

The Ryzhkov Vendetta

A Mark Ericksen Thriller Book 2

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The supreme art of war is to subdue the enemy without fighting.”
Sun Tzu, author of The Art of War

Chapter One

PARIS

ON MARCH 21, 2011, ANTHONY “TONY” FERRARI was seated in the Four Seasons Hotel George V’s Le Cinq Restaurant. He had just finished his breakfast of café au lait, a croissant, Norwegian smoked salmon, baguette, jams, and orange juice. He spotted the waiter and motioned for his check. He then heard his secure cell phone ringing. On the third ring, he checked the caller ID and noticed the call was from a German cellphone number. He picked it up and said, “I’ll call you back in five minutes.”

A few minutes later, the waiter handed him the bill.

“Thank you,” Ferrari said. He placed thirty-five dollars on the table, picked up his briefcase and suitcase, and walked toward the lobby.

Ferrari stood about six feet tall and maintained a lean, athletic build. The fifty-two-year-old looked distinguished with his wavy dark brown hair, inquisitive dark brown eyes, Roman nose, and strands of gray by his temples. He fit in at the luxurious and opulent hotel, where celebrities, diplomats, business executives, royalty, and politicians stayed. He wore a brown leather calfskin Italian sports jacket, a designer blue-and-gold dress shirt open at the collar, and navy blue casual slacks. Completing his suave, dignified appearance were expensive brown leather Testoni shoes.

He noticed an empty chair in the lobby. After sitting down and placing his luggage to the side, he picked up his cellphone and called the number back.

“*Gerhard Richter* speaking,” the voice said in German.

“*Wolfgang* here,” Ferrari said.

“All right. When you arrive at St. Pancras Station this afternoon, tell the taxi driver to go to the Starbucks on Caledonian Road. Tell him to wait a few minutes. Go inside and look for my brother *Egon*. He is expecting you. He is in his thirties, wearing a blue Columbia sports jacket and a Chelsea FC cap. *Egon* will sit down, and once he spots you, his right hand will be raised. He will give you a gift and my cellphone number. When you arrive at the hotel, please call that number.”

Ferrari had already met *Gerhard* in Monte Carlo three months earlier, and they had agreed to use these names.

“Affirmative,” Ferrari said in German. He figured Russian intelligence had accumulated hundreds of pictures of him. At the same time, he was stationed at the US Embassy in Moscow and, more recently, when he was chief of station at the US Embassy in Bern.

Ferrari thought *Egon should easily recognize me*.

Ferrari had spent the last seven days working on security issues with his client at their Berlin and Paris headquarters. Tomorrow, he would finish up with his client’s London headquarters, located in the Mayfair district. Ferrari checked out of the hotel. The bellman waved the first taxi in line to move up the hotel driveway.

Wearing aviator-style sunglasses, Ferrari arrived at the Gare du Nord train station carrying his suitcase and briefcase. He glanced at his Omega dive watch and noted the time: 10:45 am. It was a habit of his to check his watch when waiting in lines.

He stood in line for several minutes before passing through security and customs and proceeding to a waiting area. He put down his suitcase and briefcase and called a secure landline phone number at the US Embassy in London on his encrypted cell phone.

“Hello, *Bob*, it’s *Mario Ivanelli*,” he said, using his old alias.

“Hello, *Mario*. When you arrive, please call my cellphone number.”
“Affirmative,” said Ferrari.

He boarded the Eurostar and found his way to the Standard Premier section. The train departed at 11:13 am. It would arrive in London at 12:39

pm. He glanced around the full compartment and noticed a couple in their early forties with their two children sitting across the aisle from him. They looked happy and wore expensive clothes. He thought about his ex-wife and two kids, a fifteen-year-old son and a twenty-four-year-old daughter who taught kindergarten. Three years ago, when he and his wife divorced, it had been hardest on his young son. Over the years, being away from his family had created lots of stress in their marriage, in addition to the danger he faced in his line of work.

Over the past three years, selling their two-thousand-square-foot house on Douglass Avenue in upper-middle-class Falls Church, Virginia, the divorce costs, the damage caused by the 2008 Wall Street financial meltdown on their two rental properties, splitting the assets, alimony, and now paying off college loans created a financial burden. Seven months ago, his eighty-year-old father had an accident rendering him paralyzed from the waist down. He and his brother shared the eight-thousand-dollar monthly expenses for his father's nursing home in Florida. His brother lived close to their father and took an active role in assisting him.

Ferrari's thoughts were interrupted as the Eurostar sped through the Chunnel, separating France from England. He marveled at the Eurostar train's speed, which reached 180 miles an hour in spots. The distance from Paris to London via Chunnel was approximately 214 miles.

LONDON

Upon arriving at St. Pancras Station at 12:40 p.m., Ferrari carried his suitcase and briefcase to an awaiting taxi. He asked the driver to take him to Starbucks on Caledonian Road. Ten minutes later, he arrived and spotted *Egon*. They had a brief conversation, and *Egon* gave him a gift.

He left Starbucks and jumped back into the taxi. Ferrari removed his sunglasses as he entered St. Ermin's Hotel on Caxton Street by St. James Park. Registering for his room, he produced his passport and chatted with the front desk clerk. The hotel had the distinction of being used during World War II as the headquarters of the British Intelligence Services.

Since it was too early for check-in, he handed his luggage and briefcase to the bell captain to place in security. He took the two tags from the bell captain and walked to the lobby sofas to sit down. After opening the gift box, Ferrari spent a few minutes familiarizing himself with the burner cell phone inside. He walked outside the hotel and called *Gerhard's* new burner cellphone number Egon had given him.

“Hello *Gerhard*, it's *Wolfgang*,” Ferrari said.

“*Wolfgang*, take a taxi to the London Eye. Look for a man wearing a Chelsea football club cap and carrying a Nikon camera with a telescopic lens. I'll be in line around 3:00 pm.”

“Check out my mustache and Chelsea football cap. See you soon, *Gerhard*.”

He thought for a moment. Sweat ran down his forehead. *Why am I doing this? If I change my mind, what can they do to me? What if I offer to pay them back?*

Ferrari re-entered the hotel and saw an unoccupied leather chair by the fireplace in the lobby, walked toward it, and sat down. He thought about Alexander Ryzhkov. He had first met him when Ryzhkov served as the military attaché with a general's rank in the Russian Embassy in Berlin. Ferrari served in the American Embassy from 1997-1998. They met at various foreign functions and enjoyed socializing. During 2007-2008, when he worked at the US Embassy in Moscow, he renewed his contact with the Russian billionaire.

In August 2010, they met again at a United Nations function in Geneva. After a few drinks, Ryzhkov mentioned that he had something important to tell him but that this was not the place to talk. He asked Ferrari if he could meet him in Monte Carlo in December. He had just resigned from the Agency and felt less pressure from being under surveillance. Ryzhkov discovered through Russian Intelligence in 2009 that *Mario Ivanelli's* real name was Anthony Ferrari.

Ferrari had reservations about meeting with a powerful Russian oligarch and a close friend of Prime Minister Gorshkov. However, he agreed, and a meeting was set up at the Hotel de Paris in Monte Carlo, Monaco, for Tuesday morning,

December 7, 2010. He was unsure if Ryzhkov was interested in spying for the Americans. How could a former general of the GRU, the Russian Military Intelligence Service's Main Intelligence Directorate, and a multi-billionaire energy CEO become a traitor? Plus, when Ferrari factored in that Ryzhkov was a childhood friend of Russia's prime minister, it did not make any sense. Ferrari realized Ryzhkov wanted something from him.

On December 6, Ferrari arrived in Monaco and met with several bank managers in Monte Carlo about opening a private numbered bank account.

On the 7th, they met in Ferrari's room. After spending several minutes exchanging pleasantries and drinking Stolichnaya vodka, Ryzhkov looked straight into his eyes and, with a stern voice, told him in English, "I need the names of those people who were on the CIA mission called *Operation Avenging Eagles*."

Ferrari was in debt, but at that moment, he was interested to hear what the oligarch might offer him. However, he had to be extremely careful because the Russians were masters of blackmail, intimidation, and murder. He thought, at that moment, that the Agency never treated him with a faster career path, and it would not take long for the Russians to get this information eventually. Ferrari expected he would be assigned to the prestigious post of station chief in London in 2009, but CIA director Sullivan appointed Washington instead. He was tired of being in debt and now realized he was crossing a line that spelled traitor.

"General, it will cost you three hundred thousand dollars." Ryzhkov did not want to haggle with him on this figure.

"Tony, I will give you one hundred thousand dollars as a down payment in cash right now, and the balance of two hundred thousand will be wired to a private Monte Carlo bank of your choosing after I receive the information."

"Alexander, you got a deal."

Ryzhkov opened his suitcase, took out one hundred thousand dollars, and placed them into an expensive Italian leather case. "The money is in here," he said as he pointed to the briefcase and handed it to Ferrari.

Ryzhkov stood and knocked on the door to the suite's second bedroom. His head of security appeared and surprised Ferrari.

“Let me introduce you to my chief-of-staff, Viktor Sorokin. He will be a key person who will work with you.”

Ferrari reached out with his right hand and shook Sorokin’s hand.

“Glad to meet you.”

“From this point on, I’ll call you *Wolfgang*, and I’m *Gerhard Richter*,” said Sorokin in German.

“Understood.”

Ferrari turned to face Ryzhkov and reverted to English.

“I have made several inquiries, and the bank I will be using is Monch and Schneider Private Bank in Monte Carlo. After I deposit the money this afternoon, I’ll provide you with my bank’s private numbered account.”

“I’ll be in my room awaiting your call,” the oligarch said. They shook hands, and Ferrari departed.

Ferrari thought this would be a one-time effort and worth the risk. He called Ryzhkov’s Swiss encrypted cellphone at 41-41-5536428 on his Virginia cell number. The oligarch maintained a second home and office in Zug. After he answered the phone, Ferrari provided him with his private numbered account.

An elderly well-dressed man, in a suit and tie, walked past him and sat on the sofa, about ten feet from him. He lost his train of thought. Ferrari glanced at his watch and held his cellphone up to his face.

He then called his friend *Bob’s* direct encrypted Virginia cellphone number. The man at the US Embassy in London picked up the phone. “*Bob* speaking.”

“*Mario* here.”

“When did you arrive?”

“A few hours ago.”

“*Mario*, please hold a few seconds while I take this call.”

“No problem.”

A minute later, he pressed his cellphone again. “When I picked up the call, I didn’t recognize this cellphone number. Is it a burner phone?”

“Yes, it is.”

“Okay, is seven a good time for dinner?” he asked.

“Yes. Where?”

“Let’s meet at the Grill at the Dorchester Hotel.”

“Okay,” said Ferrari and hung up.

He walked up to the bellmen at the front entrance of the hotel.

“Please get me a taxi.”

“Yes, sir.”

Ferrari arrived at a McDonald’s and went into the men’s restroom. He placed a thick mustache above his upper lip and a Chelsea football club cap on his head and then left the fast-food restaurant. Ferrari walked several blocks before approaching the London Eye Ferris wheel. His brow was wet with sweat. He realized his meeting with *Gerhard* was crossing the red line. From this day forward, his life could be in danger. After surveying the area where hundreds of people lined up, Ferrari finally saw a man with the Chelsea football cap on his head. In his early forties, the Slavic-looking man had blondish-brown hair, a long thin nose, high cheekbones, and cold blue-gray eyes. He was about 6’2” and powerfully built like a gymnast. Ferrari walked up to the man, smiled, and said in German, “Good to see you again.”

The man smiled back. They waited in line for about ten minutes before entering the London Eye capsule, which overlooked the Thames River. Ferrari and *Gerhard* moved to the farthest point facing the bridge and the Parliament building. Five minutes into the ride, he handed him a small tin box of breath mints. *Gerhard* placed the box in his inside jacket pocket.

“In the mint box is a USB drive with all the details, names, addresses, etc. It is encrypted in the agreed-upon software the boss recommended. Please remember the name *EyeD4 Systems* in Wilsonville, Oregon, and their key employees, Mark Ericksen and Lars Wahlberg,” Ferrari said.

Gerhard shook his head, smiled, and whispered into his ear, “In three days, your money will be in your bank account.”

“Thank you.”

When the ride was over, each man went their separate way.

Ferrari entered a hotel near the Parliament building, darted to the men’s room, opened a stall door, removed his mustache, and threw it into the trash. After exiting the hotel, he walked toward the Parliament building and hailed

a taxi to his hotel. Having spent nine years as a United States military intelligence officer and the last twenty-one with the Central Intelligence Agency, he knew his knowledge and expertise would be an asset to the American defense community. His retirement from the Agency was official on November 15, 2010.

On January 15, 2011, his firm, *AUF Consulting Group*, focused on international risk and business intelligence consulting. A prestigious Washington DC law firm retained his consulting company to handle its aerospace and defense corporation clients. The aerospace corporation's worldwide headquarters resided in Reston, Virginia.

At seven in the evening, Ferrari spotted *Richmond*, walked toward him, shook hands, and went to the Grill. *Richmond's* four-person security detail followed the men. *Richmond* was an African American, about fifty years old, approximately 5'10," with a muscular build, and dressed in a three-piece dark blue pin-striped suit. He had large brown eyes and a neat, trim mustache. He spent twelve years in the US Army as a 5th Special Forces unit member. When he left the service as a major, he was recruited by the CIA in 1996.

Richmond was the CIA chief of station in London, and his name was an alias. They followed the host to a table covered in white linens. The host provided them with the Grill's menu for the evening. He looked forward to meeting his old friend. The last thing Ferrari did not want to discuss was his domestic violence charges cited in the 2008 divorce.

"How's retirement, Tony?"

"I'm a business intelligence consultant on retainer with a prestigious Washington DC law firm. My first project was with *Engstrom-Knight Aerospace*, one of their major defense contractors."

"I'll bet the money is better than what we get paid."

"I'm happy with the consulting fees," Ferrari said, smiling.

"Where are you living these days?" *Richmond* asked.

"I bought a condo in Alexandria on Madison Street. It's a two-bedroom, two-bath unit with a pool, a gym, and a view."

"Glad to hear you're doing well," said *Richmond*.

They had met years ago at the CIA during their German language training

in the States. In 1997, *Richmond* moved to the US Embassy in Berlin as a political attaché', while Ferrari went to the US Embassy in Vienna in the same capacity. 2004-2006, the men worked at CIA Headquarters in Langley, Virginia. During this time, both men and their wives socialized and were good friends. They both enjoyed talking about their military experience during *Operation Desert Storm*. In 2007-2008, Ferrari became the political attaché' at the US Embassy in Moscow, Russia. He spent eight months at CIA headquarters in 2008 and his last two years, 2009-2010, as CIA chief of station at the US Embassy in Bern, Switzerland.

The waiter approached their table with two glasses of water and asked, "What would you gentlemen like to start with?"

"I would like to order the Dover sole with the seasonal vegetables and a bowl of blue lobster chowder soup," said *Richmond*.

"I'll also go with the blue lobster chowder soup, the Black Angus beef fillet, and your potatoes and seasonal vegetables," said Ferrari.

The waiter asked, "How would you like your Black Angus cooked?"

"Medium, please."

"Have you had a chance to look at the wine list?" asked the waiter.

Richmond replied, "Just pick a nice Cabernet Sauvignon from Napa."

"We have several exquisite Cabernets from that area," the waiter replied.

"They start at ninety-five British pounds and go up."

"Please get us one in that price range."

"I'll have it brought to your table shortly," the waiter replied.

"*Bob*, when are you planning on retiring?" Ferrari asked.

"My wife is pushing me to retire next year, but I want to stay with the Agency for a few more years."

"Then what would you like to do after you retire?"

"Not sure. Probably work for a lobbyist on K Street or a defense contractor."

He told Ferrari his real name a few years ago. Ken Washington and Tony Ferrari worked in the shadow world, and their real names while in the employ of the CIA were classified as top-secret. Ferrari hoped Washington would volunteer if he had heard rumors of another mole in the CIA but decided not to ask.

Over the past thirty years, the CIA has discovered three moles within its ranks: Howard E. Lee, Aldrich Ames, and Jim Nicholson. During that time, the FBI has uncovered a mole within its own ranks: Robert Hanssen. Those convicted Russian spies did devastating damage to the United States of America. MI6 had moles like Kim Philby. The KGB had Oleg Gordievsky, who spied for Britain's MI6, and Adolph Tolkachev, who spied for the CIA. Both men did significant damage to Russia.

Ferrari looked at him and said, "Have you heard anything from your sources about Igor Kublanov's life being in danger?"

Washington looked up with surprise and shrugged. "No, I haven't heard anything from our Russian assets."

"I heard he secretly supports the opposition in next year's presidential elections," said Ferrari.

Washington said, "If he wants to continue owning an energy company and enjoying his billions, he shouldn't underestimate Prime Minister Mikhail Gorshkov."

Ferrari nodded his head, "Gorshkov will have no trouble winning the presidential election. He is definitely in total control."

"I agree."

After enjoying the meal, wine, and good conversation, two hours passed. The CIA station chief paid for the dinner. They left the restaurant with the security detail in tow. They got into the limo, drove to Ferrari's hotel, and dropped him off.

Ferrari expected the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR) to have a case officer or two following them. He would not be surprised to find the British Domestic Secret Intelligence Service (MI5) case officers following the Russians. He knew the games and the dangers of espionage.

Chapter Two

PALO ALTO, CALIFORNIA

ON MARCH 23, 2011, POUL KASTRUP, CEO, AND founder of *Cyberburst Communications* was surrounded by Logan Mitchell, the Executive Vice President/COO, and Albert Alioto, the CFO. They were seated around a large redwood table at their headquarters on Page Mill Road in Palo Alto.

Kastrup founded the company in 1995 after a successful marketing management career in the aerospace and defense industry. His last position was as vice president of Raytheon.

“I know you’re extremely high on Mark Ericksen for this position,” Mitchell said to Kastrup, “but do you believe he is the right candidate?” asked Mitchell.

“Your candidate at *A7 Aerospace Systems* is excellent, but Ericksen is well-connected within the Department of Defense and the intelligence community.”

Kastrup had the look of a Marine drill sergeant, a full head of wavy silver-gray hair, a jutting jaw, and hairy eyebrows with piercing, sparkling light blue eyes. He was of average height and weight, with a lean and athletic build, high cheekbones, and a trim beard.

Staring down at both men and with an authoritative voice, Kastrup said,

“Ericksen not only served with distinction as a Navy SEAL Team Six officer, but for the past nine years, he has worked for three defense contractors delivering impressive results. He joined *EyeD4 Systems* in 2006 as their senior vice president of marketing and sales, and their sales significantly increased.

When we acquired the company in November 2009, we promoted him to president and CEO. The company's sales went from \$7 million in 2009 and will reach about \$50 million dollars by the end of this September. That is proven leadership!" Kastrup abruptly looked at his executive team and continued, "I've made my decision, and that's final, gentlemen!"

Mitchell looked grim. "Poul, we're going to support your decision." The next day, Mark Ericksen woke up at 6:00 am, put on his jogging suit, sneakers, and Oregon State University baseball cap, and went out the door of his hotel room. The handsome Danish-born, sandy gold-haired, blue-eyed muscular-built forty-year-old was an inch over six feet, with high cheekbones and a Hollywood movie actor's look. He left the Rosewood Sand Hill Hotel on Sand Hill Road and ran at a good clip until he reached the Stanford Shopping Center. He stopped, wiped his face with his handkerchief, and began the jog back up the hill. After going to his room, he took a cold shower and put on a sharp dress suit, a white shirt, and a blue tie.

Kastrup, Mitchell, and Alioto were seated around the conference table in the CEO's office. The time was 8:30 am, and the intercom buzzed.

"Mr. Kastrup, Mr. Ericksen has arrived in the headquarters' lobby," the executive assistant said.

"Please have the security officer issue him a badge and escort him to the fifth floor."

"Yes, sir."

The Department of Defense had granted *Cyberburst Communications* a facility clearance, enabling top-secret security clearances for several departments within its headquarters and several manufacturing plants and divisions.

When the elevator arrived on the fifth floor, Ericksen walked twenty feet to the executive office door. A receptionist saw him through the video camera outside the secure lobby office. She pressed a button that opened the door to the executive office. She called Kastrup's staff assistant to meet her in the executive office. The staff assistant opened the thick oak door, entered, and closed the door. She met Ericksen and turned to face the iris biometrics system, which was on the wall next to the door.

The staff assistant approached the unit, looked directly into the iris camera, optically scanned her iris in real-time, and, within a few seconds, matched her template stored in the biometrics system's CPU. This process activated the door shunt that opened the oak door to the top-secret offices.

Ericksen walked confidently into Kastrup's spacious wood-paneled executive office. After making eye contact with Mitchell and the chief financial officer, Ericksen shook hands with everyone. He sat opposite Kastrup and looked directly at him.

"Mark, we would like to offer you the position of vice president of strategic planning and business development. This position's primary responsibility is analyzing and evaluating emerging biometrics and satellite espionage technology companies. We're interested in these fields for potential acquisitions," said Kastrup.

Ericksen gently nodded his head. Then Alioto gave Kastrup the compensation package to review.

Kastrup continued, "The starting salary is \$400,000 plus fifteen thousand shares of *Cyberburst Communications*. You already own ten thousand shares from *EyeD4 Systems*. If you accept our offer, you need to start on August 1. Would you be interested in joining our company?"

Ericksen broke into a big smile. "I am grateful for this opportunity and gladly accept your generous offer."

The other men stood to offer congratulations. "Welcome aboard," Mitchell said.

"Congratulations," Alioto said.

Everyone left the office except Ericksen and Kastrup. Displayed on the wall were Kastrup's college diploma, a B.S. degree from the University of California, Berkeley, and Defense Industry Association honors.

Photos of his wife, two adult children, and grandchildren were on a redwood credenza table.

"We're looking forward to attending your upcoming wedding in May."

Ericksen smiled, "You'll have a wonderful time."

Four hours later, Ericksen boarded a flight to Portland on Alaska Airlines from San Jose International Airport. He had a remarkable history over the

past decade. If it were not for his last operation in Afghanistan, he probably would still be in the Navy and might have reached the rank of commander by this time.

In April 2002, Ericksen was second-in-command of an elite tier-one Bravo team consisting of eighteen operators of the Joint Special Operations Command, JSOC, departing out of Bagram Airbase, Afghanistan, on a high-level target operation. He was a navy lieutenant of *DEVGRU*, commonly known as SEAL Team-Six, who was all about duty, honor, and country. His loyalty focused on the mission and his teammates.

During that operation, his commanding officer of the Bravo team, Jeb Templeton, a Delta Force major, was wounded. Ericksen saved his life and took over the mission. Several men died in that operation, and the deputy commander of JSOC ordered him to kill his Afghan intelligence officer, who was part of the team. The commander, a bird colonel, told him they received information from a Pashtun village elder who claimed the Afghan intel officer was a Taliban member. Ericksen worked with this intel officer and did not believe it. Thus, killing him was the furthest thing from his mind.

The commander was furious with Ericksen, who ignored the kill order. Several minutes later, the colonel lied to him and said he received Agency intercepts confirming the allegations. Ericksen had no choice but to kill the Afghan intelligence officer.

The next day after the Bravo team's briefing, he learned from Dex, the CIA operations chief at Bagram Air Base, that they never had intercepts on the Afghan intel officer. Ericksen's JSOC deputy commander lied to him. He could not ask for an investigation into the commander's criminal malfeasance because the one witness to this travesty was involved in the conspiracy. From that day forward, his guilt and depression led to PTSD. To make matters worse, a year earlier, his wife died in an automobile accident.

In May 2002, he resigned from his commission at the U.S. Naval Special Warfare Development headquarters at Dam Creek, Virginia. Ericksen was awarded the Silver Star in 2002 for bravery during *Operation Enduring Freedom* and received the Purple Heart from a classified mission in North Africa a year earlier. Over the next several years, he worked for three defense

contractors, maintaining his top-secret security clearance while concealing his PTSD.

Four years later, Templeton, who was deputy director for the Department of Defense's biometrics and forensics enterprise, recommended him for the senior vice president of marketing position at *EyeD4 Systems* in Wilsonville, Oregon.

In July 2009, the CEO of *EyeD4 Systems* sold the company to *Cyberburst Communications*, and Ericksen became the CEO in November. Now seventeen months after becoming the CEO of a subsidiary of the Palo Alto corporation, he accepted a senior management position at corporate headquarters.

WILSONVILLE, OREGON

Ericksen arrived at his office at 5:00 pm. He briefed his three top officers at *EyeD4 Systems* about accepting a senior marketing position at *Cyberburst Communications* in Palo Alto. Sitting in that meeting were Jeb Templeton, his senior vice president of marketing, Lars Wahlberg, his COO, and Sofia Kastrup, the chief financial officer, and the daughter of Poul Kastrup.

One of the conditions Kastrup had stipulated for acquiring *EyeD4 Systems* from the privately held company's founder was that he had to hire his daughter Sofia Kastrup. Since Sofia Kastrup had an MBA from Harvard University and was a CPA with a Silicon Valley software company, its CEO and founder had no objections. A Portland law firm recruited his daughter's husband, and Poul Kastrup could not be happier about their move to Oregon.

They were excited about Ericksen's new position. He told them he would start on August 1 and recommended them for new positions within the company with *Cyberburst Communications'* top management's approval.

WEST LINN, OREGON

In October 2010, Kate McDonald, an attractive thirty-six-year-old redhead with sparkling green eyes, moved in with Ericksen and joined an executive recruiting firm in the banking and financial sector in Lake Oswego, Oregon.

Shortly after that, they became engaged. She was happy about their upcoming wedding in May. McDonald's exciting life started when she left her home in Sandpoint, Idaho, to attend Stanford University. She was a member of the Pi Beta Phi sorority. The CIA approached McDonald after she graduated from Stanford University in 2000 with a degree in international relations and German language proficiency. After extensive vetting, they hired and trained her a year later in their directorate of operations. She assumed several aliases over her brief career at the CIA. Her first assignment was as a political counselor at the American Embassy in Berlin. 2005-2007, under a pseudonym (*Elizabeth Caldwell*), she attended the International Institute for Management Development (IMD) in Switzerland and received an MBA in banking and finance.

Proficient in both French and German, she landed a job with a Swiss firm in Geneva. One year later, she became a manager at *Prentice and Aubert*, a New York executive recruiting firm and a shell company for the CIA. In that position, she recruited talented Swiss candidates for Swiss banking and financial firms from her Geneva-based location and worked as a NOC (a non-official CIA officer). Her intelligence mission was to turn over those new hires' names to *Dave Jacobson*, an alias Lars Wahlberg used. He was a NOC assigned to work as an economics counselor at the U.S. Embassy in Bern. Once he received their names, his job was to turn them into assets.

In 2009, the Agency received actionable intelligence about the terrorist mastermind's mission to attack American cities. Ericksen and McDonald were part of *Operation Avenging Eagles*, a mission tasked by the CIA to sabotage a terrorist mastermind's plans aided by Russian arms dealers to attack two American cities with nuclear suitcase bombs.

The mission's secondary objective focused on discovering money laundering operations in private Swiss numbered accounts linked to

Russian arms dealers, terrorists, corrupt politicians, government, and military leaders.

There was not a week that went by when McDonald did not experience the terrible nightmares from her time being abducted in Switzerland. She never forgot the trauma she suffered from Sergei Ryzhkov and Oleg

Kupchenko in Switzerland. Nor did she ever forget the torture and sexual assault the Russian arms dealer Kupchenko inflicted on her.

When McDonald left the CIA in late November 2009, she returned to her hometown in Idaho. Over the next several months, she received treatment for PTSD that lifted her spirits. When she moved in with Ericksen, he provided her love and additional support during her battle. She continued therapy with a Lake Oswego psychologist.

Ericksen arrived at their home around 7:00 pm. McDonald greeted him with hugs and kisses. They were heading up to Mount Hood tomorrow afternoon and planned to spend two days skiing at Timberline Lodge ski area and Mt. Hood Meadows. During a nice dinner at the Portland Chart House, they celebrated the exciting news of his new position with *Cyberburst Communications* in Palo Alto and their promising future.

Chapter Three

MOSCOW

ON MARCH 25, 2011, SOROKIN FLEW FROM BERLIN on the Russian airline Aeroflot and arrived at Sheremetyevo International Airport Moscow at 4:30 pm. His bodyguards met him, escorted him into an armored Mercedes limo outside, and drove him to Moscow International Business Center. Upon arrival, Sorokin walked to the Naberezhnaya Tower entrance, located at 10 Presnenskaya Nab, Block C, at 6:00 pm.

The sixty-one-story tower stood near the Moscow River, about two miles west of Red Square. Many well-known international corporations, major Russian banks, and industrial firms had headquarters in the building. A contingent of FSB (Russian Domestic Intelligence Services) officers also had an office there.

Sorokin approached the elevator banks, went to the single elevator marked 50th floor, and pressed the button. When the elevator door opened, he looked directly at a camera mounted on the sidewall. The facial recognition system immediately took a picture of his face and compared it to the template housed in the computer. Within five seconds, the match was successful, and the elevator door closed and lifted off.

Fifteen seconds later, the elevator arrived at *Ryzhkov Energy and Mining Company's* headquarters offices on the fiftieth floor. The company occupied the entire floor consisting of ten office suites. He entered the executive lobby, and an administrative assistant immediately welcomed him.

“Viktor Vladimirovich Sorokin, welcome back,” she said in Russian, “Mr. Ryzhkov is expecting you.”

“Thank you.”

Sorokin served as Mr. Alexander Ryzhkov’s head of security and trusted advisor for the past three years. The former Spetsnaz captain and SVR intelligence operative used many aliases in his secret life, and *Gerhard* was his latest. He walked past several office suites before entering Ryzhkov’s expansive office. At forty-one, he projected an air of confidence and strength as he strode forward.

When he entered the executive suite, Ryzhkov gave him a big hug and said in Russian, “Viktor Vladimirovich, I’m glad to see you.”

Sorokin smiled, removed a thumb drive from his suit pocket, and gave it to Ryzhkov. “Good job. I presume everything went well with our asset?”

“Ferrari came through for us.” He reached into his suit pocket and handed Ryzhkov a three-page letter. “I decrypted the USB drive he gave me. It lists the operatives’ names on *Operation Avenging Eagles*, addresses of both the company and their home residences.”

Ryzhkov picked up the intercom and spoke to one of his assistants, “Please bring us some tea.”

“Yes, sir.”

Ryzhkov was fifty-nine years old, medium height, with a full head of steely gray hair and a muscular build. His face looked more like a professional prizefighter since he had a broken nose and scars on his eyebrows. He had graduated from a Russian military academy and, years later, earned a master’s degree in geology from Moscow State University. Ryzhkov acquired the company six years ago as a reward for his loyalty to Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Gorshkov, his best boyhood friend. He cherished many happy memories from his Leningrad childhood. A year later, he changed the company’s name, and since that time, accelerated the company’s operations and growth. Last year’s revenues reached \$10 billion. An hour later, Ryzhkov picked up his secure landline and called Prime Minister Mikhail Yuryevich Gorshkov.

Gorshkov’s chief of staff, Sokurov, picked up the phone. “Hello, General Ryzhkov; Prime Minister Gorshkov is not available currently. Can I help you?”

“It is important for me to see him immediately. It is about our friend *Wolfgang*. What is the earliest time you can schedule me?”

“Tuesday, the 29th, at ten in the morning.”

“That will work. Thank you.”

Chapter Four

MOSCOW

THE DACHA IN NOVO-OGARYOVO WAS A PALATIAL Estate in the Odintsovsky District, west of the city of Moscow. Ryzhkov's armored Mercedes Benz limo stayed close behind the Mercedes, driving his bodyguards. Behind his limo, a third Mercedes carried more bodyguards. The whole convoy pulled up to the prime minister's driveway.

Ryzhkov retired six years ago as the commanding general of the GRU. He had a net worth of approximately \$3 billion and considerable influence in Russia's energy and mining industries.

Ryzhkov and Gorshkov grew up in Leningrad, lived two blocks from each other, were classmates in grammar school, and were best friends. When Gorshkov's father was asked to join President Nikita Khrushchev's administration in 1963, the family moved to Moscow.

Ryzhkov served Prime Minister Gorshkov on critical operations, several of which dealt with killing traitors. However, the Russian strategic mission involving a Saudi terrorist mastermind, which had been uncovered and destroyed by the CIA, impacted Russian oil exports. In that operation, Ryzhkov's younger brother Sergei, his former staff advisor, Oleg

Kupchenko and many Russian Spetsnaz bodyguards lost their lives in Switzerland and the Middle East.

Sergei Ryzhkov had been a former KGB and FSB intelligence colonel.

Kupchenko was a retired Spetsnaz colonel and an advisor to General Ryzhkov ten years ago at the GRU. He was also a senior member of the

Russian organized crime syndicate in Moscow. Alexander Ryzhkov wanted revenge for the murder of his team and the destruction of the mission. The USB drive he now possessed revealed the identities of the principal operatives in the CIA operation that had led to those losses.

As he sat outside the prime minister's office, awaiting Sokurov's prompt to enter, he thought about the failed mission. It began three years earlier when Gorshkov had given him the approval to infiltrate a Saudi master terrorist's internal organization. The overriding plan was to sell four Russian nuclear suitcase bombs, each containing three kilograms of fissionable plutonium and highly enriched uranium, to the terrorist sleeper-cell network, along with the list of two US cities to target. The terrorist attacks would create another 9/11 and bolster the American desire for revenge. The uproar from the American government would force a boycott of Saudi oil and encourage other allies to do the same. This action would create a significant imbalance of oil on the market and accelerate demand, benefiting Russia.

When Gorshkov graduated from Moscow State University with a law degree, the KGB recruited him and sent him to the Academy of Foreign Intelligence. After finishing his foreign intelligence training, he began his career at the KGB. Many years later, his last KGB position as chief of residency at the Russian Embassy in East Berlin was with the rank of colonel. Both Gorshkov and Ryzhkov were devastated when the Soviet Union broke down. They blamed the Americans for being the driving force in that effort.

Ryzhkov hated the Americans because he was a Lt. Colonel in Afghanistan in 1986, commanding a Spetsnaz battalion when the war changed drastically. The Russians could not hold on to Mujahideen's territory because the CIA provided the Afghan government with Stinger missiles that destroyed many aircraft. The war endured from 1979-1989 and killed over fourteen thousand Russian soldiers.

Gorshkov's dream was to re-establish the former Soviet Union's Republics into the Russian Federation.

Gorshkov's chief-of-staff entered the prime minister's office.

"Sir, General Alexander Leonidovich Ryzhkov is here for his appointment."

"Have him come in," Gorshkov calmly said.

As Ryzhkov entered, the prime minister stood up, walked forward, and shook his hand. Gorshkov wore a Patek Phillipe watch on his right wrist.

The muscular prime minister excelled in handball at five feet seven in height and 160 pounds. He had earned two championship titles from the Russian Handball Federation in Moscow in the late 80s. His brilliant mind had no time for small talk; he was all business and could turn into a cold-blooded killer in the blink of an eye should he be challenged. He enjoyed playing handball with Ryzhkov, who also excelled in the sport. However, Gorshkov usually won.

Gorshkov had a full head of light brown hair streaked with gray and piercing pale blue eyes.

“Sasha, my old friend,” he said as he embraced him in a bear hug and kissed his cheeks three times.

“Misha! Thanks for seeing me on such short notice.” Gorshkov smiled and said, “Please be seated.”

Ryzhkov sat on a sofa facing the prime minister, who sat behind a large oak desk.

“Sasha, your niece Marina Viktorovna Smirnova is doing a great job as our deep-cover SVR intelligence officer in San Francisco.”

“Our family is very proud of her. Once she graduated from Saint Petersburg State University with top honors and a degree in economics and a minor in computer engineering, she was sure to be a top prospect for the FSB Academy.”

“She followed the playbook, applied for graduate school at Kings College, married an aristocrat, became a British Citizen, divorced him, joined an American video game developer in London, and a few years later applied for an L-1A transfer to *Viskin Dynamics* in California under the name of Marina Kingsborough,” chuckled Gorshkov.

“The family appreciated your recommendation of her to the FSB Academy,” said Ryzhkov.

Gorshkov nodded.

“Did you get the information?” Gorshkov asked.

“Ferrari has provided us with the names of those responsible for destroying our Saudi operation.”

“What do you propose?” asked Gorshkov.

“The key operatives were Mark Ericksen, Lars Wahlberg, Fico Delgado, Kate McDonald, and Hans Christian Scharz.”

“Leave the Swiss federal police officer off the list. Too many of our friends have their money in Swiss banks.”

“Let me add Sullivan’s name to the list since the bastard directed the operation.”

“Sasha, are you mad? We don’t want to start a war by killing the American secretary of defense.”

“All right, but let me wait until he retires from the government,” said Ryzhkov.

“Do not push the issue on Sullivan. That’s an order!” Ryzhkov’s lips tightened into a scowl.

“How do you propose killing them?” asked Gorshkov.

“There are only three left: Ericksen, Wahlberg, and McDonald. I will have our German agent, Heinrich Schroeder, get in touch with the Iranian intelligence agency to contract Hezbollah for the hits.”

“Once you meet with Schroeder, said a sterned-faced Gorshkov, coordinate the dates and places with Sokurov. There must not be any visible footprints leading back to the Kremlin. Is that clear?”

“Yes, sir.”

“You and I both know our economy depends on the world market price of oil! We came awfully close to accomplishing our mission, only to have the Americans mess it up!”

“We’ll put together a new operation next year,” Ryzhkov said.

“We’ll wait and see. The presidential elections are coming up next year, and we must ensure that since I’m running for president, we have the support of the oligarchs.”

“I’ll make sure they are with us or else!” said Ryzhkov.

“Winning the presidency is critical for Russia’s future. We must gain more influence in the Middle East and re-capture some of the countries we lost during the breakup. On another topic, I want to congratulate you on your company’s innovative strategies and increased profitability.”

“Misha, thanks to you for giving me this golden opportunity.”

“I never forget my good friends, especially you. You are one of my best friends. When we have more time, let us plan on going to my estate on the Black Sea with our wives, or would you prefer our mistresses?”

Ryzhkov shook his head and smiled. “Misha, definitely our mistress.”

They stood and hugged, and then Ryzhkov left the office. Gorshkov picked up his phone: “Send the director in.”

“Yes, sir.”

Ten minutes later, the director of the SVR entered.

Over the next fifteen minutes, Gorshkov explained the operation

Ryzhkov was managing for him.

“Once I get his plans, I’ll provide all the details. I want you and your operatives to monitor all activity and report back to me without his knowledge. Is that clear?”

“Understood, Mr. Prime Minister.”

Gorshkov thought about the first time he met Secretary of Defense Sullivan. It was the winter of 1996, and they were both at a diplomatic party hosted by the British Ambassador. Gorshkov enjoyed his meetings at social events with Sullivan. His alias at the time was *Wade Davis*. Sullivan’s official title was economics officer at the US embassy and spoke Russian.

Gorshkov never knew for certain if Sullivan was even a CIA officer, let alone the station chief. He suspected that most of the Americans employed at the embassy were spies. However, he did learn in 2003, when Sullivan’s photo appeared next to President Ridgeway, his title was director of the CIA’s counterterrorism center. Gorshkov had fond memories of Sullivan, who struck him as a highly intelligent and engaging person to talk to at these functions.

MOSCOW, METROPOLE HOTEL

On April 1, Heinrich Schroeder and his son Otto arrived at Moscow’s Domodedovo International Airport at 5:05 pm. The bald Schroeder stood five-eight and was of medium weight. He had a pepper-gray beard, a bulbous

nose, red cheeks, and small, mousy brown eyes. At sixty-two years of age, he was the CEO of an industrial company in Hanau, Germany, a Frankfurt suburb. His son Otto was the executive vice president and chief operations officer. Heinrich Schroeder's company has been doing business for thirty years with Iran, exporting dual-use biological and chemical agents the Iranian Ministry of Defense quietly used to make biological and chemical warfare.

A Mercedes limo driver met him in the hall outside security and drove them to the Metropole Hotel. After checking in to the Metropole Suite on the sixth floor, the telephone rang. He picked it up. "Hello."

"Herr Schroeder, this is Alexander," he said in German. "I'm in the Ambassador Suite. Please come up."

Over the next two hours, they enjoyed dinner and vodka while discussing the Iranians' proposed meeting.

Chapter Five

COPENHAGEN, DENMARK

ON TUESDAY, APRIL 5, ERICKSEN ARRIVED IN Copenhagen on a SAS flight. He and Jeb Templeton, his senior vice-president of marketing, took a taxi to the 5-star Angleterre Hotel on Kongens Nytorv 34. Later that afternoon, they went for a jog around the city.

Four days earlier, they had consummated purchase orders for \$3 million worth of *EyeD4 systems* from the British Ministry of Interior, MI5, MI6, and GCHQ, and a \$5 million order from the German Ministry of Interior and the BND (German Foreign Intelligence Service).

At seven-thirty in the evening, Ericksen and Templeton arrived at the Geranium restaurant. Their Scandinavian distributor's managing director and senior managers from Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and Finland were at the bar having drinks when he and Templeton entered.

Ericksen appointed *Amundsen Security Group* as its Scandinavian distributor in February 2010. The company was based in Oslo and had established offices in Copenhagen, Stockholm, and Helsinki. Thomas Andersen was the managing director of the company. He had the good fortune of meeting Ericksen when they both participated in *Task Force K-Bar*.

Ericksen commanded a platoon consisting of International Security Assistance Forces from the Australian SAS, Norwegian Forsvarets Spesialkommando, and the Danish Jaegerkorpset. Andersen was a lieutenant and second-in-command under Ericksen. They were involved from the end of December 2001 through March 2002 in *Operation Enduring Freedom* in Afghanistan.

The men sat around a large table. During the evening, they enjoyed fabulous entrees and drank beer. Andersen turned his glance at Ericksen and spoke, “Over the past year, we targeted our energies on our primary customers: ministries of defense and interior, intelligence agencies, defense and aerospace corporations, nuclear power plants, banks, and financial institutions. As of March 31, we have generated \$3 million and expect an additional \$4 million by the end of this year.”

Templeton replied, “Gentlemen, we appreciate your hard work, and we’ll support you in all your efforts.”

Ericksen glanced over at Andersen and raised his voice, “Thomas, what appointments have you scheduled for us in Denmark and Sweden?”

“Tomorrow at 8:30 am, we will meet with the Danish Ministry of Defence, followed by an 11:00 am appointment with the Danish Defence Intelligence Agency. In the afternoon, we will meet with the Danish Security and Intelligence Service. On Thursday, we have a 2:00 pm meeting with the Swedish Ministry of Defence, followed by a 5:00 pm appointment with the Swedish Military Intelligence and Security Service at the Swedish Armed Forces Headquarters. Our last appointment is scheduled for Friday morning, 9:00 am, with the Swedish Intelligence Agency in Solna.”

Templeton smiled and said, “Great job!”

Ericksen stood and raised his Tuborg beer glass, “To our teams *Amundsen Security Group* and *EyeD4 Systems*.”

The men stood, raised their beer glasses, and gave a hearty “Skoal!”

Chapter Six

SCHLOSS HOTEL KRONBERG, TAUNUS, GERMANY

SCHROEDER PLANNED FOR THE CONFERENCE TO BE at Schloss Hotel Kornberg, which had an eighteen-hole golf course on its property, was formerly a castle built for the German Empress Victoria around 1890. It was near Frankfurt.

Schroeder welcomed the Iranian Intelligence Director Esmail Beheshti, his chief of staff Hamid Aghajani, and Iranian Revolutionary Guard Commander Reza Nabavi. They sat around a conference table in the Blue Salon with Schroeder.

“Gentlemen, Schroeder said and stood up. I called this meeting because it is of critical importance.” He passed three envelopes to each man.

“Please open the envelopes. Look at the pictures of these three Americans: Mark Ericksen, Kate McDonald, and Lars Wahlberg. They all reside in Portland, Oregon. McDonald lives with Ericksen. We will pay \$3 million for this operation. We need you to contract with Hezbollah’s top operatives to terminate them.”

“When do you need this operation completed?” asked Beheshti.

“Within ninety days from today. We will wire the money to your numbered bank account in Liechtenstein, \$1 million upfront and the balance when the operation is over.”

The Revolutionary Guard commander turned to him and asked, “Can you tell us what these spies did?”

“No.”

Nabavi smiled. "It will be an honor to help you."

Later in the day, Sorokin assigned two of his associates to do surveillance on Beheshti and Nabavi, and he would follow Aghajani. The SVR also conducted surveillance on the Iranians without Sorokin's knowledge. SVR's Igor Turgenev, a Lt. Colonel at the Russian Embassy in Switzerland, watched Sorokin. He stood six-foot-five and had a muscular build. Turgenev was from St. Petersburg and was fluent in German and English. He served as a Spetsnaz officer and five years later was recruited by Gorshkov, who at the time was head of the Russian Federation's Domestic Intelligence Service. For the past eleven years, Turgenev served in the SVR.

Later that evening, Aghajani took a taxi to an internet café in downtown Frankfurt. He walked in and selected a computer. Sorokin brought a cyber warfare team to monitor their cellphone communication using top-notch technology.

Aghajani sent an email to Pelletier Joailliers, Gstaad, Switzerland, that read: "Hello Pierre, please order me the gold bracelet for my wife with the inscription 'Shirin, With Love, Hamid.' This is the one you quoted me at five thousand francs. Please have it ready for me on April Fourteenth. Hamid."

Sorokin sat at another computer station and was able to intercept the email. After sending it, Aghajani paid the assistant in euros and took a taxi back to the hotel.

BAUR AU LAC HOTEL, ZURICH

On April 13, Reza Nabavi held a meeting at the Baur Au Lac Hotel, an elegant five-star hotel catering to kings, dictators, prime ministers, presidents, diplomats, movie stars, business leaders, and wealthy tourists.

In a deluxe suite with a view of the lake and seated around a living room table were high-ranking officers of the Iranian government and their proxy: Reza Nabavi, commander of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard; Esmail Beheshti and his chief-of-staff, Hamid Aghajani, Ismail Al-Musawi, Hezbollah military commander; and Samir Hakim, Hezbollah Secret Service. Nabavi placed two envelopes in front of Hakim, and Al-Musawi said in

Arabic: “These are photos of two American men and one American woman to be terminated: Mark Ericksen, CEO of *EyeD4 Systems*, in Wilsonville, Oregon; and executive vice-president and COO Lars Wahlberg. Also included is a photo of Kate McDonald, who lives with Ericksen. In the envelope, you will also find information on their home and company addresses. We will provide you with \$1 million down and the balance when you’ve completed the operation.”

Ismail Al-Musawi was a protégé of Imad Mughniyah, Hezbollah’s most exceptional and now-deceased terrorist leader. The world media claimed it was a CIA-Mossad bombing that killed him in Syria in 2008.

“It would be an honor to accept this operation. What is the timeline for this operation?”

Nabavi turned to both Hezbollah men. “They must be all terminated by July 30th.”

“We will plan on arriving in Oregon the third week of May,” said Al-Musawi.

Later that evening, Aghajani finished his dinner in the suite, stood up, and said to Beheshti in Farsi, “My wife and I are leaving tomorrow for a week of skiing in Gstaad. I’ll be back in Tehran on Friday, the 21st.”

“Hamid, have a great time, and don’t break any bones.”

Aghajani did not intend to spend an inordinate amount of time skiing and possibly breaking some bones. He was going to Gstaad to personally pass a critically important message to his old college friend, Yossi Roubini.

They graduated from the University of Washington in 1990 with B.S. degrees in business administration.

After dinner, he and his wife took out some reading materials. While she was reading a romance novel, he sat on the couch in the suite and thought about his friend, Yossi Roubini. In September 1988, Aghajani met Roubini for the first time. Roubini joined a soccer team that played on Sundays. Aghajani was five-foot-ten, weighed 160 pounds, and played center midfielder. The muscularly built Roubini stood six-foot-one, weighed 180 pounds, and played goalie for the other team. Over the next several weeks of playing, they got to know each other. They both spoke Farsi, but when he

learned Roubini was a Persian Jew from Israel, he kept their friendship at a distance. There were no discussions about politics. They focused their interest on college courses and soccer.

Roubini had dark brown curly hair and sparkling brown eyes. His face bore a two-inch scar running over his brow. He was born in Tehran, Iran, in 1963, and his family left Iran for Israel in 1975. When he graduated from high school, he entered the Israeli Defense Forces. After five years of service, he reached the rank of captain and left the *Sayeret Matkal*, Israeli's version of Delta Force. In 1986, he was accepted at the University of Washington.

In June 1990, a few days after graduation, Roubini met with Aghajani on the evening before his flight back to Israel. He told him that if he ever visited England and wanted to get together with him, please get in touch with his uncle. "His name is Moishe Roubini, and he owns a jewelry store named *The Gold Palace* in the Knightsbridge section of London. I will let my uncle know about you and advise him to call me when you are in London. Since our countries are adversaries, it would be best for you to call his store with a burner phone," said Roubini.

Over the next several years, Aghajani acquired an MBA from the American University of Beirut and gained proficiency in the Arabic language. In 1995, he was working on his doctorate at Cambridge University. He thought about Roubini and, on his next visit to London, went to *The Gold Palace* on Brompton Road in Knightsbridge. He met Roubini's uncle Moishe and, speaking in Farsi, introduced himself as a friend of Yossi's. He gave Moishe his burner cellphone number and his address in Cambridge and asked him to have Yossi contact him. The uncle remembered his nephew mentioning Hamid Aghajani as a good college friend from Iran. Moishe gave him his private telephone number too.

Three weeks later, Aghajani took the train to London and booked a hotel room in the Knightsbridge area. He entered the jewelry store, saw his friend Roubini, and they took a cab to the suburb. After entering a pub and having several beers and a sandwich, they talked about their careers. Roubini mentioned that after he left the States, he enrolled at Tel Aviv University and

received an MBA. For the past three years, he has worked as a marketing manager for an Israeli defense contractor. They were careful not to discuss their countries' political situation, and Aghajani always thought Roubini could be an Israeli spy.

After Aghajani received his Ph.D. in international relations from Cambridge, he was in high demand for more significant Iranian government opportunities. He joined the Iran National Oil Company in 1997 and spent several years brokering deals with China and Japan. In 2002, the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs appointed him to an advisory position reporting to the Iranian Foreign Affairs minister. By this time, he was married with two young daughters. He was getting tired of government bureaucracy and, in 2005, became a professor of international relations and management at the University of Tehran. From 2007-2009, Iran had massive fuel shortages that spiked riots, burned gas stations, and arrested many people.

In the 2009 Iranian presidential election between the current president and the progressive opposition candidates, protests erupted all over Iran. Students were rioting, and many innocent people were arrested, shot, and killed. During this unrestful period, the Iranian Minister of Intelligence desperately needed an intelligent, highly experienced, and loyal chief of staff to Iran's Islamic Republic.

The name that kept surfacing among the leading candidates was Hamid Aghajani. He was offered the position, but he was turning sour on the Iranian regime by this time. He personally could not stand the riots of 2007

and 2008, nor the hundreds of students and civilians who were shot, arrested, tortured, and killed. Aghajani knew he could not say no without having significant suspicion drawn over him. Furthermore, his wife's father was a member of the Iranian parliament and a former military general. It was during this time that he needed to get in touch with his old college friend Roubini.

While on a trip to Paris in 2009, he picked up a burner phone called The Gold Palace and asked for Moishe Roubini. He told him he needed to get in touch with his nephew immediately. He left his burner phone number and asked if Yossi could call him back at eleven pm the following night.

A day later, Yossi Roubini called his burner phone.

“I’m now working as a commercial counselor at the Israeli Embassy in Berlin. Would you be willing to meet me in Zurich within the next two weeks?”

“I’ll try and set something up,” said Aghajani.

“I’m calling your burner phone from my burner phone. Call me once you set up your trip,” replied Roubini.

“Great!”

Two weeks later, Aghajani arrived in Zurich. He called Roubini’s burner phone. “Hamid, take the Zurich passenger ship BAT 3730 at 11:20 am at the Zurich Burkliplatz. When you arrive at Kusnacht, get off and take a cab to the rail station. Once you arrive at the rail station, walk two blocks to Bergdorf’s Café and look for a white BMW. When you see me, jump in. I’ll drive back to the Seehotel Sonne at Kusnacht, park the car, and we can have lunch in my room,” said Yossi.

During the lunch, Roubini provided him with Pierre’s email at Pelletier Joailliers in Gstaad. “If there are any Iranian threats directly or through their terrorist organizations regarding Europe, America, or Israel, please email Pierre and write: ‘Hello Pierre, please order me the gold bracelet for my wife with the inscription ‘Shirin, With Love, Hamid.’ This is the one you quoted me at five thousand francs.”

“Thanks, Yossi.”

“Be careful, my good friend. Just a word of caution, a man followed you on foot when you got in my rental car.”

“I know. They are always watching me.”

Aghajani left the room and took a taxi back to the train station for the trip to Zurich. Roubini did not have to tell his friend too much about the jeweler. Pierre was an Israeli asset and worked with Mossad.

GSTAAD, SWITZERLAND

On April 14, Aghajani and his wife checked into the Chateau Rosenberg Hotel. He checked his burner phone and noticed a text message: “Meet me at Berghaus Wispile Restaurant at 11:15 tomorrow. Yossi.”

On the fifteenth, wearing a blue ski parka, black ski pants, goggles, and a ski hat, he and his wife skied for two hours in the morning before he told her he needed to meet someone at a restaurant. He took the gondola up to the Berghaus Wispile, a mountain restaurant hut at almost six thousand feet in altitude.

He entered the restaurant and spotted Roubini seated at a table. Aghajani was now in his early forties, and Roubini was forty-eight. He walked over to the table, shook Roubini’s hand, and spoke in Farsi.

“Good to see you. It’s been close to two years since we last met.” During lunch, he gave Roubini a thumb drive.

“Ismail Al-Musawi and Samir Hakim have been contracted to kill three former CIA operatives working in Portland, Oregon. Everything about the operation is on the thumb drive.”

“Hamid, our government has been looking for those two Hezbollah terrorists for over ten years. They have killed several of our operatives and many innocent civilians. Hezbollah’s most wanted terrorist, Imad Mughniyah, trained them.”

Aghajani shook his head, “I am sick of my government’s support for Assad, Hezbollah, and Hamas. Since the overthrow of the Shah, our country has become one of the world’s leading terrorist nations.”

“I appreciate your help, but you’re taking a major risk in helping us.”

Roubini put his hand on his shoulder. “Be careful, my dear friend, because if you don’t already know, I’m with the Mossad.”

“Yossi, I’ve always figured you were with the Israeli Intelligence Service.” They both smiled and laughed.

After lunch, they stood and hugged each other, put on their skis, and skied down different runs. What Aghajani did not know was that his friend was also one of Mossad’s best assassins.