

## PROLOGUE

2003

*It was late. The rain lashed down on the bleak landscape. A man was looking out at the sea watching the waves crash endlessly on the jagged cliffs below. His name was Kurt Levski; he was a middle aged rotund man. Through the rain streaming down his bald head he saw a car draw up beside him. He looked inside the window even though he didn't have to; he already knew who it was. He was looking at the angry face of Julia Sword, her long auburn hair hanging in strands over her face as it always did when she was in a mood like this. Kurt stepped back as she opened the door. He knew what was coming.*

*"You have failed me," though she spoke quietly he could hear her clearly. She was referring to the operation that*

*had taken place just over two weeks ago.*

*“I’m sorry. It will not happen again,” he muttered.*

*“You’re right it won’t!”*

*The last thing Kurt ever saw was a muzzle flash behind the backseat window.*

CHAPTER 1  
MORNING

5 years later...

James woke to a knock on the door. He looked at his alarm clock; it was nine a.m. wearily he got to his feet and dressed. By the time he got down stairs whoever was outside was impatient as they were leaning on the doorbell. James looked through the eyehole to see who was visiting him at this hour of the morning. He was looking at the large head of Chief Inspector Charles Johnson. Quickly James opened the door.

“It’s about time,” Charles barked. “Now let’s get down to business.”

“Five years ago a body was found washed up on the beach. He was carrying no ID but through DNA we found out more about him than his own mother probably knows.”

“Have you ever heard of Kurt Levski?”

“Yeah, his body was found. I read it in the newspaper.”

“Well he was born in Russia in 1954 he grew up in Moscow and lived with his parents until a fire killed them and destroyed their house. He was taken to court but nothing was ever proved. After that he was sent to an orphanage and taken in by foster parents until their youngest child went missing after him taking her for a walk with him. Her body was found three months later. Once again he was taken to court but nothing was ever proved.”

“At the age of sixteen he ran away from the orphanage and fell in with the Russian Mafia. We are not sure what happened to him after that but our guess is that he worked small time earning enough to live on.”

“Why was he killed?” James asked.

“That’s what we wondered but after days of looking through old files and records we think we found the answer. Seven years ago we think Kurt had taken a major risk with the Russians by borrowing over three million pounds. Three days later one of the most successful cocaine imports in this country took place. We think we know who was behind it.”

“Kurt?”

Charles nodded. “Yes. Well I’m guessing Kurt got cocky and tried an over the top drug import, we think it was in south Italy.”

“Well there was a rat in his operation because next thing we know he’s on the run from the Italian police.”

“He owed the Mafia over two million pounds. That was the last we heard of him until we found his body.”

“Where do I come in to this?” James asked.

“We’re getting nervous. The Russians are getting out of control. The last thing we want is a full scale war against the Russians.”

Charles sighed. “There is one catch.”

“What?”

“You’ll be taking a fifteen year old.”

“You can’t be serious!” James said incredulously. “We won’t last five minutes.”

James took a deep breath. “Why do I need to bring him?”

“James, you should know by now that you can’t just walk up to the Russian Mafia and

ask can you do some work for them. You have to have a reason.”

Charles stood up to leave. “Come to the coffee shop near the offices at half one. We’ll kit you out and you can meet the boy.”

“I’ll see you at half one, sir.”

Madame Brusso’s café was small and cluttered but its location and service attracted a lot of customers. Through the crowd James caught a glimpse of the Chief Inspector. He had picked a table by the window and was talking rapidly to young boy with short brown hair. His blue eyes staring intently at the Chief Inspector. He hurried inside the café and walked quickly over to them.

“Ah, James there you are,” said Charles.

“Meet Mark Thorn. Mark Thorn meet James Sword.”

“Pleased to meet you,” Mark said politely.

“Hello,” James said awkward. “Chief Inspector would you mind coming over here for a minute?”

“Sure, what’s wrong?”

“Chief Inspector, are you sure you want to go through with this?”

“With what?”

“You know bringing him.”

“James we’ve talked about this before you’ll be fine. Now come on over and we’ll tell the boy the conditions.”

Charles and James walked back to the table and sat down.

“Mark, before we bring you in to the base we need to get one thing clear. You cannot tell anyone! If you blow our cover thousands of English could be killed in a full scale war!”

“I know sir.”

“Then let’s bring you in.”

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **BRIEFING**

Chief Inspector Charles' office was on the top floor of the MI6 building. It was a clean highly polished room with floor to ceiling windows giving views over London. Behind a maple wood desk James and Mark sat on a small leather couch.

"He's late as usual." James muttered to himself.

"Is he usually this late?" Mark asked James.

Before James had a chance to answer Charles walked briskly into the room.

"Sorry I'm late," Charles said to them. "Shall we get started?"

"Yes."

"OK. So here's what we are doing. You both know why we are sending you in."

James and Mark both nodded

"We have thought up your new identities and soon we will get someone in to disguise you. You're now Dimitri and Evan Drimovitch. You are from the slums of Eastern Russia; weren't you?"

Charles pointed to Mark. "Evan, have just been expelled from school and you," Charles pointed to James. "Dimitri, have just lost your job, you are in debt



and are in desperate need for money. There is an official coming to talk to you soon and he will tell you what will happen after that.”

“When are they coming?” asked Mark.

“We don’t know when they’ll arrive.” Charles sighed.

“They normally arrive within two weeks of first contact.”

“One more problem,” Mark said.

“What?”

“I don’t speak a word of Russian.” said Mark.

“You don’t have to,” Charles told him. “You’re not expected to talk at all. When the Russians arrive you just sit in the corner and try to look like you don’t have a clue what’s going on while James deals with everything.”

"But what if they ask me something?" Mark asked unsurely.

"I told you already that James will deal with it but if he can't then you do not answer, hopefully, you will only come out with a smacked face." Charles replied.

Mark paled but didn't say anything. James noticed this and decided to change the subject.

“When do we leave?” he asked.

“You leave the day after tomorrow,” Charles told them.  
"But until then you will be brought to a hotel not too far from here."

Mark and James stood up to leave.

"Oh and before you go," Charles said. "Mark your Mom and Dad still think you're on a holiday in France right." Mark nodded. As Charles had been speaking a young man with cropped blonde hair walked into the room.

"Well then, John will take you to your hotel."

James and Mark stood up and faced John who nodded at them and led the way out of the room.

The Savoy Hotel had a bright reception with floor to ceiling windows letting the light from outside flood in. The tiles had been polished until you could see a clear reflection of your face on them. John had walked them up to the hotel before turning around and walking back the way he had come. Mark and James looked at each other then walked inside to the reception desk behind which a blonde receptionist was typing.

“May I help you?” she asked without looking up.

“Yes I would like a room for two please,” James told her.

As the receptionist typed on her keyboard Mark tapped John on the shoulder.

“How are you going to pay for this?” Mark asked uncertainly.

“Charles gave me a credit card to hire a room.”

The receptionist looked up, “I’m sorry all are rooms are full; well there is a penthouse on the top floor that will be empty in about an hour.”

“I guess that will have to do,” James said grinning broadly.

“OK that room is reserved for you so if you come back in about an hour I’m sure the room will be ready.”

“Ok,” James turned to Mark. “Come on.”

And then they both walked outside.

They ended up in a local take – away, Mark ordering a cheeseburger and fries with a large Coke while James ordered onion rings with fries and a large 7up. They brought their food to a picnic bench and started to eat.

“Will Charles say anything about you renting the penthouse?” Mark asked James through a chip smothered in ketchup.

“Probably not but if he does there is not much he can give out about.”

“What do you mean?”

“Charles told us to get a room in the Savoy and we got the only room that was available, so we just did what he told us to do.”

“I suppose, but...”

“Just stop talking and eat up it’s nearly time to go back to the hotel.”

Mark and James quickly finished the last of their food and hurried back to the hotel.

“Ah, there you are,” said the receptionist glancing up from her computer. “Here is your key. You’re on the top floor.”

The lift to their room seemed to take forever but soon they reached the penthouse. Mark gazed around unable to take it all in at once. The first thing he did was run into the bathroom which contained a huge shower and a bath he could lie down fully in. In a press above the sink there were bath bombs and five bottles of shampoo. When Mark walked into the sitting room James threw an after eight at him.

“Here,” James said. “Found this on the bed, thought you might want it.”

“Thanks.”

“Is there anything you want to do?” James asked.

“Because we are leaving first thing tomorrow you know.”

“Yeah, I think I’ll just watch some TV or something like that.”

“All right I’m just going downstairs for a swim.”

After James had found his trunks and a towel he went downstairs.

When James had left, Mark looked through the rest of the apartment finding nothing else interesting he sat down and played some FIFA on his PSP.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **DEPARTURE**

An hour later Mark was too immersed in his PSP to hear James walking in the door so when James leaned over Marks shoulder to see what he was doing Mark jumped nearly a foot in the air.

“Don’t do that!” Mark snapped straining to be heard over James’ roars of laughter. But once somebody starts laughing it normally starts to spread and within minutes Mark was bent over laughing.

The next morning Mark’s alarm woke him up at 6:30 a.m. walking in to the kitchen he saw that James wasn’t in there, so he went into his room and woke him up.

“What?” James asked groggily.

“It’s half six,” Mark told him. “Your alarm clock must have run out of battery during the night.”

James jumped out of the bed and started getting dressed while Mark went into the kitchen and started cooking rashers and sausages.

“You hungry?” Mark called in to James.

“Yeah.” James called back

After they had finished their breakfast they received a call from the reception desk telling them that someone was there to meet them.

When the lift arrived there was already a family in it so Mark and James had to squeeze up together to get in. The children in the elevator had already got their oily hands from breakfast all over the highly polished mirrors and were now tugging at their Mom and Dad and asking them to bring them to the pool.

When the lift stopped Mark and James walked outside to the reception desk and started looking around for the person that had arrived. He was instantly recognizable by the chauffeur's suit and dark sunglasses. As soon as he saw them he walked over.

“You must be Mark and James,” he said not bothering with any formal greetings. “I am Jack and I will bring you to the airport.”

Mark and James were led to a black saloon with tinted windows.

As their plane took off Mark wondered if this would be the last time he ever saw London again. James saw the pale look on Mark's face and tried comforting him.

“Do you want anything?” James asked Mark.

“No I’m fine.”

Then Mark shut his eyes and tried to get some sleep before they landed.



## CHAPTER 4

### RUSSIA

When they landed in Moscow James took out the instructions that he was given.

“Looks like we are going to have to head for the Sayany Hotel.” James said.

“Here let me see!” Mark told James.

Mark looked at the map.

“We have to go all that way!” Mark exclaimed looking at the map. “How are we going to get there?”

James looked around. Then he noticed a taxi rank.

“Come on!”

James flagged a taxi and they both got in.

Mark looked on as James conversed with the driver, with no idea what they were saying. The only thing familiar that he heard was The Sayany Hotel mentioned once or twice.

They reached the Sayany Hotel an hour later. Looking out the window Mark could tell why they were being sent here. It was a dump! The windows out the front were cracked and the front door was damp and rotting. They both got out and James paid the driver. Mark and James walked into the dusty lobby. Dirt was

everywhere. The male receptionist was sucking on the butt of a cigar that looked like it went out a week ago. He wore a white vest despite the cold weather, which was stretched over his fat tummy, with food stains on it. He grunted when he saw James and walked over. He could tell they were foreign so he muttered in broken English. "You want room?"

James started speaking in Russian to make it easier for the man. After a few minutes they were led up their room.

The room was on the top floor and with no elevator they had to walk there. When they got there the man put the key in the lock and turned it. When the door didn't open he banged it with his shoulder. This got it open.

"Breakfast at eight," he said then left.

Mark and James walked into the room. There was a dilapidated bed in the middle of the room covered in sweat stains. Beside it was a mattress lying on the floor for Mark.

"This place is a dump," Mark said disgustedly.

"I know but this where we have to stay," James replied.

A few minutes later there was a knock on the door. James opened it to see a short, stout woman standing there with a bulging bag in each hand. Surprisingly to Mark James embraced her in a hug.

“Maggie how are you doing?”

“I’m fine good to see you have been keeping out of trouble!”

James laughed.

“Well aren’t you going to make some introductions,” Maggie said impatiently.

“Oh, yeah. Maggie this is Mark. Mark this is Maggie.”

Mark and Maggie shook hands.

“Bit young isn’t he?” Maggie said to James.

“I know,” James replied. “Charles said to take him.”

“Ah, well. Let’s get started.”

She looked at Mark and told him to go into the bathroom and run the cold water for five minutes.

After five minutes Mark came out and told Maggie the bath was full. Maggie hurried into the bathroom and poured a pale white liquid into the cold water. Then she came out and told Mark to go into the bathroom and get into the bath and be sure to cover everywhere except

his face. She told him he would be called in half an hour.

When Mark went into the bathroom Maggie noticed James smiling at Marks uncomfortable ness.

“Don’t start you’re next!” Maggie said and now it was her turn to laugh.

## CHAPTER 5

### FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Half an hour later Mark emerged looking completely different. His skin had been lightened to make him look more like a Russian citizen and Maggie told him that she had something else for him.

“One question,” Mark said to Maggie.

“What” Maggie replied.

“I was just wondering why we couldn’t have just done all of this in England?”

“We couldn’t because the Russian Mafia control the whole of Russia. They would find it suspicious if they saw two poor Russians flying over from England. And then saw them again looking for a job in the Russian Mafia. They would know something was up,” replied Maggie.

“Oh,”

The room was silent for the next few minutes before James walked out of the bathroom looking like an authentic Russian refugee.

“How do I look?” He grinned.

“Beautiful,” Maggie grunted without looking up. She passed him another bottle full of murky brown liquid.

“What’s this for?” James asked.

“Your hair it’s to blonde for a Russian refugee,” said Maggie.

“Aw,” James groaned and walked back into the bathroom.

About half an hour later there was another knock on the door.

James walked over to open the door while Maggie hid in the bathroom in case it was the Mafia.

Maggie waited tensely while James opened the door. When she heard the familiar voice of her colleague she ran out the door and embraced him in an enormous hug. “Nick,” she cried joyously, before backing up and taking a more serious approach to things. “Did you bring the stuff?” Maggie asked winking and looking at James and Marks faces to see their reactions. Nick looked at Maggie and saw her winking.

“Oh yeah, I’ve got the stuff!”

Maggie saw James and Mark cringe at the thought that they might have to get back into the rusty old bath again. Maggie held herself together until she couldn’t take it anymore and she burst out laughing.

“What are you laughing at?!” Mark and James shouted somewhat angered at being the centre of a joke.

“Nothing,” said Maggie through her fits of giggles. “It’s just that ‘the stuff’ is just a new pair of clothes for both of you.” Maggie lifted the clothes out of the bag. Mark was given an orange t-shirt that was a size too big and jeans that were stained and ripped. James was given practically the same clothes with the exception that his t-shirt was yellow.

James and Mark had just changed when there was another knock on the door. Maggie and Nick just making it inside the bathroom before James opened the door. A middle aged slightly rotund man walked into the room. He looks like an ex-boxer that had taken a keen interest in food. He was beginning to lose hair and he had two big flabby lips that sprayed anyone in front of him with a shower of spit and old bits of food. He began asking James some questions in rapid Russian. Mark could see that James was struggling to keep up with the native Russian’s conversation, but he managed to understand the important parts.

After about twenty minutes when the Russian looked set to leave. He was heading for the door when Mark coughed. The Russian turned around and began to stride over to Mark. Mark backed into the corner of the

room and the overweight Russian began to direct questions at Mark showering him with spit. When Mark didn't answer the Russian became furious and lashed out at Mark causing him to cry out in pain. After that the Russian seemed in a better mood and he nodded curtly to James before making his departure. When James was sure that the Russian had left he hurried over to James and called Maggie and Nick. Both of them ran out of the bathroom. Nick then muttered something about him having to leave and he hurried out of the room. Maggie then made her departure giving Mark and James a quick kiss before she left. Mark groaned and looked at James.

“What are we going to do now?” Mark asked James.

“We have to see them again sometime over the next few weeks,” James replied. “So how did you like your first encounter with the Russian Mafia,” James said then started grinning.



## CHAPTER 6

### WAITING

The two weeks seemed to take forever to Mark and James as they were not able to go outside for long periods of time as they weren't sure when the Russians would be back.

It was approaching night when the Mafia finally arrived. They barged into the room and two big burly men bundled them into the back of a van. Mark and James looked at each other. Mark guessed that everything was going to plan but when he saw the worried look on James' face he began to go pale. James shuffled over and spoke quietly into Marks ear. "This isn't part of the plan the must have found something out!"

James scrambled over and looked out through a hole in the back door. They were being driven to the outskirts of the city.

About ten minutes later the van stopped and Mark and James were taken into a rundown house and placed in a small room. As soon as the thugs that brought them in had left, a man walked in. He had an aura of power

about him and the gold rings and chains around his neck told them that he was wealthy. He started speaking rapidly in Russian and as Mark watched he noticed that James' face was getting paler and paler. Then Mark watched as James was led away his bowed head looking at the floor. The man then turned to Mark and started speaking in perfect English.

“And now for you,” he said smiling and Mark horrifically noticed a hint of pleasure in his voice. “You see around here were I was raised we are all big fans of history, especially of war and torture.”

Mark gulped. The man continued showing no sign of mercy.

“And that is why your friend has been taken for a little bit of torture, while you are going to be placed in front of a firing squad later tonight. And you are probably wondering how you were caught.”

Mark nodded.

“Come in!” The man barked.

Mark noticed the door opening and when the figure stepped in Mark saw Nick standing in the frame of the doorway.

“You,” Mark hissed as the two thugs carried him away. As he was dragged past him Mark let out a kick and hit

him between the legs and Mark was dragged away to  
the sound of Nicks cries of pain.

## CHAPTER 7

### PAIN

Mark was pushed out into the cold yard and his hands were tied behind his back. Mark wasn't given the mercy of a blindfold and had to stare his shooters in the face. The call was made:

“Ready, Aim.”

Mark looked up and heard James' screams as he was tortured in grotesque ways.

“FIRE!”

The six gunmen fired and Mark's body slumped to the ground lifeless and unmoving. James heard the gunshots and later that night in his cell he took his own life with a piece of glass he found under his mattress.

## EPILOGUE

*When neither Mark nor James returned from the mission two more agents were sent out to complete it. When they didn't return operation Levski was cancelled.*

*Nick is using the money he made selling information to the Russians to spend the rest of his life in rather luxurious retirement.*

*The Russian Mafia continues on as one of the most powerful organisations in the world. And no more efforts are planned to infiltrate their ranks.*