

The
Bear
and the
Dragon

**Tom
Clancy**

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and probably a pretty good soldier, too.

History
admires
the wise,
but it
elevates
the brave.

— EDMUND MORRIS



The **Bear** and the **Dragon**



The White Mercedes

Going to work was the same everywhere, and the changeover from Marxism-Leninism to Chaos-Capitalism hadn't changed matters much—well, maybe things were now a little worse. Moscow, a city of wide streets, was harder to drive in now that nearly anyone could have a car, and the center lane down the wide boulevards was no longer tended by militiamen for the Politburo and used by Central Committee men who considered it a personal right of way, like Czarist princes in their troika sleds. Now it was a left-turn lane for anyone with a Zil or other private car. In the case of Sergey Nikolay'ch Golovko, the car was a white Mercedes 600, the big one with the S-class body and twelve cylinders of German power under the hood. There weren't many of them in Moscow, and truly his was an extravagance that ought to have embarrassed him . . . but didn't. Maybe there were no more *nomenklatura* in this city, but rank *did* have its privileges, and he was chairman of the SVR. His apartment was also large, on the top floor of a high-rise building on Kutusovskiy Prospekt, a structure relatively new and well-made, down to the German appliances which were a long-standing luxury accorded senior government officials.

He didn't drive himself. He had Anatoliy for that, a burly former Spetsnaz special-operations soldier who carried a pistol under his coat and who drove the car with ferocious aggression, while tending it with loving care. The windows were coated with dark plastic, which denied the casual onlooker the sight of the people inside, and the windows were thick, made of polycarbonate and specced to stop anything up to a 12.7-mm bullet, or so the company had told Golovko's purchasing

agents sixteen months before. The armor made it nearly a ton heavier than was the norm for an S600 Benz, but the power and the ride didn't seem to suffer from that. It was the uneven streets that would ultimately destroy the car. Road-paving was a skill that his country had not yet mastered, Golovko thought as he turned the page in his morning paper. It was the American *International Herald Tribune*, always a good source of news since it was a joint venture of *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times*, which were together two of the most skilled intelligence services in the world, if a little too arrogant to be the true professionals Sergey Nikolay'ch and his people were.

He'd joined the intelligence business when the agency had been known as the KGB, the Committee for State Security, still, he thought, the best such government department the world had ever known, even if it had ultimately failed. Golovko sighed. Had the USSR not fallen in the early 1990s, then his place as Chairman would have put him as a full voting member of the Politburo, a man of genuine power in one of the world's *two* superpowers, a man whose mere gaze could make strong men tremble . . . but . . . no, what was the use of that? he asked himself. It was all an illusion, an odd thing for a man of supposed regard for objective truth to value. That had always been the cruel dichotomy. KGB had always been on the lookout for hard facts, but then reported those facts to people besotted with a dream, who then bent the truth in the service of that dream. When the truth had finally broken through, the dream had suddenly evaporated like a cloud of steam in a high wind, and reality had poured in like the flood following the breakup of an ice-bound river in springtime. And then the Politburo, those brilliant men who'd wagered their lives on the dream, had found that their theories had been only the thinnest of reeds, and reality was the swinging scythe, and the eminence bearing *that* tool didn't deal in salvation.

But it was not so for Golovko. A dealer in facts, he'd been able to continue his profession, for his government still needed them. In fact, his authority was broader now than it would have been, because as a man who well knew the surrounding world and some of its more important personalities intimately, he was uniquely suited to advising his president, and so he had a voice in foreign policy, defense, and domestic matters. Of them, the third was the trickiest lately, which had rarely been the case before. It was now also the most dangerous. It was an odd

thing. Previously, the mere spoken (more often, shouted) phrase “State Security!” would freeze Soviet citizens in their stride, for KGB had been the most feared organ of the previous government, with power such as Reinhart Heydrich’s *Sicherheitsdienst* had only dreamed about, the power to arrest, imprison, interrogate, and to kill any citizen it wished, with no recourse at all. But that, too, was a thing of the past. Now KGB was split, and the domestic-security branch was a shadow of its former self, while the SVR—formerly the First Chief Directorate—still gathered information, but lacked the immediate strength that had come with being able to enforce the *will*, if not quite the *law*, of the communist government. But his current duties were still vast, Golovko told himself, folding the paper.

He was only a kilometer away from Dzerzhinskiy Square. That, too, was no longer the same. The statue of Iron Feliks was gone. It had always been a chilling sight to those who’d known who the man was whose bronze image had stood alone in the square, but now it, too, was a distant memory. The building behind it was the same, however. Once the stately home office of the Rossiya Insurance Company, it had later been known as the Lubyanka, a fearsome word even in the fearsome land ruled by Iosef Vissarionovich Stalin, with its basement full of cells and interrogation rooms. Most of those functions had been transferred over the years to Lefortovo Prison to the east, as the KGB bureaucracy had grown, as all such bureaucracies grow, filling the vast building like an expanding balloon, as it claimed every room and corner until secretaries and file clerks occupied the (remodeled) spaces where Kamenev and Ordzhonikidze had been tortured under the eyes of Yagoda and Beriia. Golovko supposed that there hadn’t been too many ghosts.

Well, a new working day beckoned. A staff meeting at 8:45, then the normal routine of briefings and discussions, lunch at 12:15, and with luck he’d be back in the car and on his way back home soon after six, before he had to change for the reception at the French Embassy. He looked forward to the food and wine, if not the conversation.

Another car caught his eye. It was a twin to his own, another large Mercedes S-class, iceberg white just like his own, complete down to the American-made dark plastic on the windows. It was driving purposefully in the bright morning, as Anatoliy slowed and pulled behind a dump truck, one of the thousand such large ugly vehicles that covered the

streets of Moscow like a dominant life-form, this one's load area cluttered with hand tools rather than filled with earth. There was yet another truck a hundred meters beyond, driving slowly as though its driver was unsure of his route. Golovko stretched in his seat, barely able to see around the truck in front of his Benz, wishing for the first cup of Sri Lankan tea at his desk, in the same room that Beriya had once . . .

. . . the distant dump truck. A man had been lying in the back. Now he rose, and he was holding . . .

"Anatoliy!" Golovko said sharply, but his driver couldn't see around the truck to his immediate front.

. . . it was an RPG, a slender pipe with a bulbous end. The sighting bar was up, and as the distant truck was now stopped, the man came up to one knee and turned, aiming his weapon at the other white Benz—

—the other driver saw it and tried to swerve, but found his way blocked by the morning traffic and—

—not much in the way of a visual signature, just a thin puff of smoke from the rear of the launcher-tube, but the bulbous part leapt off and streaked into the hood of the other white Mercedes, and there it exploded.

It hit just short of the windshield. The explosion wasn't the fireball so beloved of Western movies, just a muted flash and gray smoke, but the sound roared across the square, and a wide, flat, jagged hole blew out of the trunk of the car, and that meant that anyone inside the vehicle would now be dead, Golovko knew without pausing to think on it. Then the gasoline ignited, and the car burned, along with a few square meters of asphalt. The Mercedes stopped almost at once, its left-side tires shredded and flattened by the explosion. The dump truck in front of Golovko's car panic-stopped, and Anatoliy swerved right, his eyes narrowed by the noise, but not yet—

"*Govno!*" Now Anatoliy saw what had happened and took action. He kept moving right, accelerating hard and swerving back and forth as his eyes picked holes in the traffic. The majority of the vehicles in sight had stopped, and Golovko's driver sought out the holes and darted through them, arriving at the vehicle entrance to Moscow Center in less than a minute. The armed guards there were already moving out into the square, along with the supplementary response force from its shack just

inside and out of sight. The commander of the group, a senior lieutenant, saw Golovko's car and recognized it, waved him inside and motioned to two of his men to accompany it to the drop-off point. The arrival time was now the only normal aspect of the young day. Golovko stepped out, and two young soldiers formed up in physical contact with his heavy topcoat. Anatoliy stepped out, too, his pistol in his hand and his coat open, looking back through the gate with suddenly anxious eyes. His head turned quickly.

"Get him inside!" And with that order, the two privates strong-armed Golovko through the double bronze doors, where more security troops were arriving.

"This way, Comrade Chairman," a uniformed captain said, taking Sergey Nikolay'ch's arm and heading off to the executive elevator. A minute later, he stumbled into his office, his brain only now catching up with what it had seen just three minutes before. Of course, he walked to the window to look down.

Moscow police—called militiamen—were racing to the scene, three of them on foot. Then a police car appeared, cutting through the stopped traffic. Three motorists had left their vehicles and approached the burning car, perhaps hoping to render assistance. Brave of them, Golovko thought, but an entirely useless effort. He could see better now, even at a distance of three hundred meters. The top had bulged up. The windshield was gone, and he looked into a smoking hole, which had minutes before been a hugely expensive vehicle, and which had been destroyed by one of the cheapest weapons the Red Army had ever mass-produced. Whoever had been inside had been shredded instantly by metal fragments traveling at nearly ten thousand meters per second. Had they even known what had happened? Probably not. Perhaps the driver had had time to look and wonder, but the owner of the car in the back had probably been reading his morning paper, before his life had ended without warning.

That was when Golovko's knees went weak. That could have been him . . . suddenly learning if there were an afterlife after all, one of the great mysteries of life, but not one which had occupied his thoughts very often . . .

But whoever had done the killing, who had been his target? As Chairman of the SVR, Golovko was not a man to believe in coinci-

dences, and there were not all that many white Benz S600s in Moscow, were there?

"Comrade Chairman?" It was Anatoliy at the office door.

"Yes, Anatoliy Ivan'ch?"

"Are you well?"

"Better than he," Golovko replied, stepping away from the window. He needed to sit now. He tried to move to his swivel chair without staggering, for his legs were suddenly weak indeed. He sat and found the surface of his desk with both his hands, and looked down at the oaken surface with its piles of papers to be read—the routine sight of a day which was not now routine at all. He looked up.

Anatoliy Ivan'ch Shelepin was not a man to show fear. He'd served in Spetsnaz through his captaincy, before being spotted by a KGB talent scout for a place in the 8th "Guards" Directorate, which he'd accepted just in time for KGB to be broken apart. But Anatoliy had been Golovko's driver and bodyguard for years now, part of his official family, like an elder son, and Shelepin was devoted to his boss. He was a tall, bright man of thirty-three years, with blond hair and blue eyes that were now far larger than usual, because though Anatoliy had trained for much of his life to deal with and in violence, this was the first time he'd actually been there to see it when it happened. Anatoliy had often wondered what it might be like to take a life, but never once in his career had he contemplated losing his own, certainly not to an ambush, and most certainly not to an ambush within shouting distance of his place of work. At his desk outside Golovko's office, he acted like a personal secretary more than anything else. Like all such men, he'd grown casual in the routine of protecting someone whom no one would dare attack, but now his comfortable world had been sundered as completely and surely as that of his boss.

Oddly, but predictably, it was Golovko's brain that made it back to reality first.

"Anatoliy?"

"Yes, Chairman?"

"We need to find out who died out there, and then find out if it was supposed to be us instead. Call militia headquarters, and see what they are doing."

"At once." The handsome young face disappeared from the doorway.

Golovko took a deep breath and rose, taking another look out the window as he did so. There was a fire engine there now, and firefighters were spraying the wrecked car to extinguish the lingering flames. An ambulance was standing by as well, but that was a waste of manpower and equipment, Sergey Nikolay'ch knew. The first order of business was to get the license-plate number from the car and identify its owner, and from that knowledge determine if the unfortunate had died in Golovko's place, or perhaps had possessed enemies of his own. Rage had not yet supplanted the shock of the event. Perhaps that would come later, Golovko thought, as he took a step toward his private washroom, for suddenly his bladder was weak. It seemed a horrid display of frailty, but Golovko had never known immediate fear in his life, and, like many, thought in terms of the movies. The actors there were bold and resolute, never mind that their words were scripted and their reactions rehearsed, and none of it was anything like what happened when explosives arrived in the air without warning.

Who wants me dead? he wondered, after flushing the toilet.

The American Embassy a few miles away had a flat roof on which stood all manner of radio antennas, most of them leading to radio receivers of varying levels of sophistication, which were in turn attached to tape recorders that turned slowly in order to more efficiently use their tapes. In the room with the recorders were a dozen people, both civilian and military, all Russian linguists who reported to the National Security Agency at Fort Meade, Maryland, between Baltimore and Washington. It was early in the day, and these people were generally at work before the Russian officials whose communications they worked to monitor. One of the many radios in the room was a scanning monitor of the sort once used by American citizens to listen in on police calls. The local cops used the same bands and the exact same type of radios that their American counterparts had used in the 1970s, and monitoring them was child's play—they were not encrypted yet. They listened in on them for the occasional traffic accident, perhaps involving a big shot, and mainly to keep a finger on the pulse of Moscow,

whose crime situation was bad and getting worse. It was useful for embassy personnel to know what parts of town to avoid, and to be able to keep track of a crime to one of the thousands of American citizens.

"Explosion?" an Army sergeant asked the radio. His head turned. "Lieutenant Wilson, police report an explosion right in front of Moscow Center."

"What kind?"

"Sounds like a car blew up. Fire department is on the scene now, ambulance . . ." He plugged in headphones to get a better cut on the voice traffic. "Okay, white Mercedes-Benz, tag number—" He pulled out a pad and wrote it down. "Three people dead, driver and two passengers and . . . oh, shit!"

"What is it, Reins?"

"Sergey Golovko . . ." Sergeant Reins's eyes were shut, and he had one hand pressing the headphones to his ears. "Doesn't he drive a white Benz?"

"Oh, shit!" Lieutenant Wilson observed for herself. Golovko was one of the people whom *her* people routinely tracked. "Is he one of the deaders?"

"Can't tell yet, ell-tee. New voice . . . the captain at the station, just said he's coming down. Looks like they're excited about this one, ma'am. Lotsa chatter coming up."

Lieutenant Susan Wilson rocked back and forth in her swivel chair. Make a call on this one or not? They couldn't shoot you for notifying your superiors of something, could they . . . ? "Where's the station chief?"

"On his way to the airport, ell-tee, he's flying off to St. Petersburg today, remember?"

"Okay." She turned back to her panel and lifted the secure phone, a STU-6 (for "secure telephone unit"), to Fort Meade. Her plastic encryption key was in its proper slot, and the phone was already linked and synchronized with another such phone at NSA headquarters. She punched the # key to get a response.

"Watch Room," a voice said half a world away.

"This is Station Moscow. We have an indication that Sergey Golovko may just have been assassinated."

"The SVR chairman?"

"Affirmative. A car similar to his has exploded in Dzerzhinskiy Square, and this is the time he usually goes to work."

"Confidence?" the disembodied male voice asked. It would be a middle-grade officer, probably military, holding down the eleven-to-seven watch. Probably Air Force. "Confidence" was one of their institutional buzzwords.

"We're taking this off police radios—the Moscow Militia, that is. We have lots of voice traffic, and it sounds excited, my operator tells me."

"Okay, can you upload it to us?"

"Affirmative," Lieutenant Wilson replied.

"Okay, let's do that. Thanks for the heads-up, we'll take it from here."

Okay, Station Moscow out," heard Major Bob Teeters. He was new in his job at NSA. Formerly a rated pilot who had twenty-one hundred hours in command of C-5s and C-17s, he'd injured his left elbow in a motorcycle accident eight months before, and the loss of mobility there had ended his flying career, much to his disgust. Now he was reborn as a spook, which was somewhat more interesting in an intellectual sense, but not exactly a happy exchange for an aviator. He waved to an enlisted man, a Navy petty officer first-class, to pick up on the active line from Moscow. This the sailor did, donning headphones and lighting up the word-processing program on his desktop computer. This sailor was a Russian linguist in addition to being a yeoman, and thus competent to drive the computer. He typed, translating as he listened in to the pirated Russian police radios, and his script came up on Major Teeters's computer screen.

I HAVE THE LICENSE NUMBER, CHECKING NOW, the first line read.

GOOD, QUICK AS YOU CAN.

WORKING ON IT, COMRADE. (TAPPING IN THE BACKGROUND, DO THRE RUSSKIES HAVE COMPUTERS FOR TIS STUFF NOW?)

I HAVE IT, WHITE MERCEDES BENZ, REGISTERED TO G. F. AVSYENKO, (NOT SURE OF SPELLING) 677 PROTOPOPOV PROSPEKT, FLAT 18A.

HIM? I KNOW THAT NAME!

Which was good for somebody, Major Teeters thought, but not all

that great for Avsyenko. Okay, what next? The senior watch officer was another squid, Rear Admiral Tom Porter, probably drinking coffee in his office over in the main building and watching TV, maybe. Time to change that. He called the proper number.

"Admiral Porter."

"Sir, this is Major Teeters down in the watch center. We have some breaking news in Moscow."

"What's that, Major?" a tired voice asked.

"Station Moscow initially thought that somebody might have killed Chairman Golovko of the KG—the SVR, I mean."

"What was that, Major?" a somewhat more alert voice inquired.

"Turns out it probably wasn't him, sir. Somebody named Avsyenko—" Teeters spelled it out. "We're getting the intercepts off their police radio bands. I haven't run the name yet."

"What else?"

"Sir, that's all I have right now."

By this time, a CIA field officer named Tom Barlow was in the loop at the embassy. The third-ranking spook in the current scheme of things, he didn't want to drive over to Dzerzhinskiy Square himself, but he did the next best thing. Barlow called the CNN office, the direct line to a friend.

"Mike Evans."

"Mike, this is Jimmy," Tom Barlow said, initiating a prearranged and much-used lie. "Dzerzhinskiy Square, the murder of somebody in a Mercedes. Sounds messy and kinda spectacular."

"Okay," the reporter said, making a brief note. "We're on it."

At his desk, Barlow checked his watch. 8:52 local time. Evans was a hustling reporter for a hustling news service. Barlow figured there'd be a mini-cam there in twenty minutes. The truck would have its own Ku-band uplink to a satellite, down from there to CNN headquarters in Atlanta, and the same signal would be pirated by the DoD downlink at Fort Belvoir, Virginia, and spread around from there on government-owned satellites to interested parties. An attempt on the life of Chairman Golovko made it interesting as hell to a lot of people. Next he lit up his desktop Compaq computer and opened the file for Russian names that were known to CIA.

A duplicate of that file resided in any number of CIA computers at Langley, Virginia, and on one of those in the CIA Operations Room on the 7th floor of the Old Headquarters Building, a set of fingers typed A-V-S-Y-E-N-K-O . . . and came up with nothing other than:

ENTIRE FILE SEARCHED. THE SEARCH ITEM WAS NOT FOUND.

That evoked a grumble from the person on the computer. So, it wasn't spelled properly.

"Why does this name sound familiar?" he asked. "But the machine says no-hit."

"Let's see . . ." a co-worker said, leaning over and respelling the name. "Try this . . ." Again a no-hit. A third variation was tried.

"Bingo! Thanks, Beverly," the watch officer said. "Oh, yeah, we know who this guy is. Rasputin. Low-life bastard—sure as hell, look what happened when he went straight," the officer chuckled.

Rasputin?" Golovko asked. "*Nekulturniy* swine, eh?" He allowed himself a brief smile. "But who would wish *him* dead?" he asked his security chief, who, if anything, was taking the matter even more seriously than the Chairman. His job had just become far more complicated. For starters, he had to tell Sergey Nikolay'ch that the white Mercedes was no longer his personal conveyance. Too ostentatious. His next task of the day was to ask the armed sentries who posted the corners of the building's roof why they hadn't spotted a man in the load area of a dump truck with an RPG—*within three hundred meters of the building they were supposed to guard!* And not so much as a warning over their portable radios until the Mercedes of Gregoriy Filipovich Avseyenko had been blown to bits. He'd sworn many oaths already on this day, and there would be more to come.

"How long has he been out of the service?" Golovko asked next.

"Since '93, Comrade Chairman," Major Anatoliy Ivan'ch Shelepin said, having just asked the same question and received the answer seconds earlier.

The first big reduction-in-force, Golovko thought, but it would seem that the pimp had made the transition to private enterprise well. Well enough to own a Mercedes Benz S-600 . . . and well enough to be