

Chapter 1

The attractive young woman glanced up from the book she was reading "I'm sorry..."

"Do you mind if I join you?"

She smiled casually and nodded. "Err, no. I mean... of course not, please do." She smiled again and signalled to him to sit down. She looked about the café and made a mental note that there were a few empty tables scattered here and there and wondered why he had chosen to ask to sit with her.

Yes you look just like your photograph, in fact very attractive indeed. He smiled as he sat down opposite her. *Your name is Svetlana Zaslavsky and you are of Jewish parents.* He recalled the notes that he had committed to memory from her father's file. *Yes Svetlana I know all about you. The bureau was right about one thing, your beauty, but I wonder if you are ready to join us?* His thoughts were rudely interrupted by the arrival of the waitress with the coffee he had ordered. He gave a slight cough as if to clear his throat. "Excuse me, but do you mind if I smoke?" he addressed the blonde girl sitting opposite.

She glanced up from her book and gave a slight shake of the head. "No not really," she said.

"Do you smoke?"

Once more she again looked up from her reading irritated by this new interruption. "No thank you," she replied curtly. Even if he had noticed the note of exasperation in her voice, he chose to ignore it.

"It's Svetlana isn't it?" Although it was a question, his tone was soft and unchallenging. At the sound of her name a puzzled look crossed her face, and she once again looked up, closed the book she had been reading and placed it on the table in front of her.

"Yes, but...but how do you know? Do I ...I mean should I know you?" she asked somewhat taken aback. He smiled at her and she was immediately on her guard. Who was he, this mild-mannered stranger and how did he know her name?

Suddenly it was 1960 and she was a very frightened ten year old girl. Screaming and sobbing as she saw her father clubbed and kicked to the ground by a gang of thugs. People were oblivious to her mother's screams as one of them grabbed hold of her, threw her to the ground and proceeded to tear open her blouse exposing the whiteness of her breasts. He pushed up her skirt and forced himself between her thighs and in minutes had overpowered her.

On that day she avowed vengeance for her mother's savage rape and her father's brutal attack. Every detail of that evening and especially the face of the perpetrator would remain with her until her dying day. She was determined to find those involved and even the score.

"I believe you and I may have a mutual interest..." she heard him say.

"In what way?" she enquired feeling somewhat uneasy. *But what could happen to me here?* "I mean, I don't know you so how can we have a mutual interest? Who are you?" she asked, but the question went unanswered as he continued with his gentle probing.

"This man," he said indicating the picture he dropped on the table in front of her, "I want you to take a good look and tell me whether or not you have you seen him before?" Svetlana picked up the picture and studied it closely. The face staring back at her was that of a man in his late fifties.

It looks like him! He's older, but I'm sure it's him. The same half-closed eyes. The black curly hair although it's receding. Yes I'm sure it's him! But be careful, play it cool as you don't know this person opposite.

"I'm not sure, why do you ask? Anyway who are you?" She repeated her earlier question, her anxiety at his interest showed. Instinctively she took hold of her bag pulling it tightly to her in case he made a grab for it. She threw the stranger a quick glance as she went to get up. In a flash he grabbed her hand.

"OK, my name is Mikhail and I know your father. Please listen to me." His eyes stared at her imploring her to stay and not to run. *If only I could convince you Svetlana that I am on your side.* She paused just long enough for him to sense that she might just stay. "Please Svetlana, I mean you no harm. Now come, sit down. I promise I can help you." Gradually he felt the tension in her subside and she slowly sat back down.

"OK, you say you know my papa, how?"

“He used to work with me...no I used to work for him. Actually he trained me at my job.” He paused and took a long draw on his cigarette, his eyes watching her for the slightest reaction. Slowly he released his grip on her hand and for a moment they both sat in silence.

Funny that papa never mentioned about working with anyone. Come to think of it, he never said much about his work or where he worked.

It was Svetlana who spoke first.

“So did he work in the city right here in Moscow?” she asked.

“Sometimes he worked here but he also worked in other places.”

*So papa what **did** you do?*

Svetlana suddenly realised how little she really knew about her father. It had taken this chance meeting with a stranger to arouse her curiosity and now she wanted to know more. “So what did he actually do?” she asked the quiet-mannered stranger sitting opposite her, but the stranger, not too sure how to answer, remained silent. Svetlana shook her head. “So Mikhail, or should I say Mr... whatever your name is...”

“Trepashkin, My name is Mikhail Trepashkin...”

“So Mr Trepashkin, give me one good reason, just one good reason, as to why we should continue with this...this...farce. Either you know my papa or you don’t. Now if you know him, and you did say you worked with him, then tell me what he did?” Her frustration at not getting any real answers began to show, “and another thing, why do you think I would know him?” she said angrily stabbing her finger at the picture on the table in front of her.

“Look Miss Zaslavsky,” he said in a calm matter of fact way, “Svetlana Zaslavsky, I know an awful lot about you. I know what happened over ten years ago. I know about your father’s beating and your mother’s rape so trust me. Let me help you.” This last statement about her father being beaten and her mother being raped shocked Svetlana.

How do you know about my papa being beaten and the ordeal my mamma suffered?

“Please Mr Trepashkin,” her voice a mere whisper, “just tell me what you want.”

“Look Svetlana, I am on your side. I need your help as much as you need mine. I can’t say too much here...” He gave a cursory look about him to check who was listening and watching, then he leaned forward and in a low voice said, “your father worked for the state and was highly thought of...” He beckoned to her to lean forward towards him and in a low whisper so that only she should hear he said, “he was a KGB man.” Svetlana was taken aback by this latest piece of information.

How come my mamma didn’t know this and I didn’t know this?

“Are you also a KGB man?” she asked in a low whisper. Mikhail gave a slight nod of the head. “Bah, how do I know that what you are telling me is the truth and not something you’ve just made up on the spur of the moment?”

“Unfortunately,” he whispered, “you will have to take my word for it unless you wish me to get you arrested.” The very thought of being arrested by the Secret Police and being dragged off by the KGB was enough to put the fear of God into anyone and Svetlana was no different. “Is that what you want?” She shook her head.

“Definitely not,” Svetlana answered in a whisper, “but I still need some sort of proof.” Mikhail thought about how else he could prove it to her, then a thought struck him, *of course, why didn’t I think of it before, her father, yes that was it, get her to ask her father.*

“Listen, I’ve got an idea and I hope it works. Go from here and ask your father, tell him you met Mikhail Trepashkin today and ask him if he remembers me?” Again Mikhail looked around the café just to make sure no-one was close enough to hear the next thing he was about to say. Having reassured himself that it was safe to speak he beckoned her to lean closer. Svetlana did as she was asked, and cupping his hands to her proffered ear he whispered a codename to her.

“Will my papa know that?”

“Yes, he should definitely remember that. It was used by Yevgeni who your father trained with. Then a lot later he trained me and my codename was...” He leaned forward and whispered ARDOV. “So there you are. You now have a means by which to check my credentials. Hurry now, go home and check all you will and we will meet here at the same time tomorrow.”

“But...”

“No buts, go and don’t look back.” Svetlana frowned then nodded her head.

“Bye, and...”

“Go...” She smiled at the quietly spoken Trepashkin, and once again collected her belongings and headed for the door.

The statue of Felix Dzerzhinsky, the founder of the KGB, stood in the square outside the imposing yellow stone nine storey building in Central Moscow. The KGB’s headquarters was known as Lubyanka because of the name of the pre-revolutionary street on which it stood. Just after 4 pm Svetlana Zaslavsky, a blonde, green-eyed Russian Jew, accompanied by a young fair haired Mikhail Trepashkin, entered through the doors of Lubyanka into the inner sanctum of the KGB. Once inside Svetlana was immediately overcome by awe at the magnificent marble and granite surroundings. The parquet floors were buffed to a rich, golden brown, with spotless long red runners; the elevators ran silently and smoothly as they whispered up and down in an endless dance from ground floor to the top and back again. On entering Lubyanka Svetlana felt as if she was standing at the very seat of Russia’s power. To offset this awesome opulence Lubyanka hides a murky past; for beneath the spotless red runners, the granite and marble facades and the highly polished parquet flooring is a labyrinth of cells and torture chambers where many prisoners of the Stalinist era had been tortured and scores had perished, but this dark secret was unknown to Svetlana on her first visit.

“Come Svetlana, we take the elevator to my office and I will explain.” With that they entered one of the whispering elevators which whisked them silently up to where Mikhail worked in the recruitment section. It was here that she first met the man who was to become not only the head of the KGB, but in future years one of the most powerful leaders in Eastern Europe, Yuri Andropov.

Again Mikhail showed her the photograph of the man that he had shown her in the café yesterday, only this time he offered her more in the way of information. The man in question was a very powerful and wealthy businessman; a man not unknown in the ‘old school’. But times were changing and whereas before he had been a great friend of the ‘old school’ he had since fallen out of favour. He was an arms dealer and had contacts in the West. His crime was that he had upset ‘certain seniors within the inner sanctum’, so he needed to be brought to task. It was now up to Mikhail Trepashkin to try and recruit the beautiful Svetlana into the KGB with a view to her being the bait to lure this man home.

“So Svetlana do you now recognise the man?”

“I’m not sure.” She was still not fully trusting of Mikhail’s motives even though her father had vouched for him and what is more she was still unsure of what he really wanted.

“Maybe this will help your memory.” With that he pushed a manila folder across the desk to Svetlana, inside which she found photographs of her father as well as detailed reports written and signed by him. There were also a number of photographs of her mother on her own and with her father. There was even one of them both sitting with another woman in Karlovy Vary, in Czechoslovakia. She was referred to as a friend of the family. She had fond memories of the trip to Karlovy Vary, but she did not remember or recognise the woman in the photograph. Then to her horror she saw pictures of herself taken over a number of years and culminating in a series of photographs taken right here in Moscow as recently as the day before yesterday, as she walked along Volkhonka Street near the Pushkin Museum.

“What are these doing here?” she asked pointing at her photographs in the manila folder.

“You must understand, because your father was a senior official here, we have to keep a comprehensive file on the whole family and his contacts. It is for the family’s own security.”

I don’t believe you!

“But why have you been taking photographs of me especially as my papa is now an old man and no longer works for the KGB’s state department” She was annoyed at this latest infringement of her privacy and wondered what other information they had on her.

“We have kept the file up to date. I promise there is nothing sinister going on, it’s just that...we hoped that...that is... the bureau hoped that the daughter of such an eminent KGB official would consider following in her father’s footsteps. That’s all.” Svetlana looked back at the photographs and the documents laid out on the desk before her.

So this explains a lot of things, she thought to herself, like the times when you went away on trips, the secret meetings and why you never talked about your work. All this time I thought you worked in the city, in an office. Well I suppose you did in a way. Damn you, damn you papa, why couldn’t you trust me enough to tell me? All this time I thought you were like all my friends’ fathers but you weren’t. You were a spy, a KGB spy!

She read and re-read the information. Trying hard to take it in, but all she could think of was that her father was a spy. Now it was obvious how Mikhail Trepashkin had recognised her, why he had spoken to her in the café and why he had asked if he may sit at her table when there were others free. Suddenly it all made sense, except for one minor thing. “Why are you interested in this man, why do you insist that I should know him?” She pointed to the photograph of the curly haired fifty year old man that Trepashkin had asked her about.

“Because he has attacked one of our people...”

“I don’t believe you Mikhail...”

“It’s true, he has attacked one of our people and we want to bring him to justice,” he added lamely.

“Who is he? your department must know him,” she said as she picked up the photograph of her mother’s attacker and stared at the face again.

Be truthful Mikhail and then I’ll try to help.

“OK Svetlana, his codename is Oleg. He is a mole, buried deep within the Bulgarian KGB. He is a very powerful and shrewd individual with animal-like cunning who, up until now, has successfully covered his tracks. All we have to go on is a name - Mike Weatherall, possibly American and a CIA operator, so now you know the scale of it. We need Oleg and you need Oleg. You want Oleg because you know that it was him who beat your father and raped your mother.” A heavy silence descended over the two of them. Mikhail took out a NETPI (Peter 1) cigarette and lit it and watched as the blue smoke curled its way upwards towards the ceiling, whilst Svetlana wrestled with, and thought about, the information she had just been made privy to. Mikhail took a long draw on his cigarette and exhaled, blowing the smoke towards the ceiling. Then he decided to drop another little bombshell.

“Svetlana,” he paused, she looked up from the desk with a dazed look in her eyes, “Svetlana, I need to ask you this. First of all we need your help...we would value your help...”

“Mik...” she started to interrupt, but he was having none of it.

“No, please listen to me. It is a serious question I need to ask and I ask it on behalf of our fatherland, (my country and yours) Russia. Svetlana Zaslavsky,” he looked deadly serious as he spoke, “are you willing to join the bureau, or to put it another way, when will you join us?” Svetlana was rocked by his proposal and her voice faltered as she replied. “You...you are asking me to join the KGB. I don’t understand...why me?” “Because I was honoured to work with your father and I think his daughter would make a really good...no, I mean, a top flight KGB Officer. I can see you rising through the ranks in the bureau up to Director level in a very short time. Think how proud your father would be to see his beautiful daughter as a top KGB Officer. How proud your mother will be when she knows it was her daughter who brought Oleg home to face justice. If you cannot do it for yourself, then at least think of your parents and your country. Also remember this, Oleg knows you and he knows that you were a witness to his deeds so at any time he could come looking for you and your aged parents, so think carefully about that and at least consider my proposal.” Svetlana was now on the horns of a dilemma, torn between joining the KGB and tracking this Oleg down, or doing nothing and yet risking everything. Either way she could die!

What do I do? If I say no to the KGB then this, this Oleg, as he is known, may kill me, or may well trace my parents through me and kill them. They don’t deserve that. My papa is no longer a young man and no longer can he defend himself against such odds. I know what I have to do.

“So if I agree to join the bureau then what?”

“Well, first of all you will meet my boss, Yuri Andropov. Then subject to his agreement you will be sent to the KGB nine-month school just outside the city.”

“And what will they teach me?”

“Many different things, such as psychology, instruction in the latest spy technology, whether it be long-range listening devices, miniature cameras, or sophisticated transmitters. You’ll be taught about recent advances in coding and decoding; all this and more besides. You’ll analyze the CIA operations, MI6 and other spy organisations, see how we at the KGB can improve. So on and so forth, so are you interested? Not only will you get revenge by tracking down Oleg,” *now, I’ll play the patriotic card and that may just push her in the right direction*, “but you’ll also be working for your fatherland.”

Svetlana thought long and hard about Mikhail’s proposition before making her decision. She again read through the documents; again she looked at all the pictures taken of both her and her parents. She looked straight into Mikhail’s eyes and now for the first time she felt he was telling the truth. She knew he was hiding nothing and slowly she nodded her head, “OK I will do it.”