial light. The light was extinguished as someone put their face to the spy hole, and then closed the slide once more.

“Open the door,” Mackintosh yelled out.

He heard the sound of a key turning in the lock, and then of bolts being slid back. The door opened on rusty hinges and light poured in from the corridor outside. Mackintosh blinked and then looked away until his eyes had adjusted to the sudden change. He saw the silhouette of a man in the doorway.

“I’m sorry to have had to bring you here like this,” the man said. He spoke in English, heavily accented. “Still, we needed to have a conversation and I doubt that would have been possible unless it was here. There are some things that we need to talk about that might be a little unpleasant.”

Mackintosh recognised the voice, and knew who it was even before the man came forward so that the light fell on his face. Karl-Heinz Sommer was in uniform, the dark green fabric almost black in the gloom.

“You have no right to do this.”

“You can’t really complain, Herr Mackintosh. You brought it upon yourself. Some might have described your attack on my safe house as an act of aggression. It was very reckless. It could have precipitated a crisis.”

“You’re not really in a position to criticise me. Men in glass houses shouldn’t throw stones.”

Sommer chuckled. “Who was responsible for what happened? I hear it was the SAS. Very impressive. I’d like to meet them.”

“I’d like that too. Maybe I could make an introduction.”

Sommer leaned against the door frame, his face half in shadow. “Thank you for bringing Günter to my attention. He really does have an interesting story to tell, doesn’t he? I wondered whether it could be true, but he’s very convincing. I might have you tell him what happened to his family. He thinks they’re outside the city. They’re not. I have them. He hasn’t told me where to find the photographs yet. I was going to bring them in and have them shot in front of him, one by one. What do you think? You are responsible for what happens to them, after all. If you had kept your hands off him, none of this would have happened. I think *you* should tell him what’s going to happen to them.”



Mackintosh ground his teeth.

“And it’s awful what happened to your French friend. What was her name?”

“Élodie,” Mackintosh said, his voice low.

“*Élodie*. I took one look at her and I knew the best thing was to put her out of her misery. It was merciful, in the circumstances. You can thank me later.”

Mackintosh wanted nothing more than to launch himself at Sommer; to get his hands around the man’s throat and squeeze.

“There’s someone who’d like to see you. Come in, my dear. Herr Mackintosh is here. You really should say hello.”

Mackintosh realised that there was a second person waiting in the corridor. Sommer stepped out of the way so that they could come in, too. It was a woman. She stepped forward into the light and Mackintosh saw the blonde hair and the white face.

Oksana stood close to Sommer. The general could barely disguise his delight.

“Did you really think I would betray my country?” she said.

Mackintosh spat on the floor at her feet.

“Feisty to the end,” said Sommer. “I’m going to leave you now, but I’ll be back soon. We do need to have that talk. I won’t lie: it’s not going to be pleasant, and I’m going to punish you whether you cooperate or not. You are going to tell me where I can find the soldiers who killed my men. And, when I find them, I’m going to bring them here and make them wish that they had never been born.”

Jimmy had dinner and went back to his room to change. He put on a sweater and his leather jacket and went downstairs. Oksana was waiting at the front door. She made a show of greeting him—there was a man sitting in the lounge area and Jimmy had the distinct impression that he was there to watch—and then fell into line with him as they left the hotel. There were few people on the street. Two parked cars opposite the hotel were occupied. The men inside watched them both, seemingly relaxed about giving themselves away. Jimmy was happy to let them watch.

Oksana led the way to her car and they both got inside. He looked over at her; she hadn't said a word since they left the hotel, and her face was pinched, perhaps even a little paler than usual.

"What is it?" he said.

"Just a little nervous," she said.

She started the engine and pulled away from the kerb. They drove over the Spree via the Rathausbrücke, passing the Town Hall and then turning right onto Grunestraße. The traffic was a little heavier here, with a line of cheap cars chugging sullenly through the snowy night. Oksana said that it would take them twenty minutes to reach Sommer's building, and Jimmy spent the time looking out of the frosted windscreen. The city looked as if it was beaten. The West still had life, a vibrancy that had not been occluded by the construction of the wall that encircled it. The East, though, looked resigned to its fate: a torpid economy, no prospects, its inhabitants occupied

with a slow trudge that would end in the grave.

Oksana indicated and turned off the main road, sliding the car against the kerb.

Jimmy looked around. "Are we here?"

"No," she said. "There's something you need to know."

She switched off the engine and turned to look at him.

"What is it?"

"Mackintosh has been abducted by Sommer," she said. "They went to his flat the day you crossed the border and took him."

Jimmy felt a shiver of panic. "I don't understand," he said. "How is that possible? Sommer just took him? How? I don't—"

She spoke over him. "I told Sommer where to find him."

Jimmy gaped. "You did *what*?"

"Mackintosh wanted it to happen. It's his idea." She raised her hands to forestall Jimmy's questions. "Sommer killed someone who was important to Mackintosh. He insisted that he wanted to confront him himself. This whole plan—you, me, everything—it's designed to put him and Sommer into a room together."

"You're going to have to explain that a little better."

"Mackintosh knows he wouldn't be able to get to Sommer any other way. He never leaves the East. And, even when he's here, he rarely leaves his building. But Mackintosh knows he's greedy. He knew there was a good chance that he would take a meeting with you if he thought that was something he might profit from. He knew the meeting would be at the Pfarrhaus, and he knew that would be where Sommer would take him. Everyone would be together in the same place at the same time."

"But if Sommer did something to Mackintosh before we met?"

"That was a risk. I assume he thought it was one that was worth taking."

Jimmy cursed under his breath. Mackintosh was insane. "So what does

he want me to do?”

“You meet Sommer, just as we planned. There’ll be an opportunity to overpower him. You take it, and then we get him to take us to Mackintosh and the two of them can settle their differences.”

“And Schmidt?”

“Oh, he still wants Schmidt. And so do I—getting him out of East Germany is why I’m up to my neck in this mess. As soon as we’ve found Mackintosh, that’s what you need to do. The chances are that they’re both being held in the basement.”

Jimmy stared at the flakes of snow that were settling on the icy windshield.

“Why didn’t he tell me any of this?”

“I said that he should have done, if that’s any consolation.”

“So?”

“So he decided that he didn’t want to give you something else to worry about before you met Sommer. He wanted you to focus on the story you had to sell them. I suppose I can see why he thought that.” She laid a hand on his shoulder. “But you need to decide whether it changes anything for you. Whether you still want to go through with it. This is the only chance you’ll get to change your mind. Once we get there, we’re committed. There won’t be any choice then.”

Jimmy gazed out of the window as he turned the news over in his mind. The news was unsettling, but he knew that it made no difference. Mackintosh was the only man who knew Jimmy was over here. If Mackintosh was killed, there would be no one to vouch for Jimmy. He would be left here, stranded in East Berlin, with no friends, no contacts, no record of entering the country and no reason to be here save for a classified story that could only be confirmed by one man. Mackintosh was the only way Jimmy would be able to have the charges against him dropped. He was the only way he had to get back to the life he had been living before Eddie Fabian sold him out. There was more, too. Jimmy didn’t trust Mackintosh and he wasn’t even sure that he liked him, either. But, as Jimmy looked out of the window

at the men and women who slouched through the smog to the slums in which they were forced to live, he knew that Mackintosh was, at least, on the right side of things. Jimmy had no interest in politics, but he had always lived his life by the principles that had been laid out by his uncle.

Stick to your word.

If you say you'll do something, do it.

Jimmy found that he was clenching his fists.

"Jimmy?" Oksana said. "We need to decide now. Do you still want to meet him?"

"I don't have a choice. I have to."

She nodded, took her hand from his shoulder and started the engine.

"There's one thing," he said. "He's my way out. If something's happened to him, I can't get home. Would you be able to help me?"

She looked at him, thinking. "Yes," she said. "The plan is to go back over the border at Checkpoint Charlie. I have diplomatic status. They wouldn't normally try to stop us."

"What if something happens and we're split up? What do I do then?"

"Go north to Kühlungsborn. It's on the coast, two hundred miles from here. The trains won't be safe—you'll have to steal a car and drive. There's a café on the promenade run by a man called Burmeister. He works for the KGB. It's sometimes necessary to get people out of the country without the Stasi knowing. Tell him that Oksana sent you. He'll arrange a crossing into Denmark."

"Thank you."

She pulled out and continued into the administrative district. Jimmy looked out at the municipal buildings, most of which had been thrown up after the war like so many of the buildings that had stood between the Red Army and its prey. These buildings, though, had not even been given the pretence of being anything other than what they were: boxy, bland, regimented hutches to accommodate the exercise of power.

Jimmy looked at them and felt newly daunted.

The snow was falling even more heavily when Oksana drove them into the Lichtenberg area of East Berlin. She followed a series of major streets, picking her way through them with the experience of someone who had been here before. They continued to the east for a minute and then turned onto Roedeliusplatz. There was an area of lawned gardens with a double-spired church in the centre. A narrow, cobbled road separated the church from the building that faced it. It was three storeys tall, and access was granted through a tall stone archway that led to a similarly impressive wooden door.

“Here we are,” she said. “The Pfarrhaus.”

The road to the vicarage was blocked by a barrier that was monitored by soldiers in a brick guardhouse. Oksana pulled up in front of the barrier and waited for the guard to walk over to them. The man was armed with a sub-machine gun and he spoke in abrupt German. Oksana replied, similarly curt, and handed over their papers.

The guard spent a long minute with their identification. He retreated to the guardhouse, where Jimmy saw him speaking on the telephone.

“How many men are in there?” Jimmy asked.

“Hardly any. He has no reason to feel threatened here. We’re in the heart of East Berlin, with Ministry buildings on all sides. You might think Mackintosh’s plan is eccentric —”

*“Insane,”* Jimmy corrected.

“Perhaps, but there’s no way that Sommer could anticipate it. I said no when he told me, but, the more I thought about it, the more I thought it could work. It all depended on you persuading Sommer to see you. Once we’re inside... well, it’s up to us, then. Here he comes.”

The guard returned and handed Oksana’s papers back to her. He said something, she thanked him, and he raised the barrier so that she could drive through.

There were cars parked on both sides of the road, their angles already smoothed down by an inch of snow. Oksana found an empty spot and reversed into it. Jimmy watched and assessed. The road was quiet, with just a single guard making his rounds. That was encouraging. Jimmy was looking at the guard when he saw a pair of women emerging from the front door of the building. The women ducked their heads against the snow as they made their way to the guardhouse opposite the one that Oksana and Jimmy had passed, and, after they spoke to the guard, the pedestrian gate was opened and they continued on their way.

Jimmy swallowed down a dry knot of fear that clogged his throat. He put his hand on the door handle, pulled it down and stepped outside.

He thought of Isabel and his son. Do this and he could go home.

THEY CLIMBED a short flight of stairs to the front door of the building. Oksana knocked and then glanced up at a CCTV camera that was fixed beneath the portico overhead. The lock buzzed and the door jerked open a fraction; Oksana pushed it back and stepped inside. Jimmy followed.

\*

The room beyond was a large lobby. It had been decorated extravagantly: the floors were marble, the ceilings were double-height, the walls had been decorated with gold filigree, and marble columns were spaced around. There was a single desk set back from the door with a man in Stasi uniform sitting behind it. He had a TV screen that, Jimmy guessed, he used to monitor the feed from outside.

The man got up and Jimmy recognised him. It was Müller.



“Fräulein Baranova,” he said, his face cracking into the most minute of smiles. “Herr Walker.”

“Oberstleutnant Müller,” Oksana replied.

Müller approached Jimmy. “Put your arms to the sides, please.”

Müller frisked him quickly and efficiently, running his hands along his arms, down his trunk, around his waist, between his legs and then down to his feet. Jimmy saw the pistol holstered on Müller’s belt and, with his chin just an inch or two from his knee, Jimmy had to fight back the urge to strike him, relieve him of his weapon and then find Sommer.

Müller stood and straightened out his uniform. “This way, please. The general is waiting for you.”

Müller led them to another lobby with two lifts. One of them looked as if it needed a key to operate. Müller pressed the button for the other one and invited them to step inside. He followed and pressed the button for the fourth floor. Jimmy stood at the back of the car, his fists clenching and unclenching, an emptiness in his belly, adrenaline buzzing in his veins.

The elevator took them up, the doors opened and they stepped out into a plush corridor. The carpets were thick, there was polished oak panelling on the walls and subtle lights were housed in recessed sconces. There were several doors along both sides of the corridor, but only one of them was open.

“Through there,” Müller said, indicating the open door.

Oksana started toward the open door. Jimmy followed, his boots sinking into the carpet. They went inside. The office beyond was as opulent as might have been expected from the corridor. There were bookshelves on the walls, full of leather-bound books. There was a blood-red Chesterfield, a marble fireplace that accommodated a roaring fire, and a polished oak desk that was seven or eight feet across. A man was sitting behind the desk; he stood as Oksana and then Jimmy approached.

“Hello, Oksana,” he said.

“General.”

The man embraced her, kissing her airily on both cheeks, before releas-

ing her shoulders and stepping to the side so that he could step up to Jimmy.

“I’m Karl-Heinz Sommer.”

“Jimmy Walker.”

“It’s a pleasure to meet you, Herr Walker. Müller has told me all about you. Could I get you something to drink?”

“I’m fine,” Jimmy said.

Sommer continued as if he didn’t hear him. “How about some vodka? I have something especially good.” He went over to an antique sideboard, opened it and took out a bottle that had been lavishly decorated with gems and crystals. “This is Iordanov—it’s made in one of the oldest distilleries in Koblenz. They use wheat grain and water from the Vogelsberg Highlands for the distilling. I had some experience with our Russian friends at the end of the war. I developed a taste for it then. It’s lovely. Don’t you agree, Oksana?”

“I haven’t tried it, General.”

“Well, we must set that right.”

Sommer took out three glasses and set them out on the desk. He unscrewed the top from the bottle and poured out three generous measures. He handed one to Oksana, one to Jimmy and kept the third for himself. He held his glass up and reached across to touch it against Jimmy’s and Oksana’s.

“*Zum Wohl*,” he said. “To your health.”

Jimmy put the glass to his lips and tipped the vodka back. It was smooth and drinkable, and he felt the familiar sting at the back of his throat.

Oksana finished her drink in similar fashion and set her glass back down on the table. “Thank you for seeing us, General.”

Sommer waved it away. “I can always make time for my friends from the KGB.”

“I’m grateful, too,” Jimmy said.

“And for my Irish friends. We can certainly help you.”

“You know what I want?”

“Indeed.” He nodded to Müller. “The lieutenant colonel noted it all down.”

“But he didn’t tell me the price.”

“You’ve paid fifty. It will take another hundred.”

“That’s fine,” Jimmy said.

“No bartering?”

“What’s the point? It’s in your best interests for me to be happy. If the goods are acceptable, and we feel the price was fair, we’ll come back—this is a small order compared to what we might eventually want.”

Sommer smiled and tapped his finger against the desk. “In that case, I’ll drop the price to seventy-five, all in. You’re right, of course—I want you to be happy.”

“Thank you.”

“You want to see what you’re buying, I believe.”

“I do.”

“Is it ready, Müller?”

“Yes, sir. I’ve laid it out downstairs.”

Sommer stood. “Come, then. I will show you.”

Sommer led them out of the office, down the corridor and to the elevator. Müller brought up the rear, with Jimmy very aware of the man's presence behind him. They rode the elevator back down to the first floor and got out. Sommer took a key from his pocket and pulled back the metal flap on the wall next to the second elevator. He put the key into the keyhole that was revealed, waited for the door of the car to open and then ushered them inside. There were two buttons on the wall, and the general pressed the one marked KELLER, the lowest; the doors closed and the lift began to move. Jimmy noted it all: access was restricted to the basement. He would need that key to get around the property unimpeded.

The doors parted to reveal a corridor, although this one was much less impressive than the one that led to Sommer's office. It was finished in bare concrete, with naked bulbs hanging from the ceiling at regular intervals. Jimmy looked left and right: there were a series of three severe-looking metal doors to the right. To the left was a more substantial door, also made from metal but this time reinforced with heavy metal straps. A circular handle was positioned in the middle of the door. Jimmy recognised a vault door when he saw one.

"This way," Sommer said, turning right. Jimmy pretended not to have noticed the vault and followed the general and Oksana.

Sommer stopped outside the last door on the right.

Müller took a bunch of keys from a hook on the wall, selected one and

slid it into the lock. He opened the door and stood aside to let Oksana and Jimmy go in first.

“I think this is what you asked for,” Sommer said.

The room was reasonably large, with enough space for two long trestle tables to fit along the wall end-to-end. One table held a launcher and the other several grenades. Jimmy picked up the launcher and hefted it, his hand around the pistol grip.

“This is the RPG-7. Russian-made, very effective. Brand new.”

“Very good,” he said. “You can source the numbers I need?”

“Of course.”

“What about transport?”

“You didn’t mention that,” Müller said.

“There are options,” Sommer cut in. “We can take it to the border for you, of course. You could collect it there. We might be able to arrange a transfer at sea—yes, Müller?”

“Perhaps. But it would be more expensive.”

“We can talk about that.” Jimmy replaced the launcher on the table. “What about the explosives?”

Müller went over to a crate that had been slid underneath the second table. He dragged it out, flicked the clasps that secured the lid and popped it open. “Here,” he said.

Jimmy moved closer so that he could look inside the crate. He saw two neatly arranged courses of brick-like objects, each wrapped in wax paper that was marked with SEMTEX-10 and warning signs. Jimmy took one of the bricks and opened the end of the wax sleeve and peeled it back. The material inside was brownish and left a dimple when he pushed his thumb into it.

“Military grade from Explosia in Czechoslovakia. The same as the *Luftsturmregiment* uses.”

“Blasting caps?”

Müller nodded. He took a canvas bag from the floor and unzipped it. Jimmy saw the blasting caps and took one out: it was a metal cylinder, closed at one end. They were simple to use: a fuse was slipped into the cap, the pyrotechnic ignition mix was added and it was attached to the Semtex. There was a countdown as the fuse burned and then the charge detonated and ignited the primary explosion: boom.

“Satisfactory?” Sommer asked.

Jimmy put the Semtex and blasting cap on the table. “Absolutely. It all looks perfect.”

“Very good.”

Sommer ushered them toward the door.

“Thank you,” Oksana said as Müller locked up.

“Really—it is nothing. Our two causes are aligned. My enemy’s enemy is my friend. I believe you told Müller that, Herr Walker. I agree.”

“I appreciate it,” Jimmy said. “So does my organisation.”

“I am glad to help.” He smiled indulgently. “And I owed Oksana a favour.”

Oksana returned the smile. “I heard that it went well.”

“Better than that,” he said. “It was simple.”

Jimmy looked from Oksana to Sommer. “What’s this?”

“I’m sorry, Herr Walker. I imagine this would be of interest to you, too.”

“What’s that?”

“What is your opinion of British intelligence? MI5? MI6?”

“What do you think?”

“You are from Belfast?”

“Aye.”

“Then I imagine you are not well disposed toward them.”

“You would be right. We hate them.”

“And with reason, I’m sure. You have experience of occupation.”

“I do.”

Sommer smoothed out his uniform. “Then I have something I’d like to show you,” he said. “This way.”



Mackintosh heard the key turn in the lock and straightened up in the chair. His gut was liquid; Sommer had said that he would return and, when he did, he knew that it was going to be unpleasant for him.

The door opened and light from the corridor was cast inside. Sommer came into the cell, but he was not alone. Müller came inside first. Behind him, he saw Jimmy Walker and Oksana Baranova.

“This is Harry Mackintosh,” Sommer said to Walker. “He is responsible for British intelligence in Berlin.” Sommer smiled down at him. “*Was* responsible. He’s had an unfortunate change of circumstances.”

The Irishman looked down at Mackintosh with grim, steely hostility. Mackintosh knew, then, that the plan he had gone to such pain to construct hung by the slenderest of threads. All of Mackintosh’s preparation, the hours of planning, the patient development of Walker, the careful creation of his legend and the sleight of hand required to put him inside Sommer’s sanctum; it all came down to this. He had agonised over how much to tell Walker, and had concluded that he didn’t need to know anything at all. Walker was the stooge; the credible patsy who could get a meeting with Sommer, someone who could make the general an offer that would tempt his greed, a useful idiot to lower his defences. And he had already served part of his purpose: helping to uncover Morgan had allowed Mackintosh the chance to send Cameron and Fisher against the men in the safe house. That had been the slap in Sommer’s face that Mackintosh knew he would not be

able to ignore. He would have to be provoked and then offered the chance of vengeance. Mackintosh had offered himself as bait and Sommer had taken it.

Sommer looked at Walker. “The British and the Americans, they come to places like this and think that they can tell us what to do. It always amuses me how surprised they are when they realise that the situation is not what they expect. This one is no different. He tried to smuggle an East German citizen across the border. They had a tunnel—it was most inventive. But we have rules about things like that. They pay no heed to them. They think they do not apply. The English—they have a unique arrogance, don’t you think? A remnant of an empire that they lost many years ago, perhaps.”

Both of the East Germans were armed, with pistols nestled in holsters that were clipped to their belts. Jimmy was still staring down at him. Mackintosh looked away; he knew that Sommer would expect him to be frightened, and it wasn’t difficult to give him that impression. He *was* frightened.

Jimmy took a step up to Mackintosh, drew his hand to the side and backhanded him across the face.

“Yes,” Sommer said with a chuckle. “Very good, Herr Walker.”

Mackintosh winced, his face stinging from the slap. He looked back up at Jimmy. Sommer was behind the Irishman and wouldn’t have been able to see his expression and, yet, there was no acknowledgement there, no sign that Walker was playing the role that he had been assigned. Instead, all he saw was dull, angry hostility.

“What happens to him?” Walker asked.

“I haven’t decided. What do you think I should do?”

“Put a bullet in his head.”

Sommer chuckled again, turned to Müller and smiled. “I’ve heard a lot about the Irish,” he said. “Remind me not to annoy you, Herr Walker.”

“This isn’t a joke to me, General.”

“Of course not.”

Walker reached down and clasped Mackintosh by the chin, pushing back so that he could look down into his face. “The unionists in Belfast had a shooter, a man called McKeown, lived on the lower Oldpark Road, north of the city. They had an award for ‘Volunteer of the Year,’ gave it to the top hitman each year. McKeown won it four years in a row before we got to him. One night, McKeown knocked on the door to our house. My old man answered it and McKeown put a bullet in his head. I was sitting at the top of the stairs. I saw it all. Six years old.”

“Barbaric,” Sommer said.

Mackintosh had no choice but to stare up at Walker; he had no idea whether this was fact or fiction, but he knew that their future—his, Walker’s, Oksana’s—depended upon what Walker said next.

“We only found out later that British intelligence—men like this piece of shit—had been providing McKeown with names of IRA soldiers and encouraging him to knock them off. So, yes, you asked me what I think of the British? I fucking *hate* them.”

Sommer didn’t speak. Instead, he reached down to his holster, unclipped the restraining strap and took out his pistol. He stepped forward and held it out.

“Here,” he said. “You decide.”

Walker looked down at the Makarov. Mackintosh’s throat was arid and his fingers felt like claws, his hands clenched into tight fists, the nails digging into his palms. The Irishman took the pistol, hefted it, and then took a step forward so that he could hold it against Mackintosh’s forehead.

Walker looked back at Sommer. “Are you sure?”

“My gift to you, Herr Walker. Please.”

Walker had taken a step forward not just so that he could press the gun against Mackintosh’s head, but because he wanted additional space between himself and the two Stasi officers behind him. He turned, taking a half step back and to the side, swivelling his hips and aiming the Makarov. He fired, a single pull of the trigger, and a bullet mashed into Müller’s head, spraying brain and scalp against the damp brick wall.

Mackintosh saw it all: Müller toppled over; Oksana stumbled back, a splash of blowback across her face; Sommer gaped, swore and, as Walker's arm turned to point at him, he rushed forward. The general closed in before Walker could take aim, grabbed his wrist with both of his hands and shoved his arm straight up. The gun fired again, the bullet punching into the ceiling, fragments of concrete falling down to the floor. Walker was younger and stronger than Sommer, but the German was fuelled by desperation. Walker tried to bring his arm down but Sommer held on, twisting Walker's hand back and then reaching for the weapon. They fell, both of them locked together, crashing against the wall. Sommer butted Walker in the face, drew his head back and then butted him again. There was blood on Walker's forehead, red running into his eyes. Sommer butted him for a third time, the gun came free, and Sommer had it.

*"Stop!"*

Mackintosh had looked away from Oksana. He looked back. She had a gun and was aiming it at the two men.

"Put the gun down and step away from it."

"What?" Sommer said. "What are you doing?"

Mackintosh looked down: Müller's holster was empty.

Sommer stood, stepped away from Walker, and took a step toward her.

Oksana's face was spattered with Müller's blood. "Don't," she said.

Sommer gestured down to Mackintosh. "You and *him*? You must be joking."

She ignored him. "Jimmy—take the gun, please."

Walker's face was covered with blood, too. He swiped it away with the back of his hand and took the Makarov out of Sommer's hand.

"Where are the keys for the cuffs?" Oksana asked him.

The general's face went beetroot red and his eyes bulged. "You're dead," he said. "You know that, don't you? All of you. I'll kill you myself."

Walker looked at Mackintosh, at Oksana, and then at Sommer. The

doubt in Walker's face changed and was replaced with something else: anger? Frustration? Walker took a half step toward Sommer, rabbit-punched him in the ribs, and, as the general bent double, grabbed both lapels and lifted him until his back was against the wall.

"She asked you where we can find the keys."

"There's a space where the guard sits outside," Sommer grunted through the pain. "There's a board on the wall. The keys are there."

"Anyone else here?" Oksana asked. "Any guards?"

"No," Sommer said. He glanced at Müller. "Just him."

"Jimmy," Oksana said. "Get the keys."

Walker went to the door and disappeared outside.

Mackintosh's arms ached. He had been trussed up like this for hours and his muscles were cramping badly.

"You set me up," Sommer said. "This whole thing."

"You're greedy and insecure," Mackintosh said. "Money and status—that's all you care about. We offered you money and threatened your reputation. I knew you wouldn't be able to resist, and you couldn't. You're predictable, Sommer. And it's going to be the death of you."

The general shone a look of the purest hatred at Mackintosh, but he didn't respond.

Walker came back inside. He held out his hand to reveal a bunch of keys, went to Mackintosh, knelt down on the floor in front of him and tried the keys in the restraints that secured his ankles until he found the right one. He unlocked and removed them and went around behind the chair to release the cuffs that were securing Mackintosh's wrists.

Mackintosh got up and rubbed the skin that had been abraded by the shackles. His shoulders ached as the blood flowed around his body once again. Walker took the cuffs and went to Sommer.

"Well done, Jimmy," Oksana said.

"Sit down," Mackintosh told Sommer.

Oksana still had the gun aimed at Sommer and he wasn't reckless enough to call her bluff. He sat down in the chair that Mackintosh had just vacated and didn't struggle as Walker secured his arms and legs with the restraints.

Mackintosh took the gun from Walker and knelt down in front of Sommer. "Where's Schmidt?"

The German's eyes bulged with fresh hatred.

"It's up to you. You can tell us and live a little longer or you can keep it to yourself and I'll put you out of your misery. It doesn't matter—this isn't a big building. We'll find him either way."

Sommer gritted his teeth so hard that his jaw bulged.

Mackintosh closed his left fist and struck him, hard, on the bony part of his cheek. Sommer's head jerked to the left. His face was flushed red, and there was an indentation on his cheek where Mackintosh's ring had cut into the flesh.

"Next door," Sommer said.

"Keys?"

"You already have them."

"Stay with the general," Mackintosh said to Walker and Oksana. "I'll go and get him."

Mackintosh went to the cell next to the one where he had been held. He took the keys, selected the one that looked most likely and tried it. It didn't work. He picked a second key and tried that. This time, the lock turned and he was able to open the door.

The cell was dark, an inky gloom that absorbed almost all of the light that leaked in from the corridor. Mackintosh stood there and waited for his eyes to adjust. He saw a bed on the side of the room with no other furniture. There was a figure on the bed. It was a man. He was sitting up, his knees drawn up to his chin.

"Hello," Mackintosh said.

The man didn't respond. He was cloaked in shadow, and Mackintosh couldn't make out his face. He stepped inside the room, and, his gun held down as unobtrusively as possible, took four steps until he was at the foot of the bed. Still the man didn't speak. Mackintosh's eyes had adjusted enough now so that he could make him out a little better. He looked to be of average height, much shorter than he was, and was slender. He had a thick head of light-coloured hair, unruly locks that spilled over his collar. His face was thin, with dark eyes framed by thick brows, a precise nose and five o'clock shadow on his cheeks and chin.

"Günter—it's Harry Mackintosh."

He didn't reply.

“I’m here to get you out.”

“Sommer?” Schmidt’s voice was tight with fear and tension. “Where is Sommer?”

“You don’t need to worry about him anymore. We need to leave. Are you ready?”

Schmidt was shaking with fear. “But Sommer will—”

“You don’t need to worry about him,” Mackintosh said again, interrupting him.

Schmidt still looked reluctant to move, even with Mackintosh’s reassurance. Sommer exerted a hold on him even now; Mackintosh wondered what the general had done to him.

“We need to go, Günter. We don’t have long—we need to be on our way.”

Schmidt swallowed and nodded. “Yes,” he said. “I will come.”



Jimmy heard the sound of footsteps coming toward them from the corridor and, with the gun still trained on Sommer, he turned to see Mackintosh and a second man coming in through the door.

“This is Günter,” Mackintosh said.

Jimmy nodded. The man was young and quite clearly terrified out of his wits. He looked from Jimmy to Oksana and then to Sommer, his eyes bulging.

“We need to be getting out of here,” Oksana said. She gestured to Sommer. “I know he said there was nobody else here, but we saw guards outside. They probably can’t hear anything down here, but you can’t say for sure.”

“I agree,” Mackintosh said. He put his hand on Schmidt’s shoulder. “Go with Oksana,” he said. “She’s a friend. I’ll see you at the lift.”

“What are you going to do?” he asked.

“I just want a moment with the general.”

Jimmy turned away from Sommer and followed Oksana and Schmidt out to the corridor.

They reached the lift. Jimmy lifted the flap and used the key to open the door. He stayed outside, holding the door for Oksana and Schmidt.

He heard the report of a single gunshot.

Schmidt flinched. Jimmy looked at Oksana, but there was no need to say anything. They both knew what had just happened.

Mackintosh came out of the cell and made his way toward them. Jimmy stayed in the corridor, his arm blocking the door from closing while Mackintosh stepped inside.

“Everything all right?” Oksana asked.

“It’s fine,” he said. “Let’s get out of here.”

“We square now?” Jimmy said to Mackintosh. “You’ve got Schmidt and Sommer is dead. That was the deal.”

“We’re square. You did everything you said you’d do.”

“Good.”

Jimmy reached into the lift and pressed the button to send it up to the ground floor. He pulled his arm out of the way as the doors began to close.

Mackintosh looked confused. “What are you doing?”

“I’ll see you later,” Jimmy said.

Mackintosh started to protest, but the doors closed and the lift started to ascend.

Jimmy knew that he would have to be quick. He made his way back to the room with the rocket launcher and the explosives.

Jimmy took the crate from underneath the table, opened it and took out the Semtex that he had seen earlier. He didn't need all of it; after all, he only wanted to open the door to the vault and not bring the ceiling down onto his head. He took the canvas bag and emptied out all of the detonators, save two. He took the bag and the Semtex and jogged back along the corridor to the large metal door that he had seen earlier. He worked quickly, taking the explosive and fashioning two squat sausages with it. He reached into his pocket and took out the roll of tape that he had purchased during his walk around the city. He unrolled it, cut off a strip and then divided that into four separate, smaller strips. He held the first sausage against the top hinge of the door and used the tape to hold it in place. He repeated the process for the lower hinge. He took the two hollow blasting caps, inserted the pyrotechnic fuses and used his teeth to crimp the open ends of the cylinders, crushing the bases of the caps around the fuses. He fitted the fuses to the Semtex, took his lighter, and lit the ends of the fuses on both caps. He started the stopwatch on his watch. The fuses were regulated for three minutes.

Jimmy ran back to the first cell and stepped inside. He had forgotten: Sommer was there. He was still secured to the chair, but his head was hanging backwards, the white of his neck exposed, blood and brains splashed over the wall behind him.

It didn't matter.

He knelt down next to Müller's body and stripped him, removing his

uniform and then taking off his own clothes. He was a little bit taller than the dead man, but there wasn't much in it. He pulled on the trousers and shirt, shuddering a little that the fabric was still warm with the corpse's latent heat. He pulled on Müller's boots, lacing them up, and then his jacket. There was a patch of something ichorous on the right-hand shoulder board; Jimmy winced as he tried to brush it off.

He checked his watch.

Ten seconds.

“We can’t just leave him,” she said.

“It’s his choice.”

“I don’t understand. Why would he want to stay?”

“He’s a bank robber, Oksana. That’s how I found him. A leopard doesn’t change its spots.”

“What does that mean?”

“It means he saw the vault and couldn’t help himself.”

“How’s he going to get out?”

“He’s not our problem now.”

Mackintosh was comfortable with leaving Walker behind. He would have fulfilled his end of the bargain, but not having to worry about that was one less thing to do. There was a good chance that Walker would be picked up by the Stasi.

Mackintosh led the way out of the lift and, with the pistol ready should he need to use it, he checked the lobby. There was no one there. It was empty.

“Where’s your car?” he said to Oksana.

“I parked it in the street. Through the doors, down the steps and then turn right.”

“What’s the security like?”

“There’s one way in and out. There’s a guardhouse—I saw one man there earlier.”

She nodded at him. “You don’t have a jacket?”

“No.”

“You’re going to stand out. Sommer might have clothes on the top floor —“

“We don’t have time for that. We’ll have to take our chances. You go first.” He turned to Schmidt. “Stay close to me. We’re going to get into a car and then drive you away from here.”

“And then what?” he said. “Where are we going to go? You promised you’d get me into the West.”

“That’s exactly what we’re going to do.”

“How?”

Oksana went to the doors. “Leave that to me,” she said.

She waited for Mackintosh and Schmidt to join her and opened the doors. It was snowing heavily. That, at least, was in their favour. Visibility was limited, and Mackintosh wasn’t able to see the guardhouse that she had mentioned. He hoped that meant that any guards there wouldn’t be able to see them either. They descended the steps, treading carefully, turned right and followed Oksana to her car. She opened the rear door, ushered Schmidt inside, and then got into the driver’s seat. Mackintosh made his way around the car, opened the passenger side door, and got inside next to her.

She started the engine, flicked on the lights and pulled out.

They saw the guardhouse through the glow of the lights. The gate was lowered. Oksana pulled up in front of it and tapped the horn.

“Here we go,” she said.

A guard came out of the hut, huddled over against the cold and the snow that settled on his hat and shoulders. He made his way to the driver’s side and indicated that Oksana should lower the window. She did as she was

told.

“What’s your name?”

“Oksana Baranova. I’ve been to see the general.”

“And your passengers?”

“Ilya Pushkin and Mikhail Bakunin. They work with me.”

“Wait here, please,” he said.

“Is there a problem? Your colleague signed us in earlier. An hour ago.”

“He’s off shift. Wait here. I won’t be a moment.”

Mackintosh held the Makarov between the edge of the seat and the door, out of sight but easily at hand, should he need it.

“He’s not going to get very far if he calls the house,” he said.

The snow was too heavy for them to make out much of what was going on inside the guardhouse. Oksana squinted through it. “Maybe he’s just going to check the log.”

“Maybe,” Mackintosh said. “Be ready to move.”

She nodded.

Ten seconds passed, and then another ten. Still the guard did not reappear. Mackintosh found his thoughts going to Walker.

“It’s a *vault*, though,” he said. “It was a serious door. How does he think he’s going to get it open?”

Oksana’s face crumpled into a frown. “Oh *shit*,” she said.

“What?”

She was about to answer when they heard the sound of a muffled explosion. The ground beneath the car shook and the glass in the window of the guardhouse rattled against the frames. Oksana didn’t wait. She took her foot off the brake and stomped down on the gas, sending the car lurching ahead. It crashed through the gate, the bar breaking off its mount and sliding off the bonnet before thumping into the snow.

“What the fuck was that?” Mackintosh shouted over the sound of the engine.

“I don’t believe it,” Oksana said, unable to take the grin from her face.

“What?”

“The order that you told Jimmy to make with Sommer?”

“Yes,” Mackintosh said. “The RPGs. Why?”

“Jimmy asked for Semtex, too.”



The explosion was deafening. The blast wave rolled down the corridor, the noise amplified by the bare walls and punching open the door that Jimmy had left ajar. Dust and small bits of debris blew into the room, and Jimmy looked away to stop it from getting into his eyes. The noise of the blast echoed back and forth, punctuated by a crash as something heavy slammed against the concrete.

*The vault door.*

He waited a moment until his ears had stopped ringing and then stepped out into the corridor. There was a cloud of dust that was difficult to see through and he could smell the harsh, chemical tang of the plastique. He waited for the dust to settle so that he could check the damage. The door had been blown clean off its hinges and had collapsed forward so that it was lying flat against the floor. Jimmy hurried over and stepped over the door and into the vault.

He looked inside. The vault was not large: five paces deep and five paces wide. The walls had been fitted with metal shelving on three sides and each shelf was stacked to capacity with gold ingots. They had been neatly arranged in individual cubes and pyramids. Jimmy crossed over to the nearest shelf and ran his finger along the lowest course of one of the stacks. He counted ten bars along it, and another four courses arranged on top. Ten by five: fifty bars in just that one stack. The bars were identical: ten centimetres long and four centimetres wide. He picked one up; it was

heavy. The bar was marked with the Reichsadler, the heraldic eagle atop a swastika that had come to symbolise the Nazi Party during the Third Reich. Beneath that was engraved the legend DEUTSCHE REICHSBANK and, below that, 1 KILO FEINGOLD and then a serial number.

Jimmy knew how much a gold ingot of this size would be worth. It would be £30,000 easy, maybe even £40,000 depending on the market.

He stepped back and checked the rest of the vault. The centre of the space was in some disarray. A pallet had been left there and stacks of bank-notes had been arranged atop it. The explosion had scattered the notes. Some of the stacks were still partially standing, but most of them had been blown apart. Jimmy picked up a handful of notes from the floor: Deutschmarks, francs, roubles, dollars, sterling. High denominations.

On the other side of the room, in the corner between the shelving and the door, was an open cabinet. Jimmy pulled the door all the way back and looked inside. He saw a neatly arranged collection of files. They had been alphabetised and, on a whim, he drew his finger down the ordered rows until he found the one that was labelled with the letter M. He flicked through it until he found a file with a tab at the top that read MACKINTOSH. He took the file, opened it and flipped through the pages: there were written reports in German that he couldn't read and a sheaf of photographs. He thumbed through them: Mackintosh outside the consulate, at a restaurant, in a park. A series showed him with a man Jimmy had not seen before.

He put the canvas bag on the floor, spread it open, and then arranged gold ingots in a single course inside it. The bars were heavy, and Jimmy was limited by what the bag could stand and he could comfortably carry rather than how many he could fit into the bag. He hefted the bag and decided that he couldn't take any more. Instead, he added a layer of bank-notes, each was secured with a paper collar. Jimmy put Mackintosh's file at the top of the bag, zipped it up, and heaved it onto his shoulder. The bars clinked until they settled. It was heavy; Jimmy knew that he would have to find transport sooner rather than later.

There was a Luger in the cabinet; Jimmy wondered whether it might be Sommer's weapon from his SS days. He took it and backed out of the vault,

giving it one last longing look even as he knew he was removing as much as was possible. He chuckled at what Smiler would have said if he had seen him here; the thought of Smiler quickly led to home, and to Isabel and Sean, and he chided himself for even the shortest delay. He had to move.

With the pistol clasped in his right hand and the bag over his shoulder, Jimmy went to the elevator. He turned the key in the lock, stepped into the car, and pressed the button for the ground floor. The doors opened and, gun ready, he stepped outside.

The lobby was empty.

He turned left, away from the front door. Geipel had added the rear exit to the plan that he had drawn for Mackintosh, and Jimmy headed for that rather than the front door. He followed a corridor into the guts of the building, passing through a dining room and then the kitchen. The door was at the other side of the kitchen and was locked when Jimmy tried it. He tried the keys, found none of them worked, stepped back, raised the pistol and fired. It took two shots to blast out the lock; Jimmy kicked it, hard, and the remains of the mechanism snapped off.

The door opened to an alleyway where the bins were lined up. Snow was falling, heavy flakes that had already drifted against the door. Jimmy stepped out, his boots sliding through the soft crust all the way to his knees, and struck out. He needed to find a car. He had to get as far away from here as he could.

Oksana drove them through the city, the red flag of the USSR that was attached to the hood flapping in the wind. Mackintosh was on edge, expecting to see flashing lights behind them, the *Volkspolizei* giving pursuit. But nothing happened. No one followed them. The roads were quiet thanks to the weather, with the main roads kept passable by snowploughs that chugged back and forth and lorries that sprayed out grit and salt. Oksana drove steadily, not too fast, dictated to by the conditions. She stared ahead, eyes squinting against the glow of the lights reflecting back from the curtain of snow. Mackintosh held the Makarov in his lap, running his fingers across the barrel, wondering whether there would be a need to use it and knowing that, if the need arose, it would probably make little difference.

They crossed the Spree and then the Spreekanal, cut west on Leipziger Straße and then south on Friedrichstraße. Checkpoint Charlie loomed up ahead. Mackintosh could see the struts of the watchtower alongside it, and saw the finger of a searchlight as it jerked through the curtain of snow and settled on them; both he and Oksana raised their hands to shield their eyes. She rolled up to the first barrier and waited for the guard to approach the window. The man was carrying a flashlight, and shone it into the cabin as he indicated that Oksana should wind down the window. She did as she was told, wafts of cold air blowing the snow inside.

“Papers,” the soldier said.

Oksana handed the man her diplomatic passport and waited for him to

check it.

“Who is travelling with you?” he said.

“Two colleagues.”

“Their papers, please.”

“Never mind them,” she said.

“Papers—*now*.”

“Did you see who I am, soldier?” she snapped. “I’m on official business and I do not have to explain myself to you. Remember your place and open the gate.”

The man stared down at her, his eyes hard and cold, and then turned away. He took a walkie-talkie from his belt and spoke into it. Mackintosh held the Makarov down low, out of sight. It would do them no good, he reminded himself. He might be able to use it to get rid of this man, but he knew that the other guards wouldn’t allow them to get much farther. There would be snipers in the watchtower and soldiers with automatic weapons in the guardhouse.

“They won’t let us through,” Schmidt said.

“Be quiet,” Mackintosh hissed.

He heard the squelch of static as the guard finished his conversation, clipped the walkie-talkie back onto his belt and made his way back to them.

He held out Oksana’s passport. “Drive through, please.”

Oksana took her passport, wound up the window and drove through the opened barrier. She turned to the right, passed through the narrow gap in the first wall, and approached the second barrier. The guardhouse was on the right and a line of parked cars was on their left. They were halfway to the next barrier when two soldiers came out of the far side of the guardhouse and blocked their way. The men were carrying AK-47s; they pressed the stocks into their shoulders and aimed at the car.

“Shit,” Mackintosh said.

He looked behind them. Four soldiers, including the one who had

spoken to them at the gate, were approaching from the rear. They, too, were all armed. The man had let them carry on through so that they could block them in this secondary area. The American sector was fifty feet away, but it might as well have been fifty miles. There was nothing that they could do.

Mackintosh looked at Oksana. She was biting her lip, looking between the men in front of the car and, in the mirror, at the men who were approaching them from behind. Mackintosh turned and saw that Schmidt was petrified; his head was down, his hands clasped to his temples. Mackintosh thought of the pistols that they had taken from Sommer's building. He squeezed the Makarov. He might be able to take out one or two of the soldiers, but the others would turn the car into Swiss cheese before they could get over to the West.

Another soldier emerged from the guardhouse. This one was clearly more senior than the others, his rank denoted by the flashes on his shoulders. He was carrying a clipboard and a flashlight. He came to the car and indicated that Oksana should wind down the window again.

"What's the meaning of this?" she said angrily.

"Who is travelling with you, Miss?" he said.

"That's none of your business. I'm on diplomatic business."

"I don't care," the man said. "Who are they?"

"And I told you—that's none of your business."

"Then I'm going to have to ask you all to get out of the car."

"No," Oksana said. "You're going to let us pass over the border."

The man took another step forward and then bellowed into the car. "Get out of the car now or I'll order my men to shoot."

Oksana turned to Mackintosh. "Wait here," she said. "Don't open the doors to anyone other than me. They're just looking for a reason to shoot us."

"What are you going to do?"

"Make a phone call."

She got out of the car and closed the door behind her. Mackintosh reached across the cabin and pressed down on the lock. The door was secured with a satisfying *thunk*.

The windows were closed, but Mackintosh could hear the sound of Oksana's voice as she upbraided the soldier with the clipboard. She punctuated her tirade with sharp little stabs of her finger into the chest of the man. He turned away and led Oksana into the guardhouse. There was a wide window next to the door where the soldiers could look out onto the vehicles that passed through the checkpoint. The snow was still falling heavily, but Mackintosh was able to see the soldier lead Oksana into the room. He handed her a telephone. She pressed the receiver to her ear and began a conversation.

"What's happening?" Schmidt asked, his voice quavering.

"Everything will be fine," Mackintosh said, trying to find a reassuring tone despite the fact that he was very far from reassured himself.

Oksana handed the receiver to the soldier and stood, her arms folded, while he spoke to whoever was on the other end of the line. The man handed the receiver back to her; she said something else into it, then replaced it on the cradle. She spoke to the soldier again, adding yet more angry stabs of her finger, and then strode to the door and came outside.

"Here she comes," Mackintosh said.

Oksana reached the car. Mackintosh reached over to open the door and she got inside.

"What was all that about?"

"They're going to let us through," she said.

"Who did you call?" Mackintosh said.

"Someone with authority who's very interested that we're able to bring Herr Schmidt over the border."

Oksana put her hands on the wheel and waited for the armed guards to part. She put the car into drive and slowly passed between them. Mackintosh looked out of the window into their faces as they went by; their hats

were brimmed with snow, their faces flushed with the cold, and they stared back with unmasked hostility.

The final stretch of the checkpoint was a slalom created by two lines of tank traps. Oksana drove the car around the first barrier, turned right to bring them around the edge of the second and then accelerated slowly away toward the American side of the border.

Mackintosh looked back at East Berlin. It looked dimmer and darker than its twin, as if shamed by its poverty. The comparison between the destitution of those who lived there and the ease and luxury of those who lived on the other side of the Wall was stark. It felt as if a heavy weight had been removed from Mackintosh's shoulders, and, for the first time in days, he allowed himself to exhale and relax.

He looked back to the front and watched through the windshield as two American MPs, both armed with automatic rifles, beckoned them forward.

They were nearly home.



## **PART VII**

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Red Square looked beautiful in the snow. The limousine drove through the Borovitskaya Gate, bouncing over the cobblestones and passing the yellow and gold Grand Kremlin Palace. The driver skirted around the Cathedral of the Archangel and took them through the arch into the courtyard attached to the Senate building. Oksana looked up at the buildings ranged around her and tried to imagine the scale of the battle that was raging within them. The old guard had been assailed by the reformers, and those men who stood to lose everything were not letting go without a fight. Oksana had found herself pulled into that battle, and it was still too early to say whether she had chosen the right side.

She made her way into the Senate and followed the corridor to the reception hall. An aide appeared and gestured that she should follow him into a separate office. She did as she was told. The room was as impressive as the rest of the Senate, with grand pieces of furniture, a roaring fire in a majestic grate and curtains made of luxurious fabrics. Oksana thought of the lot of ordinary Muscovites, hungry and cold, and found the opulence here as nauseating as she always had. The Kremlin, and the autocrats who had their snouts in the trough, could not have been farther removed from the men and women that they purported to serve. It was the flicker of hope represented by Gorbachev that drove them on.

The aide indicated that Oksana should sit, closed the grand doors behind her and exited through a door that she had not seen.

She waited for ten minutes, wondering if she had been forgotten, before the door opened again and Anatoly Maximychev came inside.

Oksana stood. Maximychev made his way over to her, shook her hand, and gestured that she should sit.

“How are you, Major?”

“I am well, sir,” she replied.

“Well done. We have been impressed with your work—very impressed.”

“Thank you, sir.”

“Can you confirm that ZERKALO has arrived in London?”

“We believe so. Mackintosh flew out of Tempelhof three days ago. Our sources confirm that ZERKALO was with him.”

“I am relieved.”

“It should have been easier. The British traitor very nearly put a stop to it.”

“True,” Maximychev said. “It would have delayed us, but we would have adapted. The Minister’s appetite has not been sated. He is still associating with the same people. The same clubs. You would think that a man in his position would be more discreet, but it appears that he cannot control his urges. If not ZERKALO, then someone else. His tastes in young men have always been predictable.”

Maximychev was an adviser to the Soviet ambassador in Berlin, although his true influence within the government was more extensive than that. President Gorbachev regarded him as one of his closest political allies, and his reputation as a sounding board and fixer was well known within the walls of the Kremlin. Oksana did not know whether it was Maximychev who had proposed the plan to discredit the Minister or whether he had simply approved it. It did not matter: he had given it to Oksana to administer, and she had done everything that he had asked. Schmidt—or ZERKALO, his cryptonym—had been introduced to the old pervert and that had been that. The boy’s real name was Sokolov. He was a recent

graduate from State School 4 in Kazan, an institution that taught both male and female agents how to seduce the targets that they were ranged against. She had seen how the Western newspapers reported it: *sexpionage*. Sokolov had been trained with a specific aim in mind: he was to seduce the man responsible for the operation of the East German secret police.

Maximychhev went to a salver that had been left on a side table and poured two glasses of tea. He brought them both over, gave one to Oksana, and sat down next to her.

“I have read your report,” he said. “It is excellent, as usual. But I have a few questions. Do you have time?”

“Of course.”

“You have personal experience of the British. What do you think they will do?”

“They will debrief ZERKALO very carefully,” she said. “His legend is secure and he tells it well—they will confirm it. I imagine that they will confer with their friends in Langley and Paris and then they will arrange for him to go public. A television interview. Newspapers. Eventually a book, no doubt. They will want his story to be broadcast as far and wide as possible.”

“When do you think they will have him speak?”

“I don’t think it will be long.”

“Good. The Minister will not allow the Wall to fall. He must be removed. He is an impediment to the president’s agenda. *Glasnost* is too important—it must succeed.” He sipped his tea and looked back at her. “What of Mackintosh?”

“I suspect that he will be rewarded.”

“They really do not know of his”—he paused—“ethical flexibility?”

“It would appear not.”

“And the man he used?”

“Walker? He was exfiltrated through Black Route Two. He landed in

Denmark. After that, we don't know."

"Very good, Oksana. As I say—the president is pleased with how you conducted this operation. He wanted to tell you that himself."

"Please thank him for me," she said. "And please apologise that I had to call him."

"The border?" Maximychev laughed.

"The guard was stubborn. I believe he would have shot us."

"No doubt. I would have given a lot to see his face when he realised to whom he was talking."

She smiled at the memory. "It would be fair to say that he was more accommodating afterwards."

Maximychev finished his tea and stood. Oksana stood, too, and took the old man's hand again. "The president would like you to go back to Berlin. We have another man—Schabowski—who has a position of influence within the Politburo. You are to assist him. The Wall must fall, Oksana. The president is adamant. It is the first domino. The others will follow."

Oksana thanked Maximychev, saluted, and turned. Her heels clicked on the tiled floor as she made her way out of the office and into the vaulted chamber beyond.

Mackintosh took off his jacket and gave it to the waiter. He made his way into the private room where he had met Vivian Bloom before. A fire blazed in the hearth. Mackintosh had chosen a light cotton suit today instead of the tweed that had threatened to overwhelm him before. He felt better than before, and not just because he was better prepared for the heat. He had been hanging on then, powered by grief and fury and his desire for revenge. He was still grieving Élodie, but he had taken his measure of revenge. Sommer was dead and Schmidt's story was a bomb that British intelligence was just waiting to drop on the DDR.

Bloom was in the same seat as before.

"Sit down, Mackintosh," he said. "Drink?"

"Thank you, sir."

Bloom poured out two glasses of sherry and passed one to Mackintosh. "Cheers."

They touched glasses.

"Not a bad way to start the year," Bloom said. "Well done."

"Thank you, sir."

"I've read your report. You did well. The only thing I'm not convinced about was involving yourself. That was an unnecessary risk."

"I disagree, sir. I'm not sure that Walker would have been able to ac-

comply with it on his own.”

Bloom stared at him. “Come on, Harry. Don’t pretend that was the reason. I know about you and the French girl. You wanted to be there to sort Sommer out yourself.”

Mackintosh swallowed, wrong-footed. “I...”

“I shouldn’t have to remind you that fraternising with agents from rival intelligence agencies is not a very good idea. I’ll turn a blind eye to it this time given that it would be churlish to let it spoil an excellent result, but don’t do it again.”

“Yes, sir,” Mackintosh said.

He waited for Bloom to say something else—to say that he knew about the money that the French had been paying him, that he knew about the Swiss account—but he didn’t. He emptied his glass and poured another.

“Everything is neat and tidy apart from Walker. Do you know where he is?”

“No, sir.”

“Really? No idea?”

“None.”

“And do you really think he robbed Sommer’s vault?”

“I’m absolutely sure of it, sir.”

“You think he’s still alive?”

“It’s impossible to say. We barely got out, as you know. He has no contacts in the East. He doesn’t speak the language. I don’t know what he would have been thinking.”

Bloom shook his head. “The brass balls on him.”

“He’s more resourceful than I was led to believe.”

“He is, indeed.” Bloom topped up Mackintosh’s glass.

“What about Schmidt, sir?” Mackintosh asked.

“He’s been debriefed. He’s very compelling.”

“And the photographs?”

“Analysed and confirmed. They’re quite real.”

Schmidt had given them the location of the photographs as soon as he arrived in London. He had hidden them in a lock-box that he had buried in the rubble of a shelled building near to the Wall. Mackintosh had sent an asset to pick them up. They had been copied and faxed to HQ from a secure line and then the originals had been brought out in a diplomatic bag.

“What will happen with them?” Mackintosh asked.

“We’ve given them to *Der Spiegel*,” he said. “They’ll be published next month.”

“What do you think will happen?”

“The Minister will have to resign. He’ll have no choice.”

“And then?”

“And then, who knows. Gorbachev is pushing his agenda as hard as he dares. Protests are spreading. There only needs to be a spark. And if that happens, all bets are off. We could be looking at a new world.”

“New worlds have new problems, sir.”

“I was thinking about that. You’ll need a replacement for Walker. There’s a chap just been arrested for murder—”

“No,” said Mackintosh.

“It worked out last time.”

Mackintosh looked at Bloom and saw that he was struggling to keep a straight face.

“I’m joking. You’ve earned some capital, Harry. A lot of capital.”

“Thank you, sir.”

“And you need something to do. You can’t go back to Berlin. The Stasi know what you did. They won’t look kindly on it.”



“That had crossed my mind.”

“It would be fair to say that your success has changed some minds in Whitehall. Your proposal has been given another look. I don’t want to speak out of turn, but I think it might be something that we are prepared to consider. There’s going to be a rationalisation of MI5 and MI6. We’re looking to build something new—a collection of all the talents—and we will need a unit to operate as the tip of the spear. The work would be deniable. Off book. I doubt I need to say anything more about that.”

“Military? It won’t work with amateurs. We were lucky with Walker.”

“I agree. It would be military—SAS, SBS, SRR, UKSF. How many agents did you ask for?”

“For Berlin? Five.”

“But this wouldn’t be limited to Germany. We were thinking of twelve. New members rotated in when there’s a vacancy. What do you say?”

“I’d say that I would be very interested.”

“Good. Here are your first two men.”

Bloom took two files from the table next to him and handed them to Mackintosh. He flicked through them: each file bore the name of its subject on the cover. FISHER and CAMERON.

“Do you approve?”

“I do, sir. Excellent choices.”

“Excellent.” Bloom smiled. “We’re just sketching this out, but we think there’ll be fifteen groups within the new organisation. Yours would be the fifteenth.”

“Group Fifteen.”

“Quite so. And you would be running it.”

Bloom got to his feet and extended a hand. Mackintosh took it.

“Thank you, sir.”

“Congratulations, Control. I think this is going to go very well.”

Mackintosh came out of the club in high spirits. He made his way down the steps to the street and paused there, breathing deeply. It was a bright day—pleasant and fresh—and he decided that he would walk to the vacant building that Bloom had suggested would make an excellent HQ for the new group. It was two miles to Vauxhall and the exercise would do him good. He started to walk.

He saw the man cross the street without really paying attention to him.

The man stepped out in front of him, blocking his path.

It was Walker.

“Morning,” he said.

Mackintosh came to a sudden stop, stock still. His mouth fell open.

“Walker?”

“Surprised to see me?”

“I am. Very surprised. How did you get out?”

“The Russians have been very helpful.”

“The *Russians*?”

“Oksana, really. She gave me another way out.”

“And how did you find me now?”

“The Russians, again. I called the embassy. They found you and told me where you were.”

“I don’t know what to say.”

Walker smiled. It wasn’t necessarily friendly; there was a glint in his eye that gave Mackintosh cause for concern. “I’m pleased I found you,” he said. “There’s something we need to discuss.”

“Yes,” Mackintosh said. “We do.”

Mackintosh started off and Walker settled in alongside him.

“You wanted me to get Schmidt,” Walker said. “I did that. And you wanted Sommer dead. That’s done, too. I went back into the cell after you left. I saw what you did.”

“You did everything I asked you to do, James. And, yes, before you ask, I know what I said I’d do for you. The charges against you will be dropped. I’ll call Scotland Yard this afternoon. You don’t need to worry about that—it’s done. You have my word.”

“That’s good of you,” Walker said. “And I don’t want to sound ungrateful, but I *do* worry. Your word doesn’t give me a huge amount of confidence. You kept information from me in Berlin. You made me make a decision without knowing all the facts.”

“Would you have said no if you’d known?”

“Probably not, but that’s beside the point. You weren’t truthful. You’re not trustworthy.”

Mackintosh felt a flicker of anger; he suspected he was about to be threatened. “So what are we going to do?”

“I just want you to do what you promised to do. That’s it. And I don’t want you ever to bother me or my family again. You, the intelligence services, the police—I just want to live a normal life, no interference, no fear that you’ve got something that you can hold over me.”

“So stop robbing banks and you’ll have nothing to worry about.”

Walker smiled, but it was thin and without humour. “Here’s the thing,”

he said. He reached into his jacket and took out an envelope. "I broke into Sommer's vault. I found this."

He held out the envelope and Mackintosh took it. He slid his finger into the seal and opened it, taking out several pieces of paper that had been stapled in the top right corner. Mackintosh turned the pages. He felt sick, and he felt worse with every fresh line that he read.

"You can have that," Walker said. "I have the original—you won't be able to find it. It's my insurance. If anything happens to me, it gets sent to the papers."

Mackintosh hardly heard him. He stared at the page, unable to credit what he was seeing. The Stasi had had him under surveillance for months. There were photographs of him and Élodie. He had thought that they had been careful, but, evidently, they had not. There was a long-lens photograph of them at Hochosterwitz, the two of them embracing in front of the castle. The next page was a copy of the Swiss bank account that he had set up.

"The front page is a summary," Walker said. "It's in German—I translated it with a dictionary. I think I've got the gist of it. Seems that the woman in those pictures with you was French. They said she worked for French intelligence."

"Yes," Mackintosh snapped, feeling the noose tightening around his neck and yet still struggling to loosen it, to deny what the Stasi had found out. "The operation to get Schmidt was a joint operation with the DGSE."

"But they say that you and her were involved, and that bank statement says you were receiving large deposits. The Stasi seem to think she was paying you." He shrugged as they walked. "I've no idea how your business works, but, in my business, Swiss bank accounts are usually used by people who have something they want to hide."

Mackintosh tightened his fist, crumpling the papers.

"Don't think I'm passing judgement," Walker said. "I don't care if you're getting paid, who's paying you, how they pay you—I don't care about that. Like you say, I've made my money robbing banks. I'd be a hypocrite. Anyway—I wanted you to have that. And you've got my word that,

as long as you do right by me and my family, that never sees the light of day.”

Mackintosh felt his cheeks throbbing with blood, and knew that he had no choice but to take a deep breath, to bite his tongue, to tamp down his anger. It was the loss of control that stirred his temper. Secrets were an inevitable part of the life of an agent, but the ones who lasted—the ones who didn’t get cashiered, or posted to pointless outposts, or killed—those agents made sure that they held the secrets, and were not the ones with secrets that could be used against them by others. And there was embarrassment, too: that the Stasi had known this about him, and that James Walker—a two-bit, no-account bank robber—knew about it, too.

Mackintosh had been played, twice, and he hated it.

They had reached the bottom of Whitehall. Parliament Square was in front of them and, to the left, Big Ben was just chiming the hour. Traffic was flowing in both directions and they had to wait to cross.

“Do we understand one another?” Walker asked.

“Piss off,” Mackintosh said.

“I will, but I need to hear you say it.”

Mackintosh took a deep breath, trying to put enough air in his lungs that he might be able to relieve the tightness that felt like an iron band around his breast.

He forced the words out, one by one. “We do.”

Walker had his hand out. Mackintosh put his bottom lip between his teeth and bit down, hard enough to draw blood, then reached out and took it.

“I’d love to say it was a pleasure, but—”

“Just fuck off, James.”

Walker grinned at him, let go of his hand, turned toward Westminster Bridge and walked away.

Jimmy flagged down a taxi. He got into the back and told the driver to take him to Hackney.

The man looked back at him in the mirror. “You all right, mate? You look done in.”

“It’s been a long week,” he said.

THAT WAS THE TRUTH.



Jimmy had found a car with official plates in a parking lot a short walk away from the *Pfarrhaus*. It was a luxury sedan—a GAZ Chaika—and Jimmy had decided that it would be a good choice given that he was dressed as a senior Stasi officer. He knew that his cover was flimsy, and would be blown as soon as he was asked to open his mouth, and so he decided to bank on the chance that by looking important he would reduce the possibility of a junior man risking the opprobrium of inconveniencing him.

He had driven north out of the city, passing through Schönholz and Rosenthal and then out beyond its outer boundaries. He maintained a northerly heading and drove for five hours without stopping. The landscape was flat and covered with thick snow. He passed Neuruppin, Wittstock and Güstrow, aiming for Rostock and then heading northwest for the coast.

Kühlungsborn was a small fishing port. Jimmy followed Oksana’s directions to a café that looked out over the Baltic Sea. The proprietor was a

gruff East German called Burmeister. He had recognised Oksana's name and, after a short conversation, he took Jimmy to a small bedroom in the attic. He told him to stay out of sight while he made the preparations for his exfiltration. Jimmy took off the uniform and replaced it with warm clothes that Burmeister's wife brought to him: jeans made from thick denim, a flannel shirt, a heavy wool jumper. There was a bright yellow oilskin, too, and heavy waterproof boots.

Burmeister drove him to the harbour just before midnight and led him to a skiff that was tied up at the end of a pier. Jimmy lowered himself down into the boat. Burmeister started the engine and they cast off. Burmeister warned him that the low levels of salt in the Baltic Sea made it prone to large waves, and he had been quickly proven right. The skiff was tossed around as soon as they were beyond the harbour walls, and Jimmy was convinced that they would capsize. Burmeister was skilled, though, and his fears of drowning were quickly replaced by the certainty that they would be picked up by the patrol boats that Jimmy had seen moored in the harbour. That fear, too, had been misplaced.

The lightship was seventeen kilometres out to sea. Burmeister pulled alongside and secured a ladder that was thrown down. Jimmy scaled it and was pulled aboard the bigger boat. His bag was hauled up on a rope; Jimmy didn't let it out of his sight. He was given dry clothes and a hot drink as the captain of the lightship radioed the local post boat to come and collect the stowaway, using a codeword in case the Stasi was monitoring radio traffic. Jimmy hid below deck for twelve hours until the post boat arrived, transferred onto it with his bag and hid again as it made the choppy crossing to the Danish island of Møn. It was easier from there: a ferry to the mainland, and a train to Copenhagen.

He had taken a room in a hotel near the airport and slept. When he awoke, he set to work. He went down to the business centre and made photocopies of the file on Mackintosh that he had taken from Sommer's vault. Next, he made an appointment at the branch of Nordea in Taastrup, twenty minutes west of the capital. The bank offered safe deposit boxes, and Jimmy had rented one of their largest for six months. The manager took him down to an antechamber next to the vault and had left him with the box.

Jimmy transferred the ingots, arranging them so that they filled the bottom half of the box. He put most of the money on top of that, keeping three thousand pounds to take back home with him. He put Mackintosh's Stasi file inside, too, keeping the photocopies. He waited as the bank staff struggled with the weight of the box, replacing it in the vault, and then made his way back out onto the street.

Jimmy knew that he would have to be creative in finding a way to get the bullion out of the country, but that was a problem for another day.



The taxi reached Hackney and plotted a route through streets that Jimmy knew. He looked out of the window with a smile on his face. He had wondered whether he would ever see these houses and shops again. The driver turned onto Valentine Road and parked next to the house. Jimmy paid him, adding a generous tip, and got out. It was a cold, fresh day, and Jimmy stood on the path for a moment and breathed it in. It was refreshing, nothing like the frigidity of East Germany or the bone-freezing chill of the Baltic. He climbed the steps to his front door, took a moment to compose himself, and then rapped his knuckles against it.

The door opened. Isabel was standing there, her mouth open.

“Hello, darling,” Jimmy said. “I’m home.”