

THE ADVENTURES OF

Dense DimmOck  
& BOB'S  
"Seven BelLies"  
SLOBOVITCH



A BOOK BY PADDY O'FARRELL

The adventures of “Dense” Dimmock  
and Boris “Seven Bellies” Slobovitch

by  
Paddy O’Farrell

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First edition

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# Rave Reviews

- **"His books are quite clearly not PC."**  
Government Information Office.
- **"This writer is going places.....and we have a list."** Psychiatric Nursing Today.
- **"A lot funnier than Mein Kampf."** Golders Green Evening Echo
- **"Mary Whitehouse will be glad she's dead when she reads this."** Moral Crusade Society.
- **"I can't really see this replacing Hymns Ancient and Modern."** Synod Times.
- **"I know this new writer's intellectual and classical genre will inspire the vast majority of our readers."** Literary Editor, Sunday Sport.
- **This is clearly the result of putting a thousand monkeys into a room with a thousand typewriters."** Science Today.
- **"I rest my case."** Charles Darwin.
- **"This book is more uplifting than Ann Widdecombe's bra."** Anton du Beke
- **"Eat you heart out Charles Dickens."**  
Paddy O'Farrell

## Paddy O'Farrell

He always wanted to be a writer when he grew up; one out of two ain't bad! Born in Canada in 1942 with a father born in Hong Kong and a Grandfather born in the Channel Islands, he attended 11 schools before signing up for 15 years in the RAF in Electronics.

He got demobbed and subsequently enjoyed a wide range of sales and marketing careers in finance, life assurance, pensions, electronic components, semi conductors, satellite TV, toys, reusable nappies, good food guides, gaming furniture design and internet consultancy to name but a few.

He took a degree at Coventry University at the age of fifty and added the professional qualifications: a fellow of the Institute of Business and Technical Management; a fellow of the Institute of Sales and Marketing; a qualified Sales Engineer; a member of the Society of Electronic and Radio Technicians and a Technician Engineer of the Chartered Institute of Electronic Engineers.

He has travelled in over 40 countries and in his first book, "Primrose Cottage", he draws from his experiences in life, from some of the characters he has met and from a vivid imagination.

In his second book, "MCC (Muddlecombe Cricket Team)" the village cricket team get mistaken for the real MCC and tour Botswana causing international havoc.

He settled in South Leicestershire for 30 years with his Scottish wife and their two sons and has enjoyed hobbies such as Duplicate Bridge, (a two star master), making golf clubs, swimming, walking, oil painting and calligraphy. He and his wife now live in their retirement home in Spain.

This book is dedicated to my lovely wife Fay, who thinks this book is probably the biggest load of shite so far:

The Muddlecombe trilogy:

- [Primrose Cottage](#);
- [MCC \(Muddlecombe Cricket Club\)](#);
- [The adventures of "Dense" Dimmock and Boris "Seven Bellies" Slobovitch.](#)

Author's note: The majorities of names used are fictitious, and bear no resemblance to anyone alive or dead but if anybody feels that some of the characters might cause them some discomfort then they need to get out more.

Chubby Broccoli and Harry Pepperman of Aon Productions may be mistaken for some other famous film producers so be careful.

Some of the timing of events may not be strictly in chronological order and some of the Azerbaijan facts may be a bit fictitious as well.

## Acknowledgements.

I would like to thank Natasha Tonks for her valuable information about the Ukraine.

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The adventures of "Dense" Dimmock and  
Boris "Seven Bellies" Slobovitch.

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## List of characters in chronological order

<b>Gerantinium O'Deighy III</b>	Village elder and Chairman of the Interplanetary Standards and Ethics Committee.
<b>Sir Robert McFadyen</b>	British Ambassador to Azerbaijan
<b>Dense Dimmock</b>	Village idiot and MI6 consultant
<b>Boris Slobovitch</b>	Chekov's old minder/assassin and Dense's drinking partner
<b>Dr Pietro Kemikhail PhD</b>	Scottish oil boffin working for the British and American Petroleum Company
<b>Mrs Dimmock</b>	A phenomenon.
<b>Nickola Elastickova</b>	Igor's professional assistant-cum-tart
<b>Chekov Yeboleksi</b>	Ex KGB interrogator and now head of Russian mafia
<b>Sidney Sidenose</b>	A solicitor from Shoreditch.
<b>Brewster Kegworth</b>	Landlord of the "Snort & Truffle" pub
<b>Fiona Kegworth</b>	Brewster's Scottish wife, an accountant.
<b>Mildred O'Riley</b>	The doe-eyed wife of Creighky O'Riley, Chekov's lover
<b>Igor Badlotski</b>	War lord in Azerbaijan
<b>Andrei Shkuro</b>	Cossack leader
<b>Natalya Balanchuk</b>	British Embassy worker in Baku
<b>MykolaDoroshenko</b>	BAP Company security guard in Baku
<b>Silas H Sawyer III</b>	President of the British and American Petroleum Company
<b>Nersik Pamboukjian</b>	A freelance journalist

## Preface

In the beginning was the word.

And the word was **BANG!**

Bloody great big bang!

The Demiurge or The Lord as he was known as later had a look round after all the galactic debris had settled and found a small innocent looking planet that was just starting to evolve. And so he set forth to work on this exciting new venture.

'What on earth am I going to call it?'

He watched the molten lava cool and as the oceans filled up, creatures crawled out of the waters. He watched Australapithecus then Homo Habilis and Homo Erectus and then along came Adam and Eve.

*"All I just wanted was a nice quiet little place where I could rest and put my feet up on a Sunday. That Garden of Eden was just perfect but somehow it hasn't worked out quite to plan. You put a young lad in a beautiful garden with a stonking beautiful blonde, stark bollock naked and along comes Hissing Sid offering them an apple. So the original sin is scrumping! It's all the fault of that bloody snake, and he hasn't got a leg to stand on.*

*I know what I'll do. I'll send down my son. Young Jesus, he should be able to sort it all out and what do they do. Crucify him! I ask you? Those bloody Romans, not even Charlton Heston can help me out on this one. It's all going to end in tears, I can see it.*

*Well, I'm going to build another Garden of Eden, another piece of heaven on earth. Now where can I find this place?"*

Quite by accident he came across an old dormant volcano and as it evolved, the dark satanic hills surrounding it slowly sprouted woods that sheltered the valley which became lush and verdant.

*"Oh, this is so exciting! Now, I don't want any cock ups here, so who's going to look after it and who's going to start begatting and breeding some nice sensible people? No, not too sensible, some nice stupid simple*

*people. I know, old uncle Gerantinium. I'll send him down.*

*And where is this place, my new Jerusalem? England. Brilliant."*

Yes! He punched the air.

'Gerantinium, wake up and get your arse over here!'

Gerantinium stopped snoring and made his way over to the boss.

'Gerantinium, have I got a deal for you my boy.'

Gerantinium didn't like the sound of that as the Lord stroked his nose and with a twinkle in his eye said. 'Now I've got a little job for you. Nothing too mind boggling. I just want you to set up a little colony for me. That's all I'm asking. Nothing awe inspiring. Just a nice quiet "pipe and slippers" sort of place. Have you got the picture?'

'Er, I'm not quite sure there boss. Just run it by me again can you?'

'Peace, tranquillity and solitude, nice gardens, lots of flowers, simple folk.....'

'Can I have a pub?' interrupted Gerantinium,

'Of course you can my boy but no apple trees or snakes and for Christ's sake, don't go over the top with that religion stuff or they'll crucify you.'

Gerantinium had to think about this. The Lord continued.

'Now look, you'll be the boss, but there's no monarchy or democracy, no communism, no anarchy or fascism, you'll be a committee. How's that sound? Shouldn't strain the old brain cells there now should it?'

'A committee?' Gerantinium mused a while.

'You know, just sit there all day long drinking coffee, scratching various parts of the anatomy, making lots of notes and blethering a load of old codswallop and at the end of the day, not a decision in sight.'

Gerantinium was still in deep thought.

'And you'd be the Chairman. How about that?'

Well, how could he refuse?

'Where exactly is it?'

'I don't know, somewhere in the middle of England.'

'Well, its sounds ok so far. What's it going to be called?'

'Oh, I don't know, something on the grounds of Shangri La, or Utopia, or Brigadoon or, well, call it whatever you want, alright?'

Gerantium's brain was getting into a bit of a muddle here, but a name was slowly starting to form.

The Lord left Gerantium to his thoughts and moving to his right asked Saint Peter for his input.

'What's your thoughts on my new project Pete old boy?'

'Yeah, I see where you're coming from boss after that last cock up with your lad. Don't you think this time there should be some sort of back up on this? What about bringing in the AA?'

'Good thinking Pete. I'll pop along and have a word then. Where the hell are their offices?'

'I think they're down there on the left somewhere.'

So the Lord set off purposefully until he found the door with AA on it and barged straight in. Well, there's not much point knocking and waiting if you're the ultimate highest authority when you will get in anyway.

'Oops, sorry.' He quickly closed the door.

'I don't think a load of alcoholics will help much.'

He walked on further down until he found another office.

'Ah, here we are. Archangels Association.'

He entered relatively cautiously this time.

'Sorry to bother you but I need a little help with a new project of mine.'

'No problems boss, how can we be of assistance,' said a rather dominating lady who seemed to be the head of some sort of meeting.

'Oh, hi Mary. Look I'm sending old Gerantium to try and recover the situation down on Earth and need some back up. Don't want any cock ups after the last fiasco with my lad.'

'Yeah, I see where you're coming from,' said Mary. 'I think we can handle that don't you lads?' she turned to

the rest of the meeting who all mumbled something that sounded like a general acknowledgement.

'Oh, cool. So I'll leave that to you then. No rush. Don't let on too much to Gerantinium, but just keep an eye on him and send us some sort of report every millennium.'

He left and a murmur went round the room. Mary quickly took the initiative.

'Ok boys let's get this show on the road. Now Saint Sidney I want you to get a few volunteers.'



*Primrose Cottage*



WAY OUT →



Village school &  
Community college



Village shop  
& Post Office



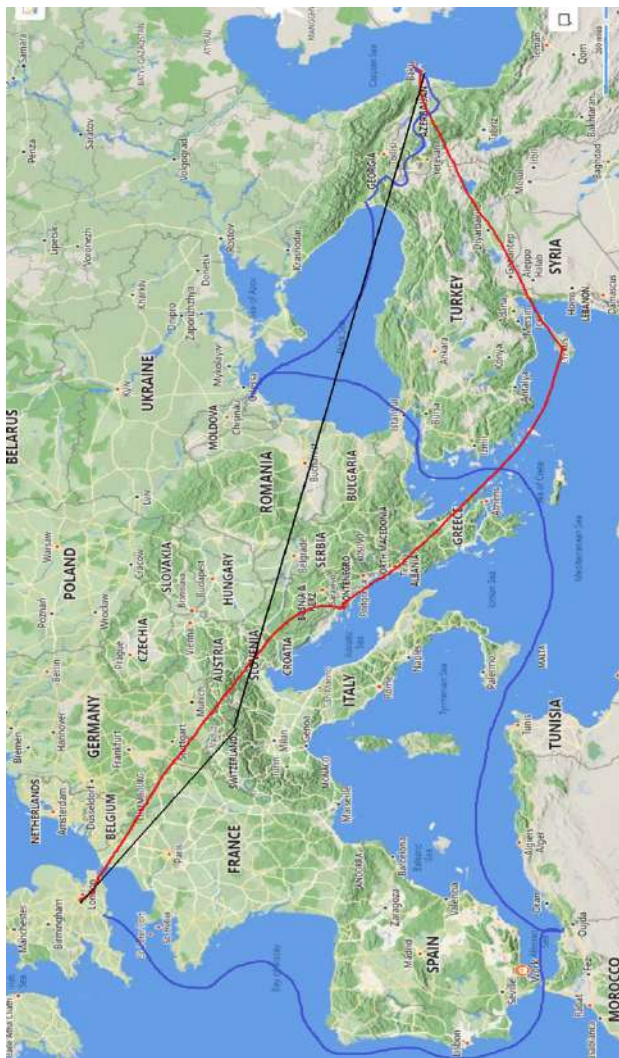
**The Snort & Truffle Pub**



**MIDDLECOMBE  
MANOR**



**Middlecombe-cum-Snoring**



Boris's journey out to Azerbaijan

Dense's flight out

Their return flight back via Switzerland

## Chapter 1. Kidnapping in Azerbaijan.

Once upon a time in a far off land called Azerbaijan during the time of Perestroika, whoever she was, a young Scottish petro chemical engineer was minding his own business drinking a glass of watered down vodka in the "Pink Pussy" night club in downtown Baku.

And on a lovely summer's afternoon in a quaint chocolate box village somewhere in the middle of England called Muddlecombe-cum-Snoring, Boris, a retired KGB assassin and Dense, the village idiot working for British Intelligence, were enjoying a pint of their favourite bitter in their local pub minding their own business.

So, just as everybody was starting to live happily ever after, who should turn up, yes, the shit fairy!

\* \* \*

Sir Robert "Standfast" McFadyen Kt OBE MC was a dour Scottish Presbyterian. Educated at George Heriot's School, Edinburgh, Winchester College, and Sandhurst and had a successful career in the Scots Guards, serving in Korea, Singapore, Kenya and Aden. He played rugby for the Army where he earned the nickname "jock strap" and after he was demobbed he did a classics degree at Balliol College, Oxford and then joined the diplomatic service. He managed to sidestep the homosexual bit and was now Her Majesty's Britannic Ambassador in Azerbaijan. A tall gaunt overpowering gentleman who was known as someone who stood for no nonsense.

Right now though he was staring down both barrels of a fully loaded nonsense gun.

Mr "Dense" Dimmock .



'Just run that bit past me again about heads rolling around can you please Mr Dimmock?'

'Well, they weren't rolling around, just sort of lying around.'

'Heads? We're talking about people's heads here are we?'

'Yeah, them things on your shoulders.'

'Right.' He wasn't quite sure how to continue.

There was a pregnant pause and Dense picked up on it and carried on.

'Yeah, it was all a bit messy.'

'I'm sure it was. And how did these heads get detached from their shoulders?'

'Them shaskas.'

'Shaskas?'

'Yeah, them sort of swords, what the Cossacks used.'

'Cossacks?'

'Yeah, Boris' mates.'

'Boris' mates?'

Sir Robert was sure this was all leading somewhere but for the life of him couldn't see where. But if nothing he had patience. He may be losing it but he was sure if he just amassed all his diplomatic skills he would get some sort of understandable result.

Fat chance.

'Boris. Ah, yes, he's the gentleman we were waiting for.'

'That's the one.'

'And he is .....?'

'He's me mate from the village.'

'The village?'

'Yeah, Muddlecombe.'

'Muddlecombe?'

'Yeah, Muddlecombe-cum-Snoring.'

'And he.....?'

'He's really from the Ukraine and he used to work for the KGB as an assassin and I helped him out a couple of years ago getting his pension fund back to blighty from the Ukraine and he lives in the village now with his old KGB boss who's having it off with the wife of that ponce

Creighky O'Riley, but obviously we couldn't have Boris coming out here with me being in the Secret Service and using all them RAF types 'cause he wouldn't have fitted in to that plane any way.'

'Obviously.'

'And because "Z" gave me this job to come and find this Scotch fella what worked in oil around here, Boris' boss helped me out with getting information from this Igor bloke what lived out here. He was a nasty bit of work I can tell you and he had this castle. So Boris pops back to his old village in the Ukraine and gets a few lads out here to help us out getting into this castle and of course Igor wasn't having none of it.....'

'Of course.' Sir Robert managed to get a word in while Dense took a deep breath. He was still cringing from the Scotch remark and felt he was probably in need of a stiff one right now.

'So like I was saying these lads were Cossacks and they don't muck about I can tell you and the job had to be done quickly and quietly as this tart's kidnapped me and that little bald short arsed git stuck these needles into me and the next thing I know is Boris and his mates is gawping and having a laugh at me and this tart lying bollock naked in the middle of her boudoir and me pecker's standing up like Nelson's Column in Trafalgar square but we gets the low down on where this Jock chap's been kidnapped and off we all goes for another sing song and a good punch up and, well, here we are so to speak.'

Dense took another deep breath which gave Sir Robert time to try and think up an answer.

'Can I get you another cup of coffee Mr Dimmock?'

Several weeks earlier.

Any foreign student trying to learn the English language would freely admit that it was a "pain in the arse" if they'd got that far into their studies.

It's all very well being able to conjugate the verbs and fully understand the vagaries of the third person

singular but to be fully cognisant of the language one needs to get to grips with the use of innuendos, slang, euphemisms, not withstanding all the local dialects.

So when someone says "hallo big boy" you need to pull in all the resources of a fully trained linguist.

Now Boris was quite clearly a "big boy" on account of his large physical size being six foot four and weighing in at twenty two stone. He had a nickname of "five bellies" in the Russian Army but had promoted himself upon arrival in Muddlecombe up to the rank of "seven bellies".

But try understanding this description of say Dense. He started life as Denis but when his full potential was realised, he was rechristened "Dense". He was five foot eight and weighed ten stone dripping wet. The only people to recognise the full meaning of "big boy" were those very close to him. His Mummy, who had to bathe him as a toddler and his lovely wife Dollianna. Of course we're forgetting the million or so people who had purchased a certain pornographic video but they probably wouldn't recognise him as his face hardly featured. They would be too busy concentrating on Dollianna's more significant points.

If Dense had wanted to go swimming in the public baths he would have had to wear war surplus khaki drill shorts or be charged with a public disorder offence.

The Australian terminology of "budgie smugglers" would have to be completely rethought and a new "euphemism" introduced as something on the lines of "badger bags". Fortunately, or unfortunately for the local ladies of Muddlecombe there were no public baths in the village.

So the use of the phrase "big boy" could quite easily be misunderstood, even by a professor.

Professor Pietro Kemikhail was born in Aberdeen; his father was a Russian trawler captain from Murmansk and his mother a local school teacher. His father enjoyed the warm sunny climes of Aberdeen compared to Murmansk, and the warm sunny smiles of the local lassies whose

men folk were always out on some oil rig most of the time.

So Pietro, or Pete as he was generally known, was destined to end up in the oil industry. After attending St Andrews University he got a PhD with a dissertation in molecular structures and ended up as a consultant for the British and American Petroleum Company. He got posted to the Azeri–Chirag–Guneshli oil fields in the Caspian Sea about 120 kilometres off the coast of Azerbaijan. An overall estimated area of the field is 430 square kilometres and operated by BAP with an estimated oil production of 500.000 barrels per day.

Doctor of Philosophy, abbreviated as PhD (for the Latin *philosophiae doctor* or *doctor philosophiae*), in English-speaking countries, is a post graduate academic degree awarded by universities.

How one abbreviates PhD to Doctor of Philosophy no one quite knows, however in this instant it meant Pete's Heavy Drinking, following in his father's footsteps with a lively taste for high grade vodka.

Having arrived at Azerbaijan and settled into his new job, the first thing any young oil executive needs to do is to find out where the local bars are.

He had been invited to the company's social club where he was introduced to his working colleagues and as there was a limited range of British beers available to keep the homesick blues at bay, Pete was eager to explore pastures new. So he enquired as to the whereabouts of these pastures where he could taste the local specialities.

This also gave his colleagues an excuse to go downtown and visit some of the local hostelrys and, who knows, perhaps some of the local talent as well.

He was quite excited about being sent to a Russian satellite country as it would give him access to a wider range of vodkas not normally available on the market in Scotland.

So off they all went one evening to downtown Baku. After several tastings in local bars the more experienced amongst the BAP company employees suggested that

they try out the “Pink Pussy” night club. Pete wasn’t impressed that much with the range of drinks that he had tasted by now so didn’t really care where he went.

So there he was enjoying a quiet night out in one of Baku’s night clubs and putting his vodka tasting buds to the test when someone said “hallo big boy”.

It went completely over his head. He was by no means big and considered himself old enough to be past the boyhood stage.

His BAP Company colleagues all looked at each other to ascertain who could fit this description and who could set up conversation with an extremely attractive young lady who had wedged herself next to Pete at the bar.

Pete was blissfully unaware of the situation being far too busy trying to evaluate the local drink with a score out of ten.

There was a movement similar to bees round a honey pot as his colleagues circled the young lady but she steadfastly clung on to Pete and eventually they gave up and announced, ‘Pete, I think you’ve pulled’.

Pete was beginning to get the picture by now and came to the realisation that he had grown an extremely beautiful young lady on his right arm.

Their eyes met and he wanted to say something but the sudden flood of testosterone overrode all his other brainal functions.

But his *groinal* functions were starting to react.

‘Hallo, what’s your name?’

Some of the testosterone subsided and left the oral section of the brain room to start functioning.

‘Er, er, Pete.’

‘Hallo Pete, I’m Diana.’

Huh! More likely something on the lines of Dobryna Akhtakhanova!

‘Er, er, hi.’

The old oral linguistic brain cells were really going into warp speed here.

‘Would you like to buy me a drink Pete?’

‘Er, er, aye, ok,’

Diana realised this was going to take some time. But she had plenty.

'Do you think I could have a vodka with some Coca Cola please Pete?'

'Er, er, yeah, aye, ok.'

Suddenly Pete realised he could now draw on the full amount of his specialist knowledge and enter into what he considered to be an intelligent conversation.

'Er, ok, but could I ask you which vodka you prefer?'

'Oh, hell, whatever they are serving here.'

'It's just that I think the vodka is watered doon a wee bittee here. I don't suppose you'll ken how to ask for a decent vodka would you? This stuff's like drinking pish.'

Diana was having a bit of difficulty with the language here. She'd never been given a project involving a Scottish person before. She was working for a gentleman by the name of Igor Badlotski who had dragged her up from the gutters of Moscow during his military service there and set her up as a courtesan, a sort of posh word for a prostitute, or more commonly known as a whore.

But she was good at her job having the benefit of good looks and a stonking good figure. Igor had seen the potential immediately and had groomed her well. He had seen the light during the breakup of the Soviets in this perestroika period and realised the benefits of capitalism over communism.

Using his contacts in the Russian army he had set about collecting as much war surplus stuff as he could and then realised the best place to sell it was where all the trouble was, in Chechnya amongst other places. And so he moved to Azerbaijan close to the market place for his goods and started taking full advantage of the benefits of capitalism. Profits. Then the usual stuff followed on naturally: gambling; drugs; money laundering; prostitution et al.

He had the misfortune to bump into Boris' boss Chekov, who was working for the KGB at the time when he first got started in his "with profits" strategic planning portfolio.

This was shunned by the politniks in the Kremlin and the KGB were asked to bring Igor in to "help with their enquiries".

Chekov got his hands on him and after a brief interrogation found little use for him other than instigating similar ideas into his own head.

So Igor was released, demobbed, but in a short time had set up a successful war surplus business based in Azerbaijan. He had taken over an old disused castle just outside Baku and had now been given the title of "Warlord" having scraped up a small army of undesirables along the way who could help him maintain his status in society.

Having set up in an uneasy alliance with the Chechnyan rebels in the gun running business he had been asked to help them out with a little terrorist activity that might align their cause a little bit closer to the Russian Imperialists.

If they could stop the flow of oil into Russia from the large oil fields of Azerbaijan then they had "got them by the bollocks" as one strategist put it. So Igor was asked if he could help. Obviously a large amount of money was involved so he had agreed and was asked to get information on the pipeline layout.

Basically this was a simple operation of finding a smart young oil executive and kidnapping him. This is where Diana or Nickola Elastickova to give her her real name came into play. She had done her market research well by talking to the other employees at the British and American Petroleum Company who pointed her in the direction of Pete who was now by her side and the rest would be plain sailing. Little did she realise she would have to sit through a complete dissertation on the different types of vodka.

'Let's ask our friend behind the bar shall we Pete?' After a brief conversation she turned to Pete and asked him what type of vodka he would prefer.

'Jings, thanks a million hen. I don't suppose your man's got a decent tasting vodka like a Polish Chopin or a Belvedere or even perhaps a Russian Standard Gold?'

The message was translated to the barman but it only drew a shake of the head.

'An *U'luvka*, a first class Polish vodka would be out of the question then?'

Another shake of the head.

'I suppose we'll just have to go with whatever shite he's got behind the bar.'

Diana had to translate that rather carefully but eventually she got a drink.

The barman realising that this customer probably knew more about vodka than he did and was probably earning ten times his normal customer's income, bent down and produced a new bottle of the non-watered down variety and gave Pete a free drink on the house.

'Oh, jeez, that's a wee bit better pal. *Slanjiva!*' and proceeded to throw it down his throat. 'That's a better swally,' he managed to say after several gulps.

Diana winked at the barman and turned to Pete. 'Cheers Pete, you happy with that vodka then?'

'It'll just have to do hen. It's a lot better when it hasn't got any water in it though.' He turned to barman and winked. Just because he was a professor didn't mean he was *completely* stupid.

The barman laughed and handed over the new bottle to the two young lovers. He knew the game and he would get his reward once they had carried Pete out in the loving arms of "Diana", off to Igor's pleasure.

Only it wasn't quite that simple.

A Scottish student's stomach lining is a wondrous thing.

The chemical department at St Andrews University had seriously considered giving it a new atomic number.

Pete had been a student for more years than he could remember and most of those years he couldn't remember much due to the alcoholic haze that was constantly tied to his brain.

The fact that eventually he had managed to fulfill all the criteria for a dissertation at university was a miracle in itself.



And that he had survived on a diet of Mars Bars in batter, Barr's Irn Bru (which was made from girders), Pot Noodles, vodka, tequila, Red Bull and the occasional malt whiskey said something about his constitution.

Diana had to sit and listen to his expertise in Vodka: chronicling all the various types: the French Pinnacle and Grey Goose; Crystal Head Vodka from Canada; Finlandia; the Russian Stolichnaya and Smirnoff vodkas. Absolut from Sweden, the Skyy from USA and of course all the best tasting vodkas: Kauffman Vintage Luxury; Stoli Elit; Chateau Mukhrani Vintage Chacha; Chopin; 42 Below; Belvedere; Russian Standard Gold; Xellent and not forgetting his beloved U'luvka.

Not only did she have to listen to all that but she had to be seen to be drinking alongside his drinking and even though he was going through four times more than she was, and she was mixing it with Coca Cola, she was on her knees at four o'clock in the morning when the barman levered them gently out into a waiting taxi.

## Chapter 2. Dense Dimmock and Neurology.

"Dense" or Denis, his given name, was born in Muddlecombe-cum-Snoring at an early age. His mother, Mrs Dimmock was, to say the least, a phenomenon.

His father was as well. So phenomenal that nobody actually could remember who he was. Everyone knew who Mrs Dimmock was, and who Dense Dimmock was, that is after he was born.

But Mr Dimmock remained one of life's great mysteries as well as a mystery to those in Muddlecombe-cum-Snoring. Some said that he died at the birth of Dense. No one is quite sure if that meant he died giving birth to Dense, or just died when he saw Dense being born.

Rumours had it that it was an immaculate conception. But these rumours were quickly scotched as the villagers didn't want any religious zealots running around flagellating themselves or blowing themselves up.

As the local rubbish collection was non-existent (the local council being unable to find Muddlecombe) it certainly didn't need any blood or guts to clear up unnecessarily.

Some of the villagers said Mr Dimmock was a travelling salesman, but couldn't remember what he was selling, or where he was travelling to or from. There was a sort of black cloud hanging over the whole event of Dense's birth. Very strange, but then everything about Muddlecombe-cum-Snoring was very strange.

His school academia record wasn't anything to write home about but Dense (everybody had forgotten his proper name by now) was proud of his Dyslexia, presuming it to be advantageous. He didn't actually get any certification, but they discovered Dense's "talent" or not as the case may be, on or about the same time as the other exam results were being given out at school.

"Oh, and by the way, Dense, you have Dyslexia," the teacher would add on to the end of all the other results.

Dense assumed he would be getting some form of certification from the Local Authority. The fact of the matter is that the Local Education Authority, like every other Local Authority, never actually knew where Muddlecombe-cum-Snoring was, so no certificates were ever issued, only results given out verbally.

Anyway today he was on holiday from his work with Intelligence in MI6 in his brand new Porsche with his gorgeous wife, the lovely Dollianna. It was his mother's birthday and as they entered the village he looked over the village green to the duck pond and to the Norman Church with its ancient little gate leading into the churchyard and cemetery.

Along the road from the church were the majestic iron gates of Muddlecombe Manor, the home of Lucinda D'Arcy-Landacre, whose husband Reginald owned most of the land in and adjoining Muddlecombe which was registered in the Domesday book. This was where Dense used to work. He was their odd-job man.

So his day job was at Muddlecombe Manor but every now and then he would receive an envelope with lots of cash in it and he instinctively knew this meant he had to do his property maintenance job on Primrose Cottage.

He could see it now lurking on the other side of the village green hidden in a small copse with a white picket fence in the front. The wooden window ledges beneath a dark thatched roof gave it an almost sinister look hiding in the shade of the tall trees to the rear.

And that's because it *was* quite sinister. The home of young John, it was rarely used by him or his shadowy colleagues so was now a sort of posh transit home for all newcomers into the village.

Primrose Cottage had been repainted, rethatched, replastered, redecorated, rewired and replumbed on several occasions. It had telephones and god knows what all installed in it, with all sorts of engineers coming and going. How they found Muddlecombe was a complete mystery, but they generally managed it, especially the telephone engineers who were completely fazed by the

lack of parking restrictions and took several hours to make up their minds where to put their vans.

Fortunately for him his employer had been broadminded enough to get him trained in whatever he needed doing in odd jobbing. He had been sent on courses at the local community college on brick laying, painting and decorating, plastering, thatching, plumbing, basic computers and "electrickery".

Although Dense had the IQ of a moron he was what you would call "good with his hands". It would seem that his brain cells had migrated to these extremities (and another) and so he was the derivative of the word "handyman".

He was very good at electrickery as he called it, because of his "denseness" so to speak. He was able to detect faults with ease. It was just a case of playing around with some wires until he got a tingling sensation between his ears and then he knew that he was between live and neutral and that there was a circuit and that is was "on". So depending on the amount of tingling, he could tell whether it was AC or DC and the rough amount of voltage and current.

This saved an awful lot of time pissing about with all these ohmmeters, ammeters, or voltmeters in one hand, the positive and negative meter cables and connectors in the other hand and then trying to turn the switch on the meter to the right position and then trying to connect the right wires to the right terminals.

Dense was well liked by everyone. Not only was he extremely handy, and cheap, but also probably because everyone could relate to him as their inferior. It's a lot easier to like someone who's in a lower station in life to you rather than having to like someone who's always bossing you around.

He was malleable. He would do anything for you and was very generous with what little assets he had. You would never get an argument out of him, probably because you would never dare to argue against his logic. He didn't have any logic, so how could you contest a vacuum?

You could listen to his slow accented drawl all day long, whether you could understand what he was on about was a different matter. Although his wit was as sharp as a balloon he would still make you laugh.

Now ladies could chatter all day long about skirts, blouses, shoes and that fashion stuff plus lipstick and perfume but if men started talking about clothes they would be deemed to be queer, especially the lipstick and perfume stuff.

But Dense would talk about shirts and trousers all day long because he didn't get out much. The simple things in life appealed to him and apart from the fact that he had an apartment in Mayfair, was married to an incredibly beautiful young lady, was driving a brand new Porsche 911 and that he had been to Kiev, Moscow and Helsinki and chased by the KGB and now worked for MI6 was of little concern to him.

All he wanted in life was a quiet time talking to his mates in the pub, a decent pint and a good shag now and then. He was in his early thirties with a wife in her late twenties living in a situation that could only be described as heaven. No fluffy clouds or harps but the nearest thing to an earthly equivalent.

The saying "keep it simple" was never so true as to Dense and his environment

The introduction of Boris into his life added spice as he could sit and talk shirts and trousers all day long to Boris who didn't have a clue what he was on about but the beer was spot on.

Like those who lived on the Galapagos Islands, he had no predators, no enemies, as Darwin's theory had predicted for those who live in an isolated environment.

This same theory probably covered the majority of the inhabitants of Muddlecombe. It was just that Dense was at the bottom of the pile of this evolutionary process.

The villager's DNA didn't quite tie in with the lineage of Homo Sapiens or the Neanderthals. Sort of another missing link.



Now neurology is a great thing if you know what you're looking for.

It's not that Dense, or Denis as he was christened didn't have a brain, it's just that you would have had difficulty finding the "ON" switch.

Then there are Russian brains such as Boris'. Now Boris had travelled the world under the guise of military attachés in the KGB and was trained to kill. Fortunately Boris had a boss who made these decisions for him, of who to kill, while all Boris had to do was work out which way to do the killing and disposal bit. Chekov, his old KGB boss, who was now one of the inhabitants in Primrose Cottage, had become self employed after the break up of the Soviets but still had his faithful staff to help him out with gambling, drug smuggling, money laundering, prostitution etc, the usual private enterprise stuff.

Boris was stationed in Tenerife when he helped out John and his friends by moving some gold bullion they had borrowed from Heathrow into a Russian bank owned by Boris' boss. However things got a little hot and he had to leave in a hurry and was sent to lie low in the village.

So there was this great meeting of intellects in the "Snort and Truffle" pub when two brains clashed or rather nudged slowly into each other and a great friendship was formed.

Boris would be double declutching from Russian into English and Dense would be double declutching from brain "on" mode to "neutral" and then into first gear. But they were happy.

So you had a twenty two stone, six foot four Boris "Seven Bellies" Slobovitch and a five foot eight, ten stone Dense Dimmock relationship.

Boris had the slavik looks with a square face and a large jaw and cherubic pink cheeks which belied his notorious assassin profession. Tufts of thin black hair

sprouted on the top of his flat head giving any decent barber complete confusion as to what to do with it.

His giant frame held two long ape like arms with great labourer's hands swinging gently in the breeze at the ends. His size twelve shoes only accentuated his enormity.

Although he was pushing sixty and lived up to his nick name of "seven bellies" he was incredible agile for someone in his condition.

Now Dense was the complete opposite.

Quite invisible.

Well maybe not really invisible just unnoticeable.

He was normal, there were no distinguishing characteristics. He didn't stick out in a crowd, he was the perfect mingler.

He wasn't tall, he wasn't short. Not fat nor thin. He wasn't heavy but he wasn't light either. He wasn't loud nor quiet. Not communist nor fascist. He wasn't at the least bit Church of England yet neither was he Roman Catholic. He wasn't handsome nor ugly. He wasn't intelligent or stupid, well not that stupid.

He was extremely average.

The only problem being in the underpant department.

God felt it right and proper to at least give him something to write home about. I mean, he was part of the family so to speak.

So his cloak of invisibility could only be undone in the summer when he was wearing shorts and of course also at home when Mummy was giving him a bath.

But he was a big boy now, literally, and enjoying the quiet unnoticeable life in Muddlecombe with his favourite pint in the Snort and Truffle.

Little had he realised that he would be working for British Intelligence, MI6 and be married to a beautiful blonde who was the talk of the town in London and the rest of the world if you had a video player.

Dense unlike Boris had a cherubic face which was always smiling. If you had what he had and a beautiful

wife like Dollianna to boot you would be continually smiling.

He had nice brown wavy hair on top of his jolly round face with a small button nose and a wide grin that showed off his pearly white teeth. Dimples either side accentuated the simple countenance.

When he and Boris got together, it was rather like watching a Great Dane sniffing a Chihuahua's bottom wondering what could come of such a relationship. Quite obviously there weren't going to be any puppies but they were a strange couple seen together nonetheless.

It was about this time a couple of years ago that Dense and another villager, Captain Creighky O'Riley helped Boris out by going back to Kiev for him to retrieve some of his pension fund, Boris being unable to do this through a cock up in communications.

This trip was the first time Dense had left the village let alone travelled to far off distant places and it was quite obviously doomed to failure from the beginning. They got mixed up with the Ukrainian secret police and ended up in a "honey trap". Unfortunately one of the secret police ladies (a double agent the West had been trying to get hold of for years) was accidentally killed leaving our two village idiots on the run ending up in Helsinki via Moscow. Dense was eventually secreted back to Blighty under diplomatic immunity and his colleague dispatched to somewhere in darkest Africa until the dust had died down.

The other unfortunate Ukrainian agent had to leave in a hurry and claimed political asylum in the UK giving Dense as a referee. The MI6 debriefing process with Dense revealed a considerable amount of extremely sensitive military and political information and also a best selling pornographic video.

Boris' pension fund was a large collection of uncut diamonds which was now the stock for an extremely profitable village business venture and Boris had shown his gratitude by making Dense a shareholder and director of the company.



That was two years ago and since then Dense had been sub contracted by MI6 Intelligence to debrief other female political asylum seekers meanwhile carrying on with his other job making politically incorrect videos.

Both he and Captain Creighky O'Riley had been awarded the OBE for services to British Intelligence and Dense had married his Ukrainian secret agent, the beautiful Dollianna and they lived very comfortably in a nice unpretentious penthouse in Mayfair.

Now try explaining all that to a neurologist.

But today was Mrs Dimmock's birthday and her son had come up from London with his new wife and with his medal awarded by the Queen. And he was working for the finest intelligence service in the World, MI6, but then Mrs Dimmock knew all this was going to happen and it came as no surprise to her but a big surprise to the villagers.

Everything was a big surprise to the villagers at the moment, even that Primrose Cottage was now the temporary accommodation for the Head of the Russian Mafia, a retired KGB Podpolkóvnik Chekov Yeboleksi together with his minder, Boris "Seven Bellies" Slobovitch.

Both of these had come under the spell of Muddlecombe and fallen not only for the unique isolated charms of the village with its total lack of any of those nasty authorities, but also for their inhabitants.

Chekov and Captain Creighky O'Riley's wife Mildred and were now an item in the absence of her husband, who was still "incommunicado" somewhere in Africa.

And in neurological terms Boris and Dense had a lot in common as opposites and would often be seen drinking together in the local pub "The Snort and Truffle."

## Chapter 3. The Interplanetary Standards and Ethics Committee.

Now it is true to say that although Dense Dimmock, wasn't the sharpest pencil in the box, however he did have two things going for him:

Item 1: His mother.

Item 2: A very large penis.

We have already covered item 2 briefly but no doubt it will come up later.

Now Mrs Dimmock was what you would call a phenomenon. She was ubiquitous but one would never really know in what form she would appear.

She didn't actually know she was ubiquitous as she couldn't even spell it, but she had her finger on the pulse of everything that concerned her. Well, after all she was a direct descendant from Gerantinium I and "you know who" up there, so it's not inconceivable that she should have some sort of higher life form, being as her son, Dense was quite the opposite.

She had a part time job using Primrose Cottage as her office. Mrs Dimmock was the secretary cum treasurer cum strategic consultant cum tea lady of Gerantinium's Interplanetary Standards and Ethics Committee. But the fact is that she seemed to know more about what was going on not only in Muddlecombe but everywhere else as well.

By day she was a bumbling old lady walking about the village in a shawl carrying a basket, being a complete nosey bastard. But by night, in her committee role she was an extremely erudite administrator who guided her committee through the strategic nuances of both cosmic and earthly political issues.

So Mrs Dimmock enjoyed excellent working conditions in Primrose Cottage every second Thursday of alternate months. John, the owner who needed instant access to the cottage on a 24 hour basis, seven days a week, very rarely turned up.

Nobody in the village can remember seeing much of John, probably because he and his furtive colleagues always seemed to come and go in the dead of night. And could the complete lack of police presence have something to do with it as well?

So she had the run of the cottage, well that was until all these new immigrants started to appear.

First of all Brewster and Fiona, the people who eventually took over the pub. Then Boris turned up and is still there along with his boss, the head of the Russian Mafia. Well actually he's hardly there at all as he is having it off with Mildred in lieu of her husband's political posting to somewhere in darkest Africa.

The Lord, God bless him, was well pissed off with all that crucifixion nonsense and having watched the crusades and a general decline in table manners he felt he needed his new dominion to be properly monitored and project managed.

Although he had relative confidence in Gerantinium he felt that he really should have some sort of back up. Like a PA to a CEO.

A sort of safety net or firewall.

So he sent down one of his angels in the form of Mrs Dimmock as part of the "coming" into this new Garden of Eden.

Now Mrs D was quite ubiquitous and she may well have had a hand to help Christopher Columbus to discover the new world and then inspire Sir Francis Drake to follow and start up the British American Tobacco Company.

Did she inspire Thomas Cook to sail to Botany Bay and introduce New Zealand lamb to the world?

Did she have a hand in the weather off Cape Trafalgar to help Admiral Lord Nelson defeat the Spanish Armada?

This is all pure conjecture because all we know is that she had to focus on the job in hand and oversee the management of this new Garden of Eden project at Muddlecombe.

One of her priorities was to be able to mingle with the local indigenous population. Obviously the wings had to come off and she felt it only right and proper to propagate to enter into the family spirit of things and gain the villagers' confidence.

So she grabbed a passing travelling salesman in order to give the illusion that she was not having an "immaculate conception" and so her son entered the world and Mrs Dimmock's earthly role was fulfilled.

She still kept up-to-date with all the other worldly comings and goings and had a considerable network of agents or fallen angels to give them their correct title who had been sent down to earth for monitor all the other projects the boss had in hand.

Mrs Dimmock's job was the secretary to the Inter Planetary Standards and Ethics committee and wasn't exactly what one would call very demanding apart from having to keep control of a gaggle of eclectic misfits. This basically meant providing the tea and biscuits (homemade), writing the minutes, administering and implementing the strategic project plans and generally sweeping up afterwards.

Gerantinium O'Deighy III, chairman of the committee sat down at the head table in the dining room at Primrose Cottage, shuffled his papers about and looked around at the assembled meeting.

'Now where were we?' he muttered under his breath shuffling the papers about a bit more.

'The minutes!' came a brusque reply from Ignatius Cromwell. As head of the Politics and Religion division he was a busy man, a doer and he couldn't be doing with all this paperwork nonsense. After all he had a lot on his plate.

'Ah, yes, the minutes,' muttered Gerantinium again and he looked up and called to Mrs Dimmock in the kitchen. 'Er, Mrs Dimmock, can we get on with the minutes please?'

'Just coming Chair,' replied Mrs Dimmock as she undid her apron and bustled through with a tray, tea pot,

cups and saucers and a large plate of home-made biscuits. 'There now, must get the tea organised first lads mustn't we?'

'Especially Mrs Dimmock's biscuits,' said Gerantinium leaning over to the biscuit plate. 'Must watch the old tummy though, perhaps just the one this time.'

In reverence to his age and position the others waited until he had gathered up *two* biscuits and then dived in to make sure they got one before they all went. That is apart from Ignatius who sat back with his arms folded waiting impatiently for the proceedings to get underway. Mrs Dimmock caught the mood of his impatience and rushed round to her seat and started arranging her papers in order. She gave a little cough and looked around the room for silence.

Gerantinium brushed the crumbs from his long white beard and gave a confirmationary cough as well. 'Gentlemen I think we can proceed with the er, proceedings. Mrs Dimmock, I think you can er, er, proceed please.'

'Thank you Chair,' started Mrs Dimmock and proceeded to read the minutes of the last meeting which were duly agreed, signed and after a brief waiting for Gerantinium to finish his shaky signature, they all had a sip from their tea and the chair opened up the meeting.

'Ignatius, my friend how's it going then in the old politics and religion side?'

'Well to be quite honest Chair, as I said before, I feel the next time the boss sends down a representative to earth he should really get the Media and Relations act together to stop all these splinter groups.....'

'Yes, yes Ignatius,' Gerantinium interjected quickly. 'You say this every time, now can we move on.' Without giving Ignatius the time for his next breath he moved to Hercules or Harry as he was known in the village.

'How's the old sport and leisure department coming along?'

Harry was still dreaming of the village cricket team's overseas trip to Botswana where his bowling was a major

influence in their win. Apart from Boris knocking the ball all over various parts of Africa.

Gerantinium picked up his tardiness and moved swiftly on to Nostradamus Macadam, the Science and Technology representative who had little to say apart from his normal request for a Windows' upgrade for his pc.

Pablo Hemmingway, the art and literature aficionado was busy doodling all over the minutes.

Gerantinium was relieved that the proceedings were proceeding so smoothly without any significant input from any of the other committee members until, 'oh, by the way, could I have a word please Chair?' Mrs Dimmock whispered humbly.

'Yes, certainly Mrs Dimmock.'

'Any biscuits left?' Gerantinium tried to stall Mrs Dimmock but knew it was doomed to failure; at least he could try some more of her home made cookies.

'I do hope Ignatius will not feel put out but my lad young Dense,' (Even his mother called him "Dense" instead of Denis,) 'has got himself involved in this intelligence lark with another trip abroad to some strange place call Azerbaijan and I was hoping we could sort of help him out a bit on this? This does of course circumnavigate both strategic and topical issues so perhaps Mrs O'Riley can be of help here.'

Captain Creighky O'Riley's doe eyed wife was living with Boris's old boss, Chekov Yeboleksi in lieu of her husband's absence.

This connection with Chekov who was head of the Russian Mafia had been extremely useful to both Mildred's wellbeing and the wellbeing of the village. Everybody now had inside toilets and the church roof was next inline for refurbishment. Mildred's School cum Community College had benefitted as well and was now a busy diamond cutting factory under the guise of Boris' entrepreneurial diamond company. Mrs Dimmock looked over to Mildred and continued.

'I know my lad's wife,' there was a silent moan from the more senior committee members in the room who

were internally drooling over the picture in their minds of Dollianna, 'and Mr Chekov,' here she turned to Mildred who blushed, 'both have some connections with that part of the world? But I feel we need to tread rather carefully here. That part of the world can be a bit on the dangerous side and I think my lad may need the usual back up. I have a feeling (Mrs Dimmock's feelings always turned out right) that there could be some additional benefit for the village here as well.'

'Where's azer... thingy, what you just said Mrs D?' Mildred queried.

'Well, I'm not altogether sure myself but I think it's one of those old Russian satellite countries.'

'Ah, well leave it up to me, I'll get on to Mr Chekov then. He's bound to know where that is.'

Chekov, Boris and Dense's wife Dollianna all came from the Ukraine which must be somewhere close to a Russian satellite country.

'Mrs O'Riley, I know the committee would be eternally grateful to you if you could put us all out of our misery and ignorance and keep us up to date on this azer ... thingy place.' Gerantinium beamed at Mildred who positively glowed with pride and satisfaction. After all this was Mildred's first time as a full member of the committee having been introduced by Mrs Dimmock to try and introduce some more local matters of interest to the proceedings.

It can however be said that the committee had fully met all the criteria of its Memorandum and Articles of Associations: that is, not a decision in sight so far.

'Now where were we?' Gerantinium scratched around for some papers trying to look important.

Mrs Dimmock saved the day, 'I think that about does it Chair, don't you think so?'

'Yes, I feel that, as you say Mrs D, does it. Are we all in favour? Oh are there any biscuits left Mrs D?'

## Chapter 4. Muddlecombe-cum-Snoring.

Muddlecombe-cum-Snoring was twinned with Shangri La and Brigadoon. The twinning committee had looked at Hobiton but felt that the introduction of people of a deprived stature and with large hairy feet would be a hindrance to their evolutionary process rather than a help.

As it was some of the villagers were starting to get small beady eyes and playing the banjo rather a lot.

Muddlecombe-cum-Snoring was surrounded by gently rolling hills somewhere in the middle of England between Muddlecombe Magna and Muddlecombe Parva. The volcanic forested rim hid this picturesque little hamlet from society and as you looked down on the green verdant valley you half expected to see a herd of grazing wildebeest or zebra. A sort of poor man's *Ngorongoro Crater*.

But instead of a herd of wild animals all one would see would be the occasional villagers basking in the sun on a pub bench outside the "Snort and Truffle" on the village green discussing either the vagaries of quantum physics or who was going to pay for another pint of Brewster's best bitter.

The chances were stacked against the quantum physics bit.

Unfortunately through natural (or unnatural) erosion, the gently rolling hills formed a perfect sinusoidal waveform which was the harmonic resonant frequency of all the major Air Traffic Control radio frequencies and a few more to boot.

If Google maps had been invented then they would have shown a sort of grey fluffy cloud over the village hiding it from the rest of civilisation.

And then there was the considerable iron ore deposit that went down several miles into the earth's crust. This formed a magnetic pole which fountained out over the village. This caused a sort of "Grey Hole" effect, adding



to the fluffy cloud effect, all of which diminished the probability of people actually finding this idyllic little village.

Any over flying aircraft would hardly notice the compass doing a brief backward somersault and them returning to normal as it passed by in complete ignorance of this little utopian outcrop.

So you had the North Pole, the South Pole and the mini middle Muddlecombe Pole. This caused a hole in the clouds during the day so that it never rained and thus giving a constant summer's day's effect all the year round. At night when the Ionosphere lowered, this let the clouds in and allowed the rain to feed the crops, grass etc.

So this Shangri-La-esque village happily went about its everyday business in complete isolation and ignorance. And boy did they have the monopoly on ignorance.

It was another beautiful sunny day in the village and everything was roses as the small band of villagers continued their blissfully idyllic life of contentment in their little peace of heaven on earth.

So in the centre of this idyllic plain was the village green complete with mandatory duck pond surrounded by the mandatory: Norman church; pub; post office; school; the manor house gates; the villagers' houses up little country lanes and huddled in the corner almost hidden by a small copse was Primrose Cottage.

The village green provided the centre of tranquillity and a cricket pitch for the now famous MCC (Muddlecombe Cricket Club). The inhabitants of the duck pond complained vociferously now and then when clobbered by a cricket ball, but normally this green and pleasant land allowed the hustle and bustle of the modern world to pass it by.

The Norman church sat blissfully at one end of the green with the pub diametrically opposed next to the village post office cum shop.

The houses were mostly thatched apart from the Norman church which was showing its age and at the moment awaiting some sort of charitable appeal to repair the roof and bell tower.

The lead on the roof was still there but starting to get a bit of fair wear and tear from the elements. Not that anybody would pinch it. The only dubious character in the village was John, and he was never there and more interested in gold bullion than lead.

The bell had ceased functioning for some time now. Some said that the villagers were pissed off for being awoken so early on their day off and had sabotaged it. The truth being that Gerantinium didn't have the energy to jump up and down every Sunday morning.

That apart from the fact that they couldn't find a locum churchman to come and give any sort of decent service of a Sunday.

Some Jehovah's Witnesses had wandered in by mistake and started giving out leaflets but were given the elbow a bit smartish by the villagers before Gerantinium had got to hear of it.

Villagers as a whole were an eclectic bunch of simple folk which is an oxymoron. Moron being the operative word, at the same time eclectic describes the variance of the individuals to a tee.

Inbreeding had smoothed the rough edges from their countenance but at the same time they were hardly all in the same category.

Socio economic grouping could not be applied to this lot. Higher occupations, intermediate occupations and lower occupations did not exist in Muddlecombe. Neither could you categorise Sun Readers from bankers.

In-breeding had reduced the population to a basic common denominator and in socio-economic terms this was "as thick as a brick". However there were some inconsistencies in this theory.

The post office /shop was run by a nice couple, Bill and Betty Boring. Now Betty was also the churchwarden, choir mistress and organist to boot. Betty was one of life's mysteries and a sign that sometimes inbreeding can produce some beautiful variants. She was not your average beedy-eyed ugly duckling but a throw back to a past ancestor and had turned out as a beautiful swan.

Unfortunately the villagers as a whole could not see this as they had no guidelines to go on other than their own simple blinkered vision of life. And that Betty had always worn her hair in a bun, had worn glasses and didn't know an eyeliner pencil from a sausage was some indication to the amount Betty spent on making herself attractive.

Underneath her twin set, tweed and brogue exterior was a stonking good figure and the fact that she was a postmistress and organist and choir mistress added to the ugly bug theory as well.

The shop looked after most of the basic requirements of the villagers but if you wanted anything really exciting like a jar of chutney you would have to go a bit further afield.

Similarly for a decent bottle of Chablis or Nuits Saint Georges you would have to explain to the postmistress, firstly that it was a wine and then that it was French and then wait a few months for the order to be delivered. That is assuming the wine distributors could find Muddlecombe.

So it was probably easier to pop down to London for the day. Most people were quite happy with the Liebfraumilch or a nice drop of Château Muddlecombe Manor's homemade cider.

Betty had gone off to Tenerife on holiday with three other ladies from the village. Now although a certain Mrs Dimmock wasn't one of those who went, she knew full well that Bill was barren and that Betty had let her hair down on holiday and had met a nice man called Brian there and that she was now unbarren.

But that's another story.

Then across from the post office was Primrose Cottage with the gates to Muddlecombe Manor all taking their respective places reverently distanced from each other around this peaceful pasture.

It was a great shame that Constable hadn't passed by this countryside scene otherwise he would have stayed a while and probably "The Hay Wain" might never have been commissioned. And the "Snort and Truffle" would have been hanging in the Tate Gallery by now.

It doesn't bear thinking of!

But Gerantinium III's socio-economic strategic portfolio was not going according to plan. Due to the inbreeding, there was not only a sharp increase in beady eyes and banjo players but a sharp decline in the testosterone count in the groinal areas of the men of the village.

Not only that, but the per capita income was going down the pan as well. So drastic measures had to be taken.

What the village need was fresh blood, someone with a bit of spunk so to speak.

First of all they found a Northern industrialist millionaire on the run from the anti-slave lobby, his family and the press. He and a certain young beauty from his local bordello in tow were quickly dragged into the picturesque vortex of Muddlecombe.

Fortunately she was a quarter of his age so when he popped his clogs and left his fortune to her, she decided to turn over a new leaf and build the local school cum community college for the village.

She managed to find an eligible bachelor with some spunk left in him and gave birth to Mildred. After her parents had passed on Mildred became the school governor.

The school cum community college provided the basic schooling for the children from kindergarten to logarithms and at night provided the villagers with extra curricular courses.

The ladies of the village found this the alternative place for them to go of an evening and offered a wide

range of courses. The most popular currently on offer for the ladies were embroidery, macramé, self defence and Mig welding, while their men went to the "Snort and Truffle" for their extra curricular courses watching Blossom Deecup the over developed barmaid.

Then they came across old John from London who found the peace and tranquillity and lack of law enforcement compatible to his line of work and he built Primrose Cottage and used it as his bolt hole away from those nasty police, customs and tax authorities. He subsequently toddled off to join Gerantinium's connections in the next world and his son, young John continued in his father's footsteps.

John was still "working" in Tenerife transferring the gold bullion he had found at Heathrow into more manageable currencies so he wasn't seen much other than sending people back to Primrose Cottage to lie low or cool off such as Boris.

Then they found Captain Creighky O'Riley, MC, late of the Irish Guards and Korean War hero who was awarded his bravery medal due to an act of drunken stupidity in capturing hill 22. The Army capitalised on this and used him as a propaganda vehicle but ensuring he left the Army before he could do any more damage.

His CV came full of testosterone but not a lot else but the sight of him in his uniform and his Irish blarney turned Mildred's head (being a complete lack of anything else to turn to) and they eventually married.

After some considerable time working in the stock market and after a stroke Brewster Kegworth materialised to recuperate and took over the running of the "Snort & Truffle" pub with his Scottish wife Fiona. She helped the locals out on those dirty little three letter words: VAT and TAX.

Then along came Dr Rammittin Chutnabuttee. Boy was he a good catch. Thrown out of Jodhpur Hospital University for sexual misdemeanours he fulfilled his role to perfection and also started up the village cricket team which had toured South Africa and where Boris' batting

was part of a memorable victory over the Botswana national team. But that's another story.

He started up a Breast Clinic but someone queried that shouldn't it be a Breast *Cancer* Clinic so he had to compromise. But that didn't deter the ladies of the village visiting his medical practice.

And so Gerantinium's plan was back on track.

Well it wasn't actually his plan, his secretary; Mrs Dimmock had a hand in it as she did in everything else to do with Muddlecombe-cum-Snoring, and the rest of the universe.

## Chapter 5. MI6.

'Any other business?' The Prime minister looked around the cabinet meeting hoping to tie things up so that he could get away for the weekend when there was a coughing sound from the corner of the room.

'Excuse me Prime Minister but the Foreign Office are still worried about some missing oil boffin somewhere in one of those strange unpronounceable countries in the old Soviet Republic bloc.'

'Can't you get MI6 to look into it old boy?' he said dismissing this as he stood up to leave.

'Right you are Prime Minister,' and so a cabinet minister who also wanted to get away for the weekend rang the under secretary of state, who had a stonking date on, who then rang *his* secretary to get in touch with MI6.

The Secret Intelligence Service, commonly known as MI6 (Military Intelligence, Section 6), is the agency which supplies Her Majesty's Government with foreign intelligence. It operates under the formal direction of the Joint Intelligence Committee alongside the internal Security Service, the Government Communications Headquarters and the Defence Intelligence.

The Secret Intelligence Service currently occupied dusky suites of little rooms opposite St James's Park Tube station in London long before it moved to its posh new headquarters at Vauxhall Cross on the South Bank of the Thames.

Amongst its many employees was the boss, code named "M", several other layers of management upheld at the bottom by "Z" and at a level lower than a snake's belly on a sub contract basis was a certain Mr Dense Dimmock

As a secret service it was obvious that any top brass in such an organisation had to be given a code name, so obviously the head of MI6 had to be "M". The next in line

had to be "N", and then the "O" department which quite clearly looked after all the "OO" agents, who ever they were.

"P" was for personnel, which nowadays would be Human Resource Management but you can't have an "HRM" department now can you?

Then there was that quaint old queen "Q" who lived in the dungeons of MI6 and made nuclear missile launchers out of fountain pens, and so on.

Now "M" was extremely busy that weekend and so delegated the cabinet request down to "N" who although wasn't *extremely* busy was however *very* busy. So it then went down to "O" who unfortunately had sent all is "OO" agents off to Las Vegas for a high level conference and seminar on "Cling Film."

It eventually arrived on the desk of "Y" who now had twenty six files in front of her and was getting a tad pissed off with getting lumbered with all the donkey work so took the ultimate decision and delegated this one.

So eventually Dense was contacted and asked to come down to London for a meeting with "Z".

\* \* \*

'You may not be aware Mr er.....?'

'Dimmock.'

'Well as I was saying Mr Dimmock, you may not be aware of the situation in central Europe, but the top people in the government have been looking into this for some considerable time and I myself, if I may venture to say so, have investigated this myself during my term at Cambridge and have come to a similar conclusion as my learned superiors. Basically what I'm getting at you may wonder is that the internecine problems in the Slovak states have transgressed into the neighbouring Armenian, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Georgian arenas surrounding Chechnya which will have far reaching strategic implications in not only territorial areas but also in socio economic, industrial, typographical and mineral dispositions which in turn will disperse the



wealth of the areas into adjoining regions and will, by implication spread worldwide causing a downturn in the monetary and social wellbeing of some of the lesser industrialised nations which can in turn only add to the unsettling of any future prognostications for those egalitarian establishments that directly or indirectly will, I hear the economists and agronomists say, effect our very own stable democratic constitution and lead to the weakening of shareholders dispositions towards capital investment should the fluctuations turn in a reverse.....'

Dense's brain cells, assuming there were more than one, and assuming they were switched on, had gone into meltdown mode after the first word, and that was only "well".

Now it could be said that "Z" was verbose, it could be said that the Pope was catholic, but there is only so much amount of Catholicism you can stuff into a Pope, a finite amount.

"Z" was verbose to the "n<sup>th</sup>" degree which meant that if a quantum physicist could shove his verbosity into another dimension it would still need another dimension to handle it all.

Like Dense's dyslexia, "Z" was proud of his verbosity.

As a Cambridge graduate he was destined to get into British Intelligence. His progress through the university started in the debating societies and eventually his motions were all passed unanimously only because of the longevity of his proposals which sent most of the other debaters either to sleep, confused or looking for something sharp to slash their wrists with.

His final dissertation was so voluminous that the examiners gave up trying to finish it on the grounds of, one, it was too heavy and two, the law of averages stated that somewhere in there, there must be some kind of intelligent thinking and so gave him a minimal pass if only to get rid of him and let the other students use the photo copying machine.

“Z” continued.

‘So what I am saying is that in the interim a small problem has arisen vis-à-vis certain personnel who are working on the internal agronomistical and chemical side of the economy with the backing of the Western powers, who have or have appeared to have mislaid one of their workers in the field which is causing some political embarrassment to both the United States and our own jolly United Kingdom. Not to put too fine a point on it we have extremely red faces and need to.....’

‘Could you just say that again please?’

Now what we have here is a complete new situation arising that has never cropped up before. Nobody has ever asked ‘Z’ to repeat what he has just said because his listeners had always followed the same routine as in his varsity days. Sleep or suicide. There was another option of course, one could pop into the library and read the Encyclopaedia Britannica.

So ‘Z’s molecular neurological brain structure had to search for previous experiences to be able to deal with this original situation. One of the more advanced neurological cells suggested going into a delaying programme until a solution could be found. Then a quick high level committee meeting could be instigated to try to resolve this ticklish problem. So the brain instructed the oral system to go into a holding pattern similar to planes circling Heathrow waiting for the baggage handlers to finish their tea break.

‘So let me get this straight in my mind,’ “Z” started off again.

‘This question of yours, vis-à-vis the discussion we have been having, or should I say, the little talk of the current situation in the Central eastern European theatre, has quite obviously, er, has quite obviously been given considerable consideration by yourself and what you are saying is, er, well what I think you are saying is, erm, now let’s be perfectly clear on this matter, er, your have asked for, well how can I put it to you, you have asked me to.....’

The neurological committee meeting had come up with an interim solution.

'.....Which part of the discussion did you want to go over again? The start, the end or the middle bit?'

'Both.' Dense was quite clear on this.

Evolution is a funny old thing isn't it?

Now on one hand we have "Z" who had gone to Cambridge, and whose neuron development has evolved into a higher intelligence form where Boolean logical binary digital patterns can be processed in nanoseconds and symmetrical solutions found in even less time.

Whereas on the other hand we have Dense who hadn't even got as far as Biggleswade and had his brain neurology based on the chaos theory. Great for wasps but not a lot of use for Homo Sapiens.

So when the two cultures meet we have what they call in Houston "a problem".

You could hear the neurological explosion in Z's central processing bit of the brain. Having offered three choices he was now faced with only two. This didn't quite fit into what was expected and all the "and", "nand" "or" and "nor" gates were getting into a right old two and eight. It looked like long division was going to be called into effect which only confused the issue coming up with .66666 recurring.

'I see.' Was the only reply "Z" could muster up at his stage in the proceedings.

Dense sat nonchalantly staring straight at "Z".

Most disconcerting.

'Right.' Another forceful reply, but something was coming through to the oral command centre.

'What I think we need to do here at this conjecture in the meeting is have a cup of coffee, don't you?' "Z" looked hopefully at Dense hoping for a plain 'yes' or 'no' reply.

'Good thinking Batman,' Dense reverted to his collection of comics.

'Z' took a step backward, shook his head and then suddenly grasped the meaning of Dense's reply.

Walking out of "Z's" office was like landing on a new planet for Dense. Well what his brain cells had been through had completely erased all previous memory so basically it was a brand new start for him. He took a large gulp of fresh air just to make sure the planet was habitable and followed "Z" to the corner of the office floor to the coffee machine

"Z" had just managed to complete the necessary functions required to get the machine to pour some sort of black liquid into a polystyrene cup when the lady in the office next door chanced by.

'Hi "Z", how's it going,' she didn't give "Z" time to reply. Life was too short.

'And this must be Mr Dimmock? So you're the chap who's going off the Azerbaijan to look for this missing oil boffin then? Best of luck old boy. See you "Z", nice meeting you Mr Dimmock, bye.'

'Oh, good bye, er ,miss,,er,..?'

'Miss Bench. Judi Bench. Sorry, whoops, actually it's "Y". See you.'

## Chapter 6. Debriefing at "The Snort & Truffle".

Now what MI6 had in their files was that Dense had several contacts inside the Soviet bloc with his wife, his mate Boris and of course Boris' boss Chekov, but because "M" was *extremely* busy and "N" was *very* busy and everyone else was *quite* busy they had overlooked this point and the information had not trickled down to "Z".

So after his briefing (not exactly a brief briefing) with "Z", Dense returned to Muddlecombe. He and his lovely wife, Dollianna who was ex FSB and KGB trained, were staying with Dense's Mum after the birthday celebrations.

So Dense and Dollianna went off to join Dense's new best mate Boris and his boss, the late head of interrogations at the notorious Lubyanka KGB headquarters in Moscow, in the conference and negotiations centre. The local pub.

So between them they had some considerable amount of experience with undesirable types under the Soviet influence during and after the cold war.

Boris was into his third pint in the "Snort & Truffle" by the time Dense and Dollianna arrived.

The landlord warmly welcomed Dense and an even warmer welcome for his beautiful wife Dollianna.

'Here are the worldlier travellers, can I presume to get you and your lovely lady a drink young Dense?'

'Oh, yeah, I need something long and stiff.'

'Later darling,' purred Dollianna making a lot of old men in the pub very happy.

As it was another lovely summer's day she had on a sleeveless, low cut figure hugging white cotton T shirt which left little to the imagination and helped in Gerantinium's social plan to keep the male population's sperm count up.

'So how was your trip down to London?' Boris managed to leave his beloved pint for a couple of seconds to get a few words in.

'Well, I got stuck in this office with this bloke what used a lot of words that didn't mean anything.'

'Was he using other language my friend?' Boris had time between gulps to introduce some more conversation.

'No, I think he were using English, but I'm bugged if I could make head or tail of it all. Cor, he couldn't half go on. My head hurt something rotten. Then this lady colleague of his comes along while we was having a cup of coffee and explains it all to me in 5 seconds flat.'

Dense was a little thirsty after his trip and looked hopefully at the bar. 'This my pint Boris or one you got in reserve?'

'No, it ok my friend you have that one, I get another couple just in case.'

'Just in case of what?' Dense was a bit puzzled on this one.

'Just in case of nuclear war.'

Dense and Dollianna giggled and shook their heads in disbelief.

'Or just in case you drink the place dry?'

'Da, da, yes, yes,' this was Boris double declutching from Russian into English which usually happened in cases of high trauma or under extreme stress. Like when there was the danger of going without a pint of Brewster's special bitter for more than ten seconds. 'You can't be too careful my friend.' Boris took another gulp which enabled the conversation to continue. 'So what they want you for then my friend?'

'Oh, I think what they said was that I've got to go to some place and look for some bloke or another.'

'Oh, that narrows it down a bit then?' Dollianna looked a little bemused.

'Yeah, I think it was in one of them Russian countries?'

'Not my beloved Ukraine darling?'

'No, it was somewhere like Pakistan.'

'Pakistan?' both Dollianna and Boris looked a bit surprised.

'No, it weren't your actual Pakistan but it had a "Stan" in it somewhere.'

'Oh, you mean Uzbekistan?'

'No, but something like that.'

Boris had time between sips to come up with, 'Tajikistan?'

'No, it weren't that one.'

It was Dollianna's turn, 'Turkmenistan?'

'No.' Dense was in deep thinking mode, a dangerous place to be for such a limited shallow intelligence.

'Ah, Kazakhstan?' Dollianna's eyes lit up at the possibility of the right answer.

'No.' Dense was reasonably sure on that.

They all stopped for a break and had a drink looking aimlessly ahead trying to think of something.

'There's only Afghanistan left I think,' said Dollianna hopefully. 'But that's next to Pakistan.'

'No, but it did have an "A" in it now that I come to think of it,' Dense said still staring blankly ahead. Nothing new there then.

'They all got bloody "A"s in them!' Boris spluttered out in between gulps.

Dense had to think about that for a moment. 'So they have,' he concluded happily.

'That doesn't help us much darling,' Dollianna was losing her patience but had to be seen to be supportive. 'Boris have you got any ideas?'

'There's Azerbaijan, but that hasn't got a "stan" in it.'

'That's it! Azer, what ever you just said.'

Boris and Dollianna looked at each other but then suddenly the whole tone of the conversation changed.

Boris and Dollianna looked to each other again and burst out simultaneously.

'You don't want to go there!'

*Podpolkóvnik* Chekov Yeboleksi or Count Chekov as he was known by his acquaintances who generally speaking had to count their extremities after their short

time spent with him in the infamous KGB interrogation centre Lubyanka .

For acquaintances read those he held in close proximity, usually those whose testicles were in close proximity of a vice during his information gathering work.

He was good at his job in the Lubyanka and had built up a considerable number of "acquaintances" during his time there in the KGB and had the foresight to see the dissipation of the Soviets and had used the information he had gathered to his advantage to ensure a prosperous and smooth change over from communism to capitalism.

His contacts had supplied him with considerable assets in an eclectic mix of such projects as: money laundering; prostitution; smuggling; property; transport; drugs; the usual commercial activities associated with quick profits.

Some of his old work colleagues were still with him: his gofer and assassin Boris had been allocated to look after his interests in Tenerife where Chekov had met Mildred O'Riley and her village friends on a package holiday in one of Chekov's hotels.

His sallow complexion, the dark shadows under the eyes, the moustache and mop of black curly hair bore a striking resemblance to Omar Sharif who Mildred had been dreaming about in her own little "Mills and Boon" world and fell instantly for this Russian romantic, blissfully unaware of his questionable back ground.

For his part, Chekov was infatuated with this doe-eyed beauty and once under the spell of Muddlecombe, they consummated their lust in the convenient absence of Mildred's roué husband.

They could be seen skipping hand in hand across the village green on a barmy summer's evening in Muddlecombe in the direction of the village pub, "The Snort & Truffle." Not bad for a forty something and fifty something year old couple especially after what they had just been doing.

The landlord, Brewster Kegworth, greeted them as they sat outside on a pub bench in the warmth of each others passion and the warmth of the dying evening sun.



It was about this time when Chekov always felt that he would have loved to smoke: he could have murdered an "after-shag" fag.

Aaahhh! Lovely!

"Hallo young lovers, wherever you are," hummed Brewster sarcastically.

'Oh hallo Brewster,' they managed to drag their eyes away from each other and looking up to him as if in surprise said 'two G and T's please my man,' Chekov said practicing his best English accent.

'Certainly squire. Would there be anything else sir? A poke in the eye with a sharp stick?'

Mildred fluttered her eyes at Brewster and lowering her voice beckoning him closer, whispered in a hoarse sexy tone, 'just two fucking G & T's, and make it snappy!' and as an afterthought, 'please,' accelerating the fluttering eyelashes.

'Certainly m'lady,' he smiled and left them tittering to each other.

The one thing Chekov loved about Mildred was her demure, shy, retiring, English Rose countenance but since their meeting she had blossomed.

Her skin had the complexion of a pickled egg that had been kept in a jar and big brown doe eyes like deep dark pools surrounded by eyelashes that could start a tsunami.

Her face was framed by a mass of soft brown curls that accentuated the full red lips and "come-to-bed" eyes.

A pale pink twin set which was the height of fashion from the village Post Office cum stores, showed off her lithesome figure with a short dark skirt hugging her slim hips and promoting her long legs.

She had led a very sheltered life to say the least in Muddlecombe until the trip to Tenerife with her pals, one of them being Lucinda, wife of the owner of Muddlecombe Hall.

Lucinda was educated at Roedean and a fashionable finishing school in Switzerland and had initiated Mildred

into the "F" word which she now used with great excitement, albeit causing extreme blushing afterwards.

'I'm sorry Chekov, I don't know what came over me,' she giggled grabbing hold of his hands tightly as a sort of security measure just in case a thunderbolt followed.

'I do love it when you talk dirty,' Chekov leered cheekily at her.

'Don't you start me off again,' Mildred whispered.

'The other young lovers are back from London. Young Dense and Dollianna. In the snug with Boris,' Brewster added to the romantic moment, wiping down the tables with his cloth. 'I'll just go and get your G & T's.'

A few minutes later he came back with the drinks followed by an entourage of Boris, Dollianna and Dense. They sat down next to Chekov and Mildred uninvited and Boris kicked off the interrogation, sorry, conversation rattling off a question in Russian: 'Where's Azerbaijan boss?'

'Oh, hallo Boris, well hallo Dense and the lovely Dollianna, how are you, nice to see you. How was London Dense? Isn't it a lovely evening?'

'I'm so sorry to interrupt your drink *Podpolkóvnik* Yeboleksi,' Boris had to continue in Russian to keep the conversation on a more rapid basis. 'But we think Dense has got himself into a bit of trouble with all this Secret Service stuff and we would welcome your advice please.'

Mildred squeezed Chekov's arm. 'Oh, isn't this exciting, Mummy said you were off on another adventure Dense.'

'He's got to go to Azerbaijan boss.' Boris butted in back in English, eager to get on with it and finish off his beer.

There was a stunned silence as Chekov looked around him and with a deeply furrowed look spluttered 'you don't want to go there!'

'That's what we said,' they all joined in.

'Why have you got to go there?' Mildred queried.

'I've got to find somebody,' Dense said very slowly with a puzzled look on his face anticipating the next question.

'Who?' they all joined in.

'Er, this bloke.'

There was a pregnant pause as they all waited for Dense to carry on. There was no point in pushing him on this. He would get round to it in his own time. Hopefully in the current millennium.

'Yeah, this bloke. I think 'es Scotch.'

'Scottish!' corrected Mildred.

'Yeah, like I said. Something to do with petrol.'

Boris was looking puzzled as was everybody else trying to correlate Scotch whisky and petrol.

'I've got my papers in the house. It's all written down. I'll pop home and bring them over.'

Dense finished his drink and walked off to his Mum's house. Ten minutes later he returned and dropped a big brown envelope on the table outside the pub with Boris, Dolianna, Chekov and Mildred all looking down at it.

'Dense, it's marked "Top Secret", see those big red letters and the red lines. Doesn't that mean we shouldn't be looking at it,' Mildred was the first to recognise the importance of the documentation.

'Well, 'ow the bleeding 'ell am I supposed to read the instructions if I can't open it up. Answer me that then?'

There was some validity to his statement but they still held back from opening the envelope until Dense started to look round the pub garden and surrounding village green and then declared that 'it's alright 'cause nobody's looking.'

Sometimes Dense's logic was on a totally higher ethereal plane than anybody else's, some times it wasn't. But today he was soaring and continued to float above everybody else with the statement: 'I'll open it up and read it to you as it's secret.'

The G & T's and Boris' beer were now called into action to drink instead of think as they watched in anticipation as he opened the envelope and pulled out several sheets of paper.

'What's all that about?' said Dense showing some official looking forms to everyone.

They pawed over the forms until Dollianna eventually came up with a suggestion.

'They look like some type of travel documents. You have to go to a Royal Air Force place somewhere and I think you show them these bits of papers and they understand it.' Her slow Eastern European accent accentuated her sensual voice as well as her sensual bodily bits.

They all continued thumbing through the papers until Chekov said, 'Ah, it looks like you have to make contact with a certain Pietro Kemikhail,' he continued reading the document. 'Ah, he works for the British American Petrol Company.'

Chekov continued. 'He works in an office in Baku.....,' he moved along the document. 'I think you must make contact with the British Embassy because it looks like this oil chap isn't in his office anymore.'

'We went to Baku once Boss didn't we?' Boris was surprised with his memory especially as he had to stop drinking to make the effort.

'Boris my friend, you are absolutely correct, but why did we go there?' Chekov looked skywards for inspiration.

'If I remember rightly, they were a right load of hooligans that we had to sort out.'

'Yes Boris they were a bad lot, it's all coming back to me now.'

'Da, da, yes, yes, I had work cut out there boss if I recall. You kept me busy, I was fair knackered with all that nasty business and the disposal problems.....'

'Yes, that'll do Boris. I don't think we need to go into too much detail right now.'

Chekov paused and continued. 'But can you remember anybody there?'

'What's still alive boss?'

'Yes Boris, the ones you didn't terminate.'

'What the ones you let go boss?'

'Yes Boris,' Chekov was getting a bit embarrassed with these revelations in the presence of current company.

'Go on Boris, dish the dirt,' Mildred clung on to Chekov's arm and carried on. 'Let's have all the gory bits.'

'Mildred my dear, I don't think now is the time or place to go into it too much. I was just trying to jog Boris' memory.....'

'Igor,' Boris jumped in. 'Igor what's-'is-name, you remember. He was into drugs or some thing and you managed to ....'

'Yes, thank you Boris. That'll do nicely. I wonder what happened to him?'

Chekov and Boris started to write down all their contacts in the Azerbaijan area and then went into the pub to use the communal telephone. After calling several old acquaintances they at last got the contact details of this chap they were looking for, a certain Igor Badlotski.

'Igor my friend, how are you?'

'Who's calling?'

'It's *Podpolkóvnik* Chekov Yeboleksi.'

'You bastard!'

'Now just hold on a minute my friend.'

'Why, so you can cut my other ball off.'

'You were the lucky one, I always had a soft spot for you, you're still firing on one cylinder so I hear.'

'I'm the lucky one?'

'Listen my friend I want to make it up to you.'

'How you going to do that. Have they invented plastic surgery for testicles?'

'No my friend but I may be able to improve your lifestyle considerably.'

'You'll have to be pretty bloody cute *my friend*, as you call me. I'm very happy since they let me out of Lubyanka thank you very much.'

'So I hear, and I understand we are both in the same business now.'

'I don't castrate people.'

'No, I've given that up as well and I'm in to private enterprise now like yourself as I have been given to understand.'

'Where's this all leading to? You'd better be quick before old memories of your charming little workshop start flooding back.'

'OK, so how would you like some substances that would make all your friends very happy and that would make you very rich?'

'Oh, so you're into the poppy trade now then my friend, where are you getting it from, Columbia, Turkey, Burma??'

'That's my secret my friend, but I can offer you several kilos dropped onto your doorstep.'

'Holy shit, several kilos.'

'Lots of several kilos.'

'No shit my friend.'

'No shit.'

'It had better be good shit.'

'It's the best shit.'

'You'd better not be giving me shit my friend.'

'Would I shit on you my friend?'

'Would you shit on me?' You're a professional shitter.'

'Not this time my friend, this is really good shit, I'm telling you, no shit.'

'No shit eh?'

'This is as white as the driven snow, real flake, coke, and blow. It is the best shit I can tell you'

'No shit?'

'It's the best.'

'Holy shit!'

'So now it may be of interest to you my friend?'

'Oh yeah, so you're Santa Claus and giving it away?'

'Yes.'

'Come on, you're shitting on me now.'

'All I want is a little information.'

'Oh oh, here it comes, like the complete breakdown of the NATO's defence strategy.'

'No, just looking for somebody.'

'Oh, you want a little girl, or maybe you want a little boy nowadays?'

'No my friend, I'm looking for a Brit who is working for the BAP company in your lovely country.'

'Where's the catch?'

'No catch. I'll send over a few free samples with my old friend Boris.'

'Christ, that gorilla still working for you?'

'A very loyal subject who just so happens to be a director of a very profitable diamond company here in jolly old England.'

'Well I'm bugged. I look forward to meeting the old ape again. Remind me not to start drinking with him though. So who's this Brit you're after?'

'His name is Pietro Kemikhail, Professor Kemikhail. He's some sort of oil boffin who sounds as if he's got lost or maybe one of your hooligans is holding him hostage for a ransom to buy more substances.' There was a laugh at the other end of the phone.

'Chekov, you always were a cunning bastard. Leave it with me my friend, we'll be talking later.'

'Oh, there's just one other thing, Boris will be coming over with a personal friend of mine, a certain Mr Dense Dimmock.'

'He sounds a bit of a Dodo.'

'He happens to work for British Intelligence my friend.'

'No shit?'

Now Chekov couldn't for the life of him understand why he had mentioned Dense's connection with MI6. He was probably putting him in great personal danger but it was alright because Mrs Dimmock understood.

And Mrs Dimmock also understood the danger Boris might be in as well. If the truth be known Mrs Dimmock had rather taken a fancy to Boris since his arrival at Muddlecombe. Boris was probably completely unaware of Mrs Dimmock's diminutive hand grasping one of his large buttocks as she passed him by or the little winks she gave him now and then.

It's very difficult to get any sort of emotion from Boris unless he has a pint of Brewster's best bitter in his hands

So as Crocodile Dundee had a "Donk", Dense had a "Boris", or Boris had a "Dense," it's not very clear as to "who" had a "what" but enough to say there were two of them going off on another adventure which was doomed to failure again.

The last time they had been involved in an adventure was when Dense and Creighky O'Riley had gone over to the Ukraine to collect Boris' pension fund, a rather large amount of uncut diamonds, and had got mixed up with the local KGB or FSB as they had been renamed after the breakup of the Soviets.

The two FSB agents were attractive females, one of whom was "the black widow" wanted by the west for spying activities. She was unwittingly killed by Creighky in a "Coitus interruptus" accident during an asthma attack without her inhaler to hand.

On the other hand Dense had been set up with Dollianna, a fairly new recruit to the espionage business who used her womanly wiles and a great figure to lure Dense into a honeytrap.

On applying the electrodes of the lie detector machine she had become aware of the second of Dense's things going for him. The electrons in the machine had found the route of least resistance and had bypassed the brain going straight to the groinal area.

So she watched as Dense started playing "wigwams" and was so taken aback with the size of the totem pole that she felt that she should really take advantage of such a rare occasion and get some benefits from the job.

It was obvious that she had a big future ahead of her and Dense grabbed both of them and started playing "windscreen wipers" along with his "wigwam" performance. Who said men can't multi-task?

The result of this was total sexual exhaustion and satisfaction for both of them which led Dollianna to leave the Ukraine in a hurry having failed in her job. So she



followed Dense and claimed political asylum and at the same time offering considerable intelligence to MI6 with the help of Dense's debriefing tactics.

This was where the best selling pornographic video came from and also a lasting relationship between Dense and Dollianna. Isn't that lovely when there's a romantic end to the story?

So Dense and Boris prepared for another adventure. God help us!

## Chapter 7. Dense flies off to Azerbaijan.

Getting to Azerbaijan was a little difficult. It all depended on where you were coming from: as the Irishman giving directions to a stranger said. "If you want to get there, I wouldn't start from here."

The options were: air, sea; land; car; bus; taxi; bicycle; camel.

Some of these options were a tad on the expensive side; some were a bit uncomfortable; some a bit unreliable; some a bit tardy and most would involve some form of travel sickness.

So Boris said goodbye to Dense as they each went their separate ways having agreed to meet up in Baku some time in the near future. Dense would be residing at the British Embassy while Boris, not exactly on any diplomatic mission could hardly turn up at the Russian Embassy, so would find somewhere inconspicuous to stay until their next meeting.

Air travel was still in its infancy in Azerbaijan. After the break-up of the Soviet Union, Azerbaijani aviation found itself in dire disarray. Cooperation links were disrupted, the supplies of hardware were cut off, aircraft were aging and becoming obsolete, experienced specialists were leaving the sector and there was nowhere to train new ones.

In the 1970-80s, airports fitted with decent runways were being built in Ganja, Yevlakh Naftalan, Nakhchivan, Zagatala, Lenkoran, Agdam, Agstafa and Sheki. They could accommodate Yak-40 jets and were linked to Baku by air-routes.

However international flights in and out of Baku were hampered by unsophisticated air traffic control and disjointed airport administration. But the British stiff upper lip prevailed and to overcome all these obstacles the Foreign Office came up with a brilliant solution; the Royal Air Force.

Transport Command to be precise, well actually only a tiddly bit of Transport Command. They were currently a bit tied up with troop movements around the Adriatic coastal areas of Yugoslavia, or what ever it was going to be called eventually. Getting one man into Azerbaijan was a fairly low priority.

Nobody had told them about Boris. Not quite the done thing to introduce an ex KGB assassin into the travel itinerary of the British Secret Service. So he was going to have to travel independently especially as he had to collect some "substances" on the way as part of the deal.

So Dense was dropped off by Dollianna at RAF Lyneham and walked past all the nicely painted white bits of rocks and flowers to a big road block with a big guardroom to the side and a big man in uniform with a nice white hat and a gun who looked down at Dense.

Now Dense is not very big, he didn't have very many visible distinguishing features to speak of. He was a fairly nondescript, sort of average looking, somebody who didn't stand out in a crowd, someone who could quite easily get overlooked. No one would describe him as a VIP, more your actual UIP, *unimportant* person. In fact once engaged in conversation with him you would get an immediate urge to do something slightly more interesting like reading the small print on a Ryanair boarding pass. (Not that Ryanair had been invented yet, but there was bound to be somebody already doing a PhD at Dublin Trinity University on their terms and conditions.)

So this rather large RAF policeman didn't feel obliged to salute a diminutive Dense or even invite him in with open arms until he got this extremely strange feeling.

You know, sometimes you get this *déjà-vu* feeling of a time or a place where you have been before in a previous life.

This was nothing like that, just a sort of painful hallucinogenic hologram of a funny old lady explaining that if you didn't give the person standing directly in front of you the full respect due to a visiting Head of State, your testicles would shrivel up to the size of

peanuts and you would be immediately moved to the front of the choir.

This was Mrs Dimmock being ubiquitous.

The nice RAF policeman immediately sprang to attention, saluted, lifted the barrier and invited Dense into the guardroom and requested to inspect his papers.

'Get this gentleman a cup of tea, a bit sharpish!' shouted the nice policeman as he opened the envelope.

He went through the paperwork and as his eyebrows lifted he immediately started telephoning various people.

'And ring MT for a staff car!'

Dense was ushered into an empty office and a young airman appeared with a large white china mug full of hot steaming tea. After several minutes the young airman appeared again and asked Dense to follow him into another bigger office where an important looking man who must have been an officer stood up from behind his desk shook Dense's hand and offered him a seat.

'Mr Dimmock, I have your papers here and I have contacted Air Movements and someone will be coming to collect you fairly soon. Obviously this matter must be dealt with in the utmost secrecy so I have alerted everyone to this, and you have a "Red" coding which hopefully will cut through a considerable amount of red tape.

This was a bit confusing to Dense who couldn't see any red tape lying about anywhere unless of course all the aircraft were taped up to keep the cold out.

He nodded.

'We'll pop you into the Officers Mess transit where you can relax and they do a decent meal there until the Air Traffic boys can whisk you off to, to wherever you are going.' The last sentence was *sotto voce* to keep it secret.

The officer stood up, 'Mr Dimmock, may I say it's been a privilege to meet one of you chaps. Can I shake your hand and wish you bon voyage and just let me say your country is damn proud of you.' He shook hands with

Dense and came round the front of the desk, showing him the door.

Dense was a bit worried about staying in a transit van but thought this must be all part of the secret service undercover operation.

'Sergeant Bullock!' The officer shouted. As the nice policeman appeared again. 'Look after this gentleman. Have you ordered a staff car for him?'

'Yes sir!' shouted the sergeant back and saluted as he turned and showed Dense the way to the awaiting car. He was given all his papers back and driven off to the Air Traffic boys.

'Who was that Sarge?' the young airman queried.

'James Bond.'

'You're joking?'

'Keep it under your hat laddie, but that was James Bond. Code Red. OK?' Sergeant Bullock tapped the side of his nose.

'You'd 'ardly credit it would you Sarge. You tellin' me 'e could kill someone with just his little finger in the back of the neck?'

'You'd 'ardly credit it would you.'

Dense was now in another even bigger office overlooking the airfield and the Air Traffic Control tower with someone of even more importance he guessed, as he had lots of pictures of aircraft on the wall and lots of maps and lots of people dashing in and out of the office. He had lots of medal ribbons on his uniform and lots of what looked like scrambled egg on the front of his peak cap which he took off as he offered his hand to Dense.

'Just got the call from the boys at the front gate, please sit down. Mr Dimmock is it?'

Dense nodded.

'Can I see your papers please sir?'

Dense gave him the large manila envelope which he proceeded to open and started to read the contents.

After a while he looked up. 'Code Red eh?'

Dense had no argument for that.

'Hmmm.'

Nor that.

'That puts the cat amongst the pigeons.'

He was completely lost on that one.

'Right. So where do we begin?'

Dense once more felt he really couldn't help much on that either.

'So, we've got to get you off to Azerbaijan then?'

Dense felt he was starting to recognise something now.

There was a brief silence, then the important officer looked long and hard at Dense, sat back in his large leather chair before starting to speak.

'Mr Dimmock, I presume you are aware that there is a spot of bother over in Bosnia at this time?'

Dense had never heard of Bosnia and couldn't remember "Z" mentioning it in his briefing nor had any one at the "Snort" mentioned it in the pub with Boris and Chekov.

It didn't matter as the officer continued anyway. 'The RAF is heavily committed to supplying troops over there and keeping up reinforcements and a lengthy supply line. What with the locals shooting at us, the defence cuts and bloody awful weather we are, how can I say, we are somewhat, er, busy. Do you see where I am coming from old chap?'

Dense felt it best just to nod.

'So, where does that put you old boy?'

Another pause.

'Not a lot closer to Azerbaijan.'

Another nod.

'Trouble is this puts my arse in a sling as it's coming straight from the bloody PM. You'd think the least I would get is some sort of phone call. No they just dump you on my door step without a bye your leave, please or thank you, eh?'

Another pause.

'Look, tell you what I'll do. We've got a Hercules going off to Bosnia tomorrow and I'm fairly sure he'll have to pop over to Cyprus at some time to pick up some

more stores, so we'll get you off to Bosnia tomorrow and then off to the sunny Mediterranean. How's that sound old boy? Your chaps will have to come up with some sort of idea to get you off to jolly old Azerbaijan until I can come up with a better idea. How's that grab you? Best offer I have at the moment old chap, but something'll crop up.'

Without giving Dense the chance to even nod, he shouted to someone outside the office who came in.

'Jim, get me a wad of Air Movement forms can you old boy. And look after Mr Dimmock here; we've got to get him off to sunny Cyprus.'

He stood up pointing to "Jim" who showed Dense out of the office and sat him down at his desk while he went to the filing cabinet, pulled out a load of forms and went back to the boss's office. He returned with all the forms signed.

'Ok Mr Dimmock, that's the paperwork done. Here's all your bus tickets, there's a number 29 off to Bosnia tomorrow at 08.30 hours.'

He smiled at his own humour and handed Dense a wad of forms. Dense was now even more confused.

'We'll just get you off to transit for the night and sort out all the parachutes and stuff and have you ready bright and early for the no 29 bus. Ok?'

Ok? Dense was now not only confused but a little bit on the terrified side. Nobody had mentioned about being thrown out of an aircraft with a parachute before.

He walked beside Jim to the officer's mess and Dense eventually managed to strangle out a sentence.

'About this parachute thing,' he croaked.

'Health and Safety sir, don't worry, it's just a precaution.'

There was a long pause as he continued, 'just in case you get shot down.'

\* \* \*

Dense arrived in Cyprus a lot happier man. RAF Akrotiri was a lot warmer than RAF Lyneham or one of

the tented encampments he'd slept in for several days in grey wet Bosnia.

His "Number 29 bus" was a Hercules converted for cargo which was fully loaded with large pallets that had been slid into the fuselage of the plane then clamped down with large heavy duty nets leaving a little space either side of the interior for some fold down metal bucket seats. Not a cushion or a stewardess in sight let alone a ticket collector, but at least his parachute offered some form of comfort.

What was uncomfortable was sitting staring at the large wooden boxes clearly marked "Ministry of Defence High Explosives". So Dense had to sit for hours and stare at what could probably be his last vision of this sceptred isle let alone Dollianna's chestal areas.

But now in the officer's mess in RAF Akrotiri in Cyprus they were looking after him like a lord. They hadn't had a James Bond before and he was treated like a celebrity. He's been taken into Limassol and shown the night life with a load of young RAF Lightning pilots.

The sun was out, he'd been introduced to Keo brandy, the famous Greek kebab, the Turkish meze, and he'd forgotten all about his assignment.

His secret papers were in the in tray of Wing Commander Giles Douglas. He was in charge of flying training for his Lightning squadron. He had enjoyed the heady lifestyle of the young bucks in the squadron when he was younger but now was getting thoroughly pissed off having to fly a desk.

And then, all of a sudden, he had a strange feeling. Nothing as traumatic as the policeman had experienced, but something that just made him dig down into his in tray and pull out Dense's file.

Then something in his mind came up with a weird formula: 1523.72 kilometres to Baku in Azerbaijan. Then something now told him that he was a bit short on his flying hours for the year. Then something else came up



with another formula: 2 plus 2 and eventually he came up with: 'Holy shit!'

He picked up the intercom and asked for the two-seater Lightning trainer flying schedule and then demanded that Mr Dimmock be in his office immediately.

Poor Dense was in no mood to be hurled into the sky at mach 2 in a two-seater English Electric T5 RAF Lightning trainer sitting astride two Rolls-Royce Avon 301R rocket engines.

Fortunately Wing Commander Douglas wasn't quite ready for take off and realised the complexity of flying off to some Russian satellite country and dropping off some poor unsuspecting Secret Service chap without some sort of planning.

So Dense sat in his office with a large black coffee and listened to Wing Commander Giles Douglas talking to the British High Commission in Nicosia and explaining the situation with regard to throwing someone out of a fast jet over enemy territory.

Dense was getting paler by the minute.

The British Embassy in Baku had to be contacted before any action could be agreed.

Dense had time for a few more Alka Seltzers. He had time for a good night's sleep as well but was rudely awoken at some ludicrous time in the middle of the night. An orderly quickly told him to pack and dragged him off to the mess for a quick breakfast before taking off to the locker room.

Several other airmen managed to get him undressed and poured him into a pressurised flight suit. He was then taken outside into a waiting Landover and driven off to the flight pan.

Wing Commander Douglas greeted him there. 'Ok Mr Dimmock, we're off to Azerbaijan. Not exactly British Airways but a bloody sight faster, sorry about the stewardesses.'

With that he shoved poor trembling Dense up a ladder to the cockpit where another helper was ready to strap him in and check all the bells and whistles. The helmet was put on, the visor closed and some funny

noise started to get into Dense's ears. After adjusting the crackle he heard the familiar if distorted voice of his bus driver, Wing Commander Douglas.

'Ok in the back then Mr Dimmock?'

Dense nodded. Fortunately the pilot could see him in the mirror and put his thumbs up. Then an incredible roar started up and everything started to shake until the glass cockpit cover was lowered hydraulically and the decibel levels were reduced to a couple of thousand. Dense's mind flashed back to his beloved village, the pub and his beautiful young wife. Would he ever be seeing them again?

The aircraft began to move out on to the runway and the roar increased until within seconds his stomach and intestines could verify that he was airborne.

'There's a sick bag just beside you old boy, but don't forget to take your mask off first.' Douglas' voice was kind of reassuring. 'We're going to take it steady this morning, only mach one point five. Don't want to overshoot the airport and we can save a bit of tax payer's money on the fuel at the same time.' These RAF types had a very strange sense of humour.

They had been in the air for about twenty minutes when all of a sudden the intercom crackled and a voice said: 'Please identify yourself. You are in Iranian airspace.'

Another crackle as Wing Commander Douglas replied, 'I am British and my flight plan is over international waters.' (which was a load of bollocks as there was nothing as fast as a Lightning around to catch him, so he felt that there was little point in telling the world where he was going.)

Crackle, 'If you do not leave our air space immediately we will have to send up interceptor aircraft.'

Crackle. 'This is a Royal Air Force T5 English Electric Lightning fighter, send 'em up. I'll wait.'

Crackle and then silence.

Now Dense, who so far had managed to keep his breakfast down was now experiencing a warm sensation

in the underpants area and was still no further forward in understanding the RAF sense of humour.

Before he knew it they were landing at Baku airport where a Landover crept out from behind a building and drove alongside them.

The cockpit canopy hydraulically slowly opened and Wing Commander Giles Douglas gave Dense instructions as to what to press and what to step on to get him out as he slid down the side of the aircraft and had to jump down onto the roof of the Landover.

Several people helped poor shaking Dense down from the roof of the Landover into the cab as they drove straight off out of a side entrance of the airport into the early morning traffic and off to the British Embassy.

The Lightning canopy slowly closed and his flying colleague gave the thumbs up and turned the volume up to taxi out on to the runway and within seconds was airborne again. The Baku air traffic control night shift woke up and rubbed their eyes in disbelief

Wing Commander Giles Douglas put his aircraft into a vertical climb as the early morning suns rays from the east glinted off the underside of his shiny metal toy as he reached 30,000 feet in a matter of seconds. He was free again. Free as a bird as he banked the jet off towards the West to rendezvous with a waiting RAF Victor tanker for mid air refuelling.

## Chapter 8. Boris gets ready.

Chekov and Boris had long meetings in the "Snort" much to the annoyance of poor Mildred who, although wasn't barred from the meetings felt a bit left out. Her value time with Chekov had been minimalised and she felt a little cheated especially as the "Snort" held the ultimate threat to mankind: Blossom Deecup, the lovely over endowed blonde barmaid employed by Brewster. She was one of the reasons her absent husband had spent so much time in the pub. But Mildred was fairly sure that under the current relationship with Chekov she had left him sufficiently sexual satiated not to stray too far away from the "nuptial couch".

'Boris my friend, we both owe a great debt to this village. You are now a rich man in your retirement and I have found true love and contentment and I hope you agree that we can repay that debt in helping Dense in his secret service duties.'

Mildred, who was never far away, squirmed with delight.

'Da, da, yes, yes, yeah boss, he's my friend.' Boris hadn't quite finished one of Brewster's special brews so had to double declutch from Russian into English on completion of his ultimate target. One that was carried out at least ten times every night.

'So now we have established our contact in Azerbaijan, how are we going to deliver the goods to him and ensure he delivers the goods to our friend Dense?'

Boris was ready for this. 'I go and see him and tell to him to behave!' In Boris' experience, when he was standing in front of someone they, generally speaking, did as they were told.

'Good thinking Boris my friend. There are a few minor points you have overlooked though. We have to get you there and pick up some substances on the way.'

Boris wasn't ready for that. 'Da, da....' he then went into solemn thinking mode. It wouldn't do him any

good but it would pass the time of day until Chekov could come up with something else.

'Boris my friend, cast your mind back to when you came over here. How did you get here?'

Easy one that thought Boris. 'I get in boat at Tenerife and Mr Sidenose pick me up at seaside and bring me here.'

'Whose boat was it Boris?'

'Ah, yes, boat belong to Primrose Cottage boss, John.'

'Who's still in Tenerife?'

'I think so boss.'

'Ah, right so we really need to talk to Mr. Sidenose then?'

Mr Sidenose, or Sidney Sidenose the solicitor from Shoreditch to give him his full title was one of Mrs Dimmock's agents in her ubiquitous world so to speak.

It was Sidney who found Brewster and Fiona Kegworth and guided them to Muddelcombe and to the eventual ownership of the "Snort and Truffle".

He was also John's solicitor and administrator who looked after Primrose Cottage in his absence. So he was in touch with John and his various nefarious dealings. He had found Brewster in the stock exchange in London and asked him to help out with investing some money. Little did Brewster know that this was from John's illegal operations but had carried out the work efficiently and profitably for Sidney albeit having to pop over to Switzerland now and then to arrange for the tax efficiency of the portfolio.

Now as well Sidney had organised the collection of Boris after his escape from Tenerife and brought him here to Muddelcombe and installed him in Primrose Cottage.

'I think what you need to do is talk to Mrs Dimmock if you want to talk to young Sidney.' Brewster had first hand knowledge of Mr Sidenose and was listening into the conversation as was Mildred.

'So I'll have a word with Mrs Dimmock then for you shall I?'

'Mildred, could you darling?' Mildred squirmed again at Chekov's invitation.

Sidney Sidenose was sitting in his solicitor's office in Shoreditch when he got this strange tingling sensation between his ears. Nothing unusual there. He instinctively knew that he should really go and see how his contacts in Muddlecombe-cum-Snoring were getting on.

It was a lovely sunny afternoon in Muddlecombe, nothing unusual there either as Sidney got out of his big black limousine wearing his camel hair overcoat and took a deep breath.

Mrs Dimmock just happened to be passing, bumping across the village green with her basket and her shawl wrapped over the shoulders. 'Sidney, what a lovely surprise. How nice to see you. To what do we owe this honour?'

Sidney bent down and gave Mrs Dimmock a peck on each cheek. 'Just thought I'd pop up from the city to get a break and get some of your lovely fresh village air into my lungs.'

'Well, while you're here why don't you have a chat with young Boris? He's off on some secret mission with my lad Dense, and I'm sure they would welcome your help. Boris will no doubt be in the "Snort".'

Brewster and Fiona were already outside the "Snort" having heard Sidney's arrival. Brewster had dealings with Sidney before he moved to Muddlecombe acting as a stock broker for him, unwittingly laundering money which obviously originally came via John via Heathrow. So Sidney had let them use Primrose Cottage as a convalescent home after Brewster's nervous breakdown. Brewster had always had this sense of foreboding every time he had met Sidney but he was getting over it by now.

Fiona on the other hand knew exactly where she stood with Sidney. He was a scoundrel. A likeable scoundrel but a rogue none the less. She had dealt with

him on the purchase of the pub and other fiscal matters so understood his good and bad points.

'Sidney darling, how nice to see you, what a lovely surprise!'

It was no surprise that it was a surprise but as everybody knew it wasn't a surprise at all it added to the moment.

'Fiona, how nice to see you again. You and your lovely husband keeping in rude health I hope?' This was the extent of his humour concerning Brewster's convalescence.

'Oh, you know me Sidney,' Brewster joined in. 'Getting ruder by the day.'

'You can say that again,' confirmed Fiona.

A nervous titter went round the company.

'Why don't you come inside, can we get you a little something after your exhausting journey?'

Boris and Chekov were huddled in the corner of the pub with Mildred hovering keeping Blossom away from her beloved.

As Sidney came in Boris and Chekov stood up and shook hands with him. They ordered drinks and sat down.

'Mr Sidenose, I understand I have to thank you for looking after my friend Boris in his journey from Tenerife to here. I am indebted to you.'

Sidney liked having people indebted to him. 'Don't thank me, thank young John. He and Boris have an excellent working relationship and John knows the value of a good employee.'

'And I am also indebted to you and John then for sustaining the profits of my bank in Tenerife as well.'

Sidney had never had so much indebtedness thrown at him before. 'You are welcome and I understand I can be of service to you again,' he said looking at Boris.

'Ah, yes, indeed you can,' continued Chekov. 'We understand John used a boat to get Boris safely across the seas.'

'And safely past all those nasty customs and excise people.'

'Exactly.' Chekov had run out of indebtedness and wanted to get down to the nitty gritty.

'Now would you know anything about that boat? What I am saying is it available for charter in the near future?'

'Oh, you mean the luxury Italian 70 foot motor launch cruiser powered by twin 900-horsepower, 13-liter, dual-turbo Volvo Penta D13s?

'That would do,' ascertained Chekov.

'I would have to get in touch with John but I have a feeling it's moored on the south coast somewhere. What sort of charter are we looking for?'

'Well, nothing has been decided yet but once more I feel we don't need to worry those nice customs and excise people too much.'

Sidney smiled but let Chekov carry on.

'I think we need to pop into Morocco on a quiet night to pick up some cargo and then get Boris off to the Black Sea and fairly close to the Odessa coast for some more cargo and then a drop off at the coastline near Georgia. That's our rough itinerary so far. Would that cause too many problems?'

'Chekov my friend,' Sidney was becoming a bit pally. 'If you have the money it doesn't cause any problems at all.'

'Mr Sidenose,' Chekov didn't want to get too pally at this moment. 'It's a pleasure doing business with you. We'll firm up on our itinerary and if you can let us know the availability we'll discuss terms.'

Boris had often talked to Sidney about his time with Chekov in the KGB and his dealings afterwards, so Sidney felt it best to keep on the good side of Chekov. Although Sidney wasn't getting any younger he felt there may come a time in his life when his testicles could still come in handy.

'Mr Chekov,' Sidney felt it best to formalise the meeting. 'Here's my business card. You have my undivided attention. Call me at any time.' A little bit of



creeping wouldn't go amiss at this juncture of the business relationship.

Sidney ordered a bottle of champagne and another couple of pints for Boris as they celebrated their new joint venture.

Chekov and Boris had talked long and hard about this project. Well Chekov did most of the talking while Boris did the hard listening.

They had talked to a lot of old comrades back in Russia before they had got hold of their contact Igor Badlotski and realised the enormity of their challenge.

Igor was what was euphemistically called a Warlord. No, that's not correct. He **was** a Warlord, no euphemisms about it. A nasty bit of work and about as trustworthy as a scorpion.

So help was needed.

Both Chekov and Boris originally came from the Ukraine. Chekov from Kiev while Boris was from one of the villages the other side of the Dnieper River. He was descended from a long line of Zaporozhian Cossacks (*Kazaks*). Napoleon himself had said "Cossacks are the best light troops among all that exist. If I had them in my army, I would go through all the world with them."

Boris wasn't exactly a "light trooper" any more but you certainly wouldn't want to cross sabres with him.

He joined the 1st Cossack Division which was formed under the command of General Helmuth von Pannwitz just after the war and served as a cadet until he was eighteen when he was promoted to Mladshy Uryadnik or Mladshy Serzhant in the modern Russian Army or as we knew it, Corporal.

He eventually moved to Moscow in the Russian Army and ended up working for Chekov in the KGB headquarters Lubyanka, then moving round the world's capitals keeping the population of anti-Russian spies in order.

He still attended reunions of his old Cossack division and although his contemporaries were now in their fifties and sixties they were still a pretty rough bunch of drunken yobbos.

Ideal for the job.

So the logistics were quite simple: get Boris to Azerbaijan while popping into Morocco to pickup something to give to Igor as a present. Then off to the Ukraine to pick up some old buddies and then go to Azerbaijan and meet up with Dense who had already started his travels.

No problems there then.

Well maybe just one or two teeny weeny areas of concern.

The initial problem being that Boris wasn't actually "in" England. His passport still had him stamped in Tenerife so he couldn't really fly anywhere without some smart arsed keen eyed young customs officer noticing the discrepancy.

Albeit Chekov did have access to specialised people who could get Boris sorted out with a new passport but that would take time which they didn't have with Dense now somewhere already on his way.

However what they could do in the meantime was to get Boris's passport couriered off to John in Tenerife who could surely find some underpaid customs officer who wouldn't mind stamping an exit visa for some small remuneration. And then John could send it back and at least Boris could get back "in" even though he was already there so to speak. But he would then be allowed legal entry to another country.

So a fast boat was the obvious solution. Not one Boris would have preferred having had bad memories of his repatriation from Tenerife to the UK through mountainous seas in the Atlantic for four days.

The trip round the sunny Mediterranean didn't sound too bad and he would have stop offs along the way. All they now had to do was wait for the go ahead from Mr Sidenose.

Then there was the small problem of getting “back up” from his colleagues in the Ukraine and getting them to Azerbaijan. Hopefully the fast boat could accommodate this exigency.

Then there was the one thousand kilometre trip from the coast of Georgia to Baku in Azerbaijan. Then what to do with Igor and his merry band of thugs.

Not forgetting finding this boffin.

Piece of cake.

Fucking big cake.

Boris rang round his old Cossack comrades and explained the situation to them. Some of them could remember their parents talking about Cossack patrols in the Baku oil fields in the beginning of the twentieth century so would pass his message on to the “Hetman” or the local chief who was elected by the tribe members at a Cossack “Rada”, and looked forward to seeing him soon.

Chekov talked to his friends in Morocco to arrange a deal with some substances. They negotiated the price but Chekov knew instinctively that this would be doubled as soon as they got there but it was cheaper than going all the way to Afghanistan. He just hoped Igor wouldn’t notice the slight drop in quality.

He gave Boris his cheque book and told him to take out ten thousand US Dollars when he got to a bank but told him he may need a bit more for expenses. Chekov had agreed a price with Sydney but knew once over in the Ukraine Boris would no doubt need to cover any extra expenditure there for his Cossack mates as well.

## Chapter 9. Boris sets off.

Boris was still "in" Tenerife as far as the Spanish Immigration Control system was aware. So to get him "out" meant asking a kind Immigration officer how many pesetas he would like to stamp the "out" bit of Boris' passport.

Now this meant that although Boris was now "out" he hadn't really been "in" England at all so getting him "out" of the country with reference to Immigration Control was really a waste of time. Just leave him "out" until he wanted to go back "in" somewhere else.

So now the only problem was getting him "out".

As Sidney Sidenose had got him "in" but not "in" properly so to speak he knew how to get him back "out".

Phew, thank God for that!

Having said goodbye to Dense, Boris started off on his travels in the hands of our Mr Sidenose down to the coast in the dead of night to a secluded little beach somewhere in Dorset where a rigid inflatable boat powered by twin 70hp Evinrude engines was awaiting to speed him off shore to the luxury Italian motor cruiser which would then speed him out of the range of the local Coastguards into international waters so that he could now find somewhere where he would be allowed "in".

The problem being that at his first port of call he didn't really want to be "in" officially because he wanted to get "in" and "out" as quickly as possible so that he could save time with all those bits of papers and rubber stamps. That apart from the fact that he had to collect some substances that Customs and Excise people tended to want to keep for themselves.

It has to be said that Boris was very proud of all the countries he had travelled to in his position as Diplomatic Attaché by showing his audience all the rubber stamps on his passport. But there came a time when rubber stamps could be bypassed, apart from the fact that there was hardly any room left for any more rubber stamps.

So Boris sat back and relaxed on this very large, very fast and very luxurious motor cruiser. Although it

was specified as an eight berth boat it had room for a small army as long as they didn't mind sleeping on camp beds and not scratching the burr walnut.

By first light the boat had reached the Brest peninsula on its way to Gibraltar for the first refuelling stop. Boris could actually now be officially "in" just for a while when they refuelled and rebeered. Boris needing to keep his "Seven Bellies" image. Having had his "in" bit stamped, he was now clear to get his "out" bit stamped. He reboarded the cruiser with his emergency supplies of British beer and they cut across the Straits of Gibraltar and rounded the Ceuta peninsular at the north east tip of Morocco.

They turned south into the Alboran Sea and dropped anchor just off the coast of the Cabo Negro beach for their next visit to their contact in Tetouan, a certain Mr Mustapha-shufti-el-riff.

Eventually a light shone from the shore and the exchange of signals verified each others passwords and the small tender was lowered into the calm waters as Boris was whisked swiftly ashore.

The tender raced back to the mother ship as Boris and his new friend drove off in the early evening dusk into Tetouan. They parked outside the gates of the market, the Medina, and walked through the busy bustling alleys until they arrived in the narrow dark side alleys of the souk.

Boris could eventually make out the figures as they came to a side entrance along an alley. A large wooden door with Moorish carvings was opened and they stepped into an open courtyard with a little fountain in the middle. There was a bit better light there as Mustapha introduced himself and a colleague to Boris and they introduced each others merchandise. The other man took Boris' packet and went into the kitchen, coming back with a plastic bag full of "stuff". Boris was allowed to taste it and nodded.

Mustapha then started the traditional Arab bartering process.

'I'm afraid my friend that due to logistical problems the price has increased.'

'Oh?' said Boris with a deep frown. 'How much has it increased by my friend?'

'Only a mere one hundred percent my friend. We have tried to minimise these unforeseen expenses and I am a poor miserable wretch, Allah strike me down, who has to tell you it is now double.'

'That's not what was agreed.'

'Oh I know and it grieves me to have to pass these overheads on to such a revered customer as yourself.'

Now Boris had been prepared for this and the money was available but if he had learnt anything at Muddlecombe it was playing the game. He had been the star of the village cricket tour to Botswana winning a memorable game against a fledgling international side but the situation he was now facing was definitely not cricket.

Boris agreed to go back to the bank and get the money and they arranged to meet in one hour. So he returned walking through the medina into the dark side streets of the souk and met his friend again outside the courtyard of his small dingy town house.

They duly exchanged items after both checking each others contents.

Now it has to be said that although Boris was generally speaking enjoying his new life in Muddlecombe he was still missing something in his life and he looked across to his Arab friend and felt that *he* should be missing something in *his* life right now as well.

Like breathing.

Boris was forced to take early retirement after the incident in Tenerife and had settled in Muddlecombe. He was enjoying his new life with his new friends and Chekov had started up a small diamond company for him which was now prospering.

"The Snort and Truffle" was providing the best bitter he had ever tasted in his life and everything was roses, that is apart from job satisfaction.

He had been trained in the art of the assassin serving a long apprenticeship and then a successful career for which he had been generously rewarded by his boss Chekov in both job satisfaction and money. But now he felt it was time to renew that feeling.

He held his hand out to his Arab friend but instead of shaking it, grabbed his thumb and bent it backwards sharply until he was on his knees. With a loud snap of bone he opened his mouth to scream but Boris' large hand quickly smothered it, then, grabbing his chin, violently jerked his head round until his facial orientation was to the West from the East.

There was a crackle as the spinal sinews broke and then a pop as the vertebrae jumped out of position and his friend, or should we now say, his ex friend, slowly tottered head first into Boris' lap. Boris covered the head with the hood of his dishdasha and gently lowered him on to his knees to the ground.

Four seconds was what the training manual had stipulated.

Yes!

He still had the touch.

He walked through the courtyard to the kitchen to greet his other "friend".

He smiled and held out his hand in greeting.

Snap!

Crackle!

Pop!

Three seconds!

He then had a strange urge to eat some sort of breakfast cereal, but the mood passed.

"Practice makes perfect" thought Boris with a large smile on his face.

His job satisfaction quotient was now back on track.

His latest incumbent was in the process of stuffing money into an "oven" in the kitchen. This was quite clearly a safe in disguise which was full of the money Boris had previously donated along with lots of other spare bits of paper so Boris had the choice of taking a considerable amount of cash.

Fortunately Boris couldn't tell the difference and was in no mood for high level decision making so picked up the lot and stuffed it into the money bags. He then collected the two sacks which he'd had to pay for twice, stuffed everything into his holdall, looked down at his handiwork, and walked slowly away. He looked back at the scene of the two kneeling supplicants, who although a

little early for the Adhan, the call to prayer, were quite obviously over zealous and should really not be disturbed, not for a couple of days at least until they started to smell.

Boris closed the door of the courtyard and left the confines of the dark narrow lanes. He exited the souk with a feeling of well being, walking back through the arches of the Medina, he hailed a taxi and relaxed as he was driven back to the coast along views of passing trees lining the "La Méditerranéene" avenue.

Boris had served in Afghanistan during his time in the Russian army and had heard the stories of the Islamic martyrs who were told that they would be greeted in the gardens of paradise by seventy two virgins. He often thought about these celestial babes and wondered if his two colleagues he had left behind were beneficiaries of such eternal bliss. They probably didn't have martyrdom down in their structured career portfolios quite so early in their lives.

But was Boris worried?

He sat back and watched the passing countryside until he reached the beach at Cabo Negro.



## Chapter 10: Boris returns to his village.

So after a couple of refuelling stops at Malta and Istanbul they arrived in the Black Sea. They sailed up the western coast until they arrived just south of Odessa just below the port of Illichivis'k and waited for the sun to set before dropping Boris off at a beach close to the village of Sanzhiika where he had arranged to meet a contact.

After much hugging and kissing and a few quick glasses of vodka and a warm supper they set off the following morning, having telephoned ahead, in a battered old pick up truck just as the sun was rising and drove off to Boris' village Druzhelyubivka.

Coming in from the south of the village they crossed between two small lakes and up a small rise and then dropped down through a valley into the village.

As soon as they dipped into the small valley Boris was confronted by an amazing sight. The road out of the village towards him was full of people.

Not just ordinary people, but people wearing the full traditional Cossack dress and uniforms.

The large high yellow crowned fleece hat with the standard loose-fitting open fronted blue tunic or chekesska with red beshmet waistcoats with ornamental cartridge loops, shoulder straps and wide trousers with yellow stripes tucked into their riding boots.

It had to be said that some of the ornamental cartridge loops contained ornamental live ammunition.

This became evident as soon as Boris's pick up truck started towards them down to the village with its horn blaring. This started a crescendo of shouts, bangs, whoops, screams, as the hordes ran towards the vehicle waving to Boris and shouting their welcome with the women waving and blowing kisses and holding up their children.

The men, who were mostly in full dress, were waving their traditional shaskas or swords and some lifting their rifles in the air. Some of the rifles were old World War

Two models and these were now being fired up into the air.

Not the best place for any faint hearted Health and Safety executives.

As the pick up neared the masses, like Moses and the parting waters of the Red Sea, everybody made way for the vehicle, banging on the roof and trying to shake hands with Boris.

The driver had to slow down or risk a few hands being taken off at the wrists. They eventually managed to enter the village where Boris was greeted with more noise and excitement and eventually allowed to be taken through the crowd to a square at the front of the small church.

The church square was now bursting at the seams with people and noise as the elderly patriarch of the clan who had the title of Ataman or Hetman a name derived from the past, held up his hands and some five minutes later peace and some semblance of order was restored.

Then it started: the speeches: Boris was made welcome and praised for his bravery and courage in the past. Boris was a little confused at that point but realised that assassinating people in dark alleyways must involve some form of bravery.

Then came the history of the Cossacks from this village praising their bravery in war. This was greeted by fusillades of gunshots which died down as they tried to reload.

The bravery of the men who died and those who had fought in the two World Wars, the bravery of the men who had fought in the War of Transnistria, the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict, the Georgian-Ossetian conflict, the Kosovo War the First Chechen War and the Second Chechen War.

Some of them had only just returned from fighting in the Chechen wars. God, did they like going off to war. They obviously hadn't got television yet.

Then the chieftain went on to exhort the independence of the Cossacks and retold how after being asked in 1539 by the Ottoman Sultan to restrain the

Cossacks, the Grand Duke Vasili III of Russia replied: "The Cossacks do not swear allegiance to me, and they live as they themselves please." In 1549, Tsar Ivan the Terrible replied to a request of the Turkish Sultan to stop the attacks of the Cossacks, stating, "The Cossacks are not my subjects, and they go to war or live in peace without my knowledge."

All the villagers knew this off by heart as part of their history lessons but it was still very emotive and brought on a loud cheer and some more gunshots.

Then the chieftain turned back to Boris and thanked him for asking his clan to go back to war again in Azerbaijan.

Another loud cheer and gunshots.

It was then that Boris suddenly realised there had been some sort of breakdown in communications.

In Houston they would call this "a problem" anywhere else they would call it "a fuck up!"

The old game of passing whispers down the line when "send reinforcements we're going to advance" had been misinterpreted as "send three and fourpence, we're going to a dance" flashed through Boris' mind.

Well, it didn't exactly flash through his mind, but he slowly came to the realisation that his request for some old muckers to help him out with some nasty little warlord in Azerbaijan had now kick started a full scale war footing for an all out attack on the country.

This was horribly confirmed when the chieftain held Boris' hand up after proclaiming him a full blooded Cossack warlord, and swearing allegiance on behalf of the whole village to follow Boris into battle and lay down their lives for the honour of the Cossack Clan.

"черт возьми!" was all that Boris could think of right now which roughly translates to "Kinnell!"

His thoughts were drowned out by the noise of the crowd and being lifted up by several large gentlemen and carried down the church steps out to the village green.

Boris watched in state of trauma as a succession of bonfires, barbeques and roasting spits were ignited and he was carried out to the end of the common and

unceremoniously dumped in front of a large temporary bar. There were lots of stone jars and carboys full of what was loosely called "okovyta" or "Ukrainian Vodka".

It was tightly known as "pure alcohol".

Then all the fatted calves were killed. They killed the fatted cows, the fatted bulls, the fatted sheep, the fatted pigs, the fatted goats, the fatted chickens. There were silly grins on the faces of the other animals who had joined "Weight Watchers".

The local dogs were looking very wary. Some of them had already left town.

And so the great feast began.

Boris was trying to drown his sorrows but everybody in the village kept coming up to him, shaking his hand, slapping his back and telling about all the good times they had had in the past.

Some of his old school mates were there: his old army mates were there and the odd one or two old girl friends who were now happily married with several children nearly as big as him now, and they all wanted to go to war with him as well. And you didn't want to argue with some of his old girlfriends either.

There were wrestling matches which Boris had to judge, and nobody dared to argue with his decisions. There were arm wrestling matches, pig riding, pig sticking, galloping riders snatching pegs from the ground, and of course the odd game of Russian roulette.

Fencing, archery, bowls, egg and spoon races, Boris could hardly draw breath in between each activity to which he was made honorary judge and critic giving his professional advice and being allowed to stick medals and ribbons on people and animals.

By the time he had a break it was dark and he took full advantage of the many and varied epicurean delights on offer.

Apart from the various meats hanging from the roasting spits, there were traditional dishes on offer as well, all made in honour of Boris' return and the start of another conflict. It made you wonder what they got up to in between wars. They obviously didn't have time to get

up to much. A punch up, back home for a quick shag and then off to war again.

Boris was now gorging himself on the local cuisine. Hot borscht, a hearty soup made with a beef or pork broth containing potatoes, beets, carrots and peppers. It is a meal in itself, but is usually eaten as an appetizer. Then there were the *piroshki* (pies) individual-sized, baked or fried buns stuffed with a variety of fillings.

*Kotleti*, pan-fried hamburgers and the *miaso* (meat) and *dich* (game) all dripping from the roasting spits. These were accompanied with the traditional stews (*ragu*) with noodles or dumplings, *pelmeni*.

The vegetables (*ovoschi*) included cabbage, potatoes, and cold tolerant greens. Pickling cabbage (*sauerkraut*), cucumbers, rutabagas and other vegetables in brine.

Then all the desserts (*sladosti*) : The *bliny* and *oladi* pancakes served with soured cream, honey or jam; the pastries (*pirozhy*) with honey from Altay region; *tvorog* - cottage cheese (or quark), usually served with honey or berry jam; *syrniki*, also called "tvorog burgers" because they are made of tvorog and fried on a sauce-pan, usually eaten with honey, sweet dressings, or jam.

The rest of the multitude had now also started to devour the food so the noise and clamour of shouts and gunshots had died down to a mere rumble and the noise of smacking lips. They sat about on the grass or at improvised tables eating and drinking in between spasmodic shouts and laughter and toasting the new warlord, "Boris the Great" which had been shortened from "Boris the great big bugger" and boasting about all the famous victories they were about to inflict on those rotten nasty Azerbaijanis.

As the evening wore on someone started to strum a *bandura*, the traditional Cossack guitar cum harp. Then another strummer joined in and someone with a lute or *kobza* then someone playing the violin or *sopilka* joined the jamming session and a few old wooden boxes were thrown in for percussion.

And then the gentle voices of the young girls started to hum the old traditional tunes about the Cossack *Mamay*, their Ukrainian folk hero.

Eventually someone remembered the words and the men folk wiped their faces from animal fat and joined the ensemble.

Harmonies started to register and the whole village green was humbled by such gentle music coming from such a band of drunken hysterics.

Then the music quickened in pace and the volume started to increase and the clapping intensified the rhythm as everybody joined in the cacophony.

The Red Army Ensemble was famous at this time touring the world during the Perestroika era and some of the villagers had been part of the travelling group and were now showing off their prowess in leading the singing.

Then the dancing started.

Boris was dragged up from the table to try and replicate the energetic movements but gave up amid much hilarity and sat back and watched as the younger more flexible members started the swirling and high kicking.

With their arms crossed they pirouetted round like whirling dervishes and then dropped down into the famous Cossack squat and kicked out each leg in time with the frenzied beat of the music.

This was a contest now as the dancing intensified and the less fit members slowly collapsed in a heap one by one until there was a clear winner who pirouetted until he dropped down completely knackered.

The young girls then got up and circling the village green, arms around each others shoulders, danced the slow gentle swaying dance, twisting one way and then another in each other's hold. This started a sort of conga as the villagers dragged themselves up and joined the line. Even Boris managed to fill in a gap and the squealing and giggling at his ungainly movements caused great hilarity.

The "band" quickened the pace and once more it was a contest as to who could keep up longest.

All this energetic activity demanded more drinking and more gorging. And so the night wore on with dancing and singing until the last person standing eventually collapsed.

As it was a beautiful balmy summer's night, some of the revellers decided to sleep under the stars. In reality they were too legless to crawl home let alone stand upright to walk to the bosoms of their families.

Most of the bosoms were legless as well.

The next morning was greeted by silence on the village green until about midday when some form of life could be seen stirring amid the detritus of human carnage.

The village elders managed to form a committee and invited Boris to join them in their "War Council".

They had elected a certain Voiskovy Starshyna Andrei Shkuro to lead this expeditionary force.

Voiskovy Starshyna being the Cossack equivalent of the Russian rank of Podpolkovnik or Lieutenant-Colonel as we knew it in the British Army

Now Andrei was a direct descendent of the famous general Shkuro and like him he had graduated from Nickolayev Cavalry School.

In World War I General Shkuro became the commander of a special guerrilla unit which executed several daring raids behind Austrian-Hungarian and German lines.

He was a charismatic and audacious Cossack leader; although his bravery often bordered on the reckless (he was wounded several times), he was also known for his cunning. Many in the Army's high command, however, considered him undisciplined and somewhat of a "loose cannon". According to Soviet historians his forces were particularly cruel and prone to looting.

Just about spot on for the sort of job in hand.

Andrei Shkuro was one of Boris' cousins and although a few years younger in his late fifties, only had one belly, and that was as flat as an ironing board.

He was mentioned in dispatches during his time in the Russian Army in Afghanistan and had travelled widely including Pakistan and India and picked up the English language and had taken time out to attend the local university in Kiev to enhance his education.

He had been involved in the local Cossack punch ups now for thirty years and had basically got the hang of it so was the obvious choice for the mission.

At the same height as Boris, six foot four, there wasn't an ounce of fat on him and with a gaunt face and an aquiline nose he looked the part of a right sneaky bastard.

He wasn't nicknamed the "fox" for nothing.

He was considerably fitter than Boris but could still drink most men under the table, that is except for Boris who obviously had the advantage of the greater capacity for such events.

It was about this time that Boris had this tingling sensation between the ears and a clear message eventually smashed its way through the alcoholic haze.

"Why don't you go to Azerbaijan disguised as a Cossack Choir. Oh, and look after yourself big boy!"

Boris shook his head and sat for a while listening to the committee rabbitting on.

He suddenly stood up and looked around until the room went completely silent. Nobody was more shocked than Boris as to how his new found authority was now being recognised.

"Why don't we go to Azerbaijan disguised as a Cossack Choir. Oh, and look after ....."

Boris abruptly closed his mouth just in time.

There was a deathly hush as the elders all stopped and stared at Boris and then looked at each other and then looked at each other again and back to Boris.

Boris sat down.

The committee sat silent for a while and then started clapping.



## Chapter 11: Azerbaijan logistics.

And so the auditions began. The committee had to correlate between singing, dancing and warring potentials but eventually they managed to whittle it down to a mere one hundred men.

The ladies cried sexual discrimination but were told they were needed at home to run the village and be ready for the return of the conquering heroes and a quick shag.

Then they sat down and scratched their heads. How the hell were they going to get this bunch of hooligans to Azerbaijan.

Where were they going to sing?

How were they going to transport them?

Where were they going to stay?

What were they going to eat?

Where could they find a decent vodka shop?

How could they get all their guns and ammunition past the custom men?

When could they start the war?

And who the hell was going to pay for all this?

They all sat and started to think. Not the best time during a raging hangover so they had an intermission for brunch and a few vodkas to get the brain cells kick started.

Half way through the side of a cow, Boris suddenly realised that he had money.

'I have money!' how quick was that!

Boris remembered giving the money to his late Moroccan acquaintance and then having to get some more and giving it to him and then taking it all back from him.

'How much money *have* you got?' queried one of the council.

'I got double amount.'

Oh good, that narrowed it down a bit then.

'I don't know, only that Chekov give me money and I give it to Mustapha and he want more so I give him more and then kill him.'

'Good for you old boy,' the council elder realised this was going to take some time.

'And I got bloody great big boat as well.'

Things were starting to move.

'How big is this boat Boris?'

'Captain say for eight people.'

'Not one hundred people then?'

'Room for only eight rich people but for poor people like us plenty of room.'

'So this money I presume is on the boat?'

'Da,da, and I have stuff to give to bad man in Azerbaijan as well.'

'I think we need to go and see this boat.'

So off they went, Boris and the village elder back down the road in the pickup truck, back to the coastal village and after several attempts to signal they saw the tender come into sight and were rushed off to the motor yacht moored out in the bay.

The captain welcomed Boris back on board and sat down with the village elder to talk logistics.

Obviously the most important bit about the logistics was the money bit so the captain went to his safe and pulled out several bags of cash Boris had given him. They counted the money and roughly estimated it at about three hundred thousand US dollars.

"черт возьми!" translating to "Kinnell!" was what ran through both the village elder's and Boris' mind.

The captain got out his maps and the nearest land fall to Azerbaijan was Georgia. Then they walked around the yacht and tried to figure out how many bodies they could fit on board.

The captain then raised a fairly simple question as to how they were going to get from Georgia to Baku.

Hhhhhmmmmmm.

This was going to need another committee meeting. But thank God the captain ran quickly through all the alternatives: plane; bus; coach; train; car/s. The camel/donkey alternatives were quickly ruled out due to the need to get there before Christmas.

The village elder thanked the captain for his help and he and Boris returned swiftly to the village with a lot on their minds, well in the village elder's mind.

But he was already thinking as they bumped their way back on the road to the village that he had contacts in Georgia as did many of the other villagers as well as contacts in Azerbaijan and with Boris' money things were looking up.

Back in the village the committee positively ran through the agenda and by nightfall everything had been put into place.

One of the villagers had a cousin in Georgia who ran a small coach company, another relative popped up who was a local councilor where there was a large village hall.

A theatrical agent emerged, and there was a concert hall and an opera house in Baku that could be used. Somebody who worked in the immigration control department was contacted. An owner of a chain of camping sites was blackmailed into letting out the majority of his caravans and tent sites.

A lot of favours were being brought in but everything was now in place and they were ready to go to war.

The number of "singers" had to be reduced to sixty to fit into the available space on the boat and the coaches and a few modifications made to accommodate guns, ammunitions and "stuff".

The musical instruments and ceremonial swords could be explained a lot more easily than a load of wooden crates full of Tokarev Self-loading SVT-40 rifles.

The relatives in Azerbaijan were prewarned of the "invasion" and told to get as much information about Igor Badlotski as possible.

As "D day" approached the choir ironed all their costumes, cleaned all their musical instruments along with their rifles, checked all their ammunition, polished their boots and combed their moustaches in readiness for the "war".

Now by far the largest logistical problem was to do with Boris' "ins" and "outs". At present he was still "out" immigration control wise. They needed to bring the yacht

into a harbour to save time loading everybody aboard but at the same time loading all the other "stuff" away from the prying eyes of the customs staff.

So while all the choir made their way to Odessa harbour to embark, Boris and the "stuff" had to be quickly loaded with the yacht's tender making several fast trips ashore and back.

Only then could Boris sail into Odessa harbour and be allowed "in" for a few short minutes and then join the choir to be let "out" officially to be available to get him and the "Cossack Choir" "in" to Georgia.

## Chapter 12: Dense in Baku.

After his release from the RAF sense of humour Dense showered and with a change of underwear sat down in the office of the British Embassy in Baku fully refreshed after his travels. The Ambassador had his file in front of him and after several minutes reading it eventually turned to Dense.

'Top secret eh?'

Dense felt a strange sense of *déjà vu* coming on regarding a lot of stupid questions, but he was in no rush. He'd had a decent breakfast and a shower and didn't have to listen to any more RAF jokes and knew that whatever he said would be totally overlooked anyway.

So a nod was all that was forthcoming.

'Red tape eh?'

Nod.

'Come to help out the poor old local boys, what?'

Nod.

'Nasty business this, eh?'

Nod

'Can't trust these locals one bit.'

Nod.

'Hope this poor chap's ok.'

Nod

'Met him briefly at one of BAP's bashes. Scottish if I remember rightly.'

Nod.

'We come over to help these locals and what do they do, kidnap you?'

Nod.

'Well, we'll show'em eh? Good old MI6.'

Nod, but not quite so assertively this time.

'Get the professionals in eh?'

A very insecure nod.

'So what's the old plan of attack then?'

That's bugged it, Dense had to start thinking but fortunately his delay was recognized.

'I know, hush hush, say no more, eh?'

The Ambassador tapped the side of his nose and gave Dense a knowing wink.

Dense gave him an unknowing wink back.

'So what do we do now then?'

Dense was ready for a reply by now. 'Wait for Boris.' Now in diplomatic terms "Boris" was a generic term for any type of Russian.

'Boris?'

'Yeah, he's coming over to help me.'

'Coming over eh?' The Ambassador translated this as to some sort of double agent swapping sides.

'E's got some mates in the Ukraine what's going to give us a hand.'

This is where the Ambassador started to get a little confused. Dense immediately picked up on this and carried on.

'Me and old Creighky done a job for me old mucker Boris a couple of years ago and went over there but got a bit sort of mixed up, what with the diamonds and Dolliana and that, but we gets it all sorted out like and old Boris, well he's sitting pretty now ain't he? Rolling in it now, mind you, pours most of it down 'is throat every night down the "Snort and Truffle" but 'es happy. Brewster's happy and me an' old Boris we gets on like a house on fire. So he says to me, Dense me old mucker, well 'e don't actually say it like that as him being Russian an' all that. But you know, it comes out similar to that. Anyway he says to me, Dense I come and help you with problem in Azer,.....' Dense felt quite proud of his attempt at a Russian accent.

The Ambassador felt the sudden urge to say something at this point of time, 'Azerbaijan?'

'That's it, got it in one. Anyway 'es popping in to see some of his old mates back in the Ukraine and see if we can get any help like. So he'll be here any day now I reckon.'

The Ambassador felt that he should try and say something again but was at a complete loss as to what to

say other than, 'can you just run that by me again old boy?'

'We just sits tight and waits for old Boris. He'll sort it out.'

'Right, ok, so, we just, sort of, wait then?'

'That's it.'

'Cup of tea old boy?'

Now it has to be said that Igor Badlotski was pleasantly surprised by the phone call from Podpolkóvnik Chekov Yeboleksi offering him several kilos of heroin or whatever variation was coming his way, but he was by far and away *more* interested in the arrival of a member of the British Intelligence.

Intelligence was information and information was power and power comes in very handy now and then.

He was also interested in getting his hands on Boris in revenge for what Chekov had done to him in the past when he was interrogated by him.

So he called in the help of Nickola Elastickova again. She would find out who worked at the British Embassy and get some inside information for him. And she could possibly get introduced to this intelligence agent and once she got her hands on him, well, allsorts of intelligence should be available and he knew several people who would be extremely interested in this and they would reward him generously.

Hey ho, all part of a day's work.

The Ambassador was at a loss to understand what to do with Dense. He had no idea how long he was going to have to wait for this Russian chappie to turn up and no idea how to look after a member of Her Majesty's Secret Service. He'd offered Dense a dry martini, shaken not stirred but all Dense wanted was a decent pint of English bitter.

So he allocated one of his staff to do the sight seeing thing and try and find somewhere where they did a pint of bitter. So Dense was taken round Baku but he wasn't impressed.

The old town itself still had most of its old medieval city wall. He was shown the two most famous sights, the Virgin tower and the palace of Shirvan-Shahk.

South of the city there wasn't much to see other than the inheritance of 80 years of communism: an endless landscape of rusting, sometimes still functioning, oil wells soaking in lakes of oil. Needless to say that nothing green can be detected there.

Policemen in Baku still wore the typical Soviet uniforms, and everybody was dressed in dark clothes. Many of the buildings were gray and run down except for some in the centre of the city.

A stroll along the Caspian Sea was hardly romantic as all one could see was the oil and excrement literally floating about.

This didn't exactly help poor Dense's thirst problem. There was an outdoor culture; a large number of people were strolling around all through the centre of Baku. Many cellars have also been changed into bars and restaurants and Dense persuaded his Embassy colleague to try one or two out.

They had made an appointment at the British and American Petroleum Company's social club to talk to some of the employees who knew the missing Pietro Kemikhail and it was there that Dense settled down for a decent drink at last.

Unfortunately this was going to be short lived and interrupted by a lot more silly questions. Dense was introduced to the workmates of Pietro or Pete as he was know at work before they all got whisked off to a meeting with the President of the British and American Petroleum Company. As a joint venture, the Presidency alternated every year and it was the American's turn this year.

So they were all ushered into the plush Director's stateroom and greeted by the President, Silas H Sawyer the third, which was great if you didn't have a lisp.

There were a few clues that Silas was from Texas. The Nocona Vintage Western silver belt buckle, the Double S Sterling silver plated Bolo tie, the Stampede cowboy hat, and the Smokey Mountain cowboy boots.



Apart from that he was perfectly normal.

'Mr Dimmock, I understand that you have been bestowed the Order of the British Empire by your royal queen in Buckingham Palace, London, England. Gee you must be one heck of a brave son-of-a-bitch to get a medal like that. Boy, are we glad to have someone of your calibre on board to help us out over this distressing episode. Do you have a tactical strategic portfolio in mind?'

'Well, I got a plan.'

'I think we should be careful here as my colleague is working for MI6 under full secrecy,' the Embassy secretary intervened.

'Well, it ain't that secret. As I was telling 'is boss, all we got to do is wait for Boris.' Dense felt it right to stamp his authority on the proceedings.

'Wait for the bloody Ruskis! Holy shit, those bastards are probably involved in this whole god damn shooting match!' burst in the president.

'No, I think what my colleague here is referring to is not the generic terminology but one particular person.' The Embassy official tried to cool things down a bit.

'Do you think your colleague could explain this to us on his own?' the president exploded at the poor Embassy secretary.

Dense picked up on this and continued.

'I was telling his boss as to how my mate Boris has got some inside information.'

'I'm sorry, please continue Mr Dimmock.'

'Yeah, well, Boris, his boss Chekov and me missus all comes from the Ukraine like and they've been around a bit. I was over there myself helping old Boris out and that's when I gets me medal from old Queenie. Well, I tells them that I've got to come over here and find this mate of yours and they says, well you don't want to go over cause there's a lot of bad buggers over here and they happens to know about this one called Igor something or other. So they gives 'im a bell and Boris reckons he'll come over here and give 'im a good

slapping and he'll come clean and spill the beans and that'll help us find your mate.'

There was a pregnant pause as everybody in the room tried to assimilate all this information at once.

Eventually Silas managed to find something to say.

'Gee, ain't that quaint that you guys can still speak in "Olde English".'

There was another slightly embarrassed silence from the British contingent until Silas continued.

'So what you are saying is that we have to wait for your friend Boris to turn up and then we'll see some action?'

'Yeah, that's it.'

'However, I do feel that any information you or your employees can give us will be of immense assistance.' The poor Embassy secretary managed to obtain some semblance of order within the meeting.

'Holy shit, that's what we're all here for, eh boys? So any of you guys got anything that can help us then?' Silas turned to the other members of the meeting.

Peitro's drinking pals quickly regained the power of speech.

'We last saw him on Wednesday night when we popped out for a quiet drink.' One of the brave oil employees said.

'And whereabouts was this?' The Embassy secretary took the lead.

'I think it was one of the bars just off Fountain Square down Torgovaya street.'

'Can you remember the name of the bar?' The interrogation continued.

The oil boys all looked at each other and sheepishly agreed, 'the Pink Pussy?'

'Ain't that out-a-bounds for you guys?' Silas jumped in.

'Is it?' was the even more sheepish reply.

'Ok, so we now know where he was last seen. Were there any other people there?' The Embassy man jumped in to save any more embarrassment to the oil lads.

They all looked at each other and the bravest coughed up, 'wasn't there a young lady there?'

'Hell, young lady my ass. She'll be a tart if she's in the Pink Pussy club!' Silas confirmed. Nobody was quite sure how he knew so much about such things but they all held their silence. Sort of Health and Safety measure.

'Can you describe this "young lady"?' The Embassy man jumped in to save Silas' bacon.

'Yeah, boy, was she some stonking good looker,' enhanced the younger of the oil boys.

'Could you describe her if you saw her again do you think?'

'No problem there. Boy did she have a good figure, or what.' He then started to cup his hands and wave them up and down his front.

'I think we get the picture boys,' a demure Silas intervened. 'So what's our next step?'

'I think we need to wait for Boris,' Dense sort of brought the meeting to a grinding halt. You couldn't really argue against Dense's logic. Rather like bashing your head against a titanium wall.

They said their good byes and thanks for the help and made an exit to some fresh air.

Dense was taken back to the Embassy but stopped short at the sight of a billboard advertising a "Ukrainian National Choir and Dancers" poster outside the concert hall.

He turned to his escort and said, 'my old mate Boris is a Ukrainian, I'll bet he'd be interested in seeing that. I hope he gets here in time for it.'

His escort duly noted this as it would give him a break for the evening. 'I'll see if I can get a couple of tickets then Mr Dimmock.'

Little did Dense know that Boris was now on his way through Georgia and would be in Azerbaijan within a couple of days.

They had landed at Makhinjauri in preference to the main port of Poti due to the lack of major port officials

and successfully got all the "stage props" off the boat further up the coast on an isolated beach and dropped the rest of the touring party off at the port.

The captain of the motor yacht said a tearful good bye to Boris and his mates and promptly hired a load of local cleaning ladies to go through the boat like a dose of salts and a French polisher to take the vodka stains off the burr walnut.

The coaches turned up eventually and picked up the "army", collected their arms and ammunition and set off for their first night at Vake-Saburtalo, just outside Tbilisi and met up with the local council official who had booked them into the local community hall for their first concert. They stayed in a camp site outside and prepared for the first performance.

This "concert" as it was loosely called was basically a pub booze up cum sing-a-long. It was extremely well received owing to the fact that the Cossacks choir had bought along several cases of local "vodka" with them which exterminated a considerable amount of brain cells, thus rendering it virtually impossible for any intelligent form of art criticism of their theatrical attributes.

However the theatrical agent who the Cossacks had taken on board used this to add praise for their next concert in two days time in Baku. He had arranged for the posters to be put up and now he could add tributes in the local evening papers like "a riot of fun with traditional Cossack songs and dances."

It did give some of the musicians a chance to tune up their instruments and the choir to rehearse their routine.

It was also valuable time to clean their rifles and polish their swords after the sea crossing.

The next day's journey was a seven hour trip into Azerbaijan. They had chosen the Ganja route to Baku to the south rather than taking the northerly route through Lagodekhi, once again preferring the lesser populated area and the fact that they had a contact at the Meore Kesala crossing into Azerbaijan who could save a lot of time with all this paperwork nonsense.

Some of their contacts in Baku were the descendants of the Cossacks who had guarded the oil fields and they were busy on an information gathering exercise at the request of their Ukrainian colleagues.

They had found an empty school during half term that was ideal for their accommodation in the large gymnasium there and they were now busy obtaining the lowdown on Igor Badlotski. And you couldn't get much lower than him.

He was fairly well known in the lower socio-economic groups in and around Baku, or the criminal fraternity as they were more often referred to. His "castle" was fairly well known and just outside Baku in open country where the local authorities left him alone to get on with his business and he let them get on with theirs. He paid his local rates and of course helped the local councilors and police force with their pension funding. All Igor wanted in life was a bit of peace and quiet, home comforts and the ability to cause havoc everywhere else.

The "peace and quiet" bit was about to go right down the pan.

So the next day the "Ukrainian Traditional Choir and Dance Ensemble" arrived in Baku and met up with their "fifth column" activists who showed them the way to their accommodation in the local college that was on holiday. They had a wash and brush up and went off downtown to the Ukrainian Socialist Workers (Affiliated) Social Club for a meeting with their old colleagues, basically an excuse for another piss up.

Now at the same time Dense was trying to instigate a piss up in the BAP social club. His Embassy colleague had suggested that it might be helpful if he got some more "informal" information from Pete's colleagues outside the confines of the Directors stateroom.

So Dense had been dropped off at the BAP Social Club and another meeting had been arranged and after a few drinks the "oil boys" felt it best if they showed Dense the area where they last saw Pete.

So the "Pink Pussy" club it was. The drinks were ordered and then naturally the barman rang the "castle" to let them know that "Pete's" pals were here with a stranger.

Now it has to be said that Nickola Elastickova hadn't been idle in *her* information gathering either and her various contacts had informed her that a new man had arrived at the British Embassy.

Her first duty had been to keep Pete happy who was now in the arms of the Chechnyan rebels up country in a little coastal village called Ilkhichi and "helping them with their enquiries". Ok, so a certain amount of sexual favours had to be donated by Nickola together with a little hashish and a lot of vodka.

Pete had reached the state of nirvana that all students aspire to: totally fucked; both sexually and narcotically. So Pete was a happy man, he didn't have a fucking clue who he was, where he was or what he was doing but was he worried?

As long as he drew some pretty pictures of an oil pipe line and described the positions of stopcocks and control valves, the nice people he was staying with would grant most of his wishes.

So that project was done and dusted and she could now move onto the next project for Igor.

The British Intelligence agent.

The phone call from the "Pink Pussy" was what she was waiting for. So she jumped into her nice shiny Mercedes-Benz 450SLC sports car and drove into Baku. There is nothing like a full frontal attack, and boy was she equipped for one.

So she boldly walked into the "Pink Pussy" to the amazement of Pete's pals who gaped open mouthed at her and devoid of the power of speech made frantic gestures to Dense who wondered what the hell had got into his colleagues.

Dense didn't even have to turn round as she brazenly walked up to the bar and after discriminating Dense from the other men who she'd remembered from

their last visit, plonked herself next to Dense and uttered those deadly words, 'hallo big boy'.

Dense's pals were distraught. They coughed and spluttered to get Dense's attention, jabbed him in the ribs and pulled his jacket for attention.

Now Dense, who was fully entitled to the "big boy" accolade, wasn't quite sure if this complete stranger at his side was talking to him or somebody else and had a look round only to see a gaggle of hysterical lunatics. Their contorted facial grimaces had eyes flitting from Dense to the newcomer.

Dense wasn't all that quick on the take up and tried some verbal communications.

'What's the problem lads?'

More muffled squirming and gesticulating.

Nickola could see she wasn't getting very far so decided to throw in a verbal hand grenade.

'Oh, hi boys. Where's Pete?'

They all looked at each other, then to Dense and back to each other and the shoulders started going up and down in time with the eyebrows. Dense was still in a state of ignorance but felt it time to break the deadlock.

'Pete, isn't that the chap we're looking for?' That served as an even bigger verbal hand grenade and instigated more spluttering and gurgling.

Nickola could see this was going nowhere fast so threw in some more ammunition, 'you guys looking for Pete?'

Silence.

Dense was looking from Nickola to his mates and back again with a strange expression over his face.

More silence until one of the boys spluttered, 'erm, errr, ell, err, yeah, sort of,' some drooling sentences were trying to come out and then somebody else had the courage to carry on.

'Er, we sort of, er, well, sort of thought he was with you?' How brave was that.

'With *me*?' The look of innocence was quite breathtaking.

'Well, er, like, when we were here last, you, were, sort of, er, well, like .....,'

'Oh, last week? Yes we had a few drinks together.' She was still getting over the hangover.

'Well, didn't Pete, sort of, er, well, didn't you and Pete,.....,'

'Yes, he got a taxi home and I got another one later on. Ask the barman. That right Vladimir?'

The barman suddenly realised he was being dragged into the conversation.

'Oh, yeah, that's it, just like you said. Well, I remember ordering the taxi, er, taxis. One for that bloke and one for you miss.'

That quite clearly was the final say in the matter. You couldn't really argue against such overwhelming evidence, now could you?

There was a gap in the conversation until Nickola, the very height of innocence, carried on, 'you not seen Pete then?'

'Er, no, he doesn't seem to have, er, sort of, come back. He must have gone off somewhere.' These big strong oil company men were being reduced to mice.

'Oh, what a shame. I liked Pete. We were getting on so well together. He was a nice lad.'

The word "was" sent shivers down the backs of the mice.

But work had to be carried on. 'So, what's your name?' She turned to Dense. 'You work with these lads then. You a friend of Pete's?'

Now Dense's neurological infrastructure was only programmed to answer one question at a time and his overriding logical thought patterns came up with a simplified answer.

'Yes.'

Oh, oh. This is going to be a tough one Nickola thought to herself.

'Look Dense, I think we really ought to be getting back,' his friends felt it best to beat a hasty retreat at this juncture.



'Dense, what a lovely name,' Nickola picked up quickly. Maybe not so difficult after all.

'Maybe I'll see you around. Lovely to meet you big boy.' She moved over and gave him a little peck on the cheek as his mates dragged him away.

Ok, so plan B it is then, thought Nickola. She immediately telephoned Igor and asked for reinforcements.

Her contacts at the British Embassy had already furnished her with the information of the British Intelligence agent's arrival, so when Dense's pals gave his name away Nickola was a bit taken aback.

Surely he wasn't the right man. Not exactly James Bond, probably a decoy. What a sneaky lot these British!

It mattered not a jot. As soon as she got her hands on him, whoever he was, all would be revealed.

Dense and his mates jumped in a taxi and they asked him if he wanted to go back to the Embassy.

'Bugger that. I could do with a decent drink. And I ain't paying several million whatever you calls it ....'

'Manats.'

'Yeah, whatever. I ain't paying for a lousy bottle of piss. I needs a decent drink. Back to your place lads?'

Back at the BAP Social Club Dense eventually got his pint.

'So what do you do now Dense?'

'I got an open mind.' Bit of an understatement there, but Dense's priority right now was to slate his thirst.

'So, you got any plans?'

'Yeah, I've got to wait for my mate Boris.'

'Then what.'

'Yeah, finish this pint first.'

'I reckon that lady in the bar has got something to do with it.'

They all nodded in agreement.

'She's definitely up to no good.'

They all nodded in agreement.

'She needs a good slapping.'

They all nodded in agreement.

'I wouldn't mind giving her a good spanking.'

They all nodded in agreement.

'I wouldn't mind just giving her one.'

They all nodded in agreement.

Obviously this was getting nowhere so they let Dense finish his drink and then ordered him a taxi back to the Embassy which arrived extremely quickly. The reception called out that a taxi had arrived for somebody.

'Bloody hell. That was quick.

Any way Dense off you go.' They all said their goodbyes and ushered Dense out to the waiting taxi.

Ten minutes later there was another call for a taxi.

Strange.

## Chapter 13. The War Council.

Born and bred in Azerbaijan, with Ukrainian ancestors, Natalya Balanchuk had been to college in the UK and was now employed at the British Embassy here in Baku. She was one of the Ukrainian "War Council's" fifth columnist getting information on Igor and his movements and keeping up to date with Dense's movements as well. And by some extreme coincidence was one of the people who had been contacted by the lovely Nickola as well. Now there's a thing.

Little did Natalya know she was a double agent? She didn't even know she was a single agent. Just helping out friends.

Keeping track of Dense was a bit of a problem. She knew of the BAP Social Club and knew Dense was a frequent visitor. So she gave them a ring and eventually managed to speak to one of the men who had been out with Dense.

She verified she was from the British Embassy and that she knew the other chap who was there at the first meeting.

The BAP man said that they had gone back to the "Pink Pussy" club and bumped into the same lady that was last seen with Pete.

That'll be Miss Elastickova, I'll bet, thought Natalya.

He then explained that they had put Dense in a taxi a couple of hours ago to be taken back to the Embassy.

She didn't like the sound of that as the Embassy was only a ten minutes drive from the Social Club. But she now had to get to the USWASC for a meeting with the visiting Cossacks.

The Ukrainian Socialist Workers (Affiliated) Social Club was formed in the beginning of the century to give migrant workers on the oil fields somewhere to go at the weekends where they could get a brief respite from the gruelling work. Somewhere where they could relax and

relate to something they all had in common, their backgrounds from the Ukraine and a good piss up.

The original shed had been replaced by a large brick hall with inside toilets, a kitchen and a dance area, giving them room to swing a cat or their partners in a wild Cossack dance. Of course there was a committee room and a bar with a stock room.

Every Saturday night was dance night with a local band and a supper laid on as well. Sunday was usually spent clearing up the mess, but there might be bingo or chess

It was late Thursday afternoon and a meeting had been arranged for Boris and his friends to put together a plan in conjunction with their local colleagues. They left the college, dropped off most of the choir, dancers and musicians at the concert hall to prepare for the evening's performance.

This left Boris with half a dozen of the elders and senior members of the "War Council". Their coach pulled up outside the Ukrainian Socialist Workers (Affiliated) Social Club hall and they were greeted warmly by their old acquaintances.

Obviously the first priority was for a round of drinks to satisfy the "Invading Army" after their long journey and then they got down to business.

The more senior of the meeting had a blether about old times and eventually Natalya asked permission to speak.

She explained that Dense had arrived safely a few days ago and since then had gone off with some of the Embassy staff to a meeting at the BAP Social Club and then had been taken out with some of the employees and visited the last place where Pietro Mikhail had been seen.

Since then Dense had gone back to the club with some of the "oil boys" for a drink. They had put him in a taxi several hours ago and he hadn't turned up.

She was obviously worried because Nickola Elastickova had made contact with her and showed considerable interest in the visiting British Intelligence Agent.

'I have to say, he wasn't quite what I expected a British Intelligence Agent to look like,' Natalya ended her report.

'That's my boy'. Boris jumped in. 'They're bloody tricky those intelligence boys down in London.'

Natalya continued, 'You're expecting a James Bond and you get a Charlie Chaplin.' A light titter went round the room.

'Natalya, I have an idea. This can work both ways,' said one of the elders. 'Can you get in touch with this Nickola and tell her that someone called Boris rang and left a message for Dense saying he was held up somewhere. Say he's missed his flight connection in Istanbul but should be here in a couple of days.'

'I'll give her a phone right now then.'

'Good girl. That'll give the impression he's coming on his own and give us a bit of breathing space and she won't suspect that the "Cossacks are coming". I hope your friend will be alright Boris?'

'But don't you worry about young Dense. He'll do the business.'

'It sounds like he's gone the same way as this BAP lad. No doubt Igor's got his clutches on him right now and I wouldn't want to be in his situation at this moment of time,' one of the other locals joined in and continued.

'That Nickola Elastickova's a nasty bit of work as well. One of Igor's little angels. Hell's Angels. I saw a taxi draw up at Igor's little bolthole and she was in it. Can't say as I saw much of the other bloke but there was only the two of them.'

Mykola Doroshenko a naturalised Azerbaijani with Ukrainian parents, he followed in his father's footsteps and worked as a security guard for BAP patrolling their vast inshore oil fields. He lived with his parents just outside Baku close to Igor's "Castle" so had ample information on Igor's comings and goings. Again, like Natalya he was part of the silent army gathering information for the "Cossack Invasion".

'So what you're saying Mykola is that our British chap is now with Igor.' One of the other elders questioned.

'Looks like it, if you put two and two together taking in what Natalya said. I reckon your man's in the shit, good and proper.'

Boris had to dwell on this for a few seconds. 'Right, that's it. Can you take me up there Mykola? I am going to give him a bloody good slapping.'

'Boris, much as you can put the fear of Christ up most people, I don't think Igor's going to welcome you with open arms.' A bit of common sense from the elders.

He continued. 'Anyway Boris that's what all the lads are here for, so wait your turn and let's get a bit more information from our local friends here, and you'd better keep your head down. You'll have to stay here and give the concert a miss.'

'This all the lads you've got with you?' queried Mykola.

'Oh, no, my friend. We've left most of them at the concert hall, rehearsing for tonight's show.'

'Well, you're going to need a small army to sort Igor and his pals out, I can tell you.'

'Yes, that's what we thought.'

The Absheron peninsula, being a part of Shirvan, was the site for peculiar types of defensive structures that originated and developed due to special social, historical and natural conditions. Vast Gobustan semideserts separating the peninsula from the inland country, relatively distant caravan routes, valuable oil and salt resources, and abundant madder and saffron fields the latter being the main export from of old, were the aspects that determined the peculiar development of Absheron and its certain economical and political isolation.

Need for protection from foreign invaders attracted by natural resources induced local feudal lords to erect fortified castles some of which still stand today.

Castles in and around Baku and the Absheron peninsular districts were constantly being invaded by troops such as the Safavids under Shah I Abbas, Russians, Ottoman and then more Safavid troops headed by Nadir Khan. Then Agha Mohammad Shah Gajar attacked the Russian troops under Javad Khan and so on.

It was no wonder that Igor's castle was a bit of a wreck to say the least. But habitable and excellent for his special needs: lots of illegal operations far from the prying eyes of the authorities.

After the death of Afshar ruler Nadir Shah, Azerbaijan split into several khanates one of which was the Karabakh Khanate founded by Azerbaijani ruler Panah Ali Khan Javanshir who was the bloke that built Igor's castle.

The earliest defensive structures in Absheron were small castles with a round donjon (whatever one of those was) built of trimmed limestone blocks. The castles had a number of features in common. Inner part of donjons was divided into three tiers. The ground level entrance led to the first tier. Spiral staircase hidden in the walls began from the second tier so that it was accessible only using a portable ladder. All the defence means were located on the top platform that had strong machicolations protecting shots that defended the castle. Narrow slit-like openings broadening inwards served mainly for ventilation and lighting purposes. They had inner water wells providing the defenders of the castle with sweet water.

Igor's castle was surrounded by open fields with a 360 degree vision of any invaders, but the one thing Igor did not have was night vision binoculars.

So the "War Council" started to form a plan.

'I don't know what you've got in mind but Igor lives in an old castle built about a thousand years ago,' Mykola started.

'Just how big is it?' a query from Voiskovy Starshyna Andrei Shkuro, the leader of this expeditionary force.

'Well,' Mykola had to stop and think here. 'It's probably only a three storey high building but it's in the middle of open fields with good visibility for several hectares around.'

'Could it be scaled?'

'Oh, yes, as long as you have some ropes and grappling irons. But it's getting you there that's the problem.'

'So what's the countryside like around it?'

'Well, pretty open to the front, but the road going up to the front wall starts in a small wooded area about a kilometer away.'

'And to the rear?'

'All open fields.'

'No trees anywhere?'

'Well, yes, there are a few about two kilometers away.'

'Could we hide some of our men there?'

'Oh, yes, but how are you going to march them across open fields?'

'I don't think we'll be doing any marching. Just the old "snake in the grass" routine.'

'In the night?' Confirmed Mykola.

'Got it in one my friend. But how can we get to those trees?'

'I see you've got a coach outside, will you be using that?'

'Oh yes, and we have another at the concert hall.'

'Right. Now there is a road that goes round the back of the forest about a kilometer away. So you've got a bit to walk to the trees and then cross the gap of approximately two kilometers at night to get to Igor's place.'

'I don't think that'll cause too much of a strategic problem will it lads?' Andrei Shkuro turned to his colleagues.

There was a look of bewilderment on the faces of the rest of the War Council.

'We're fucking Cossacks aren't we?' A rhetorical question if ever there was.



## Chapter 14. Dense meets Igor.

'This isn't the British Embassy?' Dense thought the taxi had taken rather a long time. The taxi driver opened the door to an awaiting Nickola.

'I thought you would like a bit of sight seeing so we've brought you out to see a bit of Azerbaijani history.' She grabbed him by his arm and walked him around the front of the castle.

'Isn't this beautiful Dense darling.' To Dense old buildings were not his idea of beautiful things. The thing wrapped around his arm, now that was a thing of beauty.

'This castle was probably built in the 11th-12th century by the Shirvanshah dynasty who assisted Timur in his war with the ruler of the Golden Horde Tokhtamysh. Following Timur's death two independent and rival states emerged: Kara Koyunlu and Ak Koyunlu. But the Shirvanshahs maintained a high degree of autonomy as local rulers up to the 16<sup>th</sup> century.'

Nickola stopped to survey the castle and pulling Dense a bit closer she continued.

'But the history goes way back to when the area was conquered by the Achaemenids leading to the spread of Zoroastrianism. Later it became part of Alexander the Great's Empire and its successor, the Seleucid Empire around the 4th century BC, Zoroastrianism spread in the Caucasus and Atropatene when ancient Azerbaijanis spoke the Old Azari language.'

Dense was getting a similar feeling to that in "Z"'s office: brain seizure and boredom.

Nickola picked up on this and turned towards the front door. 'Let's go inside and meet our host shall we? He's looking forward to meeting you darling.'

It wasn't your actual baronial heritage site. Inside it was more like a storeroom than a banqueting hall. Lots of wooden boxes, lots of cardboard boxes of differing sizes. The odd person in war surplus uniform and a few in white coats walking to and fro carrying little glass capsules.

Some strange looking plants with a sickly sweet smell pervading the whole place.

Strange looking garden, thought Dense.

'Mind your step; let's go through to the office shall we?'

They walked across the hallway through a double door into a large office. Now this was a bit more baronial. Some nice leather furniture and a large desk but what caught Dense's eye was the paintings all around the room. Some of them hadn't even been hung up. Some of them were stacked against the wall.

A tall swarthy figure wearing a purple smoking jacket and a silk cravat stood up from behind the desk and walked towards Dense and Nickola.

'Mr Dense, how nice to meet you. You've met my personal secretary Nickola?'

Dense would have liked to ask how a tart working in a night club had suddenly been promoted to the status of personal secretary, but he let the nice gentleman carry on.

'My name is Igor Badlotski, welcome to my humble abode. Please make yourself comfortable. Perhaps the lovely Nickola could get us all a drink?'

Nickola eased Dense into a large leather chair and stroking his ear said, 'what would you like to drink darling?'

'I couldn't 'arf murder a pint.'

'Ah, the English and their love of beer. I'm afraid we only have bottle Pils my friend.' Without giving Dense the choice Nickola left to get the drinks.

'So Mr Dense, how is my old friend Podpolkóvnik Yeboleksi nowadays?'

'Who?'

'You probably know him as Chekov.'

Dense had to think about this and he also had to try and remember where he had heard the name Igor Badlotski from. "Holy shit", it all came flooding back to him and he realised that he was really in a bucket full of it now.

Igor looked at the startled face of Dense and slightly bemused (you ain't seen nothing yet pal) asked again, 'Chekov? He lives in your village I understand?'

'Oh, Chekov, oh yeah, that Chekov.'

Igor was even more bemused. 'You have another Chekov?'

'Oh, no, no, just the one. A Russian Chekov.'

'Yes, a fairly common name in Russia but I wouldn't think there would be many of them in your village?'

'No, no, we don't get a lot of them there, I must say.' Dense was stalling to try and find some way out of this mess.

He came up with a brilliant idea.

'Do you think you could run me back to the British Embassy please?'

'Of course I can Mr Dense, of course I can. But we have a saying here in Azerbaijan that it is extremely rude of a visitor not to have a drink before leaving the hospitality of his host.'

'Er, yeah, ok, right you are then.'

'But before you leave as I am extremely interested in the British way of life perhaps you can give me some sort of idea of the typical environment in which you live. I understand you live in a small English village, what would that be called?'

Dense felt a little more relaxed having got the assurance of being returned to Baku and he felt this chap wasn't such a bad lot after all. And he didn't seem that interested in the intelligence stuff so he felt it safe to continue.

'Yeah, well I lives in Muddlecombe. Muddlecombe-cum-Snoring to give it its full title. A nice little place with a village green and a duck pond.' Dense's nervous energy was spurring him on.

'And then there's the post office and the church. Nice little church only no bugger uses it except for funerals and weddings, and we don't get many of them, I can tell you. And we don't see many vicars and that as poor old Gerantinium has to do all the burying and wedding stuff on his own. And then there's the school, well more your

actual community school that does stuff in the evenings when the kids have finished with it like. Now that's where I done all that electricky stuff and .....

Igor was saved by the entrance of Nickola with the drinks.

'I am so sorry to interrupt you Mr Dense. Extremely fascinating but before you go I hope you'll join us in a drink.' He looked up to Nickola and gave a little wink.

'Mr Dense wants to go back to Baku but has agreed to have a drink with us before he leaves. He was telling me all about his village, quite enchanting.'

'Your drink Dense darling, I'm so sorry I missed that. Perhaps you could tell us a bit more before you go?'

'Do you have a job there my friend?' Igor was quick to jump in before Dense could continue and Igor wanted to get a bit more information from Dense before he went. Before he went to sleep with the drug in his drink that is.

'Oh, yeah, I works at Muddlecombe Hall.'

'Oh yes, and what do you do there my friend?'

'Well, basically whatever Lady D'Arcy-Landacre tells me to do. Just sort of looking after the estate, bit of this a bit of that.....'

'Do you have any other jobs?' Igor was impatient to get to the nitty gritty before Dense fell over.

'Oh, yeah, I does a bit for John on Primrose Cottage now and then. You know, a bit of this, a bit of that.....'

'I don't suppose you have any other jobs in your busy work schedule like working for the British Intelligence perhaps?'

That was a bit of a bomb shell that took Dense by surprise, but he was prepared for that.

'Oh, no, they said I wasn't to tell anyone about that as I'd signed some secrets act or something or other. So I'm not allowed to "disclose" (Dense had heard that word used) any more information.' Dense felt that would put an end to any further investigation regarding MI6.

'And what about your friend Boris?'

That was another bomb shell.

'My mate Boris?'

'Yes, Mr Boris Slobovitch.'

'Oh, yeah, well, we help's boost Brewster's profits at the "Snort".' Dense tried to inject a bit of humour into the proceedings.

'So where is Boris right now? He was supposed to be bringing me a little present.'

'Well, the last I heard he was in the "Snort" with Sidney.'

'In the "what" with "who"?'

'The "Snort's" our local and Sidney, well, he's a sort of solicitor from Shoreditch.'

Now Igor could start to see that some of this information could actually lead somewhere so he persevered even though at the moment he didn't have a fucking clue where.

'Mr Dense, perhaps you could elucidate me further on this gentleman from Shoreditch and his connections with Boris?'

Dense wasn't quite up to speed on elucidating but carried on anyway.

'Well Sidney's a friend of me Mum and helps her out on the legal stuff and all that, and he also helps John who owns Primrose Cottage like what I was saying just now, and Boris bumps into John over in Tenerife but gets into a bit of trouble, what with all that gold and Chekov's bank and that and has to scarper a bit sharpish and Sidney helps him out getting him back home without all that paperwork nonsense, and puts him up in Primrose Cottage. But Boris has a bit of a problem back home in Ukraine somewhere and so me and Creighky pops over there to help him out but we gets a bit tied up and we has to scarper a bit sharpish and God knows how we ends up in Moscow but we escapes to Helsinki but Creighky gets sent out of the way to somewhere in the jungle in Africa .....

'Mr Dense why don't you have a drink, you must be very thirsty?' Igor knew he was and very confused as well.

'No, if it's all the same to you, I'm not a great lover of that bottle stuff.'

Oh, oh, plan "C" then thought Igor and Nickola.

'Some champagne perhaps. We have a nice little Veuve Clicquot or perhaps a Dom Pérignon?'

'No, I don't go much on that cheap foreign plonk either. Oh, look at the time; I really must be getting back.'

'Yes, of course Mr Dense. Allow me to call a taxi for you.' Igor nodded to Nickola and then picked up the phone and pressed the "intercom" button rather than the "outside line" button and rattled off something in Russian which translated to "bring in a couple of boys and a bit of rope".'

Igor felt a teeny weeny bit of remorse having to resort to stronger measures other than simple interrogation but couldn't take any more gobbledygook from this person who was either incredibly clever or incredibly stupid. But as he was from British Intelligence it must be the intelligent bit.

Mustn't it?

Whatever, Igor was going to have to do it the quick and easy way. Obviously Boris wasn't coming in the near future from what he had gathered from Dense so this would give him time to prepare for him and get his revenge over Podpolkóvnik Yeboleksi. He rubbed his hands in anticipation.

So it was now down to the good old reliable sodium pentothal.

The door to the office opened and Dense assumed it was the taxi arriving and stood up only to see two very large and very ugly men who promptly grabbed his arms and plonked him back down on the chair.

'I'm very sorry Mr Dense to have to put you to all this discomfort but I really need to get some sensible information from you other than the comings and goings of your crummy little English village.'

They tied Dense down and then a bald, short arsed little man in a white coat came in with a rather large hypodermic needle and popped it into Dense's arm.

'You realise I shall have to report you to the British Embassy and they will take a very dim view of this treatment of a British passport holder don't you?'

'Yes, but as I say, I am most terribly sorry and will obviously be giving your Embassy a full apology.'

'Oh, that's ok then.' Dense felt a little better for that and was starting to feel a strange sensation coming over him at the same time.

'Now perhaps you can just answer a few simple questions for us please. Let's just confirm where Boris is shall we?'

'Like I said, he's with Sidney the last time I saw him in the "Snort".' That wasn't too hard now was it?

Igor breathed a sigh of relief. His original conversation was obviously the truth. Right, now let's get down to the nitty gritty.

'Now perhaps you can tell us who you work for in the British Intelligence?'

'"Z".'

No problem there thought Dense.

However this caused a problem for Igor.

'Z?'

'Yeah, "Z".'

'And Z is?'

'I dunno. It's secret.'

Igor grasped his furrowed forehead as if in pain.

'What's secret?'

'His name. I only knows him as "Z" like.'

'And did this Z person talk to you at all?'

'Yeah.'

Igor was stating to lose it.

'And what did this Z person say?'

Now let's go back to neurology and Dense's physical cranial make up. Although he was a bottle of sherry short of a Christmas hamper, his neurological layout varied from the normal homo sapiens complex brain configuration.

In some areas of the brain he was, it's only fair to say, a bit on the slow side. On other areas, although he wasn't eligible for the "Brain of Britain" contest, he could store an immense amount of completely useless information. And so when an exterior force was

introduced such as a veterinary surgeons syringe full of sodium pentothal, then things started to happen.

This "truth serum" went straight to the place of least resistance vis-à-vis an extremely large area of memory, bypassing all the fiddly little bits, such as his higher form of intelligent thinking, such as philosophy for example. This quite clearly was virtually non-existent, but when asked about the workings of the British Intelligence Service, the obvious target was all the rubbish that "Z" was talking about and so out it came.

'You may not be aware of the situation in central Europe, but the top people in the government have been looking into this for some considerable time and I, if I may venture to say so, have investigated this myself during my term at Cambridge and have come to a similar conclusion as my learned superiors. Basically what I'm getting at you may wonder is that the internecine problems in the Slovak states have transgressed into the neighbouring Armenian, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Georgian arenas surrounding Chechnya which will have far-reaching strategic implications in not only territorial areas but also in socio-economic, industrial, typographical and mineral dispositions which in turn will disperse the wealth of the areas into adjoining regions and will, by implication spread worldwide causing a downturn in the monetary and social wellbeing of some of the lesser industrialised nations which can in turn only add to the unsettling of any future prognostications for those egalitarian establishments that directly or indirectly will, I hear the economists and agronomists say, effect our very own stable democratic constitution and lead to the weakening of shareholders' dispositions towards capital investment should the fluctuations turn in a reverse.....so what I am saying is that in the interim a small problem has arisen vis-à-vis certain personnel who are working on the internal agronomical and chemical side of the economy with the backing of the Western powers, who have or have appeared to have mislaid one of their workers in the field which is causing



some political embarrassment to both the United States and our own jolly United Kingdom. Not to put too fine a point on it we have extremely red faces and need to.....so let me get this straight in my mind, this question of yours, vis-à-vis the discussion we have been having, or should I say, the little talk of the current situation in the Central eastern European theatre, has quite obviously, er, has quite obviously been given considerable consideration by yourself and what you are saying is, er, well what I think you are saying is, erm, now let's be perfectly clear on this matter, er, your have asked for, well how can I put it to you, you have asked me to.....'

His interrogators immediately started scouring the complete works of Charles Dickens, Shakespeare and Robert Burns to try and break down what they believed to be some sort of code.

Their seventy two trillion gigabyte random access computer working at one thousands of a nanosecond gave up the ghost and so they had to resort to their Big Guns.

Or "Big `uns" as she was called, for obvious reasons. None other than our lovely hospitality executive, Nickola Elastickova

Oh no, here we go again.

So they carted Dense up stairs to the interrogation centre or Nickola's boudoir as it was more commonly known.

Dense was disrobed down to his underwear, and Nickola started to reveal some of her womanly wiles.

Also a great pair of tits.

Out came the lie detector equipment, on went the electrodes and the electric current coursed around Dense's body bypassing the area of least resistance, the brain and following the blood to where it was most needed, the groinal area.

So up popped the totem pole and out popped the eyes of the poor defenceless interrogator. It's really not

fair; Dense should have some sort of government health warning, some sort of Health and Safety sign similar to those on electricity pylons:

“BEWARE LARGE ERECTION!”

But I suppose if you’re working in the Secret Service, all’s fair in love and wigwams.

Then the poor lady did what any normal hot blooded woman would do under the circumstances and took *advantage* of the circumstances.

Now it was about this time that we can see a fine example of both items 1 and 2 of the things going for Dense interacting together at the same time.

The young lady impaled on top of Dense was feeling a considerable warm, tingling sensation in her loins and at the same moment in time started getting a tingling sensation between her ears.

As she was writhing and moaning atop our poor defenceless Dense, various words were starting to form. Then some of the words started to make sentences.

‘Oooh ahh.....oil pipeline.....aaaaahhhh  
.....Baku–Tbilisi–  
Ceyhan.....pipeline..... oooooohhh  
hh.....blow.....up.....pipe  
.....line..aaahh.....ooooohhhh.....young.....  
Scottish.....ooohhhh.....engineer.....ooohh....aaaaah  
hhh.....work.....oooooaaaaahhhh.....for  
.....ooooooohhhh.....BAP.....aaaaaaa  
aaahhhh.....ooooohh.....terrorists... take  
young.....ooooohhhh.....Pete.....  
.....aaahh.....to help draw  
.....ooooohhhhhhh.....maps.....ooooohhhh  
.....aaahh.....hold.....him.....  
...captive.....aaahhhh.....ooohhhhhhhhh.....in  
.....old warehouse.....aaahh.....in.....old  
industrial.....area.....in....ooooooohh.....near  
...oaaaahh.....village.....of.....Ilkhichi  
.....ooooooohhhhhhh!

## Chapter 15. War.

The concert was a mild success. Given that the choir had received no training and that they were sober, it was quite an achievement that they actually managed to harmonise and eventually get in time with the musicians.

If the audience had been totally tone deaf it would have been a roaring success but we must bear in mind that the choir were all under a considerable amount of stress.

They were just about to lay down their lives for Boris, and the village idiot.

There must be better options for shuffling off from one's mortal coil. But these people were Cossacks and what counted was a good punch up followed by a good piss up and followed by highly exaggerated tales of bravery and heroism that they could tell their grandchildren bouncing on their knees.

So be it.

So back to the Ukrainian Socialist Workers (Affiliated) Social Club to prepare for the invasion. They all enjoyed their "last supper" before the battle and started to get ready.

Black was the order of the day, or night should we say except for the musicians.

'Mykola, can you give me a bit better idea of Igor's disposition please?'

'Well he must have about forty or so people there but bearing in mind that there are quite a few laboratory technicians working on his little botanical garden project. I haven't actually been inside his castle but I would hesitate to guess that the laboratories are all in the basement. He does have some security guards but their numbers seem to have dwindled recently. I suppose there is no real security threat to him locally. There are other war lords around the country but they all seem to have come to some sort of unwritten agreement not to invade each others territory.'

'Thank you Mykola. We have a plan and I hope you will be able to help us out on directions to get out to Igor's place?'

'No problem. What are you thinking?'

'Well, we really need to get our main force to the rear of the castle and give them time to cross the open countryside in the dark. So can you show the drivers of the coaches the way up to somewhere to the rear first and then we need to have the frontal diversionary attack forces in place before it gets light.'

'Ok, no problem. The sun rises about half past six.'

'What time does it start getting light then?'

'About six o'clock.'

'Ok, so we need to get our rear force in position then and give them, what, say two hours to crawl across the fields?'

'That should do it. So we need to leave here about half past three to be in place in time.'

'Great. Then can you drive round and drop off the rest somewhere on the road leading to the front of the castle?'

'No problem.'

They all finished the meal and gathered round for the final briefing.

'Ok men. Make sure you have all the equipment with you and in good working order. We leave here about half past three so you have time for a rest before we depart. Can I ask that the musicians are all in traditional costumes and all their ammunition well hidden with the rifles at the back behind your instruments. We want some nice soothing lullaby music from you before you start getting nasty.'

A loud cheer went up in the hall.

'Boris, you'll have to try and hide yourself behind the musicians, but don't do any singing.'

Another loud cheer and laughter.

'The rest of you are the main attack force and will have to do a bit of crawling and a bit of climbing up walls. We have a kilometer of open fields to cross in the

dark and you must be in position under the castle back walls by six o'clock.'

Another cheer.

'The frontal diversion will start as soon as it starts getting light and as soon as you hear it at the rear we must assume that the guards will have heard it and will come to see what is happening giving you time to climb the walls and quietly dispatch the enemy.'

Another much louder cheer went up.

'We don't want any shooting until it is absolutely necessary. We are looking for a British Intelligence agent who must not be harmed. We suspect he will be with Nickola Elastickova who is an extremely attractive blonde lady.....'

Another extremely loud cheer went up as the speaker's hands were cupped and waved in front of him. This took several minutes to quieten down.

'Also bear in mind that there are a lot of laboratory workers who we presume will be unarmed and will be very useful hostages.'

Another cheer.

'We are also looking for Igor Badlotski the local badman and if possible he should be taken alive.'

A murmur of discontent rang around the hall.

'Gentlemen, can I ask you now to charge your glasses,' the speaker waited while the vodka was passed round.

'Please raise your glasses and let's drink to the fight.....' a long pause and then..... 'And to the Cossacks!'

There was a split second of silence as the vodka was thrown down the thirsty throats and then following the crescendo of smashing glasses to the floor, the place erupted.

'The Cossacks!' The choir screamed in unison.

One of the problems of being a "Warlord" is that you very rarely actually get to go to a proper war per se.

Ok, so you have to supply arms to other people who want to go to war or terrorists who have a personal

grudge against some other form of religion, or even have a local battle with another "warlord" over territorial issues as to who you are supplying drugs to or where you want to operate your protection racket from but you never really go to war.

Now nobody had actually told Igor that the Ukrainian Cossacks had declared war against him so spare a thought for him as he was really in no position to be fully prepared on a war footing or to be in a state of readiness for such an eventuality.

Ok, so this wasn't exactly a full scale war and the possibility of it being brought up in the United Nations Security council was fairly slim, but you try telling that to the Cossacks.

So their battle plan was simplicity itself: surprise, a frontal diversion and then a sneaky attack to the rear.

The security guards on the castle had a pretty boring job. They couldn't remember the last time they actually had to do any "securing" so they had devised a system for half the night shift to find a cozy little place to huddle up and get a good night's rest to be nice and fresh and ready for the next day's rape and pillage.

This left half a dozen extremely bored and unprepared people for what was about to happen. As it started to get light they thought they could hear some sort of music. They looked at each other and slowly walked round to the front of the castle's ramparts only to see about half a kilometer away a band of musicians slowly walking up the road to the front of the castle gently singing some beautiful lullabies.

What they failed to hear was the little clinks of grappling hooks landing in the empty ramparts they had just vacated to the rear and then the pitter patter of tiny feet creeping up behind them.

The AK-47 is a selective-fire, gas-operated 7.62 × 39mm assault rifle, first developed in the USSR by Mikhail Kalashnikov. Known as a Kalashnikov, an "AK", weighs in at 4.78 kg with a loaded magazine.

With a length of 880 mm and a fixed wooden stock, cyclic rate of fire of 600 rounds/min, and a full-auto burst rate of fire at 100 rounds/min it has an effective range of 350 metres and a muzzle velocity of 715 m/s.

It one of the worlds most robust and reliable rifles ever built and is greatly favoured by the world's terrorists organisation.

However even with the most sensitive hearing and the realisation that someone is coming up behind you it would take about two seconds to raise it, get it into roughly the right direction of the assailant and pull the trigger.

Meanwhile the first and last thing you would see is the flashing, highly polished and perfectly honed blade of a traditional Cossack *shaska* coming at you at just below the speed of sound.

And a shaska sword doesn't make a lot of noise.

The odd parts of the body falling to the ground might, but not enough to cause too much of a noise pollution problem.

The Cossack leader, Andrei Shkuro had quietly got his men in position behind the gawking guards and lifted his arm and dropped it for a signal to commence operations.

Not your actual *snap*, *crackle* or *pop* this time, more your actual *swish*, *squelch* and *thud* as the severed parts dropped to the floor. And you don't feel much in the mood for any breakfast cereal afterwards either. A bit messy, but again extremely minimalistic in decibel terms.

Meanwhile the rest of the rear attack force had managed to scramble up the walls and were starting to fan out strategically to start the search for the rest of the enemy.

They were not a pretty bunch, with blacked faces and matching outfits. The early morning light was now racing towards another beautiful dawn morning as they scampered around the top of the castle.

Someone fell over a sleeping sentry, it was not widely known who was the most surprised but who the

fuck cares. Before the sentry could rub the sleeping dust from his bleary eyes he was quickly dispatched back to a state of permanent somniference.

This caused a search for more horizontal bodies which were once more quickly dispatched, this time without even giving them the courtesy of being woken up.

After a thorough search of the rest of the ramparts they slowly moved their search down into the living quarters of the castle.

Igor was dreaming of making love to a beautiful woman with a heavenly celestial choir singing softly in amongst the clouds in time to their sensual movements. The choir slowly became louder and louder until he suddenly came to the conclusion that the music wasn't so spiritual after all but coming from outside his window.

Once again he was perplexed until there was an almighty crash and the door to his bedroom swung open on what was left of its hinges. He was now definitely wide awake and in a state of extreme traumatic astonishment, or shock as the medics call it as he watched a screaming banshee waving a sword over him destined to slice his body in half from head to toe.

His life was saved by the Tiger skin at the bottom of his bed which his assailant slipped on and the sword came down just short of his body between his legs.

Unfortunately it wasn't quite short of the dangly bits between his legs.

Whoops-a-daisy.

The sword embedded itself deep into the black satin sheets as poor Igor clutched at his crutch to try and rejoin the parts of his body that he felt were necessary to his leadership skills let alone his macho image.

He didn't really have time to make such judgments as he looked down and before he had time to scream, he saw the blood trickling between his fingers, and fainted.

What a shame, the poor bloke was only firing on one cylinder but doing very well taking all things into consideration.



Several gawking Cossack figures followed into the bedroom and looking down at the figure in blood stained silk pyjamas in a large black satin sheeted bed figured out that he must have been someone of great importance.

As the attacker withdrew his sword from the tangled mess in the mattress his colleagues whispered, 'Dmitry my friend, I think that must be the big bad man we are looking for.'

'Oh, shit. What do we do now?'

'I'll get hold of Vladimir, he knows a bit about medical stuff.'

'Does he know how to sew balls back on?'

Now it's all very well poncing about playing "Three Musketeers" with your fancy swords, very practical in close quarter fighting, but not a lot of use waving an unloaded sword at your opponent ten feet away. This is where a loaded rifle comes in handy.

So having secured the top of the castle it was now time to look for the rest of the enemy and deal with them accordingly. They wiped their shaskas put them back in their scabbards and unstrapped their rifles from their backs. Fortunately there were a few spare Kalashnikovs lying about which would come in handy as well.

They would have to let in the frontal diversionary troops eventually who were now only a few hundred meters away and in full harmonic voice. And hiding behind the musical instruments out of view was Boris.

With their full contingent of men now all safely in the castle, the Cossacks slowly tiptoed round the building starting at the top floor and working their way down the stairs.

Not only was it a great surprise to the castle inhabitants but it was also a great surprise to the Cossacks how surprisingly well this surprise had taken everybody by surprise. As they opened all the doors they were greeted by people taken completely by surprise.

The large front door was eventually opened and the choir, musicians and Boris greeted their colleagues with open arms.

Someone beckoned to Boris to follow him upstairs to one of the bedrooms. This one was luxuriously well appointed and sprawled out on the enormous bed were two naked figures covered only in a thin film of perspiration.

They were both zonked out on their backs gently snoring. Boris and his friends stopped and let out a gentle whistle at the sight of Dense with all the electrodes still in place and his totem pole still standing to attention.

"черт возьми!" Boris muttered under his breath which roughly translates to "Kinnell! Dense, you lucky son-of-a-bitch."

'Is this your friend Boris?'

'That's my boy!'

'He's a big boy isn't he?'

Now while the gathered assembly stood there in stark amazement at Dense's obelisk it suddenly came to them that he wasn't actually snoring but muttering under his breath. They managed to dislodge the electrodes and were greatly saddened by the sight of his manhood acquiescing but then bent down and listened to his soft whisperings.

Now let's go back to Dense's neurological breakdown. We have already established that he had an enormous propensity to gather a load of useless information. He also had the propensity to realise he could quite easily forget this information. Going back to his school days he had to learn everything parrot fashion and here we see a perfect case of the two propensities amalgamating.

While Nickola was moaning and groaning on top of him, his unconscious mind followed suit and memorised everything she had said parrot fashion.

So his colleagues sat and listened to his gentle ramblings and tried to make head or tail of them.

'Oooh...oil..pipeline....aahh.....Baku-Tbilisi-  
Ceyhan...pipeline...oohh..blow.....up...pipe...line...aahh.....o  
ohh.....young...Scottish.....ooohhhh.....engineer....ooohh....  
aaaahh....work...ooaahh.....for....ooh.....BAP.....ahhhh.....  
...ooohh...terrorists...take  
...young.....ooohh.....Pete....aahhh.....to help draw  
.....ooohh....maps.....oooh.....aaaahhh.....hold.....  
...him....captive.....aaahhh....ooohh....in....old..  
warehouse.....aaahhh.....in.....village.....area.....in....oo  
hh.....near.....of...Ilkhichi.....industrial.....ooooooo  
ooooooohhhhhhhh!'

As Boris was the only one in the room who could speak English they all looked at him and asked him if he could make any sense out of this gibberish.

Fortunately Dense continued his parrot fashion ramblings which gave Boris the time to find a bit of paper and eventually copy all the incoherent phrases down.

'Ok, boys, I think I've got it all down. I think I understand what he's on about and I think we need to talk this over.' What Boris meant was that he didn't have a fucking clue but thought a gathering of minds might be able to decipher it all.

Now the last thing a lady wants to see when she wakes up in the morning, flat on her back, stark naked is half a dozen black faced, hairy arsed, battle scarred Cossacks staring down at her.

But with considerable professional aplomb she greeted them.

'Hallo boys.'

Well, if rape is inevitable, lie back and enjoy it.

## Chapter 16. A victory.

There were still some pockets of resistance and the Cossacks felt that now was as good a time as any to try out the Kalashnikovs. They seemed to work perfectly well.

However the traditional sword still came in handy and persuaded those who still had their heads on their shoulders that it was best to keep it that way.

This obviously helped to accelerate the surrendering process.

They worked their way down to the basement areas and found the botanical section. Ablaze with bright lights to accelerate the growth of the plants. They found a few bleary eyed workers amid the greenery totally unaware of the hostilities above, probably due to the gentle throbbing of a generator in the background. Or probably due to the fact that they were carrying out personal quality control on the tall spiky grass like plants.

They were gently herded up and sent back up stairs to the reception area for corralling amongst the other prisoners.

Some of the army managed to find the kitchens and in a warm corner next to the ovens sat a large gentleman dozing in a chair. He was silently surrounded and then gently prodded until they got some reaction.

His eyes slowly opened, closed and then reopened a damn sight faster. Now for somebody with a fairly low Intelligence Quotient he grasped the situation extremely rapidly and came up with the correct course of action.

'Hallo boys, can I get you some breakfast?'

A loud cheer went up as they helped him out of his chair and investigated the contents of the kitchen.

Meanwhile things were getting a bit messy in Igor's bedroom. The Cossack "Paramedic" arrived with his first aid tin, looked at the situation and promptly fainted as well.

Somebody felt that they should wash the wound so threw some water over the blood coagulated area. This revived poor Igor who started screaming.

They managed to control his writhing and shut him up with a gag. Then someone had a bright idea and naturally assuming Igor was not only a warlord but a drug baron to boot sent out a search party for something akin to morphine to shut him up.

Boris had now managed to get Dense dressed and they left Nickola to the pleasures of the conquering heroes. It wasn't quite clear who was going to get the most pleasure, the Cossack hordes or Nickola.

Dense was nearly awake by now as they followed the screaming sounds to Igor's bedroom.

'We really need to get this chap to hospital,' said one of the people holding Igor down.

Boris introduced Dense to everyone and he came up with an interim solution.

'He's got some sort of doctor chappie,' said Dense. 'He had a white coat and a big syringe.'

'Ok, everybody search the place for a man in a white coat and a syringe!' The order was given by Andrei Shkuro who suddenly realised the stupidity of his remark and quickly rescinded the order.

'Mr Dimmock, do you know what he looked like?'

'Oh, yeah, he had a white coat and a syringe.'

Andrei Shkuro wanted to bash his head against a brick wall but held his composure and continued. 'Was he tall, or short or .....?'

'He wore glasses and he was bald and he was a right little shortarse. I wanted to give him one I can tell you!'

There were not many people smaller than Dense who he could have punched on the nose and he was getting really angry now.

'Ok boys, do you get the picture. Get going and Mr Dimmock perhaps you can help look as well.'

It wasn't long before a terrified man in a white coat was dragged into the room and then the other search party arrived with various bottles of liquid. The situation was explained to the little man who rushed off to get his

syringe and returned and injected the squirming Igor until he relaxed into a state of blissful euphoria.

The little man in the white coat then dressed the wound and stitched up what he could. It was a bit late to try and join bits back on and he felt Igor would not really want to keep them as memento of the day, so disposed of them. He whipped the sheets off the bed and made Igor as comfortable as possible for a man in his condition.

A potential eunuch in the custody of a wild looking bunch of warriors.

The rest of Igor's men, those with their heads still on and those who were still under the influence of drugs were rounded up in the main hallway.

They were in a sorry state. Some still in the pyjamas or underwear and some with a glazed look in their eyes not really understanding the situation, or really caring for that matter.

Those of the Cossacks not in a queue outside Nickola's bedroom surrounded the prisoners, pointing various forms of armaments at them. The invaders were a pretty frightening sight, blacked faces underneath great big black busbys, ammunition bandoliers glistening in the hall lights over black blouses with baggy pantaloons tucked into their black calf leather boots.

The majority of them were covered in mud from their two hour crawl across the fields which added to ferocious countenance. So when politely requesting the prisoners to help in clearing up the mess there were few abstentions.

The "glazed gang" cleared up the bodily parts as they were too far gone to worry about all the blood and guts lying about. The rest of Igor's troops, what was left of them were rounded up, tied up and locked away in one of the basement cellars.

Then there came a sudden shout from the kitchen, 'Breakfast!'

There was a mad rush for the food, and some of them had even forsaken their turn in the queue outside Nickola's bedroom.

The poor cook had to work overtime keeping up with the hungry hordes voracious appetites and afterwards when some semblance of order was restored the "Council" met to appraise the situation.

One of the top priorities was to get Igor to a hospital as he would be needed in any future plans. None of the Cossacks had sustained any life threatening injuries but needed some cuts and bruises seen to. Their demands for some nurses to attend them were not taken too seriously.

So the meeting turned to Boris and Dense. Now it has to be said that Dense was now viewed in some awe. The Cossacks all gave him a smile or a knowing wink. Patted him on the back or shook hands with him. He was some sort of celebrity so when the meeting focused on him there was a ripple of laughter and a few arm signals going up and down.

Then Andrei Shkuro announced, 'this is our brave man from British Intelligence,' the place erupted. It was very difficult to apprehend how such an insignificant person could be blessed with every man's dream of manhood. The Cossacks were aware that they had won the battle but that the British "Stiff upper lip" for want of another euphemism, had been sustained throughout the war.

Dense blushed bright red and managed to stutter out, 'thank you Boris and all your lovely friends.' They all looked pretty scary to Dense but he felt "lovely" was the best option at this moment of time

The place erupted again and eventually the banging on the tables and shouting died down and Andrei Shkuro looked to Boris for some sense.

Boris pulled out the piece of paper he had copied down Dense's ramblings on and started to read in English.

'Da, da, yes, yes, I have copied down special coding of friend Dense. It is some sort of short hand.'

Boris opened up his piece of paper and began slowly rearing it.

'Oooh...oil..pipeline....aahh.....Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan...pipeline...oohh..blow.....up...pipe...line...aahh.....oohh.....young...Scottish.....oohhhh.....engineer....oohh....aaaahh....work...oaaahh.....for....ooh.....BAP.....ahhhh.....ooohh...terrorists...take...young....ooohh.....Peitro....aahhh.....to help draw.....ooohh....maps.....oooh.....aaaahhh.....hold.....him....captive.....aaahhh....oohh....in....old..warehouse.....aaahhh.....in....old...industrial.....area.....in....ooohh.....near....village.....of...Ilkhichi.....ooooooooooooooooohhhhhhhh!'

Everybody was in fits of laughter until all of a sudden Dense jumped up.

'That's the chap we're looking for!'

Boris stopped and looked to Dense for further confirmation.

'That's the Scotch oil boffin I've been sent out to look for. You remember Boris, what we talked about in the "Snort"?''

The penny suddenly dropped for Boris as well now. 'Da, da, yes, yes, my friend. Of course. That the man, what he called.....?'

'Pete summat?' Dense said scratching his head.

'Peitro!' Boris confirmed

'That's the fella', Peitro summat or other.' Dense was being really helpful here.

'Kemikhail!' Boris exploded.

'That's the one,' Dense confirmed. 'That's the one old "Z" were rabittin' about, well eventually anyway.....'

Andrei Shkuro intervened here and back in his native Russian stopped Dense and turned to Boris to elucidate.

Boris explained that while Nickola was still atop Dense, a loud cheer went up, he was muttering something and he had copied it down. It now made sense that it concerned the missing oil man from the British and American Petroleum Company and that he was probably being held captive in this place called Ilkhichi by a gang of terrorists.



Well, this was all too much for the assembled Cossacks. The chance for another war? They all jumped up and down, waving their guns in the air and swishing their swords about. They picked up Boris and carried him and Dense around the hall on their shoulders.

Andrei Shkuro managed to get some order and started. 'Gentlemen, I think now is the time to sit down and do some planning. But first we need to get Igor to hospital and Mr Dimmock back to the Embassy to let them know the situation and you'd better take Boris with you.'

Boris and Dense gave some sort of nodding approval.

'Then come back here and we will finalise our plans, OK?'

Basically they wanted witnesses out of the way as there were going to be a lot of questions asked of the prisoners to get the information required to carry out their plans.

'OK, boys. Can you help Igor into a car and take Boris and Mr Dimmock into town and while you're there we will need some provisions. We'll write out a list for you Boris. See what money you can find upstairs boys?'

Igor was lying peacefully with a silly grin on his face dressed in a sort of blood stained towel type nappy that had been improvised to stem his bleeding. He was gently lifted up and carried downstairs to a Toyota Land Cruiser and they maneuvered him gently into the back seats.

Andrei Shkuro came out with a list which seemed to comprise mostly of vodka and sent them off into Baku with Mykola.

Back in the meeting room, 'Ok, boys, now I think we need to review the situation. I think we can safely say that we have now established our base headquarters here.'

A cheer went up as they all fully understood that meant they had won the war. The first one that is.

'I think we must now ensure that this campaign is a profitable one.'

Another loud cheer.

'So we need to search the place and establish the total worth and how best we can realise these profits.'

This confused some of them, 'Don't we normally just burn the place to the ground?'

'Ah, yes, the old traditional rape and pillage.'

Another even louder cheer.

'But,' there was pause here until the speaker got all their attention. 'Do you fully realise what we have here. We are sitting on a little gold mine but unfortunately this gold is not transferable back home.'

Some very strange faces.

'What I'm saying is that to realise the asset potential of this place we need to get a full inventory and find the best way of disposing of these assets.'

A long silence then one of the braver ones put his hand up.

'What's an assitt what you just said?'

'An asset is something that can be changed into money.'

Another brief silence, so he continued. 'What would you rather have, an asset or loads of прекрасна гроші?'

That made them sit up and think. No contest really. Loads of lovely money in preference to something they really didn't understand.

'прекрасна гроші!'

'Ok, so now go and sort your quarters out, get yourselves cleaned up and then I want a full inventory of this place. Then we need to interrogate our colleagues downstairs and find out a bit more about this operation.'

They all trundled away rubbing their hands. This was the interesting bit, the interrogation.

## Chapter 17. Back at the British Embassy.

Natalya Balanchuk had a fairly uneventful morning in the British Embassy, so far. Then Dense and Boris walked in after being dropped off by Mykola on his way to the hospital.

She rushed round the front of the reception desk.

'Oh, Mr Dimmock, I'm so glad you're alright. Whatever happened?'

She looked up to something shading the light from the entrance door.

'Ah, the famous Boris. Of course, we met at The Ukrainian Socialist Workers (Affiliated) Social Club. I'd best ring the Ambassador. Do you gentlemen (she didn't know them very well) want to sit down? A cup of coffee?'

She rang the Ambassador and was asked to send Dense up in ten minutes. Meanwhile she sorted out the coffee for them.

'Sir Robert would like to see you Mr Dimmock, perhaps you can wait here Boris my friend.'

Now it has to be said that although Natalya had supplied information to both Nickola and the Ukrainians, she had forgotten to mention all this to her boss. It was a local affair and she didn't see the need to pass any of this to the British Embassy. So she was a little surprised to be invited in to see the Ambassador.

'Mr Dimmock,' the Ambassador rose from behind his desk and shook Dense's hand warmly. 'I can tell you it's a relief to see you. We all thought you'd gone the same way as the young Scottish Engineer. Are you alright? You look a bit tired?'

'Yeah, I am a bit knackered,' Dense replied.

Well, he had been up all night. Well, not all of him, but a part of his body had fulfilled a long night's ordeal.

'And what with all the blood and guts and all them heads rolling around all over the place.....'

'Just run that bit past me again about heads rolling around can you please Mr Dimmock?'

'Well, they weren't rolling around, just sort of lying around.'

'Heads? We're talking about people's heads here are we?'

'Yeah, them things on your shoulders.'

'Right.' He wasn't quite sure how to continue.

There was a pregnant pause and Dense picked up on it and carried on.

'Yeah, it was all a bit messy.'

'I'm sure it was. And how did these heads get detached from their shoulders?'

'Them shaskas.'

'Shaskas?'

'Yeah, them sort of swords, what the Cossacks used.'

'Cossacks?'

'Yeah, Boris' mates.'

'Boris' mates?'

Sir Robert was sure this was all leading somewhere but for the life of him couldn't see where. But if nothing he had patience. He may be losing it but he was sure if he just amassed all his diplomatic skills he would get some sort of understandable result.

Fat chance.

'Boris. Ah, yes, he's the gentleman we were waiting for.'

'That's the one.'

'And he is .....?'

'He's me mate from the village.'

'The village?'

'Yeah, Muddlecombe.'

'Muddlecombe?'

'Yeah, Muddlecombe-cum-Snoring.'

'And he.....?'

'He's really from the Ukraine and he used to work for the KGB as an assassin and I helped him out a couple of years ago getting his pension fund back to blighty from the Ukraine and he lives in the village now with his old KGB boss who's having it off with the wife of that ponce Creighky O'Riley, but obviously we couldn't have him coming out here with me being in the Secret Service and

using all them RAF types 'cause he wouldn't have fitted in to that plane any way.'

'Obviously.'

'And because "Z" gave me this job to come and find this Scotch fella what worked in oil around here, Boris' boss helped me out with getting information from this Igor bloke what lived out here. He was a nasty bit of work I can tell you and he had this castle so Boris pops back to his old village in the Ukraine and gets a few lads out here to help out getting into this castle and of course Igor wasn't having none of it.....'

'Of course.' Sir Robert managed to get a word in while Dense took a deep breath. He was still cringing from the Scotch remark and felt he was probably in need of a stiff one right now.

'So like I was saying these lads they don't muck about I can tell you and the job had to be done quickly and quietly as this tart's kidnapped me and that little bald short arsed git stuck these needles into me and the next thing I know is Boris and his mates is gawping and having a laugh at me and this tart lying bollock naked in the middle of her boudoir and me pecker's standing up like Nelson's Column in Trafalgar square but we gets the low down on where this Jock chap's been kidnapped and we're getting ready to try and find him.'

Dense took another deep breath which gave Sir Robert time to try and think up an answer.

'Can I get you another cup of coffee Mr Dimmock? Perhaps Sir Robert we could introduce Boris at this stage. He's downstairs.' Natalya prepared to leave.

'Oh, yes I think we should hear his side of the story as well. Bring him up.'

'You must be Boris, the long awaited Boris.'

Sir Richard held out his hand.

'Da, da, yes, yes,' Boris stammered quite overawed by the occasion. This was a lot more splendid than some of the Russian Embassies he had been in, during his days as a Military Attaché working for Chekov

'Do sit down, and can you do the honours please Natalya.' He pointed to the tray of coffee and biscuits. 'I've asked Natalya to stay with us to see if she can help with any local input and perhaps she could help our friend Boris with his English.'

There was nothing wrong with Boris' English once he'd had his pint of Brewster's special bitter. It was just a shame all that was on offer was coffee and biscuits.

'So, Mr Dimmock. Perhaps now that Boris is here we can continue where you left off and your friend Boris here can let us have his input now.'

'So where was I?'

'Well, you left here yesterday to go to the BAP Social Club.'

'Right, that's it. It's all coming back to me now.' Dense paused to collect his thoughts. This took some time as you can well imagine.

'Yeah, I went off to the BAP Social Club, and had a few drinks with the boys and they said why don't we go downtown to the "Pink Pussy" club and we can show you where we last saw that mate of ours, what's 'is name.'

'Peitro Kemikhail.'

'That's the one. Anyway, we goes off to the club and in walks this tart and the oil boys all gets excited and points and coughs and all that stuff. Well, she's a stonking bit of totty I can tell you and what does she do? She starts coming on to me. Well I can tell she weren't up to no good, that's for sure so I gives her the elbow and we all jumps in a taxi and goes back to their club and has a few drinks. I says me goodbyes and calls for a taxi back here and jumps in it and the next thing I know I'm up country somewhere outside this old castle. And guess who's standing outside waiting for me? Yes, it's that tart. Well, I gave her a piece of me mind but then out comes these other lads, a bit bigger than me and suggests it's in my best interests to come in for a cup of coffee.'

'Sugar Mr Dimmock?' Natalya had picked upon the fact that everybody was about to die from boredom.

'Ta love. Anyway, as I was saying, I goes into this posh office and there's this guy dressed in some poncy dressing gown who starts asking me questions. And would you believe it, it's that nasty bit of work what me and Boris talked about in the "Snort". Well, bless my soul, he asks me all about MI6. I told him straight, that's none of your bloody business and then what does he go and do? Call up this shortarse bald doctor chappie in a white coat who pumps me full of some stuff.....'

'That's the chap that stuck the needles into you?''  
The Ambassador was wide awake now. 'That's not on old boy.'

'Yeah, that's what I thought, but that was the last thing I thought.'

'And then?' Everybody was riveted now.

'Well, the next thing I know as I just said, is the sight of me mate Boris' happy smiling face and me lying stark bullock naked next to the tart, and she ain't got a lot on either.'

Things were hotting up.

'I'm afraid to ask what happened next.' The Ambassador chirped in.

'Da, da, yes, yes, ,' Boris quickly jumped in here. 'I start to write down some stuff that my friend was talking about in his sleep on a bit of paper and all my mates is standing round, just sort of looking. So I gets my friend here dressed and we leaves the rest to it.'

'To what?'

'Da, da, yes, yes, well, my friends are hot blooded guys and there's this sleeping beauty lying there with not a lot on, not doing much so we sort of leaves them to it.'

'Oh, dear. Oh well, all's fair in love and war.' A profound statement from the Ambassador. He continued. 'So tell me Boris, how did *you* get in to this, er, castle?'

'Da, da, yes, yes,' Boris was getting very excited now as any Cossack would after another glorious victory and looked to Natalya for help. He then started off at a great speed in Russian retelling his great heroic adventures. Everybody sat mesmerised as the story unfolded and eventually he ran out of breath and Natalya

collected herself, took a deep breath and started in English.

'Mr Ambassador, I feel that it best that we leave out some of the gory details.....'

Boris picked up on this and quickly butted in. 'Niet, niet, oh, no, no, is most important part of glorious battle for my comrades and brothers from Ukraine .This is great victory for Cossacks.....'

Here the Ambassador jumped in. 'I thought you said that it was just Boris and a few of his mates?'

'Oh, by the way Boris,' Dense interrupted. 'You'll never guess what I saw in town the other day, a poster for some Ukraine choir. So I got some tickets for you. Thought you might quite like it.'

Boris had a strange look on his face as he wasn't quite sure how to answer that. Natalya saved the day.

'Mr Dimmock, that was Boris' mates.'

Dense was even more surprised.

'You mean to tell me that lot running around chopping peoples heads off was a load of choirboys?'

Natalya and Boris nodded while the Ambassador looked startled.

'Help me out on this one lads can you? That bit about choir boys chopping people's heads off, just run that by me again can you?'

Boris and Natalya looked at each other to see who and how this could best be approached. It was becoming quite clear that the Ambassador was getting his knickers in a knot ,that's if he wore any under a kilt.

'I think what we are trying to say is that in order to rescue Mr Dimmock from Igor Badlotski.....'

'Igor Badlotski!' Where the hell does he fit into all this?'

The poor Ambassador was becoming extremely agitated, but continued.

'He's a very nasty bit of work. He's on our files as some sort of warlord, the local police daren't go anywhere near him and he's got all the local judiciary in his pocket. He's an extremely dangerous gentleman. God knows how many nasty bits of business he's involved



with. Wanted on lord knows how many criminal charges.....'

'I'm sorry to interrupt sir, but I think you'll find he's tucked up in a hospital bed right now in town and he won't be up to anymore of his nastiness, will he Boris my friend?' Natalya jumped in with part of Boris' translation.

Dense and Boris looked to each other with big smiles on their faces.

'Er, I'm a little confused Mr Dimmock. What you're saying is that you have captured this Igor chappie?'

'Well, not exactly me. Boris helped a bit didn't you mate?' And then the penny dropped a bit further for Dense. 'I get it, that choir lot, that's your mates. That's your village pals. So I didn't need to buy tickets for that concert after all?'

Boris nodded slowly and there were more large grins on their faces.

'So you captured this Igor chap with a choir?' The poor Ambassador was looking extremely perplexed.

'Da, da, yes, yes, a Cossack choir. Sort of in disguise,' Boris stammered out.

'This castle that you went to then Mr Dimmock, that was this Igor's place then?'

'Yeah, that's it governor, got it in one.'

'And who is looking after it right now?'

'The choir.'

'I'd like to meet this choir.....?'

'They ain't a pretty sight right now your lordship, not after what they've been through, with all that blood and guts lying about.'

There was a silence as the Ambassador looked completely stunned. 'I think I need a drink.'

The Ambassador put his head between his hands as Natalya went to the drinks cabinet for the "usual" crisis gin and tonic.

Then suddenly Dense perked up, 'Boris, what happened to that bit of paper you had with the writing on?'

'Oh, da, da, yes, yes, I got it somewhere. Ah, here it is.' He produced the wrinkled paper from his pocket and gave it to Dense.

'This is what that tart told me,' he looked questionably at Boris who nodded.

'We reckon it's summat to do with that Scotch bloke what's missing don't we Boris?'

Another glance at Boris got the confirmatory nod. He handed it to Sir Robert who was still cringing from the "scotch" bit. He put his drink down and started to read it.

'Is this some sort of code?' The Ambassador was puzzled until he suddenly picked up on some of the words.

'Ah, I see where this is leading up to. Natalya perhaps you can help us out on this. There are place names .....?' He passed the paper over to her.

She gave Dense a strange look but eventually came up with 'Ilkhichi. That's just up the coast and it's close to that oil pipeline as well.'

'So how did you get all this information?'

The Ambassador looked to Dense and then Boris. Then Dense looked at Boris and Boris shrugged his shoulders and didn't really know the best way of describing what had happened, not with a lady in the room.

He eventually managed a weak response, 'it came from Dense, only after that lady had put all those electric cables on him.'

'She tortured you?' The ambassador was horrified.

'Well, it weren't exactly torture,' Dense corrected.

'My god, how brave are you intelligence boys? Mr Dimmock, if this is going to cause you any trauma please don't carry on.

'Oh, no, there weren't any of that trauma stuff. She was just sort of on top of me, just asking me all these stupid questions and I must have dozed off.....'

'My god, you fainted? You poor chap.'

'So I must have been talking in my sleep and then I wakes up and there's Boris writing it all down.'

'I think the old Geneva Convention seems to have gone right down the pan,' the Ambassador concluded.

'So what happens now?'

'Well, boys are talking this over right now,' Boris replied.

'Just how many choir boys were there Boris?'

'Well, not as many as we would have liked because they don't all fit in buses.'

'At a rough guess?' the Ambassador really needed a bit more accurate data for his monthly report.

'Well, what with musicians, there must be sixty, and the boys from the Cossack social club, say about seventy?'

'Holy shit. I'm so sorry Natalya. I think I need another drink please and the pills as well. So what you're telling me, let me get this right in my mind, is that the British Secret Service is heading up a whole Cossack battalion .....

'Niet, niet, no, no, only company,' if Boris had learnt anything whilst in the Russian Army it was the disposition of soldiers.

'.....a whole company of Cossacks who are running around the countryside chopping peoples heads off!' A sort of rhetorical question with only one correct answer which was "no" but that wasn't going to happen.

'Not chopping *everybody's* heads off,' Boris was a little upset at the last remark but felt this was a good enough reply to try and calm the poor Ambassador down a bit.

'Oh, good, oh, good, that's alright then.' The Ambassador was heading for a nervous breakdown. 'I hate to think what's going to happen if the press gets their hands on this. God forbid, can you imagine the headlines? Cossack choir chops heads off in harmony!'

'Sir Robert, perhaps now would be a good time to talk to our friends at BAP and update them.' Natalya felt she had to help her boss in some way.

'Good thinking Natalya. I'm glad someone round here's still got their head on their shoulders. Ooops,

sorry.' He stopped and looked up and held his hands in the air. 'What the f... am I going to tell them?'

Natalya's presence cut the blasphemy off in mid sentence.

There was a pregnant pause. 'Natalya, where did you say we think our Scottish engineer chappie is being held?'

'Ilkhichi. It's just up the coast about two hundred kilometers to the north east. It's just inland a bit. I used have a friend I met at University who lives up there. We used to go up there for quiet weekends. There's a little river running into the sea just up from the village. It's a bit desolate.'

'Right. So what can we tell Silas H Sawyer the third? We can hardly tell him we've found young Professor Pete can we? We could tell him that a load of choir boys are running round chopping peoples heads off, but I don't suppose that will enhance his relationship with the British Secret Service now will it?'

'We tell him we got a plan.' Boris smiled.

'What plan is that may I ask?' The Ambassador wasn't smiling.

'I don't know, but I know boys will have plan.' Boris was very convincing.

'I think I'll just tell him we have someone who is helping us with our enquiries, eh?'

## Chapter 18. The Plan.

After they had said goodbye to Boris and Dense and the invalid Igor, the Cossacks set about realising the value of their new found assets. They were slowly putting together an inventory but obviously needed some help from the current incumbents, or what was left of them. So they set up a sort of board of enquiry and invited the prisoners to assist them with their investigations.

They had cleared out the main hall and set up some tables and chairs for the people asking the questions and a lone chair in the middle for the interviewee.

Although the traditional shaskas swords had been cleaned, polished and sharpened after the battle, they felt that if they stuck them in the wooden floor of the hall and dribbled some tomato ketchup down the length of the blade into a little puddle at the bottom, this might have the desired effect of speeding up the "correct answer" situation.

This, together with the rest of the Cossacks generally lounging about looking menacing, did indeed provide surprisingly rapid results.

Their initial enquiries satisfied the completion of the itinerary but then they had a high level meeting to figure out what best to do with all this loot.

'Gentlemen,' Andrei Shkuro started. 'We have won a great battle and we have considerable spoils of war...'

A great cheer went up.

'But now we must decide how best to realise these assets.'

Some of the assembled company once more looked a little baffled.

'This stuff is worth a lot of money.' Andrei Shkuro felt it best to clarify those with a glazed look on their faces. This immediately cheered them up.

'Now what we have is a lot of guns and ammunition. These will be extremely difficult to move about the place until we find a buyer.'

He looked around for any questions and continued.

'We also have a considerable amount of narcotics and they will be even more difficult to move about. Now we also have a considerable amount of stuff that makes these narcotics.'

Again he waited for any questions. The fact of the matter was that his colleagues were waiting to know how much money they would be getting, not the boring logistics of all this.

'Now what else have we got?'

This really put the cat amongst the pigeons.

'We got prisoners,' a timid soul ventured.

'And what are they worth?'

That was the end of that conversation,

'Have we got anything else?'

Silence.

'Gentlemen, we have real estate.'

He looked round the room for any form of intelligence. He continued.

'We have a fucking great big castle!'

At last some response as the cheers went up.

'So, we have property, a drugs factory and arms. We can't take all this back home with us, so to save us a lot of time and bother why don't we just sell it all as a job lot?'

Another round of cheers.

He continued. 'Now the big question is who is going to buy this job lot?' He looked up to the assembled blank faces. 'If my information serves me right, this little lot belonged to a warlord, so why don't we try and sell it to another warlord?'

This brought the house down.

After he had got some silence, 'now if my information is correct there are several warlords within a fairly close vicinity so why don't we invite them along and have an auction and sell to the highest bidder?'

This brought some loud applause and he continued. 'I think gentlemen that we should have another round of interrogations and ask our captive audience for more information and perhaps give them the chance of changing their allegiance in lieu of redundancy.'

'Or we chop their heads off!' A wag in the audience brought the meeting to a hilarious end.

Igor's private army had been reduced to about thirty, ten of whom were workers in the cannabis factory, or "zombies" as they had been nicknamed. They had readily accepted changes in their employment contracts and had been put back to work. They didn't care who they worked for, they didn't really care if they were Arthur or Martha as long as they could enjoy their continued job satisfaction in excellent working conditions.

Meanwhile the bald, shortarse in a white coat and Nickola had been kept under close scrutiny, Nickola in more intimate scrutiny, but they obviously held considerably more information than the run of the mill warlord yobbo and so were needed for more intense interrogation, especially regarding the kidnapping of Pete the oil boffin.

The search of Igor's office produced some interesting paperwork and bank statements regarding local officials and other contacts which needed to be correlated. There was a large safe which needed to be correlated as well.

There were a few wads of money hidden away, obviously petty cash to sustain his standard of living but Igor's fortune must be in the safe or in some Swiss bank account. So all this had to be sorted out to maximise their potential profit.

The nice shortarse gentleman in the white coat was brought into the office and even with the tomato ketchup threat could only prattle on about the cannabis logistics and distribution, which in itself was helpful for any new "farmer" but not a lot of help in the immediate realisation of their assets. He however was useful in showing them the little pharmacy he built up and the whereabouts of the sodium pentothal.

Nickola who was relieved of her troop entertainment role for the time being couldn't give them any more information other than that they already had plus a few names of the kidnapers.

The Cossack leader Andrei Shkuro now realised that if he was going to hold an auction and invite other warlords, this could encourage them to do just what he had done. Invade the castle.

So he had to ensure his spoils of war were guarded properly and that the necessary security measures were in operation.

He sat down with the elders and captains to discuss this.

'We have a couple of problems: firstly we need to know who and where the other warlords are; secondly if we are going to invite them over, we will need to have a considerable show of strength to put any ideas of invasion out of their heads.'

There was considerable nodding until someone came up with a suggestion.

'We have all the prisoners, can we not motivate them to change sides and also give us information on the other warlords?'

'Good thinking, yes why not. We should ask our little doctor friend and our lady as well on these matters.'

Then someone else came up with another idea. 'What about all our friends at the Social club. Surely there must be a few people there to help us out?'

'Why, of course. Mykola and his friends. He should be back soon.'

'Why don't we invite them here for a piss up? We must have a victory feast!'

'Now you're talking.'

'I think we need to finish the interrogations first, don't you?'

They all rubbed their hands and went down stairs to the main hall again and dragged the poor prisoners back out one by one.

It is incredible how fickle Igor's troops were. For the sake of a few Manats, Rubles, Dollars and the promise of not chopping their heads off, they all of a sudden wanted to become Cossacks.

And the information on various other warlords was extremely forthcoming as well. All the contact details



were duly noted and the preparations for the great feast began.

Mykola had left Igor in a private ward in the hospital with strict instructions plus a bribery not to let any unwanted visitors in and then picked up Dense and Boris at the Embassy.

As they drove up to the castle there was a definite increase in security now with the road and outlining land being patrolled by armed Cossacks and their newly recruited allies.

They all waved once they recognised them and beckoned them on up to the doors of the castle which now had little sandbagged machine gun posts either side.

'Mykola my friend, how is our Mr Igor?'

'Oh, I left him in safe hands and he won't be disturbed for some time.'

Andrei Shkuro continued. 'You have all the supplies?'

'Yes, they're in the back, Boris and Dense are helping me unload them.'

'Good, now we need your help. We need some more volunteer recruits for our army. You noticed the increase security measures we have in place?'

'Yes, are you expecting another war?'

'No my friend, not right now but as soon as word gets round that Igor's castle has been taken over, there will be a lot of greedy people wanting a piece of the action.'

'Other warlords?'

'Precisely, and we want them to come and visit us, but on a personal invitation basis only, not a sneaky invasion.'

'Like we did?'

'Exactly, so we need to enhance our defences. Now have you got anymore contacts in the social club who might be able to help us out?'

'Of course. You know they would be only too pleased to sign up for another war.'

'I hope it doesn't come to a full scale war, but we need to show our adversaries that we are ready for one.'

'I'll finish unloading and then go back to the club and have a few words with my colleagues.'

'Thank you Mykola. Now there is the matter of rewards and we are trying to sell off this place and invite our neighbourly warlords to an auction, but that is going to take some time. Meanwhile we need to get some more information from Igor, like the combination of the safe.'

'So you want me to visit him in hospital and ask a few pertinent questions?'

'Yes, I'm not sure if he will cooperate, but we have found the sodium pentothal and hope this might help in our investigations.'

'Leave that with me, but I don't think he is quite ready for that.'

'No, now before you go, there is this small matter of trying to find this oil boffin. I think we will need some local help with this.'

'Yes. I have been talking to Natalya and this was brought up at her meeting with Boris and Dense at the British Embassy. She knows of this place where we think Pete is being held.'

'Oh, I think we have confirmed that with our lady friend here.'

'Well Natalya has a friend in this Ilkhichi village so I think we need to talk to her as well.'

'Excellent. We all need to meet up. Now we are having a feast to celebrate our famous victory so bring her and all you friends up tonight. Oh and by the way, here is another shopping list for our celebrations.'

## Chapter 19. The Ilkhichi plan.

Prior to the victory feast Andrei Shkuro and his captains together with Natalya and Mykola plus Boris and Dense held another committee meeting.

'Now our intelligence so far has given us the information that the oil boffin is being held in a warehouse somewhere in Ilkhichi. I understand Natalya that you have a contact there?'

'Yes, I have an old uni pal up there.'

It was just about then that Boris had another tingling sensation between the ears and some sort of message came through.

'Why don't we go up there disguised as a choir? And look after yourself.....' Boris cut himself short again.

'Boris what a brilliant idea? Why didn't I think of that?' Andrei Shkuro's sarcasm was lost on Boris.

'I think we should take Boris' idea a step further and this will need some back up. Does this village have any sort of village hall?'

'Yes, if I remember right, there is an old community hall there.' Natalya looked thoughtful.

'Ok. So can you contact your friend and see if the hall is suitable for a concert?'

'Great, another traditional Cossack song and dance routine?' One of the captains said with glee, rubbing his hands in anticipation of another punch up.

'So Natalya, see if you can book the hall and then I need some concert posters and leaflets distributing all over the place and any information on any warehouses in the vicinity. Ok?'

'Leave that with me. I'll come back to you soonest.'

'Now, the choir are going to have to learn a few more traditional songs from the neighbouring countries. Especially Chechnya.' Andrei Shkuro turned to the choirmaster.

The choirmaster, or to give him his full title, the only one who could read music, looked a bit thoughtful, but shrugged his shoulders and agreed in principal.

'Now we have a small problem as to how to recognise this Pete chap. Would you recognise him Mr Dimmock?'

'Only from his photos in my secret file. Do you want to have a look at them?'

'Yes, might as well.'

So they waited for Dense to go and get his secret file and they all had a look at the photos.

'Hhmmmm, not a great lot of help there Mr Dimmock my friend,' was the general consensus of opinion.

'What about one of his pals from the BAP Social club?'

'Good thinking there Mr Dimmock. Only what happens if there is any shooting? They may be in a lot of danger?'

'Oh, yeah. Never thought of that.' It was a miracle he'd had an original idea at all.

'I think we need to talk to someone there and get a volunteer who can recognise our oil boffin,' Andrei Shkuro confirmed. He continued, 'Mykola, take Mr Dimmock back to BAP Company HQ and see if you can find a volunteer preferably someone with a bit of combat experience.'

Mykola and Dense went off back into Baku.

'What transport have we managed to find here?' Andrei Shkuro asked around.

'Apart from the two coaches, there are a couple of old vans and a pick up together with the Land Cruiser.' One of his captains answered.

'And Boris, do you still have those packets of narcotics that were for Igor?'

'Oh, yes, I've still got them. Do you want them now or for tonight?'

'No, no, we will need those when we go up to Ilkhichi, for the next concert.'

Boris looked a little confused wondering why the choir was going to need all those drugs. But no doubt all would be revealed.

Natalya contacted her friend in Ilkhichi and explained the situation to her who got very excited about all these happenings in her little village. She phoned back two hours later and confirmed the booking for the hall on Saturday night and had to dash off to Kachmaz to get the posters and leaflets printed. She told Natalya about a small industrial estate on the outskirts of the village. All this information was then duly passed on to the committee but Natalya had to go back to Baku and tell everybody in the social club about the great feast that night. That only left her four hours to do her hair.

Mykola and Dense arrived at the BAP Social club in Baku and managed to contact one of Pete's pals and they met up in the bar.

'Hi Dense. How's it going my man?' the BAP man gave Dense a high five. Dense didn't quite understand why this man in front of him was standing with his arm up in the air.

'We thought you'd been kidnapped from what we heard from your Embassy?'

'Oh, yeah, I was.'

'You were really kidnapped?' The astounded oil man looked at Dense and put his arm down.

'Oh, yeah, like, I was, er, kidnapped.' Dense couldn't understand why his friend couldn't understand this bit about being kidnapped.

'So were you tortured or something?'

'Oh, yeah, sort of.'

'Sort of tortured. Holy shit Mr Dimmock. You limey's are something else. This sort of happens on a daily basis does it?'

'Well, er, no, like, but, well, er, you know...?' Again Dense didn't quite know how to explain something quite simple like he'd been tortured.

'So, did you end up with this, er, Diana woman?'

'Diana?' Dense was confused here again. Nothing new there then.

'Yeah man, you know, the one with the big.....' he tried further description with waving his hands around in front of him.

Dense still had that glazed look all over his face.

'You know, the one in the bar.'

'Oh her, Nickola you mean?'

'What ever, did she torture you then?'

'Oh, yeah, sort of, like, you know.....'

'Jesus H Christ. She tortured you and you're not in hospital or even injured?'

'Well, like, a bit sore..'

'Boy are you brave or what?'

'Well, me mate Boris sort of rescued me.'

'Oh, right, this Russian chap you've been waiting for.'

'Well, yeah, like him and his mates.'

'His mates?'

'Yeah, you know, the Cossacks.'

Both the British and American employees of BAP were now firing incredulous questions at Dense.

'Where did they come into all this?'

'Well, we sort of needed them to take over Igor's castle.'

'Igor's castle? Isn't that the old castle just out of town on the northern road?'

'I think so.' Dense hadn't noticed any other castles around.

'Doesn't that belong to some sort of warlord?'

'Yeah, like, that's Igor. But he's in hospital now and me and the Cossacks sort of live in his castle now like.'

Mykola had been trying to understand the English conversation and had now picked up the threads. 'Brave Cossacks attack castle and we give Igor and bad men good spanking, eh Mr Dimmock?'

'Right on Mykola.'

Mykola continued wanting to cut the conversation down by a few hours. 'Now we look for your friend, Pete but we don't know what he looks like.'

'Let me get this straight.' The main oil man obviously needed to fully understand the happenings to be able to continue.

'You've just captured a castle and put the main man Igor into a hospital?' He looked around for confirmation. Dense and Mykola nodded.

'You've put this Igor chap in hospital? Isn't there some sort of unlawful activities going on here? Don't the locals mind being invaded and letting you go around wounding people? Don't the local police have a say in this matter?'

Lots of questions here that had both Dense and Mykola confused but Dense came up with the solution.

'We chopped a lot of heads off as well, not just wounding them.'

There was a stunned silence and Mykola took full advantage of it.

'So now we go rescue your friend but need someone to come with us.'

There was an even longer and louder stunned silence as the oil men looked to each other more in disbelief than looking for a volunteer.

'It's ok, Boris and I will look after you,' Dense thought this might ease the situation.

Mykola came to the rescue. 'The Cossacks will protect you, so no worries my friends. But we need someone with army experience just to sort of dodge bullets.'

The looks that went round the oil men were not the sort of looks of volunteers.

'And we got lots of money for volunteers.'

This started a soft murmuring amongst the assembled company.

After a short committee meeting held under the breaths of the oil men, some one ventured forward.

'Harry was in the army weren't you mate?'

It's nice to know you have good reliable friends isn't it?

'Thanks pal, but I was only National Service and only in the Royal Engineers.'

'Perfect!' Mykola and Dense jointly congratulated the poor scapegoat.

'We got party tonight. You boys come up, we got lots of booze and lots of ladies come to dance and we got lots of stuff in the farm that you boys like as well.'

How could they resist. A sort of last supper for poor Harry.

The feast was a great success. This gave the musicians and dancers a bit more practice and some of the tunes were relatively harmonious. However they had to learn some new songs that were needed for the next invasion. The capture of the warehouse in Ilkhichi and the release of Pietro Kemikhail from those nasty terrorists.

The choir didn't understand why they had to learn jingoistic songs from Georgia, Armenia and Chechnya, but no doubt as with Boris, everything would be revealed.

Dense was treated like the conquering hero with all the Cossacks enhancing his reputation in the underpants department and as the word spread more and more of the local social club ladies seemed to be drawn to him as well.

It was a great pity that halfway through the night he collapsed with all the drinks everybody had given him. The problem being he was only used to drinking eight percent proof "Snort" best bitter not eighty percent vodka.

But there was a rush of lady volunteers who took him upstairs and helped in to bed. It is very strange that it took so long but the ladies eventually returned several hours later with large grins on their faces.

The feast also gave the Cossack committee a chance to gain some more recruits to their cause from the local Cossack social club.

It's amazing how there was such a sharp linear acceleration in the ratio of bravado against the amount of vodka poured down the throats of the volunteers.



Boris' army was now over hundred strong but by the next day after the feast the numbers had dwindled to just below one hundred.

After considerable amounts of black coffee, by midday they were all assembled and the plan was unfolded. They only had two days to fully prepare and train everybody for their various roles in the campaign and get everybody into position.

They would need to take one of the coaches up to Ilkhichi along with the two vans to be used as part of the surveillance and rescue plan.

This would leave enough people behind to securely guard the castle and ensure no unwelcome visitors popped in uninvited.

And of course to look after Nickola and the bald shortarse in the white coat. Nothing too strenuous there then.

Mykola had to keep an eye on Igor in hospital and had been given the sodium pentothal ready to aid his memory of the combination of the safe.

Igor's "leftovers" and the volunteers from the Social club were duly kitted out and given their orders. A few basic training exercises were given to sharpen up the volunteer's skills in "chopping heads off " and a rifle range was set up. The Kalashnikovs took a bit of getting used to with everything except the targets getting completely decimated.

The expeditionary force required for the "rescue Pete" plan would consist of a few musicians and about thirty Cossack specialists. A sort of SAS: the "Swords And Sneaky" brigade.

The two vans would form a "vanguard" so to speak and go up there now and liaise with Natalya's friend to reconnoiter the land and overcome any obstacles or problem areas. Boris would be in that party with his packets of drugs as part of the plan.

The coaches would follow the next day with the "choirboys" and distribute a few more posters and rehearse for the concert that night.

Hopefully the kidnappers were unaware of any rescue plan as the only contacts they had made with Igor other than himself were Nickola and the bald shortarse in the white coat.

Nickola had been kept busy on the job and had been given a taste of her own medicine, well the medicine they were farming in the basement. She didn't know what day it was let alone who was next in the queue.

The little, bald shortarse in the white coat had to look after the "farm" and wasn't interested in any other problems other than ensuring a good harvest.

So the advance party set off for the two hundred kilometer drive up the coast.

## Chapter 20. The next concert.

They took the road north past the Altyaghach National Park to the magnificently named Gandob-Kachmaz-Yalama-Russian-Border-Highway eventually turning off on to a side road leading east down to the coast to Ilkhichi.

So four hours later they drove into the village and made contact with Natalya's friend. They stopped off at the village hall then took one van out on to the road to the industrial estate.

The industrial estate was a bit run down with only about a dozen units some of whom were empty. They drove round making notes of the various types of buildings, their front and rear exits and the kinds of security in place.

Hopefully if anybody was watching they wouldn't take too much notice of a van obviously looking for a delivery to one of the units.

Back at the village hall they had a committee meeting or a "War Council" to arrange a plan for the next night.

The village stores topped up the leftovers from the feast and they settled down for the night with a little choir rehearsal and to await the rest of the invasion force tomorrow.

\* \* \*

Back at the castle they were getting ready as well. The two coaches were fuelled up and filled up with the necessary musical instruments, ordnance and vodka.

Mykola had been visiting the private hospital to get up to date information on Igor who was "stable" but unable to receive visitors for another couple of days. So the pentothal syringe was held back until further notice.

The security system of the castle had been reviewed as thirty members would be needed for the trip up to Ilkhichi and new watch rosters were now in force. They tried not to be too conspicuous and alarm the neighbours, not that there were many for a radius of two kilometers but the local police had been seen driving by and necessary precautions had been taken by looking through the paperwork in Igor's office to see whose names were on the bank statements.

Of course the rifle range practices didn't exactly add to the peace and quiet of the countryside but what's a bit of grouse shooting between friends?

The fact that there were no grouse for several thousand miles was neither here nor there.

So Saturday came and the great expeditionary force set off to Ilkhichi. They had to stop off and pick up the "volunteer" Harry from the British and American Petroleum Company who joined Boris and Dense in the second coach.

He was reassured by the warm welcome he got from the other passengers all dressed to "kill" so to speak in their traditional Cossack outfits and the part payment of several hundred US Dollars for his professional services, the rest to follow at the identification of Pete, dead or alive!

Harry wasn't thinking too much about Pete at this moment of time, more about Harry. But his fears were washed away by some of the vodka reserves during the journey.

\* \* \*

Four hours later they arrived at Ilkhichi and were greeted by the colleagues at the village hall and the preparations began.

Andrei Shkuro explained that there was to be a force of twenty men sent behind the lines. That is behind the dry stone wall that ran along side the industrial units with the river running behind the wall. This obviously would

have to be achieved in the dark and camouflaged sentries posted to note where the enemy was.

Finding the enemy was going to be a problem, but hopefully the concert would throw up a solution. This is where Boris' packets of hashish would come into play during the intermission.

So now all efforts were on the concert. Some left over leaflets were hastily distributed around the local shops and the news that free drinks were available.

And so the great event started. The Cossack choir all got dressed in their finery, their traditional costumes while the other twenty in their traditional war paint and ammunition belts were driven down to the coast and dropped off for their march up the river bed to get into position for the real event.

The villagers arrived and were duly greeted, seated and the first part of the concert began. The audience was mildly amused and gave some timid applause and then the interval came.

Now Boris had generously donated his hashish into the intermission drinks but had to make sure none of the choir drank from the contaminated bottles of vodka.

So the second half kicked off in a far livelier atmosphere and the applause was hitting crescendo levels. Then the choirmaster stood up and after managing to get some semblance of order played the audience for an encore. And then he asked if anyone was from Armenia which brought a small group of the audience to their feet and then the musicians and choir broke into the "Hay Kajer" song about the Armenian braves. Well that brought the house down as it was a fairly well known song even in Azerbaijan.

Next the audience was requested for those from Georgia and the folk song called "Orovela", a traditional song sung by the labourers in the fields was performed.

The audience were getting wild by now and then it was the turn of the Chechnyan volunteers to show their faces and the choir burst into the "Shtalak's Song" the anthem of the Chechen Republic in Russian.

Now there were several Cossacks in plain clothes scattered amongst the choir and they weren't allowed to drink at the interval because they now had to mingle closely with the exuberant Chechnyans.

The concert ended with a rousing chorus of the "Sari Gelin", a folk song of Azerbaijan. Sari Gelin has many different lyrical interpretations in many languages, but the melody remains unchanged. It refers to a blonde bride in yellow garments and is a very emotive traditional song of the mountains in all adjoining countries close to Azerbaijan.

This was the finale that really brought the house down and had to be sung several times which gave the plain clothes men a better chance to get to know their new Chechnyan friends.

The Cossack dancers then got everybody in a line and danced around the hall until everybody was completely exhausted and /or completely out of their minds on Boris' drugs.

It was gone midnight as the revellers eventually fell out of the village hall all hugging and kissing each other and gave the Cossacks rousing cheers. The Cossacks for some strange reason seemed to be more involved with the Chechnyan section of revellers and joined them walking down the road. That is until it was quite clear who were heading off to the village and who were heading off on the out of town road towards the industrial estate.

The Cossacks said farewell to their friends and as soon as they were out of sight, the Motorola VHF two way transceiver squawked "Four pigeons coming home to roost" and the camouflaged advanced party behind the stone wall squawked back "roger and out".

Half an hour later the industrial unit had been identified by the entrance of four very jolly and happy people who had great difficulty with the key until someone let them in making a lot of "ssshhhing" noises. The last one fell over the step and was unceremoniously dragged in giggling.

The sound of vomiting could be heard a few minutes later and then after about an hour everything went quiet.

The attack was planned for four o'clock in the morning so the Cossacks sat patiently behind the stone wall listening to the sound of running water of the gentle babbling brook. This was later enhanced by the sound of tinkling fountains which gave off small puffs of steam as our waiting heroes relieved themselves and prepared for the battle.

The village hall group pincer movement was now on its way towards the industrial estate having camouflaged and blacked up. Boris, Dense and the poor Harry who had managed to get at the interval drinks were following to the rear with a couple of "minders" looking after them. Basically trying to hold Harry upright.

By the allotted hour everybody was in position surrounding the warehouse. This wasn't the Cossack's "SSS" plan "A" (**S**urprise, **S**ilent and **S**neaky) this was another "SSS" plan "B", (**S**care the **S**hit out of the **S**uckers).

The whistle blew and both the front and back doors were simultaneously kicked in and the screaming Cossacks charged in letting off ear splitting salvos in the air from the newly acquired Kalashnikovs. The noise echoed around as the bullets ricocheted off the steel supports of the warehouse and the poor unsuspecting Chechnyan incumbents were rudely awoken.

The noise inside the warehouse was deafening and the sound of whizzing bullets set the parameters for the amount of headroom available in such a confined space.

The Chechnyans staggered around in a complete daze. They had to crawl to somewhere, but they really didn't know which way was what until they suddenly felt the warm reassuring kick from a Cossack boot in the soft underbelly part of their bodies and realised the safest thing to do was just lie down.

It was pandemonium with the Cossacks running around like headless chickens, bumping into each other and falling over the surrendered bodies of the enemy. It was a miracle there weren't any injuries although a

buttock wound was suffered by one of the Cossacks. So now he would have something to tell his grandchildren on his knee.

Eventually someone found the light switch and some sort of order was eventually restored. It took only about ten minutes before all the enemy were accounted for and it was safe for Boris, Dense and the hapless Harry to be let in. Everybody who could stand up was herded into a corner and bound and then the search began amongst the bodies, not wounded but comatose, for the kidnapped oil boffin.

They eventually found a small office with lots of maps and drawings on the wall and huddled in the corner lying on a mattress was Pietro Kemikhail who was in one of his deep trances.

He was dreaming of the equivalent of the Koran's celestial babes when the scene seemed to change from heavenly bliss to a beleaguered battle field with hordes of Genghis Khan's Mongol tribesmen screaming about all over the place. Then the scene changed again to an earthquake and the tremors were changing to a shaking sensation as he eventually awoke and stared into the eyes of another person with a glazed look on his face. Harry.

Harry tried to lift Pete up to give him a celebratory hug but fell over ending up beside him on the floor with the two of them giggling like rag dolls with hiccups.



## Chapter 21: The Paparazzi.

Farmer Gurkan was an early riser having to see to his small herd of cows. He was one of the many smallholders in and around Ilkhichi but this morning his bladder was playing up and after easing the situation he was really awoken by the sound of gunfire and it wasn't the occasional pot shot at a rabbit this was real machine gun stuff.

He dressed, got on his bike and pedaled into the village to the telephone box and dialed the police. The nearest police station was at Sayad and the night shift constable was none too happy at being woken up at stupid o'clock in the morning. He berated the poor farmer and even with the background noises felt it must have been some sort of mechanical backfiring.

The farmer was positively livid with the lethargy of the police and slammed the phone down. There was an old telephone directory next to the phone on a little shelf and he stared at it until an idea popped up.

He turned the pages of the directory until he found what he was looking for; *Xalg Cebhesi Gazeti* or Popular Front Newspaper. He eventually got put through to the night editor and explained his story. The night editor felt this needed some form of confirmation before he called out any reporters or photographers so rang the police station.

An extremely embarrassed constable coughed and spluttered with excuses which only spurred the editor on to take some action. An extremely embarrassed constable felt it time that he should take some action now as well.

It was a race as to who could clarify this source of information. Was it some sort of gangland punch up? Was it another Chechnyan uprising? Was it an invasion from the Americans?

This got the farmer, the constable and the Popular Front editor all guessing. So the race was on. The farmer

rang the local mayor, the constable rang his sergeant and the editor rang the nearest local freelance reporter.

Nersik Pamboukjian was what the modern world would call "paparazzi" or a freelance journalist who just so happened to have been to the same school as Djovdat, the Popular Front night editor who knew he could pass such information on and have first pick of any scoops and a little bit of bunce thrown in as well. So being a lazy Popular Front night editor he called Nersik and explained the situation.

Nersik needed no prompting and grabbed his camera, jumped on his scooter and drove off to Ilkhichi. He met up with farmer Gurkan at the telephone box and together they set off to the industrial estate.

There was no mistaking where the battle was with the noise of screaming Cossacks still to be heard even though most of the firing had died down by now. Some of the Cossacks had been a bit miffed at not being able to chop any heads off or not shooting anybody and with not using all their ammunition so felt it only right and proper to fire off a fusillade now and then just to finalise the "SSS" plan B and let the cowering Chechnyans know who was boss.

So it was with some trepidation that Nersik and Gurkan dismounted and crept slowly towards the warehouse. This was what Nersik had been waiting for. Something exciting and probably newsworthy, and probably worth lots of dosh. This is what any journalist had been waiting for, a scoop!

Boy, was he going to get some job satisfaction. He just had to keep his head down at this moment in time as a few loose salvoes were still whizzing around now and then. His brain started to think "Syndicating" which for a journalist was rather like winning the lottery.

Farmer Gurkan had come to his senses and stayed well back as Nersik crawled towards the open warehouse door. Before he had a chance to look into the abyss he detected a strong smell of cordite and emboweled underpants

but slowly pushed his head round what was left of the door frame.

The Cossacks were too busy mopping up and looking for the spoils of war to notice a little head pop round the doorway. But when the flashlight bulb went off it naturally caused a knee jerk reaction or what in the business is called a trigger finger jerk and a spray of machine gun fire was roughly sent in the direction of the door.

Poor Nersik was about to add to the ambient smells as he lay face down outside the door. A few seconds later a gentle Cossack boot turned him onto his back and he lay pointing his Nikon up at the downward pointing barrel of a hot Kalashnikov.

It took the Cossack only a few seconds to realise that this wasn't an offensive weapon and offer his hand to a trembling reporter.

Now the one thing a Cossack loves more than a good war and a bottle of vodka is a picture of himself after the battle to take home to show his grandchildren. So the poor Nersik was grabbed by the scruff of the neck and dragged into the warehouse thinking this to be his last view of life on earth as he knew it.

'Hey boys look what I've just found!'

The Cossack held Nersik up like a hunting trophy as a loud cheer went up and a crowd assembled around the poor Nersik whose eyes were shut tight fearing the worst.

He eventually opened one eye only to see a sword poking him in the stomach. You can't beat the good old traditional Cossack welcoming gestures.

'What are you doing here my friend?'

'Er, er, I'm, a , rep... rep... reporter if it pleases you sir?'

'Ah, you've come to report on our great Cossack victory have you then?'

A sort of rhetorical question with a shaska sticking in your belly button.

'That'll be right k... k...k...kind sir, your famous C... C... C... Cossack victory.' Nersik didn't have a fucking clue

what he was on about but felt it best at this stage to play along with these black faced lunatics.

'So, you want some pictures of the famous Cossack warriors do you young man?' The questioner accentuated the "young" bit to sort of suggest that his life could be on hold before proceeding to the "old" bit.

'Oh...yes...yes.... I would love to t... t... t... take some photos of all you handsome C... C... C... Cossacks.'

Well, that bought the house down. After they had all finished laughing the spokesman confirmed, 'he thinks we are so handsome!'

Another round of raucous laughter, 'Ok mister reporter, you sit down there and we'll all go and put our make up on especially for you.'

Andrei Shkuro interrupted the proceedings, 'how's it going boys. Has everybody been accounted for?'

'Yeah, boss, only Serge has an enormous wound in his arse!'

Another round of laughter.

'Ok. Where's the first aid tin?'

'Here boss,' the paramedic replied.

'Get Serge stitched up. Anything worth recovering from our Chechnyan friends?'

'Yeah, a lot of plastic explosives and detonators boss and a few rifles and hand guns. Can we go and get ready for the photo now?'

'Ok, but where are Boris and his friends?'

'The one with the big one?' a rousing chorus answered.

'You mean Mr Dimmock? And the oil boys as well?'

Nersik had by now got his heart rate down to an acceptable non life threatening level and was taking all this chit chat in like any decent reporter should. He had heard about the kidnapping of the BAP company man and was putting two and two together.

Boy! Was this a scoop or was this a scoop!

He prepared all his camera equipment, lenses and flashes etc and after his legs had got the blood flowing back, started walking round the warehouse taking a few snapshots.

'Let me know when you're ready boys and I'll get a decent picture of you all together.'

Just then four men appeared out of the office dragging two giggling limp glassy eyed oil employees. Boris and Dense supporting the hapless but now hopeless Harry, while two minders carried Pete.

Wow, Nersik quickly rattled off a few shots of them as they walked them over to some boxes and unceremoniously dumped the drugged dummies down to relative comfort.

Boris and Dense then started talking to Harry and Pete in English trying to get some sort of sense out of them.

The reporter sidled up to the least fierce looking Cossack and quietly asked him who the English people were.

'They're the boys from British American Petrol Company who we brave Cossacks have just saved from the clutches of the Chechnyan terrorist killers. And that big bugger is our Cossack mate from England, Boris and that small one is the one with the big one, Dense Dimmock.' His arm movement went up and down

The penny didn't fully drop concerning the small one with the big one bit until he eventually figured it out. 'How do you know he's,' cough, cough, ahem, 'he's got a big one?'

This was mind blowing stuff for a reporter, like finding the crown jewels after a royal robbery.

'We watch him playing wigwams with naughty lady after we capture castle.'

Nersik just couldn't take all this in in one go. But he was going to have a damn good try.

'Can you just run that bit about capturing the castle for me please?'

'Well, Boris comes over and asks the lads for a bit of help rescuing this Brit who's been kidnapped from BAP Company and we says ok 'cause he got this mate of his in the British Secret Service and .....

'Whoa, did you say that the British Secret Service are involved?'

'Well, not all of them, just this guy with the big..... you know what.' The arm movement was repeated.

'What, that little fellow over there?'

'That's the one, anyway .....

'That little guy over there, he's in the British Secret Service?' It was just getting better and better.

'Yeah, like I was saying, he's got to rescue this oil bloke and the only one who knows anything about it all is this geyser Igor who's got a big castle and he's a bit of a bad lad.....'

'Not Igor Badlotski?'

'That's the one. You heard of him then?'

'Who hasn't around here? You don't want to get mixed up with him. He's a nasty bit of business that's for certain.'

'Well, he ain't any more, that's for sure, 'cause he'll be battling for the other side as soon as he gets out of hospital.'

Nersik's brain was starting to hurt.

'I'm sorry my friend, you've lost me a bit there. What has all this hospital bit got to do with capturing a castle?'

'Well, it was his castle and we've sort of borrowed it for a while.'

'Captured it so to speak?'

'That's it in one.'

'If it's not a rude question, how did you capture it? It's damn nigh impregnable.'

'Nah. It's a piece of cake if you know what you're doing and with all the boys and the silent stuff they never stood a chance.'

'They never stood a chance?' Nersik was really going to have to write all this down because he couldn't make any sense of it but knew damn well this was one big international headliner and he was going to be a very rich man.

All he had to do was to find someone who could talk in some sort of reasonably lucid terminology.

'Yeah,' the Cossack wasn't finished telling his story and carried on. 'Yeah, like I was saying we have this SSS code operation .....

'SSS?' Nersik had to carry on with this dumbo for the time being.

'Yeah, like it's silent sort of fighting with the old shaskas.....'

'Shaskas?'

This poor Cossack was really having trouble with this stupid reporter chap, having to spell everything out for him. Didn't he understand anything?'

'Yeah, our swords. They don't make a lot of noise and as we had to keep the old noise level down not to wake up the whole bloody castle we had to chop a few heads off, nice and silent like .....

'You had to chop a few heads off?'

Nersik was standing in front of this black faced buffoon completely wide eyed and gob smacked. His jaw was hanging down loosely from the rest of his face. He was starting to dribble. He couldn't believe what he was hearing. This chap in front of him must surely be some sort of mental retard. He could not be telling the truth. He would have to get some sort of collaboration on this which he felt would be highly unlikely.

'Yeah, a bit messy but it keeps the noise down a bit,' continued the Cossack.

Nersik shook his head.

'Look my friend. I think I'm going to take some pictures now. Ok? Can we get you all together at some stage and while you're getting ready I'll just have a wander around .Ok?'

Nersik eased himself away from his buffoon friend and walked over to the group of English speakers.

'Hi. My name's Nersik. I'm from Reuters News Agency covering this little party.' He thought they must have heard of Reuters rather than some obscure "Popular Front" local rag. He picked on the smallest of the group in his best English.

'Hi, your name Mr Dimmock, Dense Dimmock?'

'Oh, yeah.' He had to think of this for a while as nobody usually referred to him as a mister.

'Hi, my name is Nersik, can I ask you some questions please Mr Dimmock? I understand you work for British Intelligence?' Let's just go straight to the point thought Nersik.

'Oh, yeah, but like I'm not allowed to tell anyone 'cause it's a secret.'

'Oh, I do understand Mr Dimmock. Don't worry your secret is safe with me,' and ten million readers thought Nersik smiling inwardly. He wanted to scream out loud but fortunately his fist was stuck firmly in his mouth for a few seconds.

'Now, Dense, you don't mind if I call you Dense?' He carried on with or without Dense's permission. 'Can you tell me exactly what you are doing here please?'

'Yeah, I've come to rescue Pete.'

That was pretty exact.

Probably not quite as exact as Nersik would have liked. Nevertheless he carried on.

'Pete is the British American Petroleum Company man who got kidnapped?'

'Yeah, I think his name is Pietro Kemikhail, scotch or something.'

'Right, and you've just rescued him?'

'Yeah, with a little help from me old mucker Boris and a few of his pals like.'

'And these mates of Boris, how did they get involved?'

'I dunno, you'd best ask Boris.'

'And were you involved in this castle affair?'

'Well, I gets dragged off to this castle by this tart who works at the "Pink Pussy" club in Baku. She only kidnaps me and takes me up there and then this nasty bit of stuff, Igor what's 'is name and this little bald shortarse bloke shoves a syringe into me and the next thing I know is old Boris and 'is mates is looking down at me and this tart lying bollock naked. I tell you, wait until I get me hands on that little short arse fella, I'll give him a piece of me mind, I can tell you.'



Nersik had to get his head round all this before he could start asking any more questions because this was all getting a bit too much for his brain.

'So how did these mates of your friend Boris capture this castle?'

'I dunno, you'd best ask Boris. But I tell you those Cossack fellas don't muck about, that's for sure. You should have seen the mess they made, chopping all them heads off.'

"Holy shit. That buffoon was telling the truth after all," thought Nersik.

'Ok, ok, that's great. I think I'll take a few photos now. Thank you Mr Dimmock. Can I come back to you later, you've been most helpful.'

'Yeah, no problem, what was your name, Music?'

'Nersik my friend,' he spelled it out for Dense.

"черт возьми!" thought Nersik which roughly translated to "Kinnell. I've really hit the jackpot here."

His next priority was to talk to Boris but felt it best to start taking some relevant pictures just in case the locals started shoving their noses in. It was painfully clear who was in charge so he sidled gingerly up to Andrei Shkuro and told him he was ready to take some pictures of the heroic Cossacks.

'Ok lads, let's be having you. This nice young man wants to take a photo of you 'orrible lot to tell the world how brave you are.'

This bought on a round of laughter.

'How's your arse Genghis Khan?' this got a rousing cheer all round.

They eventually got into some sort of order and Nersik arranged them to his liking.

'Can we have one with your swords please?'

If there was anything a Cossack liked more than having his picture taken was having his picture taken with his trusty shaska unsheathed.

There was a general melee as the heroic Cossacks stumbled about jockeying for a good position for the photo shoot.

Andrei Shkuro eventually organised everybody and the posing started as Nersik flashed away with his Nikon.

'Ok, that's brilliant. Now can we have our two oil boys please?'

The two minders managed to get Pete and Harry upright and unceremoniously dragged them in front of the rows of statuesque Cossacks who daren't move a muscle.

Nersik rattled off a few more shots then called out, 'can we have Boris and Mr Dimmock now?'

Boris and Dense had been watching the proceedings and walked over in front of the assembled group.

Then suddenly a wag in the back row called out, 'Mr Dimmock, do you want to borrow my shaska or are you going to get your cock out!'

Well, the whole group collapsed in laughter and it took several minutes to get everybody back into some sort of order.

Although this was in Russian, the poor beetroot faced Dense figured it out and eventually managed a smile for the camera.

Nersik finished his shots and then went over and thanked Andrei Shkuro for his help and asked if he could take some pictures of the terrorists.

Andrei and some other Cossacks took Nersik over to the other end of the warehouse and showed them the dishevelled bunch of Chechnyans huddled together in a corner.

Andrei and his colleagues posed for Nersik with their boots resting on the hapless prisoners. There were only about half a dozen in all and quite clearly not amused at the goings on.

That finished, Nersik returned and started talking to Boris. Twenty minutes later he had got the whole story and couldn't believe his luck. He needed to get this into print pretty damn quick.

Farmer Gurkan had watched as the reporter had flung himself to the floor following the burst of machine gun fire and felt it in the interests of both himself and his

cows that he should keep at a respectable safe distance from these activities as it was really none of his business.

Half an hour later he heard the noise of a police car siren and jumped out from his hiding place and waved it down.

The police Sergeant, his constable and the local mayor got out and Gurkan slowly but explicitly explained the situation to them. So they crept up to what was left of the door to the warehouse and slowly looked inside.

Nersik was just about to dash outside and bumped into them. Realising a bit more could be added to his press release he grabbed them and hastily shoved them in front of some Cossacks and took some more hasty shots and promptly said his goodbyes.

He hopped on his scooter and dashed home to his little photographic development laboratory and extracted all the films from his camera and started the process.

Meanwhile the Chechnyan prisoners were all rounded up at gunpoint by the Cossacks who then asked the local police where they could lock them up. This proved a bit of a problem for the local constabulary as the nearest big town with any prison facilities was in Khachmaz, twenty five kilometers away and the local mayors didn't see eye to eye and the Khachmaz mayor was bound to take all the credit. With the local mayor's intervention they agreed to take them back to the village hall and contact the national police force as this was quite clearly a matter of international importance which would involve Interpol and this was the first time the local mayor had been involved in anything of such importance.

So discussions started as to how to transport the prisoners but more importantly the Cossacks wanted to know where the nearest transport café was for breakfast.

\* \* \*

The sun was just starting to rise in the east as Nersik raced back to see his friend Djovdat in the local

*Xalg Cebhesi Gazeti*, Popular Front Newspaper's office and charged in without even a bye your leave.

'Djovdat my friend have I got a story for you. Now just sit down and listen to this.' Nersik gave his friend a brief outline of the morning's happenings and then asked him if he had the list of print Press Syndicates.

Djovdat went over to his filing system and eventually pulled out a folder and dropped it in front of Nersik at the desk he had commandeered.

'Ok, my friend, this is your story. Got a paper and pencil ready?'

The excited lazy night reporter prepared himself.

'Ok, Nersik, fire away.'

'Right, this is your share of the story. As it's purely for your local readers we'll try and keep it simple.' Nersik pondered this for a while and realised there was no way it could be simplified but he was buggered if he was going to get the juicy bits he was about to syndicate to the world's national press.

'What about,' Nersik pondered a bit more.

'What about, local police capture dangerous terrorist group?'

'Sounds good to me.'

Nersik forgot to mention that the terrorists had been precaptured by somebody else. But that would be quite enough to excite the local Popular Front's readers for now.

He carried on with the details of time and place and a bit of local atmosphere and Djovdat hungrily wrote it all down.

'Now, off you go and start your edition and meanwhile I've got to get in touch with all the Press Syndication lot. Have you got a fax machine?'

Nersik ploughed through all the press agencies, press associations, wire services, media groups and news service organisations.

'Have you got another typewriter Djovdat my friend?'

'Yes, there's one over there in the bosses' office. But you'd better hurry up he'll be here round about nine o'clock.'

'No problem my friend.' Nersik sat down in front of the typewriter and started.

\* \* \*

Meanwhile, back at the ranch, or warehouse, the Cossacks had found some meagre rations, well meagre for a bunch of ravenous raiders, and started cooking what was available.

The poor Mayor and his police sergeant were still discussing what to do with the prisoners over a cup of tea. After the Cossacks had finished eating the decision had been made for them.

If there's anything a Cossack loves more than getting pissed, chopping people's heads off, telling heroic tales to grandchildren bouncing on their knees or being next in the queue outside Nickola Elasticova's boudoir it is a grand victory parade.

The sun has now risen over the Caspian Sea to the east starting another morning in the boring lives of the villagers of Ilkhichi. This was going to change. Those of them who had not been woken by the gunfire were now being given a second chance to wake up to the sound of a full Cossack chorus of their victory song.

*HAI! roll up! Eagles brave,  
To protect "the Tchighka"  
And gain glory newly.  
Nobles all!  
Or we fall.  
Twice we die not, truly-  
Hai! Take arms. On we go!*

*From our rifles we shall shout,  
We shall roar from cannon,  
With our sabres clashing-*

*Nobles all,  
Or we fall!  
'Gainst our foemen dashing.  
Hai! Take arms. On we go!*

The musicians and choir were now in full voice as they marched down towards the village. The poor Chechnyan prisoners were tied up in a crocodile line and were not a happy lot being shown off as prizes of war as they were dragged along with the occasional prompt from a shaska up their arse.

Dense and Boris tagged along behind with Harry and Pete who were by now nearly able to stand up and walk on their own.

The local mayor had quickly realised the political kudos that could be gained from this parade and jumped in front of the procession leading the marchers. His stout disposition caused some delay to the proud swaggering Cossacks who had to prompt him to increase his walk rate with the occasional swishing of their shaskas extremely close to his rear quarters.

By this time Nersik's press release had been faxed to all parts of the media and the local and national TV and radio station reporters were starting to pour into the village.

Andrei Shkuro's boot had to remind the mayor to buck his ideas up and by the time they had reached the village the poor man was puffing and panting but quickly rearranged his demeanour in front of the TV cameras.

The whole village was now filling the small square as the heroic marchers stopped outside the village hall and quickly knocked up the nearest café proprietor for some victory celebratory drinks.

His vodka stock dwindled to nothing within ten minutes as did his beer and wine as the small crowd drank to the health of the Cossacks and anybody else close to hand.

The reporters were buzzing around like bees round honey trying to get some sense out of somebody without the mayor jumping out in front of them.

It didn't take long before they figured out who Dense was and managed to talk to him in English.

'You must be Mr Dimmock the British secret service agent. This must be a proud moment for you?'

'Oh, yeah, like, well I'm not actually allowed to tell you that I work for British intelligence as it's a secret. Oh, hallo Mum.' Dense waved to the camera which brought on much hilarity.

## Chapter 22. What the papers said.

The "Republic" (*Respublika*) or Respublika was the state owned newspaper in Azerbaijani and the headlines reflected the bias towards the old style Russian ownership.

"Russian troops rescue British hostages from Chechnyan rebels."

"This is an exclusive report from our local correspondent of how Russian trained troops acting on information from their intelligence agencies stormed a warehouse in Ilkhichi in the Davachi district of Azerbaijan early this morning and overpowered a large group of ruthless, highly armed dangerous Chechnyan rebels and secured the release of British hostages held to ransom from the British American Petroleum Company. There were only minor casualties to the brave heroes who discovered papers showing how the terrorists planned to attack the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyha pipeline.

A spokesman from the Azerbaijan Defence Ministry admitted that secret plans for the rescue were in hand but that they could not be allowed into the public domain. The Ministry praised the efforts of the gallant troops and welcomed the return home of the British and America employees to the safety of their families and the continued good working relationships with Azerbaijan employers in boosting the economy of the nation in their oil exploration."

The "Popular Front Newspaper", (*Xalq Cebhesi Gazeti*), or Xalq Cəbhəsi Qəzeti

"Local police capture dangerous terrorist group."



"Our special correspondent on the scene at Ilkhichi describes how the swift arrival of the local Police aided the rescue of a British hostage who was captured from the British American Petroleum Company Headquarters and held ransom.

The local mayor Rashad Kurbanov was on hand to congratulate the other rescuers and thank everyone for their courageous efforts and praised the efforts of police Sergeant Vugar Mirdjavadov and his colleagues for their brave efforts.

Our special correspondent can reveal that shooting was involved in the courageous rescue but that nobody was seriously injured.

The Chechnyan rebels responsible for this outrage were all taken into custody and are awaiting trial.

The "National Newspaper" (*Xalg Gazeti Xalq Qəzeti*) came out in Azerbaijani, Russian and English and was Nersik's closest contact.

### "Cossack choir captures Chechnyan rebels"

"Our special reporter Nersik Pamboukjian had an exclusive meeting with the Cossacks in Ilkhichi village in the early hours of this morning where a previous choir concert in the village hall had been a covert operation to rescue British hostage Peitro Kemikhail a bio chemist working for the British American Petroleum Company.

British secret service agent Dense Dimmock co-ordinated the attack with his Russian counterpart Boris Slobovitch and a platoon of highly trained Cossack fighters. The Chechnyan terrorists surrendered quickly in an early morning lightning attack and were taken into custody by the local officials.

Earlier in the week, a similar attack had been mounted on the Baku castle of local warlord Igor Badlotski who held vital information concerning the Chechnyan rebels. His castle was stormed in typical

Cossack style using their "shaska" swords in a noiseless coup leaving several of Igor's defenders headless. Igor is currently in hospital recovering from minor injuries.

For a full report and exclusive pictures see page 3."

"Azerbaijan News" (*AzerNews*) a weekly English paper but wasn't published until Wednesday.

"The Times".

"SAS style attack on Chechnyan rebels releases British Hostages"

An exclusive report from our man on the spot in Azerbaijan can now reveal how the British Secret Service masterminded a daring raid to release British Oil company employee hostage , Pietro Kemikhail from Chechnyan rebels in the small village of Ilkhichi in the Davachi district of Azerbaijan early this morning.

This joint operation with Ukrainian troops headed by Dense Dimmock our special MI6 man at the scene was brilliantly organised after undercover operations involved an attack on a local warlord to gain further information to secure the release of the hostage.

"The Daily Express".

"James Bond rescues British Hostage in Azerbaijan."

MI6 British Secret Service agent Dense Dimmock rescues British Oil employee held hostage in Azerbaijan.

This special report from our man on the spot can reveal how MI6 masterminded an attack on a warlords castle just outside Baku with the help of specially British trained local Cossack fighters.

In the process of information gathering several of the Warlord's men had their heads chopped off in a covert attack on his stronghold outside Baku.

This led to vital information for a further night attack on a warehouse in the small village of Ilkhichi where Chechnyan terrorists were holding British American Petroleum Company employee Pietro Kemikhail hostage. This daring raid copied from a James Bond movie took the rebels completely by surprise with no casualties and the safe release of the hostage.

"The Sun"

"Choirboys chop Chechnyan heads."

MI6 executes Chechnyans in rebel hostage release. Our special correspondent can now release this incredible story of how joint Anglo Ukrainian special forces disguised as choir boys rescued the British hostage held by Chechnyan terrorists in Azerbaijan.

The local warlord's castle had to be overpowered by silent attackers using traditional swords executing guards to gain entrance for information which subsequently led to the whereabouts of the Chechnyan terrorists' stronghold. And then after giving a local concert in their choirboy disguises overran the rebels in a daring night attack in the small village of Ilkhichi in the north east of Azerbaijan.

MI6 special agent Dense Dimmock who masterminded the operation said afterwards that this dangerous mission was a completely successful, well coordinated joint operation with no casualties and thanked his fellow heroes for their brave co-operation.

This obviously raises the question whether choirboys will be trained by the SAS for further defense operations abroad and will the M25 be widened to cover such eventualities?

But the burning question we are all asking is  
Samantha Fox an MI6 undercover agent?

## Chapter 23. What the Prime Minister said.

'Good morning Sir Robert, here's your coffee and I've taken the liberty of picking up the morning's local papers. I think you will find them most interesting.'

'Thank you Natalya.' Sir Robert started to read the first paper.

'Holy shit!' was all that Natalya could make out as she left his office.

Half an hour later Sir Robert picked up the phone.

'It's the PM's office Sir Robert shall I put them through?' a stupid question if ever there was.

'Good morning Sir Robert. It's the PM's private secretary here; I'm putting you through now.'

'Sir Robert. It's the PM here. Have you read this morning's papers? What the fuck's going on?'

'I'm sorry Prime Minister; I've only just read the local press. Don't tell me there is something in the UK press already?'

'It's headline news all over the fucking place and nobody here knows anything about it. Perhaps you can enlighten me on headlines such as "Choirboys chop Chechnyan heads," or "SAS style attack on Chechnyan rebels releases British Hostages" or "James Bond rescues British Hostage in Azerbaijan" and who the fuck is this clown Dense Dimmock?'

'Er, ah, yes, well actually Prime Minister, Mr Dimmock is the chap you sent out here to sort out the release of this hostage chap Pietro Kemikhail who works for the British American Petroleum Company.'

There was a long pause and eventually the PM replied.

'Did I?'

'Well, Prime Minister the MI6 report had your name on it and other than that I'm afraid I can't help you as obviously you have more information than I do. Mr Dimmock hasn't reported back yet but obviously seems to have done the job.'

'What, chopping people's heads off. There's going to be some awkward questions flying about in the house I can tell you.'

'Obviously Prime Minister, all I can do is get hold of Mr Dimmock and come back to you with a full report.'

'Make it fucking quick old boy can you?'

'Yes Prime Minister. Are the bluebells out in Hyde Park yet?'

\* \* \*

"M" was sitting at his desk one bright sunny morning in one of the dusky suites of little rooms opposite St James's Park Tube station in London when the intercom on the phone went.

'It's the PM's office, shall I put them through?' Another fucking stupid question from his PA in the office next door.

'Oh, alright then and can I have some more sugar in my coffee please?'

The light on the red phone lit as he picked it up.

'Good morning Prime Minister.....oh, sorry. I thought it was the PM.'

Two seconds later. 'Good morning Prime Minister. Turned out nice again?'

'"M" get your arse over here a bit fucking smartish and with a full report on this Azerbaijan affair. OK!'

"M" was about to say "what Azerbaijan affair?" but felt that under the circumstances it was best just to nod.

'Right you are Prime Minister. Be with you in a jiffy.'

He put the red phone down and sat bolt upright with a sheepish grin on his face.

Now if "M" hadn't been so extremely busy that weekend and "N" so very busy and "O" with all his "OO" agents in Las Vegas and "P" sort of busy and "Q" far too busy designing exploding toilet seats and "R" busyish and "S" off sick and "T" tied up with paperwork and etc etc, well he would have probably known what the hell was going on in Azerbaijan.

"Oh shit," was his first thought and then he slowly collected his brain cells into some sort of semblance and picked up the green phone.

"N" get your arse in here this minute with a full report on this cock up in Azerbaijan!' He slammed the phone down and presumed it was a cock up or the PM wouldn't have been so uppity.

"N" immediately wiped the sweat from his brow and picked up the blue phone.

"O", get your arse in here in two seconds flat with a full report on this balls up in Azerbaijan!'

"O" picked up his yellow phone and rang "P" who wasn't even going to bother ringing "Q" so rang "R" on his purple phone and so on until "Y" picked up her cerise phone but couldn't get any reply from "Z".

Now "Y" felt it was high time that she got promoted so felt a little bit of initiative wouldn't go amiss here. She went next door to "Z"'s office and opened up his filing cabinet and what was right in front in the "A" section, the Azerbaijan file.

It was the only file in there. Anyway "Y" took the file out and then brazenly walked past the offices of "X", "W", "V", "U", "T" until she came to the office of "N". She wouldn't dare go anywhere near "M's" office . She knocked on the door and just walked straight in.

"N's" personal secretary was affronted and demanded to know why this upstart in front of her had dared to charge in so presumptuously.

'What do you want!' screamed the PA.

'I've got the Azerbaijan file for "N".'

The PA had like everybody else had heard about this Azerbaijan file and realised it was far too hot for her to handle so changed tack to a more humble approach.

'Oh, well done. I'll just pop in to his office. Won't be a jiffy.' It was about three seconds later she heard "N" shouting "get her in here bloody quick!"

'Come in young lady. You have got the file?'

'Yes sir.'

'Oh well done. You're new round here aren't you?'

'No sir, I'm "Y".'

'Well jolly well done anyway.'

He picked up his blue phone and rang "M". He beckoned "Y" to sit down,

'I've got it boss.'

"Y" listened to the brief conversation and then after "N" had put the phone down heard a commotion outside as "M" burst into the room.

'Where is it?'

'Here boss. You'd better thank this young lady here.'

'God, well done girl. You've just saved the day I can tell you. Must dash. See you "N". Bye.'

With that he ran out of the office and "N" followed but only to ask his PA for two cups of coffee. "Pretty little thing," thought "N" closing the door, looking down at "Y". "Nice figure too."

'It's "M" for you Prime Minister.'

'Good, send him in will you.'

"M". God am I glad to see you. Have you seen this morning's papers?'

'Sorry Prime Minister, been a tad busy with this Bosnia lark I'm afraid.'

'Well, you may just be a tad busy with this Azerbaijan lark old boy. Got the file?'

'Yes, Prime Minister, here it is.'

'Good, let's have a shufti shall we.'

The Prime Minister slowly opened the file until he found what he was looking for. An insert of the cabinet meeting minutes with his name on. Then he turned to the other pages.

'Ok, so what have we got here? Some sort of.....Christ.....doesn't he go on,.....then Mr Dimmock crops up and then....some RAF reports of Transport Command flights to Bosnia, some other RAF report of a flight to Cyprus and another RAF report of an unauthorised flight to Baku. Where's that?'

'That's in Azerbaijan Prime Minister,'

'Ah, good, ok, so now we have a report from the British Embassy in Baku.....and that.....seems to be .....that.'

The Prime Minister shook the file upside down to see if there were any more papers and then turned to "M".

'Is that it!? Is that fucking *it!*!?'

"M" had another sheepish grin on his face which was starting to glow by now.

'It would appear so Prime Minister.' Was all he could say at this moment of time.

'Sir Charles, (the "M" formality was now way down the pan) 'Sir Charles,' the Prime Minister was initially lost for words but something was forming in his extremely agitated mind. 'Can I show you *my* files? This is the first one. It's called "The Times". This is the second file,' he was speaking extremely slowly and forcefully by now. 'This is my second one and it's called the "Daily Express".'

The Prime minister took a breather and looking "M" straight in the eye and started off again. 'This is another file, it's a cracker this one, it's called "The Sun". It's got pictures of tits on page three. Would you like to have your picture on page three Sir Charles?'

A sort of rhetorical question if ever, so the Prime Minister carried on. 'Perhaps you would like to read this particular file Sir Charles? It reads: "MI6 executes Chechnyans in rebel hostage release". How does that grab you Sir Charles?'

Sir Charles was to say the least speechless for several minutes as the Prime Minister gloated and waited for a reply.

'Er, well, er, Prime Minister, I think I need to get a full report on this matter straight away.'

'Sir Charles, I think you need to get a full stick of dynamite up your arse straight away.'

And so it was that "Y" got promoted to "T" and very soon after a considerable amount of dynamite had been put up people's bottoms, she eventually ended up being promoted to "M"!



## Chapter 24. The Ilkhichi fiesta.

Sir Robert called Natalya into his office.

'I really need your help to try and find this bloody Dense Dimmock. The Prime Minister's up my backside and wants a full report sort of like yesterday. Can you get in touch with your friend up in this village, what's it called?'

'Ilkhichi, Sir Robert. I'll give her a call.'

That was going to be a waste of time.

It was ten o'clock in the morning by now and everyone in the village was legless. The National police had turned up at last and were trying to get statements off everybody so that they could figure out who were the prisoners and who weren't.

Another complete and utter waste of time, so they started drinking as well. The other café just down the road had realised that there was the potential of a quick manat to be made and set up another stall in the village square. The local drinks distributors had been alerted and reinforcements were on their way.

So the phone rang in Natalya's mate's house but there was nobody in. Just like the rest of the assembled crowd in the village square, the lights were on but there was nobody in. They were all completely rat-arsed.

The Cossacks were in full flow of traditional songs and dances around the square. The audience was clapping in time to the frenzied music. The Chechnyans had great difficulty trying to keep to the beat and were constantly falling over each other still tied together. It was a glorious sight.

The mayor was still jumping up and down in front of the press who'd phoned through all their stories by now but the TV cameras were still running on the proceedings as their public always liked a good fiesta and this was of interest on both national and local news programmes and the audience was growing at a pace from the other nearby towns and villages.

Nobody wanted to miss a piss up like this one.

Sir Robert had eventually picked up on this and sat watching the TV in disbelief and realised the futility of everything and then realised exactly what he had to do. He had just had a very strange tingling sensation between his ears which seemed to make his decision that much easier for him.

If you can't beat them, join them. He doubted if they would have a decent malt whisky up there so grabbed a bottle from his drinks cabinet and called in Natalya.

She hurried into his office and he pointed to the TV screen.

'You see that young lady? How would you feel if I asked you to drive me up there to interview our dear Secret Service agent?'

How could she refuse?

'I think before we go we really must give cowboy Joe, sorry, Mr Silas H Sawyer the third a call just to let him know what's going on. Can you quickly put me through to him Natalya?'

'Ok Sir Robert. Hang on.' She dialled and soon passed the phone over to Sir Robert.

'Good morning mister Sawyer, Sir Robert MacFadyen here. How are you?'

'Oh, hiya Bobbie boy. I'm just swell.' Sir Robert cringed. 'I hear there's some news on young Doctor Kemikhail?'

'Yes, that's correct and I'm just off up there to rescue him.'

'Gee, I thought that he's already been rescued.'

'Yes, he's been rescued from the terrorists but he's still involved in negotiations with the locals up there.'

'Gee, that's just great. You guys have done a great job. Listen. I might just pop up and see if I can help in these negotiations. Where did you say he was?'

'Oh, it's a little place on the East coast called Ilkhichi. I look forward to seeing you up there. Must dash. Cheerio.'

Sir Robert felt now was as good a time as any to cement Anglo American relationships and at the same time he felt an inexplicable sense of well being, a feeling

that he was twenty years younger in the Officer's Mess in India as a young subaltern.

He wasn't quite so sure if he could handle a hang over as well nowadays, but he was going to give it his best shot.



Four hours later they eventually found a parking slot about half a kilometer outside Ilkhichi and walked into the village. It was painfully obvious where everything was happening from the noise of music, gunfire and general crowd laughter.

There were beer tents, hot dog stalls, kebab stalls, local produce stalls, anything the locals could think of as an excuse to make a few manats. The Cossack choir was now in full alcoholic harmony with the musicians trying to keep up.

There must have been about a thousand people there now jammed into the village square and down the little side streets. All the houses had their front doors open welcoming anybody into their homes.

Natalya at last recognised her friend and managed to push her way through the crowd to greet her. They gave each other a warm hug and a kiss and Natalya introduced Sir Robert to her friend who gave him a big hug and kiss and then blushing tried to curtsy but fell over laughing.

Sir Robert held up the whisky bottle and Natalya's friend pushed her way into the beer tent and out again with three glasses. There was a moment of silence as they savoured the lovely peaty taste of the malt whisky and then quickly downed it in order to catch up with the state of the other revelers.

Sir Robert was beginning to enjoy himself. The fiesta atmosphere was catching but he couldn't for the life of

him understand why Dense had a gaggle of women round him.

'Sorry to drag you away from all those lovely ladies but you may not be aware that you are headline news and that the poor old PM doesn't know what's going on. Now we need to have a wee talk as the Prime Minister wants some information from you. But first let's have another wee dram, eh, my boy? Cheers! Slanjiva!'

'Cor.' Dense coughed, he had drunk it a bit too fast. 'That's got to be the real stuff?'

Dense had another swallow and after more coughing managed a brief word.

'Is that slanjee.....thingy . Is that scotch or something?'

Sir Robert burst out laughing. He was definitely in the mood.

'Aye, Scottish my boy. Scottish. What we are drinking is scotch.'

'Oh sorry. We don't get much of what you just said in our village.'

'Dinna huish yoursen, ma wee laddie.' He was definitely in the mood as he poured out another drop of malt whisky.

Natalya was watching the proceedings with great interest and muttered to her friend, 'It's about time he let his hair down. He deserves a break from all that boring work.'

She let them get on with it and walked over to Boris. It wasn't difficult to find Boris although there were several Cossacks who matched his height, but none who matched his girth.

'Boris my friend, how are you and how are our two BAP boys?'

'Natalya, nice to see you. What are you doing up here?'

'Oh, Sir Robert wanted to have a talk with your mate Dense and also sort of be on the scene with the rescuers and all that.'

'Oh good. The boys are alright. Suffering from a severe overdose of, how can I put it? Shock.'

'Where are they?'

'I think they are, oh, there they are over there, with all the local girls looking after them. The locals have all decided that they need English lessons but I don't think they're getting much sense out of Pete and Harry. They're still a bit, how do you say, woozy.'

'High as kites.'

'That's it. We had to get our audience at the concert here to lighten up so I had to use my Moroccan stock to enhance their drinks at the interval and I think Harry must have got at the drinks more than the audience and he's at the same altitude as Pete who was kept under the influence by our Chechnyan friends.'

'So, nobody was hurt?'

'Poor Serge suffered a scratch to his arse and wants a medal.'

'You've done a good job my friend. Do you realise you are all on TV and radio?'

'Oh, we had a reporter chappie in with us after we'd captured the Chechnyans and he took our photos but you say we're on TV now?'

'Big time. That's why Sir Robert came up. He couldn't get in touch with anybody because we could see you all having a good time. And oh, look who's just arrived. Mr Silas H Sawyer the third our BAP man. We'd best say hallo.'

Natalya and Boris pushed through the throng and waved to Silas and pulled him over to where Sir Robert and Dense were sitting on the steps with Harry and Pete and a gaggle of local beauties.

Boris left them to it and went off to find Andrei who was deep in conversation with the mayor both toasting each other.

'Boris, here you are my friend. Another famous Cossack victory thanks to you. Have a drink. Cheers.'

'Boss, the English Ambassador and the American BAP boss are over there and I think they want to thank you for all you brave efforts.'

'Mr mayor excuse me. I have to go on a diplomatic mission.' He gave the mayor a slap on the back which rearranged his rib cage and said his farewells.

They managed to get through the crowd and Boris interrupted Sir Robert who was in full flow with Silas.

'Sir Robert, may I introduce you to our leader, Voiskovy Starshyna Andrei Shkuro.'

They shook hands and Andrei gave Sir Robert a big hug, rearranging *his* ribcage.

'So you a famous English knight?'

'No my friend, I am a Scottish knight. I am explaining to my friend from the British American Petroleum Company here that I am Scottish but that this my friend,' he held up his bottle of malt whisky. 'This is Scotch. The finest drink in the world. Perhaps you would care to join me in "a Wee tippie" as we say in Scotland.

Sir Robert gave him a glass which the Cossack poured straight down. After a gentle cough he shook his head and then picked up his own glass.

'Sir Robert. That was quite a nice little aperitif but I am a Cossack from the Ukraine and we make the finest vodka in the world. Perhaps you would care to try a, what ever you just said, "tippie"?''

Sir Robert had to save face here so as with the whisky he threw the vodka straight down.

There was a pause for a few seconds and he replied after going cross eyed.

'My friend, that is indeed a very pleasant drink for a Sunday afternoon tea, but I would still prefer my "tippie". I feel if you tried it a wee bit slower, letting the fine favours of the peaty Scottish moors roll around your taste buds it would be more appreciated.'

He passed his glass back to Andrei who tried the rolling around the taste buds bit but then said. 'I agree with you Sir Robert it is indeed more flavoursome if drinking it a bit slower but the Cossacks drink vodka as a celebratory drink to enhance their enjoyment of the moment and today we have a great victory to toast do we not?'

'We do indeed and I have much to thank you and your brave men for so perhaps we had better try your vodka once more for a toast to the Cossacks.'

Andrei took a few steps up the church entrance and shouted to all the surrounding crowd.

'We are toasting to a great victory for our brave Cossacks.' Having got the attention of his fellow warriors he then let rip an enormous bellow, 'THE COSSACKS!'

The noise that followed echoed round the village square as glasses were raised and then dashed to the ground. After a quick sweeping up the dancing and singing started up again.

'I don't suppose there's a decent bourbon to be had around here is there?'

Sir Robert and Andrei laughed and offered the alternatives to Silas H Sawyer III.

## Chapter 25. Prime Minister's Question Time.

'Prime Minister, I've got GCHQ on the hot line for you sir. Where do you want to take it and I think you might need to bring the FO in on this as well.'

'Ok, right, is there anybody in the Foreign Office available?'

'I'll get on to that straight away Prime Minister. You'll need a monitor by the way.'

'I'll need a what?'

'A television set sir. I'll set one up for you. In the cabinet office?'

'Ok, that'll do nicely. I'll take the call in there.'

'Hallo Prime Minister, this is GCHQ here are you on the red phone?'

'Ok, I'll just pop into the cabinet office and talk there, hang on. I'm waiting for the FO to come in on this.'

Five minutes later the Foreign Secretary arrived a bit out of breath. 'What's the problem Prime Minister?'

'I don't know just yet. I've got GCHQ on the line, hang on.'

'Ok, GCHQ, fire away, we've got everything set up here.'

'Right. Now this is an outside broadcast we've just picked up from the local Azerbaijan TV via our relay stations in the Med. You may be interested in it. I'll play it back right now. Hang on, here goes.'

The Prime Minister settled down with the Foreign Secretary and watched what appeared to be some sort of fiesta with lots of people dancing around a village square.

'Ok, you got that Prime Minister?'

'Yes, just some sort of glorified piss up, where's the connection?'

'Ok, now I'm just going to zoom in on the chap in the middle prancing around with some swords, you may recognise him.'



The audience watched until the Foreign Secretary suddenly spluttered, 'that's what's 'is name. Bob, Bob , er, Bob MacFadyen.'

'Sir Robert "Standfast MacFadyen?'

'The very same Prime Minister. Old "Jock strap" MacFadyen'

'What the fucking hell is going on?'

'It appears to be some sort of traditional Scottish sword dance Prime Minister.'

'I don't believe it. Has the world gone completely loopy? And who are those other lunatics prancing around Sir Robert with big furry hats on?'

'They would appear to be Cossacks Prime Minister.'

'And who's that with a big hat on riding a donkey.'

'It would appear to be a cowboy Prime Minister.'

There was a large pause as the Foreign Secretary out of deference patiently awaited the Prime Minister's pleasure.

'Foreign Secretary, can I ask you a personal question?'

'Fire away Prime Minister.'

'Foreign Secretary, do you think it's too early for a drink?'

'I feel, Prime Minister, under the circumstances as everybody else appears to be completely pissed out of their brains that now would be as good a time as any for a rather large stiff one.'

'You sound like my mistress.'

\* \* \*

It was another lovely day in Muddlecombe-cum-Snoring as Mrs Dimmock prepared to go out. As there were no newspapers in the village it was her duty to keep the villagers posted with any news so she put on her shawl and bonnet and picked up her basket and bumbled across the village green to the shop.

'Good morning Betty,'

'Good morning Mrs D, turned out nice again?' Betty had a PhD in the blatantly obvious.

'And how are we this lovely day, how's the bump coming along?' Mrs D pointed to Betty's front.

'Oh, we're both coming along just fine thank you.'

'I bet Bill will be ever so proud of his first child.'

'Well, it'll be my first child, ha, ha, ha!'

That brought on a fit of sniggering and titters.

Just then a tall lady walked into the shop.

'Good morning ladies.'

'Good morning Lucinda.' This was Lucinda D'Arcy Landacre the owner of Muddelcombe Manor. Now she was with Betty on holiday in Tenerife when the "bump" was conceived with a certain Brian.

Now Brian was a director of an Industrial Abrasive company and had set up a business contract with Boris' diamond company in the village and had for obvious reasons come to the village since their Tenerife liaison on business trips and had taken on the responsibility of purchasing manager for the shop taking Betty out to exotic shops like Marks and Spencer and Sainsbury's to stock up the shop.

'And how are we all this lovely morning. And how is Betty coping with the new expected arrival. Bill will be thrilled.'

Much more sniggering and tittering.

'And young Dense? How's your lad these days, don't see much of him. There's a bit to do around the Manor for him.'

'Oh, my boy is having a lovely time.'

'Isn't he off in somewhere like Czechoslovakia?'

'Azerbaijan.'

'I knew it had a "z" in it somewhere.'

'He flew out there in one of the Royal Air Force's new jet fighter planes.'

'What, one of them Spitfires?' Betty *didn't* have a PhD in plane spotting.

'No, it goes a bit faster than one of those Betty. It goes through the sound barrier.'

'No, The sound barrier?' Betty sounded as if she knew what she was talking about.

'And he stayed in the Ambassador's house in the capital city called Baku.'

'Get away.'

'And then he got invited to stay in this big castle by one of the local lords.'

'No, In a castle?'

'And then Boris turns up with all his friends from the Ukraine and they stayed there as well.'

'The Ukraine? That's where Chekov and Dense's lovely lady come from isn't it?'

'That's right, and Chekov knows this lord fellow and gets some information from him concerning this poor Scottish lad that's been kidnapped by these terrorists and held to ransom.'

'Get away, terrorists?' Betty was in awe right now.

'So my lad gets his secret service hat on and off they all go to rescue this poor chap and my lad gets his picture in all the papers along with Boris and his mates who are called Cossacks and they have a choir and they had concerts over there as part of this secret service undercover operation.'

'Get away.'

'And then, you'll never guess what happened?'

'You'd better tell us Mrs D.' Lucinda was getting a little impatient now.

'Well, it's only the Prime Minister.'

'It's only the Prime Minister what?' Lucinda was getting more impatient.

'Well, he only brings all this up in the House of Commons and has all the Secret Service and Foreign Office chiefs running a round like scalded cats trying to find out what has really happened and now he wants my lad to come back and start a full blown parliamentary investigation into the whole affair.'

'Your lad certainly gets around doesn't he?'

\* \* \*

Question Time in the House of Commons is an opportunity for MPs to question government ministers about matters for which they are responsible.

Prime Minister's Question Time, also referred to as PMQs, takes place every Wednesday that the House of Commons is sitting and gives MPs the chance to put questions to the Prime Minister.

Speaker of the House of Commons : 'Order. Order, gentlemen please. Questions to the Prime Minister please from the Shadow Foreign Secretary.'

Shadow Foreign Secretary: 'Prime Minister, no doubt you may have read reports in the national press concerning the release of a British hostage in Azerbaijan. Would you care to clarify the situation there please?'

*(I bet you haven't got a fucking clue what's going on)*

Prime Minister: 'My honourable friend is correct in bringing this to my attention and he can rest assured that the situation is under control.'

*(You bet I haven't got a clue what's going on but I ain't telling you that)*

Shadow Foreign Secretary: 'Could the Prime Minister put some light on reports of executions that have been carried out with regard to this operation.'

*(Get out of that you slimy bastard)*

Prime Minister: 'Can I reassure my right honourable friend that such reports have yet to be confirmed but he must realise that the priorities are to have the safe release of the hostage.'

*(La, la, la, la, la)*

Shadow Foreign Secretary: 'So does this mean the Prime Minister condones such actions?'

*(Got you there)*

Prime Minister: 'Can I say at this juncture that I do not condone such actions but that I do condone is the safety of British nationals who have been cowardly abducted and subjected to unlawful imprisonment and used as hostages.'

*(That'll shut you up)*

Shadow Foreign Secretary: 'Will the Prime Minister reassure the House that a full report on this action will be forthcoming?'

*(You can't shut me up pal)*

Prime Minister: 'I can reassure my right honourable colleague that I have been in touch with both MI6 and the Foreign office and together we have already made contact with our representative in Azerbaijan and a full report is already underway.'

*(We've seen a video of our Ambassador pissed out of his skull but will be kicking his arse for a report as soon as he's sober)*

Shadow Foreign Secretary: 'And will the Prime Minister's report explain how he condones the use of foreign mercenaries in such actions?'

*(I'm not sure if the word "mercenary" cropped up in the papers, but let's just throw it in and see what happens)*

Prime Minister: 'I think my right honourable friend is totally unaware of the facts and that the facts involve national security matters that cannot be discussed at this moment of time.'

*(La, la, la, la, la)*

Shadow Foreign Secretary: 'So the press reports of Cossacks running around chopping peoples heads off are matters of national security?'

*(Don't you la, la, la, me pal)*

Prime Minister: 'Once again my right honourable colleague is totally unaware of the facts which have come from a source far outside our jurisdiction and also that relevant delicate discussions concerning NATO realignment are in progress following the breakup of the Russian Federation and that any outside interferences like this matter could upset the balance of these talks and once again I am going to have to explain to my right honourable colleague that I cannot go into details at this juncture as this is under the umbrella of national security.'

*(La, la, la, la, waffle, waffle, waffle, rhubarb, rhubarb, rhubarb, etc)*

Speaker of the House of Commons: 'Thank you Prime Minister and my right honourable friend but I think at this moment we must move on to more important matters.'

*(God, come on girls put your handbags down I think we've had enough bullshit for the day.)*

## Chapter 26. Back to Baku.

'Good morning Mr Dimmock.' It was "ma wee laudie Dense" up at Ilkhichi yesterday towards the end of the celebrations. But then Sir Robert had remembered why he had come up there so dragged Dense who could have been dragged anywhere by then back to Baku in the hands of the trustworthy Natalya.

She had watched the proceedings with much amusement and knew that Sir Robert would be in no position to remember much of what had happened.

'Good morning your lordship,' Dense's hangover probably wasn't as bad as Sir Robert's as he was getting acclimatised to the local vodka by now.

'Good morning gentlemen,' Natalya walked into the dining room with their breakfast and a steaming pot of black coffee.

There was some sort of mumbling from both of them to acknowledge Natalya's entrance. Natalya potted about while they got stuck into their meal and then threw the thunderbolt into the arena.

'Don't forget the report for the Prime Minister Sir Robert?'

'Holy sh....sugar! Dense my boy, we'd best get started.' It was "Dense" now that he needed his help, god forbid.

'Id forgotten all about that. The PM will be screaming for it in a few minutes.' Sir Robert polished off the toast and marmalade, wiped his lips with his serviette and went over to a desk to get some paper and a pencil.

He picked up his cup of coffee and sat down at the dining table.

'Right my boy. So where do we begin?' Sir Robert had another swig from his coffee and tried to get the brain cells aligned into some sort of non alcoholic logic.

'So, you arrived on the...?'

Dense was still well into the bacon and egg and even if he didn't have a hangover couldn't possibly have

remembered silly little things like dates after what he'd been through.

'I think you'd better help us out on this Natalya.'

'The tenth Sir Robert.'

'Of course the tenth, and that noisy bloody jet fighter, woke half of Baku up. So we brought you back here and then had a wee chat.' Sir Robert's brain suddenly reverted to full diplomatic mode.

'No, we had a full departmental planning session to correlate your schedule with our strategic planning portfolio.'

'Did we?' Dense interrupted his breakfast schedule.

'You got that Natalya?'

'Yes Sir Robert.'

'Good, now then what did we do? Ah, yes we discovered that we had to wait for your mate Boris, who,,,,,,who.....had some sort of low down on this chap Igor. Now hold on,' Sir Robert was now in deep political pensive mode.

'Yeah, 'cause Boris knew this warlord chappie after he'd talked to his boss in the "Snort" and rang him up with an offer of some stuff to get information of the hostage and all that.'

'Ah, right. So you had a pre-planning meeting in secret to ascertain who to contact and who would have the most useful information regarding the hostage situation and how best to get this information. And this meeting was held in the ....where?'

'The "Snort" our local pub.'

'Ah, the old double bluff. Have the secret meeting out in the open so as to fool any counter espionage agents into thinking it wasn't secret at all?'

'Yeah, well, it was a nice day, so we all sat outside like.' Dense felt this was a fairly reasonable answer seeing as he didn't have a fucking clue what Sir Robert was on about.

'You all?'

'Yeah, well, there was Boris' old boss Chekov who knew this Igor chap and then Mildred and then of course Dollianna me missus.'



'Your wife.'

'Yeah, that's it, and she's ex FSB from Kiev....'

'Ex FSB?' Sir Robert gasped.

'Yeah, and don't forget Chekov and Boris are both ex-KGB.'

'Ex KGB. Good god. How did you get mixed up with all that lot?'

'Ah well, that's another story, but they all helped in getting hold of this Igor chap anyway.'

'Ok, so after your arrival, you alerted us to your Anglo-Ukrainian joint intelligence gathering session that would yield successful information on the whereabouts of the hostage and we then agreed a further planning meeting with Cowboy Joe, er, delete that please Natalya, er the British American Petroleum Company personnel to disseminate our plans with them. Then what did we do?'

'We went down to the "Pink Pussy" club with the boys.' Dense could remember that bit but for the life of him couldn't remember anything that Sir Robert was on about.

'No, then,.... you keeping up with us Natalya?'

'Yes Sir Robert.'

'No, then Mr Dimmock went into covert operation mode in one of Baku's downtown nightclubs totally disregarding his own personal safety and to try and make contact with any underground personnel who could give him further information regarding the hostages.'

'Oh, I get you. That's when I bumped into that tart, what's er name, Nickola summat.'

'Elastikova.'

'Thank you Natalya.' Sir Robert then carried on after several moments looking up at the ceiling for inspiration. 'So what happened next?'

Dense was able to keep up with this by now and felt he could help out a bit here. 'So that's when the boys from BAP rescued me from this dangerous tart and dragged me back to their social club for a decent pint.'

'No, I think here you had to regroup after having made contact with this undesirable (which was the last

thing Nickola was) person to formulate another plan and then.....?' Sir Robert looked over to Dense.

'Well, I has another pint and then calls a taxi and it turns up and instead of taking me here, takes me up to this castle place without a by your leave and there's this Igor that Boris has been looking for as bold as brass with that Nickola bird.'

'Ah, now we see that the Anglo-Ukrainian infiltration plan is put into action here where you are kidnapped by someone you want to make contact with. Damn clever!'

'What happened next?'

'Well, I get's invited in and Igor's all chummy like until this little bald shortarse git in a white coat comes in and sticks these needles into me.'

'Ah, now, this is where you get tortured and interrogated completely over ruling all the Geneva Convention agreements on the treatment of Governmental diplomatic officials.'

'I don't know about that, I told'em straight that I couldn't tell'em anything 'cause I'd signed this secrets act thing.'

'Good man. So you resisted all efforts to exhort information from you?'

'Well, I dunno like, 'cause the next thing I know is Boris and his pals is all having a laugh at me and this Nickola bird lying in bed stark bollock naked.'

'Yes, right, so now I think this is where Boris comes into the scene?'

'Yeah, well they'd captured the castle by the time I wakes up and poor old Igor's had his bits cut off and is screaming blue murder.'

'Now then, this is where the chopping of heads comes in then?'

'Yeah, what a bloody mess, but Boris and his mates had this sneaky plan to attack at night from the rear with their shaska swords like whilst at the same time they was marching up the road at the front singing there heads off. Bloody marvellous.'

'Ok, right, so we've established that you had made a covert entrance into Igor's castle to distract him from the

pincer movement organised by the Ukrainian joint forces who obviously utilised SAS style tactics for a night manoeuvre with a frontal diversionary attack which distracted their highly fortified defences whilst silent mode operations to the rear took them by surprise with the use of traditional Cossack swords. These silenced the defenders thus allowing entrance to the castle for the frontal forces who overran the castle and released you from the torture chamber.'

'You mean Nickola's boudoir?'

'Yes, I don't think we need to over dramatise this do you?' Sir Robert had a sip of his coffee and turned to Natalya.

'Are you getting this Natalya?'

'Yes, Sir Robert. I've got the gist of it so far. It's sort of in a draft form at the moment but I'll have a full report once you've finished ready for you to authorise.'

'Good girl. Now where were we? Now, how did you get the information of the hostage's whereabouts?'

'Well, I'm not quite sure on this one. I only knows that Boris is bending over me scribbling something down on a bit of paper and it's in some sort of gibberish....'

'Ah, some sort of code?'

'Yeah, whatever, and it turns out it was what the tart was prattling on about in her sleep while I was sort of on the job so to speak.'

Sir Robert cringed, while Natalya smiled to herself having been given the lowdown from Boris on Dense's interrogation techniques.

'Good, right, so let's see now. You initiated some sort of deep psychological interrogation whilst you yourself were being tortured and was able to correlate this information into a coded message to pass on to the Ukrainian attack force when they rescued you.'

'Did I?'

'Yes, and the information contained accurate details of the whereabouts of the hostage and those people who had taken him?'

'Yeah, like the name of some sort of village up north somewhere...'

'The village was Ilkhichi in, where exactly was the village Natalya?'

'It was in the Davachi district Sir Robert.'

'Good girl. So now what happened?'

'Well, we had a stonking good breakfast and got the local lads to clear the mess up and of course we had to get Igor off to the hospital on account of his missing bits.'

'The wounds he incurred during the daring rescue plan.'

'Yeah, and the old Andrei what's his name has a meeting with the lads to try and work out how to rescue the scotch chap.'

'Scottish, Scottish chap Mr Dimmock.'

'Sorry your honour. Anyway they sends a few lads up to this village to see how the land lies and the rest of us jumps in the coach and follows them up there later.'

'Right, so as I see it, you and Boris and his Cossack leader Andrei had a joint Anglo-Ukrainian post battle staff meeting and agreed a plan of attack to rescue the hostage. This meant sending a forward reconnaissance group up ahead to assess the situation and the main attack force then followed. What happened next?'

'Well, it was dead sneaky, they'd arranged a concert in the village hall there, thanks to Natalya here and her mate....'

'Well done Natalya.'

'Thank you Sir Robert.'

'Sorry Mr Dimmock, please proceed.'

'So they had this concert with all the Cossacks singing and playing musical instruments and then Boris slips a Micky Finn into the drinks at half time and gets all the locals high as kites. And then they starts singing all the local songs from all the local countries like and the Chechnyans all gets up and starts singing. So, as we know we're looking for Chechnyans we gets all pally with them and follows them home and as we know Pete's held in an industrial part of the village we watches them that goes in that direction. Well, this is the clever bit. Old Andrei the clever old fox had half his men already up

there hiding. So when this lot starts walking back there they can find out where they go.'

'Damn clever, damn clever. So then they attacked?'

'No. They waited for a couple of hours so as they're well and truly in the land of nod and then they goes in with guns blazing. Bloody Nora, what a racket, well it scares the shit out of me I can tell you. What it did to them lot inside I wouldn't like to guess. Well poor old Harry has been dragged along from the BAP Social club as he knows what Pete looks like, but he'd been at the booze with the Micky Finn at half time in the concert and he didn't know if he was Arthur or Martha but once they'd got all the Chechnyans sorted out Harry stumbles over Pete and that's him rescued. So Pete's as high as a kite as well and they make a right pair but at least they're happy.'

'Fantastic, so now we have another British angle to this affair with the introduction of Harry. So Natalya, let's begin by saying that Mr Dimmock together with Boris and his Ukrainian allies had a preconceived plan to fool the terrorists into showing themselves. This included a clever plot to disguise everybody as a Cossack choir giving a concert in the local village after our secret agent had managed to ascertain the facts from the warlord's colleagues. Then a brave volunteer, British citizen Harry, did he have a surname?'

'Dunno.' Dense looked blankly back at Sir Robert.

'We'll fill that in later. Our employee from the British American Petroleum Company volunteered to join the special forces in the capture of his friend Pietro Kemikhail and was part of the task force involved in the tactical plan to release him from the Chechnyan terrorists. How are we doing so far Natalya?'

'Ok Sir Robert, keep going this is getting very interesting.'

'Oh, yes, we have to keep our PM's mind active. So where were we? Oh, yes, the concert. A cunning plan had been devised to use traditional local anthems to create awareness of each nationality with the help of free drinks at the interval. It soon became aware who the

Chechnyans were and this was followed up by close covert liaison with them and the discrimination of those who left the concert in the direction of the area our Secret Service agent had derived from his previous information gathering exercise. And then?’

‘Andrei and his boys kicked the bloody door down and went in blazing away with everything they’d got.’

‘But they waited a bit didn’t they? So here we have a tactical plan for a delayed attack, on just the front door?’ Sir Robert looked to Dense.

‘No, they did the backdoor in as well at the same time.’

‘Good, so the invasion force front and rear pincer attack before first light took the terrorists completely by surprise with an SAS style full force entrance and completely overwhelmed them. Then our British contingent scoured the enemy position for the hostage. Our brave Secret Service agent with the help of Harry so-and-so joined in the attack and searched for Pietro Kemikhail and rescued him from the clutches of the terrorist Chechnyan kidnapers. How’s that. I think that just about clinches it don’t you Natalya?’

‘Don’t forget the local police arrive with the mayor and all that and karterd the bad boys off to prison and we all gets our photos taken and then we all goes down to the village for a big piss up and then you arrives to *rescue* us.’ Dense had a little giggle here.

Now Sir Robert couldn’t remember much about what happened afterwards, neither could Dense, but fortunately Natalya had a clear picture in her head of the day’s events.

‘I can help you out on the following proceedings if you like Sir Robert?’ Natalya had a twinkle and a mischievous smile on her face.

‘I think all we need to say is that we concentrated on cementing relations with not only the local Azerbaijan community but also Anglo-American and Anglo-Ukrainian joint operations, don’t you Natalya?’ Sir Robert gave her one of his dour Presbyterian stares.

‘Spot on Sir Robert. I’ll go and tidy up this report.’

'And Natalya, before you go, I want you to give cowboy Joe a ring and get him with Harry what's 'is name and Pietro over here for a press conference as soon a possible with our gallant secret service agent here Mr Dense Dimmock OBE. Ok?'

Now at the same time that Natalya had rescued Sir Robert and Dense, cowboy Joe, ooopps sorry, Silas H Sawyer the third had his chauffeur pick up Harry and Pietro and guide them safely back to Baku. And eventually Andrei managed to get his Cossack army into the coach and vans to return to the castle.

Meanwhile Mykola had been busy during all the heroic battles looking after Igor who after a blood transfusion had responded well to treatment and his charge nurse had responded well to a large bag of foliage harvested from the "farm" at the castle. And then Igor had responded to further treatment of sodium pentothal and had come up with the combination of the safe.

So Mykola turned up back at the castle while the heroic returning army were having breakfast, well brunch to be precise. It was midday. They were all telling their friends who had to stay behind about all the heroic acts they had carried out and slapping each other on the back and asking whose turn it was next in Nickola's boudoir.

Mykola managed to get a quiet word in with Andrei and when they had finished brunch they went up to Igor's office and tried out the combination.

"Open sesame" they both whispered as they slowly and precisely turned the front numbered disc and it worked. Andrei opened it slowly and stared inside.

There was rather a lot of cash and bits of paper with names and addresses on that looked like some sort of invoices for the supply of arms to various people. Then there were several bank cheque books and paying in books and then an address book and a telephone book.

'Interesting my friend,' said Andrei to Mykola as they both whistled softly at the treasure trove.

'Now what do we do?' Mykola scratched the back of his head.

'Well, the first thing we do is pay the boys and then we'll have to look into these bank books. We'll need some expenses for local contingency needs but I think they deserve a nice bonus first don't you my friend.'

Mykola nodded then added, 'I think we need to keep a little bit back from them before they piss the lot up against the wall.'

'Yes, good idea. Divide this lot up evenly then take half back for the "rainy day". I've no doubt their lovely ladies will have a say in the matter when we get back home eh Mykola?'

So the Cossacks were richly rewarded and were already bartering for swapped guard shift duties to be able to go down town to the "Pink Pussy" club.

This was just what Andrei wanted so as to spread the word about the castle being up for grabs and entice some speculative buyers into the auction.

However he was still in a dilemma as to what to do about the bank accounts when he got a tingling sensation between the ears and for some strange reason went over to have a chat with Boris.

He came over to him with all the cheque books and paying in books.

'Boris my friend, do you know anybody who can help us out with all the banking stuff. It looks like a Swiss bank to me?'

'Oh, yes, I know somebody who worked in a big bank in London. Perhaps he'll know about this sort of stuff,' Boris replied.

'Ok, Boris let's get in touch with him then,' Andrei continued.

'He is the boss in the "Snort".'

'The who?'

'Our local pub in Muddlecombe, only I don't know his telephone number.'

'That's not a lot of use then Boris my mate is it?'

Just then *Boris* had a tingling sensation between his ears and casually came up with a number, 'double O, four, four, one three double three, one hundred, one hundred, and look after yourself big boy!'



Boris smiled to himself and turned bright red just realising what he had said as the others all looked quizzically at him.

'Well try the numbers first eh Boris?'

They watched as Andrei dialled the numbers and then handed the phone over to Boris.

He waited a couple of seconds and then heard the reassuring voice of Fiona. 'Oh, da, da, yes, yes, hallo Mrs Brewster.' Boris reverted to his English via his double declutching mechanism.

'Hallo, who is that?'

'Fiona it's me Boris.'

'Oh, hallo Boris, where are you?'

'I'm in Azerbaijan.'

'And what's the weather like there?'

'It's ok, can I speak with Brewster please?'

'Ok, hang on Boris, I'll get him from the bar.'

There was a long silence and then a voice shouted, 'hallo Boris, where are you?'

'I'm in Azerbaijan?'

'And what's the weather like, we are really missing you.' What Brewster really meant was that his profits had fallen by fifty percent since Boris had left.

'Weather ok Mr Brewster. Please I need help with problem of Swiss bank.'

'Don't we all my friend. What's the problem Boris?'

'We want to get money from Swiss bank.'

'Don't we all. So whose bank is it?'

'It belongs to bad boy here who we just captured and we chopped heads off in heroic battle to get castle....'

'And do you have a name for this bank?' Brewster's head was reeling from Boris' description but managed to get a sane question in.

'Oh, da, da, yes, yes, ok, I go get book,' a few seconds later Boris replied, 'Credit Suisse it say on bank book.'

'Ok Boris now I just happen to know a gnome .....

'He knows a gnome?' Boris turned with a quizzical look on his face.

'He knows a what?' Andrei was as puzzled as Boris.

'Sorry Mr Brewster why we talking about fairies?'

'The Gnomes of Zurich are similar to fairies my friend because they are so hard to find, but come in very useful for illegal trading. So now Boris I will need the following details, have you got a pencil and paper handy?'

'Oh, da, da, yes, yes, ok, I go get paper and pencil.'

He looked to Andrei and the other Cossacks standing round rubbing their hands in anticipation.

'Ok, Mr Brewster I ready.'

'Ok, Boris now listen very carefully now.'

'Oh, da, da, yes, yes, ok,'

'We need the name of the account holder. It should be on the front of the bank book, ok?'

'Oh, da, da, yes, yes, ok,'

'Then I need the account number and sort code, a six digit number with dashes in between. Then I need his date of birth, his place of birth, his current address, the names of his mother and father and their place of birth, and dates of birth, ok, got all that?'

Several seconds later Boris replied after much nodding from his co writers. 'Ok Mr Brewster, we got all that.'

'Now what you have to do is get this bad guy to open an account locally if he hasn't already done that and persuade him to then open an account for you or whoever is the recipient of the money. Like giving it to some sort of charity. Got that?'

'Oh, da, da, yes, yes, I think so. So we need to get him out of hospital and shove shaska up bottom.'

'Yeah,' Brewster cringed. 'Whatever. Ok, now we also need copies of any utility bills such as telephone or electricity bills, you got that?'

A few seconds later Boris confirmed that, 'Oh, da, da, yes, yes, ok,'

'Now the big question now is are there any secret passwords that we will need to get into this bad boy's account?'

‘Oh, da, da, yes, yes, no problem Mr Brewster, we got big syringe with some sodium stuff. If that don’t work we got shaskas.’

Brewster was visibly cringing once more. ‘Oh, good, I don’t know what a shaska is but it sounds as if it will do the job,’ he tried smiling. ‘Now let me have those details and let me have your telephone number as well Boris and we’ll see what we can do, ok?’

‘Oh, da, da, yes, yes, ok, I can’t wait to get back to your beer Mr Brewster.’

‘Good lad Boris. Oh and tell your friends there will of course be a handling charge involved in this little caper, ok?’

‘Oh, da, da, yes, yes, ok, here is my number,’ and Boris read the number on the telephone back to Brewster.

‘Looks like another visit to the hospital then,’ said Mykola. ‘And I’ll need to do a bit more reaping from the harvest downstairs.’

So Boris, Andrei and Mykola visited Igor in hospital again and Igor was looking a lot healthier after his treatment and blood transfusions. He had got a bit of colour back into his cheeks. In actual fact on closer examination he had got some colour on his lips as well and what was that around his eyes? Mascara? Surely not.

A sack of leaves was duly deposited with the charge nurse along with a phial donated by the bald shortarse bloke in a white coat back at the castle.

They all sat round smiling at Igor as the sodium pentothal was injected and waited the necessary length of time until Igor was smiling back at them.

They took all the notes down and stood to leave as Igor asked, ‘I don’t suppose a bouquet of flowers is out of the question is it?’

They returned to the castle and Boris rang Brewster with all the details.



'Hallo, can I speak to Tebos Eggenberger please?'

'Can I please ask who's calling?'

'Yes, my name is Brewster Kegworth. My account number is 3488967231.'

'Can you hold the line please Mr Kegworth.'

'Hallo, Mr Kegworth, Tebos here. How are you. Long time no see?'

'Hallo Tebos. Yes, I'm sorry I haven't been in touch recently but I am sort of retired. But I hope you are looking after my account?'

'Oh, don't you worry your little head about these things. Everything is quite in order. How can I help you?'

'Well, I have a friend who unfortunately is in a bad way in hospital but he has asked me to look after his business affairs and he has an account here with you.'

'Mr Kegworth you know I am unable to disclose any other person's account details.'

'I appreciate that Tebos and you know how much I appreciate your privacy and you know how much it would hurt me to withdraw all my funds but I do have my colleague's details with the necessary security information.'

'Ok, Mr Kegworth, fire away but I still will not be able to give out any information.'

Kegworth rattled off all the account details with dates of birth and passwords and waited while Tebos looked through his records on the database.

'Yes, Mr Kegworth. He does indeed have an account with us.'

'Ok. Now Tebos I don't want to do anything against your data protection laws but perhaps if I ask you for a balance of that account you will not be able to tell me any detailed numbers.'

'That is correct Mr Kegworth.'

'But if I gave you some details of say a range of money and you, for example you just coughed if this

was incorrect and let's say, sneezed if the guesstimation was roughly accurate, how would that sound?'

'You know I could not possibly do that.'

There was a pregnant pause.

'Ok. So let's just imagine any such numbers were in the hundreds?'

A gentle cough was whispered down the line.

'Or let's say these numbers were in the thousands?'

Another quiet cough.

'Or perhaps in the millions?'

Achoo!

'Let us presume this amount was from one to five million?'

Cough.

'Or six to ten million?'

Achoo.

'Tebos my friend you really must do something about your cold. I hope we can talk again when you have recovered.'

'It was my pleasure Mr Kegworth. Is there anything else I can help you with?'

'Tebos my friend you have been most helpful as usual. I presume my friend will have to come into the branch to make any large transactions?'

'Yes, I'm afraid that is the case as you are well aware. Even if you went to court it would take many years to get power of attorney so it's quicker if he can come to see us. He can of course write cheques up to the agreed limit of ten thousand dollars.'

'Tebos, my dear friend how can I thank you enough?'

'Just give me more money Brewster.'

They both laughed as the conversation ended on Christian name terms.

## Chapter 27. The press conference.

'Good morning ladies and gentlemen of the press. I would like to welcome you to the British Embassy and this press conference which concerns the release of a British citizen, Dr Pietro Kemikhail who was held hostage by Chechnyan terrorists.

As has been the tradition in Azerbaijan for many centuries, Cossack security forces from the Ukraine have been used to guard the precious Azerbaijan oil fields. So it is only natural that these forces help in internal security matters regarding the rescue of hostages held by outside terrorist organisations. They deemed fit to imprison somebody against their will and so must take full responsibility for such an unlawful act and pay the penalty for any action taken against them.

This act was perpetrated with the help of dangerous external criminal agencies in Azerbaijan so it was necessary to gain information from such elements by force. British Intelligence were fully aware of this and with the knowledge of armament dealings and gun running amongst a plethora of other dangerous activities known to this organisation, the use of force would be needed to obtain the necessary information quickly and effectively with minimum casualties to the civilian population.

And so MI6 sent over one of its best operatives to manage this project. His insight and personal knowledge of Ukrainian undercover agents led to the successful operation in Baku where the criminal organisation's stronghold was overrun in a surprise night attack. Fully aware of their firearms disposition these brave Cossacks using only their traditional "Shaska" swords quickly disposed of the enemy with minimal casualties and our intrepid secret agent managed to obtain the necessary information required for the release of our British hostage.

Having gained the whereabouts of the terrorists our colleagues in the British American Petroleum Company

were called in to help with the plans to release the hostage. One of their employees volunteered to join the planned attack in the village of Ilkhichi and assisted in the release of his colleague. Once again our secret service agent and his Cossack allies organised a completely successful night attack after more information gathering exercises in the form of a choir concert in the local village hall. This produced the exact whereabouts of the terrorists and they were successfully overrun again with minimal casualties and our brave BAP Company man managed to locate Dr Pietro Kemikhail and rescue him during a quick armed operation.

The terrorists are now in the custody of the local police who were on hand with the local mayor to take over custodial duties whilst myself and my colleague Silas Sawyer from the BAP Company arrived to join in the celebrations of a highly successful joint Anglo Azerbaijani American Ukrainian operation.

I think this whole operation highlights the efficiency of cross border communications in carrying out such a successful and efficient operation.

Now I am open for any questions but please be aware that a lot of information concerning this whole affair is under the umbrella of national security for all the countries involved. Yes, the one at the back?’

‘Thank you Mr Ambassador. John Connaught, International Press. I was given to understand that summary executions were held in the Baku battle. Can you please confirm or deny this statement?’

‘A good question. I personally have no knowledge of such actions but please be alerted to the fact that the operation in overrunning the castle in the outskirts of Baku was to be kept to a low key silent attack in the middle of the night. Under these conditions it is quite feasible that when one is armed with only a sword and the enemy is armed with machine guns with live ammunition that a very quick response time is needed to defend one self and under such circumstances it could be possible that some wounds could be inflicted on the upper body area. Next question please?’

'Thank you Mr Ambassador. Barry Hazing, New York Times. Can I ask your MI6 operative how he encompassed the overall strategic planning in such a volatile environment to ensure that every aspect of this operation would be carried out so effectively given the limited resources available in such a short period of time?'

There was a pregnant pause while Sir Robert looked to Dense who looked back to Sir Robert who looked back to Dense.

'I think he means how did you plan all this.'

'Yeah, well like me and Boris had a chat over a couple of pints of Brewster's best in the "Snort".'

Poor Barry Hazing was to say the least, puzzled. 'Gee, is that some sort of code for some sort of Russian involvement?'

Sir Robert intervened. 'Yes, I think what my learned friend here is trying to say is that this transcends national security boundaries.'

Barry Hazing looked even more puzzled, 'gee, ok,' he muttered as Sir Robert moved on to the next question.

A hand shot up. 'Bruce Melbourne, Sydney Times. That Brewster's best sounds like a decent swallow. Where'd yer have to go to get a pint of that mate?'

Much laughter from the floor and Sir Robert jumped in. 'I think my friend that really is under the umbrella of National Security.'

More laughter. Sir Robert continued. 'Ah, then, the young gentlemen in the front here.'

'Thank you Mr Ambassador. Nersik Pamboukjian, freelance journalist. Hi there Dense. How's it going?'

'Oh, hi there er, er, Music.' A ripple of laughter ran through the room.

'Mr Ambassador can I ask your MI6 operative,' another ripple of laughter for the sarcastic use of the words "MI6 operative". 'How did he manage to get the information of the whereabouts of the Chechnyan rebels?'



Sir Robert looked to Dense again to see what he was going to say.

'Yeah, well, me and the oil boys went downtown to one of the night clubs....,'

'As part of a covert operation.' While Dense was trying to think of the rest of the sentence Sir Robert intervened.

'Yeah, like he said, anyway this tart gives me the old come on and is all over me like a rash and I tells her straight I ain't having none of it and then we goes back to the BAP club and then I gets a taxi back but lands up in this castle and who's there but this tart and her boss this Igor chap and then this little bald short arse bloke in a white coat sticks a needle into me and the next thing I knows is I'm laying in bed with this tart stark.....'

'I think we don't need to go over our MI6 operatives undercover interrogation techniques at this point, but needless to say his information gathering exercise was completely successful.' Sir Robert jumped in quickly trying to keep the level of the conference above the waist.

'I just wondered if our MI6 operative had any sort of secret weapon?'

Lots of sniggering from the audience.

'Thank you Mr, er, Music? I think if he did have such a weapon it would be kept secret, don't you?'

Much more sniggering from the assembled press.

'Yes, our man to the left here,' Sir Robert quickly moved on and pointed to one of the other journalists.

'Thank you Sir Robert. Could I ask how the hostage felt throughout all these proceedings?'

Sir Robert looked over to Dr Pietro Kemikhail.

'Well, it all started when me and the boys went down town for a few swallies in our local night club drinking this pish.....'

'Vasily Dorokhov, Pravda. Vat is pish? Is new type of vodka?'

Much tittering.

'Aye, it's a special watered down version of vodka they try to sell you to rip you off. Not a decent vodka in sight like a Polish Chopin or a Belvedere.'

'No my friend you want a Russian Standard Gold.'

'Aye, that'll do nicely pal but I'm more yer actual *U'luvka* Polish vodka man.'

'I think gentlemen we are losing the track somewhat here.' Sir Robert jumped in.

'Aye, oh sorry, where were we? Pish, that's it. Then this tart that your man obviously met as well joins in and she obviously kens the barman as he soon gets the proper vodka out and she tries ta drink me under the table an' so we calls a taxi 'cause she's completely stocious. Well the next thing I know is we're up at this castle an' a couple of big guys drag me in an' this little guy sticks a needle into me.'

'Was he a little bald shortarse guy in a white coat?' Dense queried.

'Ay, that'll be the fella, and Jings, I gave the wee gobshite a piece of ma mind but then after he sticks this needle in me I cudna' tell you if I was Rob Roy or Flora MacDonald.'

More sniggering from the press gallery.

'Then the next thing I know is I have this weird dream that I'm in the middle of some sort of battle. Sort of like the battle of Bannockburn wi' machine guns, and then I wakes up an' there's ma pal Harry sitting grinning down at me and all these guys wi' black faces an' big furry hats running around.'

'And do we know the reason for the kidnapping?'

'Well, after the Cossack boys had saved me we had a look at all the papers and drawings lying about and it's obvious they wanted to blow up the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline which feeds the oil into Russia. So we presume they had some sort of grievance against the Russians probably about this Chechnyan independence lark.'

'Thank you Doctor Pietro, obviously a traumatic time for you and we are all very relieved that you are safe and sound. And none more relieved, I'm sure than the

president of the British and American Petroleum Company, Mr Silas H Sawyer the third.'

Sir Robert looked to Silas who stood up.

'Gee, thank you Sir Robert. I guess that is the understatement of the year. Yeah, great to have Pete back. I guess I'll soon be able to understand him.'

Pause for laughter.

'But seriously, he does a great job for us and we all appreciate his work which of course will enhance the lives of everybody here in this beautiful country of yours. Azerbaijan. Obviously there are a lot of people to thank in obtaining the release of my friend here and our company sets the standard for a joint venture between us and the English and this only goes to show how we can work together in obtaining our selective goals. However we must not forget the local mayor Rashad Kurbanov and the courage of police Sergeant Vugar Mirdjavadov and his colleagues for their brave efforts and fast response time on the scene of the kidnapping.'

Silas had a bit of problem reading Sir Robert's notes with all the strange names.

'So thank you everybody and thank you Sir Robert. Thank you and your intelligence agents for bringing our young doctor back to safety.'

A little ripple of applause went round the room as Silas inwardly hoped his God wouldn't strike him down dead for all the goddamn lies he had just said.

'Sir Robert?' A hand went up.

'Yes. The man in the front.'

'John McTaggart. Daily Record. Can I just ask you when you first heard of the release of your man?'

'Yes. I saw it on the local TV station on the early morning news. Good work Azerbaijan TV.'

'And what was your reaction?'

'Well, I immediately drove up to this village...'

'Ilkhichi.'

'Thank you Natalya, and ensured the safety of Dr Mikhail.'

'And were there any celebrations there Sir Robert?'

'Oh yes, the whole village plus a few more joined the Cossacks in celebrating their happy victory and the release of my colleague here.'

'And did you by any chance join in with the Cossacks in a wee sword dance perhaps?'

'Well, in the heat of the moment as everybody else was in party mood I might just have decided to enhance the celebrations and further cement Anglo Ukrainian relationships.'

Sniggering went round the room.

'Anyway, it was a great relief to everyone to see Dr Mikhail safe and well and thank you Silas. Yes I think you summed it up nicely and now I must bring this conference to a close and as usual there will be some light refreshments and some heavier refreshments for our friends in the press.'

Much sniggering again and clapping as everybody stood up and the real interrogation began as each member of the press grabbed his target and started on the third degree.

Sir Robert had anticipated this and with a sigh of relief guided Dense out of the room before any more confusion was introduced.

They left to the press to demolish their food and booze allocation for the month and sat down in Sir Robert's office.

'Well, I think that went ok, didn't you?'

Dense sort of nodded but Natalya replied, 'Yes Sir Robert. I think that was a success. I've sent a copy on the secure teleprinter line of our originally agreed report to the Prime Minister's office as you requested and a copy to MI6. Now don't forget we have an appointment with the Ukrainian Socialist Workers (Affiliated) Social Club in downtown Baku this Saturday evening.'

'Best bib and tucker boys.' Sir Robert said.

Dense wasn't quite up to speed on this as he hadn't used a bib for some years now and thought tucker was Australian food.

'I think the kilt is the order of the day don't you Natalya?'

'That would be a brilliant idea Sir Robert. I'm sure the locals will appreciate that. Then on Monday we have to go to the president's office for some sort of investiture.' Natalya reminded them.

'Oh, Christ I'd forgotten about that.' Sir Robert gasped.

'And cowboy Joe and his lads as well?'

'Yes, and your friend Boris as well Mr Dimmock and Andrei and Mykola,' Natalya added.

'I'd best get the old ceremonial uniform and medals out then. And I don't suppose you've got your morning suit with you Mr Dimmock?'

Dense didn't have an afternoon suit or an evening suit let alone something for the morning.

He looked blankly at Sir Robert.

'Hmm. What are we going to do? Do you know any decent clothes stores in town Natalya? I don't suppose there's a Moss Bros handy?'

Natalya wasn't quite sure what a moss cross was but replied anyway.

'I think I can find something for you Mr Dimmock. I know a little tailor in town. But we must go there now. I'll take you into town and we should have something ready for you for Monday.'

So Natalya drove Dense downtown to the tailors. Meanwhile back at the castle, they were gathering for a few little aperitifs before lunch, just the one bottle of vodka, when somebody called Boris to the telephone.

'Hi Boris, it's Brewster here.'

'Oh hallo Mr Brewster, how are you, how is the beer?'

'Oh, don't you worry your little head Boris my friend. We're looking after your beer for you. Now I have some information here for you now.'

'Da, da, yes, yes, ok.'

'Now I want you to listen to this very carefully. In fact does your boss there speak English?'

'Da, da, yes, yes, he speak a good English. You want to speak with him?'

'Yes, I think it's in the best interest if I do, alright Boris?'

'Da, da, yes, yes, ok, I go and get him. Hang on Mr Brewster.'

Boris dashed off and brought Andrei back with him. He passed the phone over to Andrei.

'Hallo, my name is Brewster Kegworth. I have been looking into Mr Igor Badlotski's bank details for you on behalf of my friend Boris.'

'Oh, hi. I am Andrei, how can I help you?'

'Hi Andrei. Well after Boris gave me all the details that you obtained from Igor I talked to his bank in Switzerland.'

'Oh, how did you manage that?'

'Ah, well, I used to work in the banking business before I started keeping Boris' thirst quenched.'

A little giggle from Andrei.

'I have an account in Switzerland too and I managed to get a rough idea of the amount of money Mr Igor what's 'is name has in his account.'

'Ok, so does he have much?'

'My friend, he has a considerable amount of money but you will not be able to get at all of it unless you get him to Switzerland to sign off his wealth.'

'Ok, so what do we do now?'

'Well, there is some good news. He has the authority to sign off ten thousand US dollars a day. But let me reassure you this would take years to get at all his money.'

There was a deep intake of breath from Andrei as he raised his eyebrows in anticipation.

'So can I ask you Andrei how is Mr Igor? Is he in good health?'

'Oh well, he is alive. But I don't have an update recently.'

'Ok, so I hope you can persuade him to sign off some cheques to keep your expenses going and I will try and organise some sort of logistics to get him to

Switzerland. I will of course have my own expenses to take into account my friend but I suggest you ensure Mr Igor has a long and healthy life. No doubt you can update me on his health the next time I ring?’

‘Ok Brewster. Thank you for all your help. I’ll pass you back to Boris.’

‘Hallo Boris?’

‘Da, da, yes, yes, hallo Mr Brewster. Listen can I speak to my boss Mr Chekov please is he in pub?’

‘Yes, hang on I’ll get him for you.’

There was a pause as Mildred was dragged off Chekov and he picked up the phone.

‘Hi Boris. How are you? Is everything going ok?’

Boris reverted to Russian and started.

‘Boss, I had a bit of trouble with the Arab gentlemen as they tried to swindle me.’

‘So what did you do Boris?’

‘What I always do boss. I killed them.’

‘Good boy and did you get the merchandise?’

‘Oh yes, and I found a lot of money lying about as well and I got all your money back too.’

‘Well done Boris. So you want a bonus?’

There was a smile on Chekov’s face as he said that.

‘No, no boss, just pay me usual. I paid off the posh yacht for you and I have still got a sack full of dollars. What do you want me to do with it?’

‘Well done my friend. Just hang on to it for the time being because I think Andrei will be giving you a lot more soon. But we all have to meet up in Switzerland and sort out our finances. Don’t forget you have a nice little diamond business here in Muddlecombe to look after and we must keep it tax efficient my friend. Now I am reading about your exploits in the papers here in England and you and Dense have obviously succeeded in your work very well. So what are you going to do now?’

‘I don’t know boss. I listen to Mr Brewster talking to Andrei and like you said I think we have to sort out Igor’s money and give everybody a share. We have got to go to the Cossack Social Club on Saturday night then we have to go and meet the President on Monday.’

'Well enjoy yourself Boris. I will talk to Brewster to keep up to date on the financial proceedings my friend, bye for now.'

Boris put the phone down and looked to Andrei.

'Well Boris, we have to look after our friend Igor and get him to Switzerland and then we will all be very rich. I must thank you for inviting me on this mission. Your friends back in the Ukraine will be eternally grateful. Now we have to get you dressed up for the visit to the president on Monday and especially on Saturday night and we mustn't forget your friend Mr Dimmock.'

'Mykola tells me Igor is ok. A little changed due to the trauma but he is out of bed and wants to come back boss.'

'Ok Boris. Can you and Mykola arrange to get him back here and I think we need to give our friend Nickola Elasticova a rest but I think she would welcome a little help don't you Boris?'

Boris looked puzzled.

'I think she can help in the convalescence of our friend Igor as well so go and use your charm Boris to persuade her to get some help from some of her friends to keep our troops moral up amongst other things?'

Boris eventually understood what Andrei was on about and went off to Nickola's boudoir. He had a bit of trouble trying to explain to his colleagues waiting outside her door his reasons for queue jumping but as he was bigger than them they accepted his decision.



## Chapter 28 . Pinewood Studios.

It was another grey dismal day in the village of Iver Heath in Buckinghamshire as two men started to work in their palatial offices of Aon Productions Ltd in Pinewood Studios.

'Harry, do we have any sort of patent rights over the name "James Bond"?''

'No Chubby, why do you ask?'

'Have you read this bit in the English papers about some James Bond secret agent over in some weird Russian country?'

'No. What's he up to then?'

'Well, it sounds like this guy who works for MI6 apparently is running around chopping peoples heads off.'

'What the hell's wrong with the old Walter PPK?'

'Well, exactly. The whole world seems to have gone crazy. Sean never went round chopping people's heads off.'

'Good God, no. Can't have our man making a mess, now can we?'

'Seriously Harry, have you read this shit?'

'Sorry Cubby, but I've been a tad busy getting ready for our next movie.'

'Well, you gotta read this. This is unbelievable. He's got the Cossacks involved and some warlord over there in.....Azer....Azerbaijan.....'

'Where the hell's that?'

'It's one of those old Russian federation states that's got independence, and a lot of oil by the look of things, and he's got the Russians on his side as well.'

'Let me have a look, pass the paper over Chubby.'

Harry Pepperman picked up the paper and started reading.

'Holy shit. This would make a cracking good movie.'

'A bit blood thirsty?'

'It would be interesting to have a little talk with this chap don't you think?'

'It would wouldn't it? Do we still have any contacts in MI6?'

'I don't think Mr Fleming can help us out on that anymore. Didn't we talk to a young lady there as some sort of liaison person?'

'Yes, Judy somebody.'

'Judy Bench!'

'That's the girl. Let's give her a call eh?'

Chubby rang through to his PA and eventually got the number.

'Hi there, is that Judy Bench? Oh hi Judy, it's Chubby Broccoli here, you remember we had a little chat about our movies some time ago?

Yeah, that's right, James Bond. Now can you help us out? We're reading about one of your chaps out in Azer.....That's it Azerbaijan. Could it be possible to meet up with him at some time?

We might what?

We might regret it?

Listen, the more I hear about this fella the more I'm intrigued.

He runs around with an ex KGB assassin?

I gotta meet these guys. Can you arrange something for us Judy, please?

It may take some time as they're still tied up with the local warlord and the Cossacks in Azerbaijan and you don't know when they will be coming back, so you'll have to come back to me.

Ok, listen we owe you Ok?'

## Chapter 29. Baku nights.

It was Saturday night and everybody in the castle was getting ready for the big night out down at the Ukrainian Socialist Workers (Affiliated) Social Club in Baku.

Boris had been fitted out with a traditional Cossack outfit and the choir were all tarted up as well.

Nickola had been given some time off and had picked up Igor from the hospital and was looking after him ensuring his return to good health.

Her boudoir had been sub contracted out to some of her colleagues eager for a quick buck, that's roughly what they said anyway, as the Cossacks had now been paid and were getting a bit tired of the same thing.

Natalya had talked to the "choir" and her friends at the social club telling them to be ready for the big night out and the cunning plan to test Sir Robert's authenticity as a true Scotsman



Ilkin Ragimov's first name meant "first born" but unfortunately he didn't know who he was first born to and so was brought up in orphanages and eventually ended up on the streets in gangs and had to fight his way through life. That bit he was good at and although no giant, he held his own in aggression and underhanded fighting.

He eventually had his own gang on the streets of Baku and progressed through the university of "hard knocks" to become a ruthless leader. Drugs, extortion, prostitution naturally followed and he was eventually recognised as one of Azerbaijan's war lords.

Only there was something missing in his life. Not just a mummy and a daddy, he felt a little cheated with the title warlord, more like a war servant.

He didn't have a castle.

So the news of Igor's downfall was greeted with great enthusiasm and he had now taken an interest in the comings and goings of the castle and had just watched as a coach load of the castle's new inhabitants drew out of the front gates down the road to Baku. This was the choir on their way to the Cossack Social Club for the evening's entertainment.

Ilkin, never one to miss an opportunity came to the realisation that now would be as good a time as any to take the bull by the horns and attack the castle whilst so many occupants were missing.

He, like the Cossacks before him realised the best way to take the castle by surprise would be to attack from the rear as the front was clearly well guarded. He was clearly under the misapprehension that there were only fifty or so defenders and that most of them were now out of the way. He quite clearly hadn't done his homework and what he hadn't taken into account was that Mykola who worked for the security firm that guarded the oil fields had been recruited to help with the security of the castle. As most of the security guards he worked with were ex-patriot Cossacks who were only to happy to oblige and collect a little bit of overtime to boot. So this extra manpower had been brought in to cover emergency exigencies such as a good piss up downtown.

Ilkin drove back to his warehouse and rallied his troops and set the time of attack for one o'clock in the morning presuming the coach load would be away for some considerable time.

He felt twenty of his hardened best henchmen could quite easily handle the situation and sent them on their way.

The ramparts of Igor's castle outside Baku still had the blood stains of the last executions just to remind the current sentries of the problems that could occur should they fail in their duties.

It definitely helped to concentrate their minds and at this time, just coming up to one o'clock in the morning was when the minds needed to concentrate the most and

so it was that our alert sentries heard some noises to the rear of the castle. They got their night vision binoculars out and scanned the fields at the back.

Now the Cossacks had had years of training and experience in approaching a target through an open field with the utmost silence and non disturbance of all things natural by crawling using their elbows and bodies like a snake to minimise any noise and movement levels.

Ilkin's gang did not have the benefit of such experience.

'Hallo lads. Looks like we've got visitors. Sergie, pop down and alert everybody. No noises.'

There was a lot of scurrying about as the Cossacks all got into position with hardly a sound.

The night watch guard commander took an advantage point to monitor the situation.

'They must think we're fucking stupid,' he muttered under his breath.

'Ok lads. They have two ladders with them. Wait until the first two scale the wall then out with your shaskas and you know what to do. The old "ghost executions ploy", Ok?'

He looked around for confirmation.

'Then retreat back to behind this wall here and let the next two get over and let's just wait and watch and see what their reaction is when they find their friends. Oh, Sergie just pop down and alert the rest of the watch to go round the back to stop anybody escaping .Ok?'

'No problem boss.' Sergie quietly shuffled downstairs as the night watch guard commander watched the approach of the oncoming invaders.

'There are only twenty of them. Shouldn't cause too much of a problem.'

He rubbed his hands, 'nice to get back to work again, eh lads?'

They waited until they heard the sounds of the ladders scraping the sides of the walls and then slowly took out their gleaming shaskas and positioned themselves strategically to await their guests.

There was much huffing and puffing as the first two eventually scrambled over the edge of the ramparts and leaned over.

Now every Cossack raw recruit knows from his basic training days that it states quite clearly in the infantry manual section of attacking castles that one should never lean over the edge of a rampart when there is a high probability that someone with a nice shiny shaska is hiding behind it.

*Swish, squelch and thud.*

Twice!

And leaving the decapitated bodies lying on the stony floor, (oh, no, not more blood and guts for the cleaning ladies in the morning,) the guards quickly retreated behind the inner walls to sit and wait for the next arrivals.

The next two eventually managed to get over the ramparts and then suddenly stopped as they fell over their friends.

It didn't take long before they evaluated the situation but it took considerably longer to think of what to do next. They were a bit confused as to how their friends, who had started out whole, were now in bits and not in the best of health. That, and the fact that there did not appear to be anybody responsible for such an action close to hand.

The thought of some sort of joint hari-kari initially crossed their minds but the logistics of that was too much to contemplate so they ruled it out as it must have taken considerable self discipline and microsecond timing to achieve.

The priority they had to contemplate was the safety of their own necks and how best to defend themselves against what appeared to be an invisible enemy.

Furious looks and whispers between each other and another look back down to their ex friends and then back over the wall to their oncoming colleagues still didn't seem to offer them any better solution as to what to do next. They stood transfixed and terrified in the darkness and there was the faint smell of something nasty as their

nervous systems offered a relief and a warming feeling to their rear.

The next two climbed over the ramparts only to witness the scene of two of their colleagues *standing* rigidly like statues and their other two colleagues *lying* rigidly like fallen statues.

There was a gulping noise and much whispering as they looked around to try and find the ghosts that had chopped their friend's heads off.

The Cossacks behind the wall were besides themselves as they held themselves in readiness.

The next two invaders scaled the ramparts and now there was a group of huddled gibbering idiots staring into the unknown void of darkness not having a clue what to do next.

After much whispering they obviously had come to some sort of agreement and dropped their weapons and lifted their arms in surrender not quite knowing to whom or to what they were surrendering.

The next two climbed over the ramparts only to be met by an incredible sight of all their colleagues, well all minus two, standing frozen with their arms in the air and nobody else in sight.

They were eventually acquainted with their headless colleagues lying on the floor and after much more hissing and muttering came to the same conclusion as the others and stood bolt upright with their arms in the air.

The Cossacks could hardly contain themselves and felt it best that they reveal themselves now before everybody fell about in helpless laughter.

The night watch guard commander raised his arm and they climbed over the inner wall to greet their new acquaintances. He blew his whistle and the rear guard quickly surrounded those still on the ladders at the rear of the castle grounds.

'Good evening gentleman, what's wrong with the front door?'

His humour was wasted on them. Tommy Cooper on a good day would have been wasted on them as they looked round for a spokesman but none came forward

other than the arms trying to get even higher to accentuate the overwhelming desire to be taken prisoner, alive.

They were mildly surprised to say the least to see so many Cossacks pointing Kalashnikovs at them as they were taken down to the cellars and tied up to await the return of their leader.

Andrei was enjoying himself at the Ukrainian Socialist Workers (Affiliated) Social Club who had put on a great spread for him and his colleagues. He had arrived with Boris and the choir in the coach and were already well into the vodka.

Sir Robert arrived in full highland dress which was greeted with much applause by the local ladies of the club. Dense arrived with him and the same ladies started licking their lips being fully aware by now of his reputation.

Silas H Sawyer the third arrived with Pete, Harry and a few more BAP Company employees. The local ladies were now positively drooling.

Natalya was looking forward to a great evening's entertainment and made sure her lady friends served their guests with plenty of drink and pleasant smiles. She had found a black market bottle of malt whisky and duly presented it to Sir Robert who couldn't refuse but to taste it and was pleasantly surprised to find that he enjoyed it.

Pete and some of the choir were in deep debate about the vagaries of the local vodka until someone asked one of the girls to try and find something a bit better than the "pish" they were serving up at the moment. The social club bar committee were approached and had an unscheduled committee meeting with Pete and some American dollars and managed to find something a bit more to his taste. This was greeted with considerable applause by not only Pete but also the majority of the homesick Cossacks.



Eventually the choir's whistle had been sufficiently wetted and some sort of singing commenced.

Sir Robert was in deep conversation with Andrei and stopped to ask how Igor was getting on.

'That's him in the front row of the choir. Our new soprano.'

'Good lord. The one with the lipstick and mascara.'

'That's our big strong warlord only I think he is now known as a warlady.'

'What happened?'

'A bit of a cock up in the heat of the battle.'

They both collapsed into laughter.

'What will you do now Andrei?'

'A good question. We will be going home soon but we will need to realise some of Igor's assets and Boris and Dense have a friend in their village who knows a Zurich gnome apparently.'

'Extremely useful people to know my friend,' popped in Sir Robert.

'So I have to take Boris and Igor to Switzerland for further financial discussions but I don't quite know how all this is going to happen. We are waiting for the man in the village to organise something.'

'Oh, good. At least your journey hasn't been in vain. And we are all going to see the president on Monday.'

'Yes, I look forward to that. Now Sir Robert we are going to ask you to join in with our celebrations. I think the choir are nearly in tune and you must show us some of your Scottish dancing again. Perhaps we will have a competition with the swords again? And perhaps we can share some of your excellent whisky?'

'By all means, I am sorry not to have offered you some.' He poured out two large glasses for himself and Andrei who promptly downed his, coughed and replied.

'A pleasant little aperitif my friend,' and then gave out an almighty bellowing laughter.

Sir Robert was prompted to do the same as Andrei caught Natalya's eye and winked.

The Scottish kilt is a knee-length garment with pleats at the rear, originating in the traditional dress of men and boys in the Scottish Highlands of the 16th century. Since the 19th century it has become associated with the wider culture of Scotland in general, or with Celtic (and more specifically Gaelic) heritage even more broadly. It is most often made of woollen cloth in a tartan pattern.

Although the kilt is most often worn on formal occasions and at Highland games and sports events, it has also been adapted as an item of fashionable informal male clothing in recent years, returning to its roots as an everyday garment.

It uses eight yards of material and is extremely warm and ideal for winter wear. It also has medical benefits and many myths have been started about what a true Scotsman wears under a kilt. Bearing in mind that the male reproductive organs are external they must therefore be kept at a temperature lower than the body's internal temperature to enable the sperm count to be kept to a reasonable level.

Whether the sperms eventually produce good mathematicians is a debatable issue.

However the Cossacks had a cunning plan for Saturday night to discover the truth and get to the bottom of this myth. They were more anxious to get round to the front of it in reality.

The choir were by now completely legless but the more they drank the more melodious they seemed to get. Some of the choir had detached themselves and were starting to do the traditional dance routines.

The audience clapped in time as the dancers pirouetted and started doing the one legged kick from the squat position. Some of the crowd tried to join in but ended up on the floor much to everyone's amusement.

Then they started doing the whirling dance, starting slowly and accelerating. Again some of the audience joined in and Natalya dragged Sir Robert on to the floor.

As the whirling got faster so the centrifugal force of Sir Robert's kilt started to lift the kilt until the desired height of the tartan had been achieved.

There was a great shouting and swooning from the audience, mostly the females as the truth of what a Scotsman wears under a kilt became only too obvious. Fortunately Sir Robert was so drunk he didn't appreciate that he was the cabaret until he collapsed in a heap as the dancing got too fast for him.

It only became apparent to him of his celebrity status after the dancing had finished when everyone clapped him and pointed to him with great amusement.

Some of the ladies were now fervently wishing Dense had been wearing a kilt.

Andrei came over and steadied Sir Robert as he tried to stand up to receive his rapturous applause now fully realising the reason for his popularity and blushing as he laughed and accepted some relief from Natalya in the form of another large glass of whisky.

He and Andrei held each other up in fits of laughter as Sir Robert managed to walk back to the safety of a chair nodding his head furiously realising he had been tricked into revealing all and shaking his finger at Natalya.

This set the tone for the rest of the evening as everybody tried to prove who was the biggest prat of the night.

It was a close run thing between Boris and his dance of the Russian grizzly bear and Pete standing in for Sir Robert getting everybody up to do the Scottish eightsome reel.

Sir Robert steadfastly resolving to sit all the dances out thus concurring his nickname "Standfast".

It was three o'clock in the morning as the coach pulled in through the front gates of the castle and Andrei and the revellers were acquainted with the new arrivals.

The night watch commander gave a full report to Andrei and together they sat down to a cup of hot black coffee to try and clear their heads.

'Do we know who the leader of this rabble is?'

'No Andrei, we haven't asked any questions yet.'

'Ok, so let's get them up here and get some answers. I think Boris would be interested in this don't you, He's an old KGB man, just the sort we need eh my friend?'

'Yeah, I think Boris is just the man. I'll go and fetch our visitors and I think we can sit back and enjoy this.'

All the prisoners were brought up to the main hall where the Cossacks sat round waiting for the proceedings to start. The old tomato ketchup on the shaskas routine was ready as was the "heads in a sack" routine. They had already buried the unfortunate invaders who had lost their heads but had filled two small round sacks with potatoes and a generous helping of tomato ketchup and left them lying in the middle of the hall.

The prisoners were lined up in the middle of the hall next to the two football sized sacks and looked suitably unhappy. Then Boris walked in and sat down next to Andrei.

Andrei waited sufficiently long enough to get the desired stage effects and walked over to the prisoners.

'Good morning my friends. How nice of you to visit us but you should have called first and I'm sure we could have received you better. Oh by the way can I introduce you to my Friend Boris, he's a "бывший русский КГБ палача".

They fully understood the meaning of "ex Russian KGB executioner."

This did nothing to help the demeanour of the prisoners who were taking sideways glances at the two sacks and trying to move as far away from them as possible.

Boris stood up and walked over to the first prisoner and measured his neck with his hands and looked back to Andrei.

'Can I try this one please boss?'

'No, no Boris, we haven't asked the questions yet. Just wait. I know you are a little out of practice but be patient my friend.'

Andrei looked over to the prisoner. 'I am so sorry my friend but Boris has not had a lot of job satisfaction recently being so far from Lubyanka. But perhaps you can help us and we will have to ask Boris to wait for another day.'

The prisoners all looked to each other and then all nodded rapidly in silent agreement.

'Good. So now why don't you tell us who is your boss, the man who put you in this dangerous position, who put you in such danger?'

The prisoners all looked at each other again and in silent unanimous agreement grunted to the tall one in the middle and with their hands tied behind their backs nodded over to his direction.

Andrei went over to the person in question and pointed to him.

'This one is your spokesman?'

They all nodded.

'This is your leader?'

They all moved their heads from side to side.

'So he is going to tell me who *is* your leader?'

They all nodded their heads up and down.

The spokesman muttered something then cleared his throat and tried again.

'Ilkin Ragimov.'

'Thank you my friend, and is this Ilkin?' he looked for clarification which got the nod. 'And is this Ilkin here tonight?'

Furious nodding from side to side.

'Your leader is not here with you?' What sort of leader is that, who doesn't lead his troops into battle?'

Much stamping from the Cossacks who obviously found this most distasteful.

'I find that hard to comprehend don't you lads?'

Andrei addressed the grinning audience who were by now some seventy strong with only the bare night watch on duty and causing the prisoners much anxiety. They were

a pretty ruthless looking band of cutthroats which did nothing to enhance the prisoner's state of mind with regard to a pleasant long life of retirement ahead of them.

'Why don't you ask your friend to join us?' Andrei addressed the prisoners.

There was much shuffling and muttering until a general consensus of nodding conveyed the message that they felt he should really be with them on this auspicious occasion.

Andrei walked over to the spokesman and cut him free and took him into the office and pointed to the phone.

'Ok, my friend, just ring him and tell him that everything is ok and that he can come over to see the spoils of his victory.'

It was just getting light as a big black American limousine drove up to the front of the castle. Ilkin was pleased to see two of his friends standing guard outside the front gates. He drove in to the courtyard and was pleasantly surprised to see his colleagues had a guard of honour awaiting him.

As the gates closed behind him he was not so pleasantly surprised now that he could not recognise any of the guard of honour.

The Kalashnikovs of the guard of honour suddenly changed from the "present arms" position to the "come on in sucker, one false move and you're dead meat" position and he was staring down the barrels of twenty guns.

It took him some time to realise that there wasn't an awful lot he could do as there was no sight of any of his men anywhere.

One of the Cossacks started to open a car door while Boris opened one of the rear doors. Out came one of Ilkin's bodyguards and he was big. Not quite as big as Boris but all muscle, probably all muscle between the ears as well.

Boris wasn't too happy about this and felt he had a point to prove. He offered his hand and the sucker took it.

In one second the thumb was broken and he was on his knees in front of Boris and then Boris grasped his neck and, *snap, crackle, pop* and what was previously one hundred and twenty kilos of pure muscle was now hundred and twenty kilos of pure dead weight.

The occupants of the car were visibly shocked but felt it best under the circumstances to overlook this minor irritation and do nothing in the interests of their priorities, to keep breathing.

'Are you happy now Boris?' Andrei enquired.

'Sorry boss. I thought I saw his trigger finger move.'

'You can't be too careful these days can you?' Andrei turned his attention to helping one shaking occupant out of the car.

'Mr Ilkin I presume? Welcome to our humble abode.'

Ilkin was helped out of his limousine. He had a large fedora hat on and black silk shirt with a big gold pendant hanging from a gold chain. Tight black trousers accentuated his sinewy figure and the snakeskin cowboy boots helped to push his height up to five foot eleven.

He had a shed load of gold bracelets round his wrists and his fingers held every conceivable size and shape of rings. It took him a bit of time to stabilise as he was walked into the hall. He was greeted by the sight of his troops lined up in the middle of the hall which was surrounded by far too many Cossacks for his liking. He had obviously completely underestimated the enemy.

His attention was drawn to the two soggy blood stained sacks next to his colleagues. He looked at them then to his colleagues and the spokesman who had his hands free waved his hand across his throat and made a grimace with his tongue sticking out.

Ilkin got the message and felt sick in his stomach. Then his ex bodyguard's body was unceremoniously dumped along side the two sacks as the prisoners gulped. The stage effect had its required reaction. Another *live* bodyguard with his hands tied was led in

very sheepishly by Boris which caused much smirking from the Cossack audience.

Last but not least a very dapper middle-aged gentleman with a briefcase was ushered in to join the others centre stage.

The two outside sentries were replaced with real ones and joined the circus parade as Ilkin took in the surrounding picture of the Cossacks and their blood stained swords stuck in the floor, swaying gently to and fro.

His face showed what he obviously thought, "holy motherfuckers, I'm in deep shit here!"

Andrei lifted his arm to quell the tittering and smirking. 'Good morning Mr Ragimov. I'm glad you could make it. You were on our invitation list but obviously decided in your eagerness to jump the queue. We are going to put this lovely piece of real estate up for sale and invite the highest bidder but you may have saved us a considerable amount of time. I do apologise for a couple of your friends who lost their heads in the excitement.'

Much sniggering from the audience.

'Now who have we here? He turned and looked at Ilkin's friends standing shaking next to him. Andrei pointed to the smart middle-aged gentleman.

Ilkin managed to stutter, 'oh, this is my business manager.'

Andrei then pointed to his other colleague the twin muscled giant.

'I presume this fellow is *not* your business manager?'

Much tittering from the assembled crowd as Ilkin managed a nod.

Andrei then turned to one of his colleagues. 'Is that bald short arse chap in a white coat up yet? If not get him here ok?'

'Ok boss.' He scuttled off to wake the laboratory professor.

'Now then my friend we have a lot of talking to do but I am going to have to make all your colleagues secure in case they upset our discussions.'



Andrei had a quick word with the night watch guard commander who rounded up all the prisoners including the newcomer with the muscles and took them and his night watch guards off to lock up the prisoners, get a good breakfast and then some sleep.

The stage effects were cleaned up and the other ex muscled gentleman taken away and buried.

A bleared eyed short arsed bald gentleman in a white coat staggered into the hall led by two Cossacks.

'Ah, good morning my friend,' said Andrei. 'We have had some visitors in the night and this is Mr Ilkin who is their boss and he and his business manager would like to have a look around and I would like you to take them down to your laboratory and explain the cost effectiveness of it to them. Ok?'

The short arsed bald gentleman in the white coat mumbled something and was led away together with Ilkin and his business manager by a guard of Cossacks to tour the castle.

Andrei turned to those left in the hall. 'Well my friends I think it's time for breakfast don't you?'

Ilkin was well impressed with the laboratory down in the cellars and had a long talk with the short arsed bald gentleman in the white coat who explained the horticultural side of things to Ilkin whilst his smart middle-aged financial adviser scribbled down notes furiously while they were walking round.

They were then shown the armoury which well impressed the financial adviser and then a tour of the castle including a quick pop into Nickola's boudoir which was now home to several ladies and the recuperating Igor, all of whom were tucked up in bed fast asleep.

They finished the tour and were guided by the guard of honour back to the dining room and offered a coffee before being taken upstairs in to Igor's plush office and a meeting with Andrei with Boris lurking in the background.

'Right gentlemen, it's a great shame you didn't ring for an appointment but now that you have seen around the castle what are your impressions?'

Ilkin did not want to give any idea that he was extremely interested in it as this would not be the best position to start the negotiations so he just nodded.

'Ok, my friend let me give you my impressions. My financial advisers and I have come to the conclusion that for one million US dollars you could get a significant return on your capital quite easily within twelve months.'

Ilkin started to say something but Andrei put his hand up and continued.

'Unfortunately you have put yourself outside the bargaining arena with your stupid action tonight and we now have some of your assets which you could use as sort of deposit. You've probably guessed that my large friend standing behind me is a "бывший русский КГБ палача".'

Ilkin visibly shivered.

'He abjectly apologises for the loss of your friend but Boris has been out of action for several months and was a bit rusty but thanks you for allowing him to maintain his level of job satisfaction.'

Andrei gave Boris a quick look and a smile and turned back to Ilkin who was in no frame of mind to say anything other than gulp.

'So that's the deal my friend. For one million dollars this is all yours together with all the furniture and personnel. I think your smart financial adviser will agree with me''

He gave him a quick look which warranted a very slow nod of the head.

'So we will give you a week to come up with the cash and for every day it is late my friend behind me will be obliged to start asset stripping some of your deposit currently being held in our cellars.'

He paused to check Ilkin's reaction which was suitably miserable but after a quick look to his financial manager got the nod and he brightened up considerably.

'I think that's fair don't you? So we look forward to seeing you in a week's time. Good bye my friend and thanks for calling in to see us. We will see you in one week from today. That'll be Tuesday morning bright and

early. You can bring the money and we will let you have your deposit back and the keys to the castle. Until then my friend, hasta la vista baby!

Andrei and the others in the room all had a quick titter as Ilkin and his dapper financial manager were escorted out into their car as Andrei yawned and staggered off to bed.

'We have a busy day tomorrow lads. Our visit to the President's palace. So I'm off to bed to get some sleep and then get ready and all poshed up. Good night my friends, sorry good morning.'

## Chapter 30. The Presidential Palace visit.

It was Monday morning as they drove to the Presidential Palace which was located on Istiglaliyyat Street in the capital. An impressive twelve story building with surface made of marble and granite.

Natalya had liaised with Mykola in the castle to meet outside the palace and they joined forces to climb the long steps up to the front of the building.

The invitation had included Andrei, Boris, Dense, Pete and Harry as part of the investiture and special guests of Sir Robert and his embassy staff together with Silas H Sawyer the third and some staff from the British American Petroleum Company.

The local Ilkhichi mayor and police sergeant were invited as well.

After the usual security measures and registration procedures had taken place they were all taken through the palace up a large staircase with a red carpet and then into a large palatial ceremonial hall. At the end of the hall were several rows of gold chairs covered in red velvet which were laid out in front of a dias with a table with gold candelabra and flowers.

To the side there was a long table with rows of crystal glasses and lots of plates of canapés which were swiftly taken round on silver platters and offered to the guests. Several wine sommeliers walked round the guests offering a range of aperitif drinks including orange fruit juice, sparkling champagne, and vodka for the more traditionally minded.

After the guests had all had something to eat and drink a large gentleman in a ceremonial toast masters uniform of bright red and gold called everybody's attention and in a loud voice, started reading from a large vellum script.

It was of course in Azerbaijani but everybody got the gist of it and Natalya translated for the embassy visitors.

'Good morning ladies and gentlemen. Our President welcomes you to this grand national investiture event.

This investiture was created by our own president and is to be bestowed only on those worthy of the title National Hero of Azerbaijan.

The Qizil Ulduz Medal Golden Star is a medal of a National Hero of Azerbaijan and is conferred for bravery and courage shown in defense of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan Republic, and for the protection of the world population.

May I take the opportunity to describe the special design of this medal.

The "Qizil Ulduz" medal is an eight-ended star with flat dihedral rays attached to a pentagonal plate, which is bordered with a fillet along the perimeter, with two eye rings. The Inner side of the plate is covered with moiré ribbon, the colours of which are corresponding to the National Flag of Azerbaijan (blue, red and green). There is an inscription of Azərbaycanın Milli Qəhrəmanı in the center of the rear side of the medal. There is a serial number carved on the upper ray of the medal. The medal is pinned to the left side of the chest above other orders and medals.

Thank you ladies and gentlemen for your time. May I now ask you to be upstanding for the President of Azerbaijan.'

Those who had understood what he was on about stood while the rest very quickly got the idea and followed suit.

The President arrived in a smart navy blue suit with a sash crossing the jacket and some medals on his lapels. A crisp white shirt and tie in the national colours of Azerbaijan.

The President had with him a young lady attired in traditional costume carrying a tray of medals. She was followed by the president's equerry in full army dress uniform with epaulettes, white\_aiguillettes, lanyards and medals. He had a clipboard with him and started calling names out. One by one each person left their seats and walked up to form a line in front of the president.

The first in line was the mayor of Iikhichi who was roughly the same height as Dense but considerably

wider. He had on a smart suit with his mayoral sash and a top hat which he took off and held under his arm. Then the police sergeant resplendent in his dress uniform who was slightly taller than the mayor and stood next to Harry who was wearing a smart suit. He was slightly taller than the police sergeant and had Pete next to him, who again was taller by an inch or so. Then Andrei in his full Cossack uniform who stood proud at six foot two. Boris had managed to get into another Cossack uniform and had the advantage of being two inches taller than Andrei but considerably larger in all directions.

And last in line was Dense.

It was a complete coincidence in the listing that he should be at the end of the line and looked completely out of place not only in the linear height dispositions but also in dress. The tailor in Baku had only managed to find one off the peg suit. It must have been a strange shaped peg, but he only had time to adjust the trousers but left the sleeves too long and the jacket a bit on the large size. So Dense vaguely resembled a bag of potatoes against the other medallists in their smart attire.

Dense was one of those people who could put on a bespoke Saville Row suit and still look scruffy.

Soon one by one their names were called out again and they took a step forward to have their medals pinned on them.

'Mayor Rashad Kurbanov' called the equerry. The local Mayor stepped forward had his medal pinned on him, shook hands with the President who had a few words to thank him for all his efforts in rescuing the hostage. Those who were present at the rescue couldn't remember seeing much of the mayor until the television cameras arrived, but obviously there had to be a local hero handy so why not him?

Police Sergeant Vugar Mirdjavadov was called next to substantiate the mayor's bravery and got his medal and some encouraging words from the President.

'Harold Arbuthnot Johnson!' Ah, so that's what his name was. He went slightly red under the collar in embarrassment of both his name and the fact that his

level of bravery was probably less than the mayor's or the local police sergeant's.

None the less he gratefully accepted the medal and the President's gratitude.

'Pietro McGonagall Kemikhail!' Some giggling came from the seated audience as his parents obviously had a sense of humour when naming him. He had his medal pinned on and encouraging words from the President to carry on the good work of the British American Petroleum Company.

Just as the President was pinning the medal on, Pete quietly said in his best Russian learnt from his dad, 'may I presume Mr President to ask if the aperitif vodka we just had was a Polish U'luvka?'

The President stopped, looked at Pete and then to his equerry and said to him, 'take this gentleman down to our cellars afterwards and give him a bottle of U'luvka. It appears we have a connoisseur in our midst.'

He finished pinning the medal on and shook hands warmly with Pete and winked and moved on to the next person.

'Voiskovy Starshyna Andrei Shkuro!' The president looked up to find some room to pin the medal amid all the Cossack finery and decorative ammunition belts which he gladly saw were only for show today. 'You're not wearing the sword today my friend?' queried the President.

'No Mr President, your security guards asked me to leave it with them.'

'Phew,' muttered the President with a twinkle in his eye.

'Boris Slobovitch!' Once again the president had difficulty finding room for a medal let alone reaching high enough and was extremely careful not to shake his hand too vigorously.

'You're a big boy,' smiled the President. He moved on.

'Mr Denis Dimmock OBE!' There were gasps from the audience as Dense stepped forward. Unfortunately he

hadn't brought his award with him for obvious reasons so there was plenty of room for another.

'Who's this?' muttered the President to his equerry.

'This is the British Secret Service Agent Mr President.'

'He doesn't look like James Bond to me.'

The president pinned the medal on the thick woolen jacket and shook Dense's hand and moving closer, whispered in English, 'brilliant disguise!'

Dense took a backward step into line as they stood to attention during the Azerbaijani National Anthem and then everybody relaxed as the President walked amongst the guests after more drinks and small canapés were offered by a band of smartly dressed waiters.

The President mingled around talking to the guests and then started up a conversation with Andrei.

'Mr Shkuro, can I thank you for all your help in this matter but can I ask of you one favour?'

'Please Mr President your wish is my command.'

'Good man.' The President smiled. 'Now all I ask of you is that before you return to your mother country would you oblige me by giving another concert before you go?'

'That would please me greatly Mr President. But I must point out that we are not professional singers or musicians.'

'Yes I understand that but I missed the first two and everybody tells me that they gave a great many people a lot of pleasure.'

It was not surprising with a couple of kilos of best Moroccan hashish to enhance the proceedings.

'No problem Mr President.'

'Ok Andrei, just liaise with my equerry here and he'll sort out the details.'

'Thank you Mr President. Before you go, could I at this point offer you some, what do you call it, political kudos?'

'I'm never too busy to turn down any political kudos my friend.'



'As you may be aware we have taken over a warlord's residence which contains a lot of "war surplus" equipment, shall we call it, and also a considerable narcotics manufacturing project which I'm sure your internal security department would be only too pleased to capture.'

'I'm sure they would be ecstatic.'

'Now it just so happens that another warlord is keen to take over this business opportunity and will be coming to take it over in a week's time. Now his "work force" has been critically reduced and is in our hands at this moment of time.'

'Carry on my friend, this sounds interesting.'

'So if your internal security department were to arrange an ambush at the time of the take over you would be in possession of a considerable amount of illegal goods and a large quantity of undesirable criminal characters that are no doubt on your wanted list.'

'My god, that as you say my friend would give me one hell of a lot of political kudos. So you need to talk to my equerry friend here in the uniform about *two* items then.'

'I must point out that this may cause considerable embarrassment to some local council officials and police personnel.'

'My god what a field day we could have. My friend I am considerably indebted to you and my equerry will be in contact with you very soon to discuss logistics. And you no doubt will be out of the country by the time all this has happened?'

The President left Andrei talking to his equerry and carried on walking amongst the guests.

The President went over and shook hands with Sir Robert with some formal conversation as there should be between a President and an ambassador.

But the President then muttered something under his breath about the female members of his entourage would have preferred to see him in his traditional Scottish kilt performing some traditional Cossack dances.

Sir Robert blushed bright red not knowing what to say as the president burst out laughing.

Word certainly gets around quickly in Baku doesn't it?

'Now then Sir Robert, I want to have a word with you and Buffalo Bill over there.' The president pointed to Silas H Sawyer the third who was resplendent in full formal cowboy dress.

Sir Robert allowed himself a small snigger which was followed by an even louder snigger from the President. They walked over to Silas who turned and bowed to the President and said a 'Hiya Bobby Boy. Nice uniform. No kilt to day then?'

It was his turn to snigger now alongside the President.

'Listen gentlemen,' started the President. 'I have been having talks with the Ministry of the Interior and we feel that under the present circumstances we can allow the British American Petroleum Company another tranche of the oil exploration and production contract for the next five years. How does that grab you?'

'Mr President, how can I express my thanks to you?' Sir Robert bowed and the President grinned and replied. 'Oh, I guess I'll manage to find a way.'

Much more sniggering as Silas added, 'gee Mr President I guess we owe you.'

'Thank you my friend, now while you're here would you mind if I asked you a personal question?'

'Gee, I guess under the circumstances you can ask any damn thing you like,' Silas drawled Texas fashion.

'Mr Sawyer, can I ask you if you take your boots off when you make love?'

Sir Robert and Silas looked astounded but both laughed out loud as Silas replied, 'gee Mr President, that's a tricky one.' He paused, 'If I can find a young lady who has the strength to pull them off then I guess the answer is yes.'

This bought the house down and after much back slapping and hand shaking the President made his exit.

'Wow, gee Bobby boy I guess we hit the mark. I need a stiff drink.'

Sir Robert ignored the Texas informality but as it was definitely something to celebrate he invited Silas and the rest of the staff back to the Embassy to celebrate.

'I don't suppose you have a decent drop of beer have you Sir Robert,' asked Boris with full backing from Dense who followed this up with, 'I could murder a drop of Brewster's best bitter right now eh Boris me old mate.'

'I'm sorry lads. All we have is bottles of nice cold lager in the fridge.'

'Ok Sir Robert, we'll try our best to murder them then.' Dense was that thirsty he could drink anything right now.

'I've got a nice drop of vodka lads,' Pete showed off his bottle the President had given him from his cellars.

'Oh, by the way Mr Denis Dimmock OBE, Qizil Ulduz, I've been meaning to ask you about how you're getting back to the UK.'

'What the hell's a one of those things you just said?' quizzed Dense.

'It's one of those medals you've got pinned on to your suit. Let's just call it the Gold Star of Azerbaijan shall we to keep it simple. Not a lot of people have got one of those I can tell you let alone have heard of one of those. Anyway have you thought of how you're getting back to blighty?'

'Da, da, yes, yes, Sir Robert,' Boris interrupted. 'I got to talk to my friend here 'cause I think Brewster wants us to go to Switzerland.'

'Brewster wants us to go to Switzerland?' Dense looked aghast. 'Why the hell would Brewster want to us to go to Switzerland? Does he want us to try out a new beer?'

'Niet, niet, no, no, we got to go to get Igor's money.'

Dense looked more puzzled than usual. Sir Robert helped him out. 'Ah, sounds like your friend Mr Brewster

has a gnome in Switzerland and needs to do some financial shenanigans.'

This hadn't in anyway alleviated Dense's state of puzzlement.

'Da, da, yes, yes, that's it. He got to see gnome in Zurich 'cause Igor got a load of money there and he has to meet gnome to ok it if he give us some.'

'What's wrong with the local bank?' Dense was still puzzled.

'Dense my friend. Sometime's it's in one's best interest not to tell the nice Chancellor of the Exchequer where your money is if you have a lot of it or he will take a great chunk of tax out of it.'

'Da, da, yes, yes, that's it. When Brewster work in bank before he work in "Snort" he use gnome he told me.'

'Yes, well. I'm not supposed to be involved in this sort of illegal transaction so I'll just forget about this conversation but needless to say you will be going back via Switzerland then Dense my friend?'

'Da, da, yes, yes, we go back to castle and talk with Andrei and get Brewster on telephone my friend, ok?'

Dense still had that puzzled look but resigned himself to what ever they were talking about so he just shrugged his shoulders.

'Now then gentlemen let's have a drink shall we? Oh Natalya before I forget can you get on the secure teleprinter and inform the Foreign Office of our new agreement that has been awarded to the British American Petroleum Company contract.'

## Chapter 31. Prime Minister's question time.

It was Question Time in the House of Commons again giving another opportunity for MPs to question government ministers about matters for which they are responsible.

Speaker of the House of Commons : 'Order. Order. Questions to the Prime Minister please from the Shadow Foreign Secretary.'

Shadow Foreign Secretary: 'Prime Minister, I would like to thank you for the Azerbaijan hostage report but there are a couple of points I feel need discussing with special regard to taxpayers money.'

*(Got you now Mr smart arse)*

Prime Minister: 'I obviously welcome your interest in the country's economics my learned friend. Please fire away.'

*(Come on baby, come to mama)*

Shadow Foreign Secretary: I see in your report that there was an unauthorised flight involved in getting personnel to Azerbaijan.'

*(Get out of that you slimy toad)*

Prime Minister: Thank you for bringing that up. It is nice to see my learned colleague taking such keen Interest in the affairs of state.'

*(Ok, bring it on)*

Shadow Foreign Secretary: 'It would appear that one of the RAF's most advanced and most expensive jet fighters was used as a personnel carrier for a Foreign Office employee. And that this flight was unauthorised. I would welcome my learned colleague's comments on this delicate matter.'

*(Got you now clever dick)*

Prime Minister: 'I am glad my learned colleague has observed this and I can quickly clarify this matter. An RAF Lightning jet fighter was employed in the movement of one of MI6's undercover agents. Two previous flights were also used. Both of them were scheduled flights carrying troops and stores to and from the Bosnia arena.

Hence there was little extra taxpayer's money involved. So, about this so called unauthorised flight. It was authorised by the RAF, by the Ministry of Defence and by myself. The only unauthorised part was that of an overzealous Iraqi air traffic controller who mistakenly took its flight plan going over his territory.'

*(Now who's the clever dick?)*

Shadow Foreign Secretary: 'Thank you prime Minister but it still seems a rather expensive way of moving one person from A to B'

*(You can't get out of it that easily)*

Prime Minister: 'It would be to the untrained eye. But I would ask my learned friend to think of the alternatives. There are civilian flights to Azerbaijan. This involves flights from the UK to Moscow and then catching a connection from Moscow to Baku. Bearing in mind the lack of hard surface runways in Azerbaijan this would involve a fairly small and slow type of aircraft. I would also like to point out to my learned friend that such a journey would be under the auspices of Aeroflot, which I'm sure he realises is a Russian state run airline which is extremely expensive, extremely unreliable and hardly the most secure method of transporting a member of the Her Majesty's British Secret Services.'

*(Got you by the balls now smarty pants)*

Shadow Foreign Secretary: 'I would like to thank the Prime Minister for his detailed and forthright reply which obviously clarifies the matter nicely.'

*(Fuck!)*

Prime Minister: 'I'm glad to have been given the opportunity to be of assistance. However I would like to add that as a direct consequence of this operation, our MI6 operative has been awarded the Azerbaijan Gold Star and not only that but our

Ambassador there informs me that the President has awarded a further five year contract to the British American Petroleum Company in Azerbaijan.'

*(That'll teach you to ask stupid questions dick head)*

Shadow Foreign Secretary: 'Thank you Prime Minister. I am obviously extremely happy as to the outcome of this successful operation.'

*(Double fuck!)*

## Chapter 32. Another concert.

Boris and Andrei opened the door to Nickola's boudoir to find her and Igor in the middle of a make up session.

'I'm sorry to trouble you Igor my friend but we need to have a little talk to you about your future.'

'Talk away dearie. I'm sure my good friend Nickola will probably be involved in it some way won't you my love.'

Nickola nodded.

'Ok, well Igor as I look at it there are only two options open to you. As you know we now have access to your private funding in Switzerland most of which you will be donating to the good Cossack charitable cause not forgetting the British Intelligence and of course my friend here. You have had dealings with Boris before as I understand.'

'Oooh, what a Big brute your are Boris,' exclaimed Igor then blowing him a kiss.

Most disconcerting for poor Boris. But then he stood his ground and just scowled his most brutish KGB assassin's scowl.

'I forgot to mention that Boris is option three.'

Igor gulped.

'So where are we? The first option is to turn you over to the police and after having a chat with the President he seems extremely keen to get his hands on a warlord for obvious political reasons. I have done a deal with him to let him have at least one warlord, the opposition, young Mr Ilkin Ragimov together with all the contents of the castle, but giving him two warlords would be a considerable bonus and add a lot more voters to his next election.'

Igor muttered, 'Ok. What's next?'

'So option two is to get you out of the country before any warlords are handed over and we all go off to Switzerland to rearrange your



financial arrangements so to speak. Then you can fly off somewhere nice and hot and enjoy a pleasant retirement.'

'What, without any money?'

'Igor my friend, how could you imagine we would do such a thing?'

Igor humphed.

'No, we can come to some equitable agreement in splitting up your estate so that you can have enough to live reasonably comfortably in a good lifestyle in your retirement.'

Igor humphed again.

'My friend we know roughly how much money you have in Switzerland and for all we know you may have something else stashed away in some other tax haven. So I think you really don't have much choice do you?'

Igor humphed again a little bit less grumpily this time.

'Of course there is always option three my friend?' He looked to Boris who was grinning profusely and rubbing his hands.

Igor humphed extremely grumpily this time.

Andrei and Boris left the boudoir leaving Igor and Nickola to carry on with their cosmetic make up sessions.

'I think that went well don't you Boris my friend?'

Boris nodded with a large smile on his face as they went down stairs to the hall where Dense was trying to have an intelligent conversation with Mykola. Just as with his conversations with Boris in the "Snort" this wasn't quite up to any Royal Society's lecture standards.

Andrei interrupted them.

'So now my friends we need to talk about getting out of here. Do you have the telephone number of your friend in your pub back in England Boris?'

Boris got that tingling feeling between the ears again and came up with the number and actually managed to curtail Mrs D's best wishes this time.

They dialled the number and Boris asked for Brewster and started, 'Da, da, yes, yes, hallo Mr

Brewster. We want to know how we getting back home please. I have terrible thirst.'

'Me too,' popped in Dense.'

Andrei grabbed the phone to forestall the next half an hour discussing the benefits of their local beer.

'Hi Brewster, Andrei here. We talked before.

Yes nice to talk to you too. The weather is fine here. Now the last thing you said was that you were going to look into the logistics of moving us all to Switzerland. How's it going?

How many are there of us?

Well, we have Boris and Dense. Then there will be Igor and his lady friend.....

How is Igor? A changed person I think we can truthfully say.

Any body else? Yes there will be myself and then of course there is the problem of getting my Cossack colleagues back to the Ukraine.

There will be about forty or so. Some of them are staying on. They have been offered jobs in the Security Company in the oil fields. So I reckon, say at the most, fifty of us in total.

When do you need to travel?

We need to travel next Tuesday morning in a bit of a rush my friend. You understand? Good. You have already looked into the scheduled flights but they are run by Aeroflot and a bit unreliable and with all the stopovers and changes, bloody expensive.

So you feel that as there are plenty of funds available that chartering a plane would be the best decision.

OK, so you'll look into picking us up next Tuesday at Baku and then dropping my Cossacks off at where?

Yeah, Kiev will do nicely.

And from there to Zurich.

And after our meeting with the bank would I mind getting a direct flight back to Kiev. First class?

I think I could manage that. And what do we do with Igor and his lady friend?

You think that's their problem.

Ok Brewster we'll wait to hear from you.'

\* \* \*

Mrs Dimmock hustled and bustled around Primrose Cottage getting everything ready for the Interplanetary Standards and Ethics Committee meeting. She had called another extra ordinary meeting and felt that she should at least have plenty of home made biscuits ready for the committee members.

Primrose Cottage was empty now, with John the owner still busy in Tenerife, Boris in Azerbaijan and Chekov now living with Captain Creighky O'Riley's wife Mildred in their cottage.

So she put the teapot and the biscuits on the table, got all the minutes ready, and took her apron off just as the first committee members started to arrive.

They all eventually took their respective places around the dining room table with Mildred being the latest addition to the committee, bringing in some fresh blood and giving the men something to drool over to distract them from making any silly decisions.

The Chair, Gerantinium III eventually brushed the biscuit crumbs from his beard and started making gentle coughing noises until Mrs Dimmock realised he was ready to commence and called the committee to order.

'Chair!' Mrs Dimmock put the opening stamp of authority on the meeting as everybody quickly grabbed some more biscuits and poured another cup of tea.

'Thank you Mrs Dimmock. Now where were we? Oh yes. I would like to thank you all for coming to this extra ordinary meeting.' He looked over to Mrs Dimmock with a puzzled expression on his face.

'Why are we here Mrs D? This is the second meeting we've had in a month.'

'I'm sorry Chair, but I felt it necessary to update you on the current situation with regards to my lad and Boris in Azerbaijan.'

'Azerbaijan, where's that?' queried Gerantinium

'We discussed this in the last meeting chair. It's in the minutes.'

'Jolly good show. Carry on Mrs D.'

'Well, as I was saying, the situation now is coming to a close and our boys out there have contacted Brewster.....'

'Brewster, who's he?'

'He's the landlord of the "Snort" chair.'

'Oh Brewster? Silly me, of course. Sorry Mrs D.'

Mrs Dimmock looked up to the ceiling and carried on.

'Well Brewster, as we all know, worked in the city before he took over the "Snort" and is now acting as a financial adviser to Dense and Boris.'

'Jolly good show,' spluttered Gerantinium reaching over for another biscuit.

'They have come across a considerable amount of money after taking over this castle from this bad warlord person. But all this money is tied up in Switzerland.'

'What do they want to put it there for?' Gerantinium was as usual getting a bit perplexed here.

'I think you need to talk to Brewster about that chair. I think it's something to do with not paying tax.'

'Jolly good show.'

Mrs D carried on regardless.

'Anyway the reason I've called you all here is to inform you that a considerable amount of money will be made available to the village and we need to ascertain what best to do with it. So we need to table a sort of list of priorities that we feel the village needs.'

'I think Boris' diamond company is giving us considerable benefits already.'

'Thank you Mildred. Yes, Boris is a considerably generous human being and should be cherished but as I understand it both him and my lad they will be getting considerably more funding via this Switzerland operation so just in case they have any spare I feel it only fair that we should have a list of projects available for them. For Instance, have you got your inside toilet fitted yet chair?'

'Oh yes, that other one was a damn sight inconvenient.....'

'So you now have a convenience?' One of the quicker witted committee members shoved his oar in with a giggle.

'Thank you Hercules. And you have got yours?'

'Oh yes and they've started on the central heating as well.'

'Oh good. So have we all got central heating now?'  
Everybody nodded.

'Good, so are there any more projects needed?'

'What about the church roof. Nothing's happened there has it?'

'Yes, I think we need to ask Betty our church warden about that.'

'I think we need to ask Betty about getting a bit more stock in her shop. I'm getting a little tired of Baked Beans.'

'Oh ah, don't we know it?' Another quick witted reply caused a ripple of laughter.

'Betty has improved the wine stock I must say, especially since she's got the nice Brian chap in to help her out with the purchasing.'

'Oh ah, I think he's helping her out with quite a lot more as well, eh?'

More sniggering.

'Jolly good show.'

'Order gentlemen. Order please!' Mrs D could see where all this was leading to and felt it best to bring the meeting back above the waistline.

'The drains. That duck pond don't 'arf pong summat rotten on a hot day.'

'Ok, so we have the drains, the church roof and Betty's shop, anything else?'

'Might I bring up the school community college? I am a school governor.'

'Mildred, of course you have every right to bring this up. I think there must be a considerable amount of upgrading that could be done to the benefit of the village.'

'Well Boris' diamond company takes up a lot of space, not that he doesn't look after the maintenance and it gives the ladies a lot of work and he does pay well.'

'I'm sure we could have a chat with young Boris and come to some arrangement.'

'Just how much money are we talking about here?' An alert committee member questioned.

'That's a good question. Obviously we don't know how much is involved but I have a gut feeling between my lad and Boris there could be a six figure sum.'

'Holy shit. Oh I'm sorry chair, sort of slipped out. But that's a lot of dosh!' The committee members were becoming increasingly more alert now.

'So does that mean I can have a Rolls Royce?'

'And how will that benefit the village?'

'I don't suppose it'll give the village much benefit but it'll give me a hell of a lot of pleasure.' This brought much hilarity to the proceedings.

Then someone came up with a good idea.

'What about a village hall?'

'Now that's a good idea,' Gerantinium replied feeling quite pleased with himself that he could have some input into the meeting.

'Now what about a cricket pavilion?' Hercules still had fond memories of the cricket team's tour of Botswana and continued, 'Doctor Rammy would be chuffed with that.'

Doctor Rammittin Chucknabuttee was the young Indian doctor that had started up the cricket and arranged via his uncle in Botswana to go out there on tour.

'Don't suppose the ducks will be too happy when Boris starts smacking the balls into the duck pond.'

'Bugger the ducks,' Hercules jumped in. He was thinking on the lines of something that rhymed with ducks but felt as there were ladies present he'd best behave himself.

'And where are we going to put all these super new buildings?' Mrs Dimmock as usual, the sound of common sense.

'Well, the cricket pavilion will have to be next to the village green,' Hercules stated the obvious.

'And the village Hall? There isn't much room left in the village for any more buildings.'

All of a sudden Gerantinium sat bolt upright and with an enormous grin on his face came to a startling conclusion.

'Why don't we have the village hall and the cricket pavilion all in the same building?' he was so surprised at his input as was everybody else that it bought the proceedings to a grinding halt as everyone looked to everyone else thinking the same thing.

"Why didn't we think of that?"

'Are there any more biscuits Mrs Dimmock?' Gerantinium felt fully authorised to request extra special rations under the circumstances. After all it was an extra ordinary meeting.



Andrei, Boris and Dense duly arrived at the Presidential Palace for their appointment with the President's equerry.

After the usual arrival procedure at the reception and being issued with security badges they sat down and awaited the arrival of their host. They looked around at the ornate cornices and painted ceilings and pictures of the President hung on the wall.

The large national flag was hung on one of the walls next to statues and busts of famous Azerbaijan people.

The equerry arrived and took them up the stairs to his office, ordered coffee and asked his guests to sit down.

'Good morning gentlemen. I am in honoured presence indeed with three holders of the Qizil Ulduz Azerbaijan Gold Star medals.'

He smiled and continued.

'The President has briefed me on your visit and is very keen to ensure this project is carried out successfully and efficiently. So what is your plan?'

Andrei thanked the equerry for his time and took control of the meeting fearing Boris and Dense would end up discussing the benefits of this chap Brewster's best bitter.

'We have already had discussions with the new warlord a certain Ilkin Ragimov.'

The equerry interrupted.

'Ah yes, we have this gentleman on our records. A nasty little man. But what of our friend Igor. He's just as bad?'

'My friend I can assure you Igor will never be any more trouble to you and in order to save your taxpayers expense of a lengthy court case he will be leaving the country permanently.'

'Are you sure about this?'

Andrei looked to Boris and Dense who both laughed and confirmed that he would be in no fit state to cause anybody any more trouble again.

'So what about Mr Ragimov. What are your plans my friend?'

'Mr Ragimov has already visited the castle and was met by a full guard of honour.'

'You gave him a guard of honour?' The equerry couldn't quite understand this giving a common criminal a good welcome.

'No, my friend. He wasn't expecting a guard of honour from us but from his own men.'

'Ah, I see,' replied the equerry.

'So, when he returns, he will obviously be expecting us to do the same and then we will leave once the terms have been agreed. So to speak.'

'Ok, so where do we come in on this?'

'All *you* have to do is provide this guard of honour and once he has accepted the handover, he's all yours. I presume you have some soldiers who could handle the situation?'



'Oh yes, we have an elite battalion of Special Forces. Ah, and I see. So you want us to dress up as Cossacks?'

'That's it, we will even provide the same armaments as we used for his first visit. In fact, I recommend that you come on the night before and make a full inventory of the castle and if we can get you in unnoticed, Mr Ragimov won't suspect anything as I know he is keeping a watch on the castle.'

'Ok, so how do you plan to do that and when does all this take place?'

'Our scheduled meeting with Mr Ragimov is on Tuesday morning and now this is where we now talk about the concert Mr President requested.'

'Ah, yes. I was about to get round to that.'

'So if we can give the President the concert on next Monday evening we get you all dressed up after that and you can return to the castle instead of us. I will be with you of course. We have two coaches that will leave the castle on Monday afternoon full of Cossacks and return on that evening full of Cossacks so nobody will be any the wiser.'

'Brilliant my friend.'

Andrei, Boris and Dense arrived back at the castle which was still on full alert just in case any other warlord tried his hand.

'Right my friends I think the meeting at the President's palace went well. All we have to do now is to find out how your friend back in your village is getting on with our travel arrangements. Can you give him a ring Boris?'

Boris got that tingling feeling between the ears again and dialled the number, without the usual "big boy" romantic messages.

'Da, da, yes, yes, hallo Mrs Brewster, Boris here can I speak to Mr Brewster please?'

Da, da, yes, yes, oh, hallo Mr Brewster, Boris here.

I'm fine and so is Dense, yes and the weather is ok too.

We want to know how we are getting back.  
Da, da, yes, yes, that's right, via Switzerland.

You have arranged for us to be picked up on  
Tuesday by the RAF.'

Dense looked a little puzzled.

'How are you going to get us all in that jet fighter?'  
Dense interrupted the proceedings dragging everybody  
into his puzzled planet.

'Da, da, yes, yes, what you on about Dense?' Boris  
looked even more puzzled.

'Well, I came out with the RAF. Queer sense of  
humour, but there weren't much room for me let alone  
all you lot and Boris as well.'

Andrei looked to the stars and took the phone off  
Boris.

'Hallo my friend. It's Andrei here. My friends here  
are a little puzzled as to how you are going to get us all  
in some sort of jet fighter?

Yes, Dense said he was flown out by the RAF in this  
jet fighter sort of plane.

It's not the RAF, it's Ryan Air Freight. A small charter  
company operating out of Dublin. They're bloody cheap  
although the paperwork's a pain in the arse.

It's a Boeing 737, not a jet fighter.'

Andrei looked over to Dense who heaved a sigh of  
relief.

'Ok my friend. That sounds great and what time will  
we be picked up?

Midday. Great. And from there to Kiev?

And then on to Zurich where you have taken the  
liberty of booking us all into the Storchen hotel on the  
Banks of the Limmat River in the Weinplatz old part of  
town. A hotel you know well close to Igor's bank.

Sounds great. And then I have to organise my flight  
back to Kiev when we have completed all the necessary  
transactions.

Ok. So we'll see you midday on Tuesday?'

Andrei put the phone down to save half an hour's  
discussion on the strategic situation of the village beer.

'Ok boys. All systems go for Tuesday then.'

Dense still wasn't completely happy but shrugged his shoulders.

Boris licked his lips with the thought that he would soon be back in the arms of the "Snort and Truffle" in Muddlecombe with several pints of Brewster's best bitter lined up for him.



Monday evening was another beautiful sunny balmy evening in Muddlecombe as Bill and Betty Boring started to close the village Post Office cum shop. Bill was doing the stock taking as Betty looked out over the village green and could see her friend Mildred walking hand in hand with her tall handsome Russian lover across to the "Snort" occasionally breaking into a skip as they reached the pub and sat down outside on one of the rustic benches.

'I'm going over to the "Snort" for a drink,' Betty didn't give Bill a chance to reply as she took off her apron ran her fingers through her hair and started walking across the green.

Brewster had just come out to serve Mildred and Chekov as Betty reached them.

'Hello you two.'

'Hallo Betty. Knocking off early then?'

'Well if one can't come out once in a while for a little drinkie now and then what's the world coming to.'

'I seem to remember you and your little drinkies out in Tenerife Betty.'

Betty blushed recalling the wild nights she and her friends from the village had gone through on holiday. Especially the night in a gentleman's club which thankfully she had absolutely no recollection of at all.

Mildred winked at Betty. 'What would you like to drink Betty?'

'I think I'll just stick to a cool Pimms please Mildred.'

Mildred turned to Brewster, 'make that three Pimms please my man.' Mildred grinned at Brewster with one of her wicked smiles.

'Certainly m'lady. Will there be anything else?' Brewster returned the sarcasm twofold.

Just then Mrs Dimmock appeared stumbling across the green in her shawl and bonnet carrying her fruit basket.

'Here comes trouble,' muttered Chekov under his breath.

Mildred laughed as Mrs Dimmock closed in on them

'Good evening Betty. Good evening Mildred my dear and this fine handsome gentleman you have entwined in your arms. I hope I won't be *too* much trouble Podpolkóvnik Chekov Yeboleksi?'

It was Chekov's turn to blush as Mrs D gave him his full Russian rank and name. Mrs Dimmock continued.

'Now then Mildred I understand that Brewster is off to Zurich tonight and just a little reminder concerning our last committee meeting.'

'Oh yes, I'm just about to discuss that little matter with him once he brings our drinks. God the service round here is terrible.' Mildred joked as Brewster arrived with their drinks.

'Where would you be taking your drinks m'lady? Orally or poured over you?'

Everybody sniggered as he placed the Pimms on the table.

'Have a good trip my friend. Bring my little boy back safe and sound,' Mrs Dimmock gave Brewster a little peck on the cheek as she darted back across the green.

'How the hell does she know about my flight?'

'That's a good question my friend. She seems to know everything. Bloody dangerous. Back in Russia she'd have been shot for being a witch.' Chekov had got over his embarrassment but still kept his voice down watching Mrs D disappear down her lane.

Mildred took a sip of her drink and then addressed Brewster. 'We understand that you are off to bring the heroes back from that place I can't pronounce.'

'Azerbaijan,' Chekov confirmed.

'And that you will be acting as their financial adviser?' Mildred looked Brewster in the eye.

'Yes, that's right. Our lads seem to have come across a considerable amount of money and we're stopping off in Switzerland to ensure they get a tax efficient investment.'

'Good thinking Brewster. By the way Boris has got some of my money left over from his exploits. Can you look after that for me as well please?'

'No problem Chekov. Leave it with me and I'll make sure your money is safe.'

'Now while we're talking of all that money, it has been considered by some of the villagers that it might be of use to benefit the village in some way and we would like to ask you to discuss this with our lads.' Mildred fluttered her eyelashes which meant that Brewster really couldn't refuse.

'What a brilliant idea. I would like to offer some of my money to go towards anything for the villagers as well,' Chekov chirped in.

'I think you and Boris have helped enough already. But it's a nice thought.'

Mildred wrapped herself a little closer around Chekov if that was possible.

'So what are we talking about here then?' Brewster could feel the influence of Mrs Dimmock coming into this and didn't feel that he wanted to go against such a powerful force. He really should take advantage of other people's experiences, like King Canute trying to mess with the tidal laws of nature.

'Well, I think that we should first of all thank Chekov and Boris for their generosity and hope that they wouldn't mind if we asked again knowing that there is a considerably larger pot available now. And not forgetting Dense who will be involved as well.' Mildred looked round for confirmation and continued.

'Can you ask Boris if he could either plough some of his diamond company money back into the School or perhaps think about his own premises?'

'I think that's a good idea. As a shareholder, well as a major shareholder, not forgetting that all the villagers have a piece of the cake, I think we should look into that seriously. After all he isn't doing too badly at all is he?'

How Chekov had changed from the ruthless KGB interrogator to Russian mafia boss to Mildred's toy boy. Well not exactly a toy boy but he was behaving like one and keeping Mildred's matrimonial bed warm in the absence of her husband after the manslaughter affair of the Russian female double agent in the Ukraine.

Mildred coiled herself round Chekov once more and squeezed his arm. 'Chekov, your generosity is only superseded by your personal.....' she looked up to the skies for a word and felt "shagging" was probably not the best turn of phrase at this moment of time and came up with, ' .....good looks and charm.'

Everybody gave a dirty chuckle knowing exactly what she should have said in the beginning.

Chekov blushed as Mildred continued. 'One of the ideas that the locals came up with was some sort of village hall. Boris would probably like a cricket pavilion as well after his exploits in Botswana with Dr Rammy.'

'Or we could do something on the lines of amalgamating them both into one nice new modern building?' Little did Brewster realise how far Mrs Dimmock's influence had spread.

'Oh what a lovely idea!' Mildred actually managed to release Chekov to clap her hands.

'Isn't that going to cost a lot of money?' Betty's commercial brain kicked in here.

'Well, I've already looked into the accounts that we are talking about here. A certain Igor Badlotski's nefarious activities have amassed a considerable fortune which he has agreed to share with Boris and Dense and all the Cossacks who helped them out. But this would still leave a tidy sum which I estimate could build several village halls to say the least.'

'That's very generous of him. How did all this come about?'

'Well, I think you'd better ask Dense and Boris about that. He and his Cossack pals had some considerable influence on the matter as I understand it, so if you don't mind waiting for Boris to finish off his pints and finish off his stuttering you may get some information out of him.'

'Christ that'll take all week!' Chekov butted in.

'Ooohh, isn't this exciting,' cooed Betty

'So we are agreed then Brewster that you'll have a word with our lads and we'll let you action on our behalf some sort of generous donation for the village?' Mildred snuggled back into Chekov's arms.

'Don't worry. I'll do a full report and bring our heroes back safe and sound. Now if you'll excuse me I'll need to get packed and down to Heathrow to sort out the travel arrangements. With a bit of luck I should be back inside a week.'

\* \* \*

Back in Azerbaijan Monday evening was all hustle and bustle in the castle as everybody got ready for the concert. Not only that but they would have to be ready to leave the next morning. Apart from Andrei, Boris and Dense, the rest would be staying overnight at the Ukrainian Socialist Workers (Affiliated) Social Club for a quick getaway.

This time they would have to be on their best behaviour in the President's palace. They got all their costumes laundered and ironed and their boots nice and shiny. All their bushy moustaches nicely trimmed and their shaskas polished.

All their decorative ammunition belts were emptied of their non decorative ammunition. The musicians tuned and cleaned their instruments and everybody boarded the coaches but each coach was only half full leaving behind the local conscripts to guard the castle and room for the Special Forces to return after the concert.

As they had forecasted Ilkin was monitoring their movements and duly noted the exodus but realised that there were still enough people left to tackle any attack, not that he had that many of his gang left to mount a decent attack and had learnt from experience to keep a cool head under such circumstances.

He wasn't particularly bothered what sort of head it was as long as it was still on his shoulders. But tomorrow all this would be his as his financial manager was now closing all the deals necessary to have the million US dollars ready for the morning. He rubbed his hands at the thought of all the power he would have with Igor out of the way and all the deals he could now set up and make all the profits his financial manager had forecasted with vast expansion in the narcotics market, increased turnover in the extortion field and apart from prostitution and money laundering. The arms dealing and gun running would really take off and he would be getting a tenfold return on his initial investment within the first year.

What a shame.

Andrei smiled as they drove out of the castle and down the road to Baku and was prompted to give Ilkin a little wave but felt that would be showing off.

They drove down the Sumgayit Highway towards the city centre and the Presidential Palace in Fountain Square on Istiglaliyyat Street. The main gate in black railings opened up for them after a security check and they drove in to the large open space in front of the Palace.

The British Ambassador's car was already there and the whole of the Ukrainian Socialist Workers (Affiliated) Social Club had also been invited along with the British and American Petroleum Company social club members.

Andrei together with Dense and Boris led the way with all their traditionally dressed Cossack comrades group into the Palace.

Canapés and limited amounts of wines, beers and soft drinks were served, although Pete had managed to get hold of some of his favourite vodka after a few words



with the equerry but only a taster with a promise of a full bottle afterwards.

The musicians tuned their banduras or kobzas, lute-like instruments ready for the concert and the choir gathered round them.

Everybody else sat round the large main hall and awaited the arrival of the President. It wasn't long before he arrived and welcomed everybody giving brief conversations with some of his guests. He berated to Sir Robert for not wearing his kilt.

'I'm so sorry Mr President but it's in the laundry.'

'Huh,' was the President's reply eyeing Sir Robert suspiciously.

He then took his seat and the concert began.

The choir started with their traditional "Mamay" songs and then the music started to get more upbeat. Some of the choir detached themselves from their ranks and started to dance the traditional Cossack squat and kick routine and then the slow whirling dance which increased in speed until the frenzy collapsed and the dancers started a more genteel form of line dancing with each dancer closing ranks with another shoulder to shoulder.

Natalya and her girlfriends from the Ukrainian Socialist Workers (Affiliated) Social club now got up and joined the line twisting this way and that in each others arms as they stamped their way around the large hall gathering men as they passed. Pete and Harry got "picked up" as did some of the other male audience.

It came to a crescendo as Boris and Dense were hauled to their feet with a loud applause and actually managed to stay on their feet as they were guided through the contortions of the line dance. Sir Robert and Andrei entered the melee and concluded with some fine solo dancing which resembled something akin to a highland fling with squats and kicks thrown in.

The President was eventually drawn into vortex of the musical whirlpool which eventually collapsed with everyone in fits of laughter. Some sort of order was restored as nearly everyone got back on their feet.

The President stood and applauded and went over to Andrei and Sir Robert shaking their hands. He then made it over to Dense and gave him a big hug and then walked over to Boris and opened up his arms but left it at that to everybody's amusement.

After the noise had died down he thanked everybody for a grand evening and awarded free drinks to everybody. He called his equerry over and left him with Andrei to resolve the forthcoming events. The President waved to everyone as he left the hall to a loud applause.

The equerry summoned the waiters to erect the tables with tablecloths and glasses and directed them to get the drinks out together with some light refreshments in the form of sandwiches, samosas and some other local sweet pasties.

He then guided Pete over to one of the waiters who was instructed to take him down to the cellars to collect a bottle of his favourite U'luvka Polish vodka. The other drinks were brought out but the Cossacks first of all had to get undressed.

Andrei and the equerry took them over to a side room where the local Special Forces were waiting to get into their disguise for the morning. The Cossacks returned to the hall in local civilian clothes and attacked the bar. Pete and Harry had a head start on them besides fraternizing with the local girls from the Ukrainian Socialist Workers (Affiliated) Social club.

Andrei, Boris and Dense had to keep a cool head ready for the following day's activity but that didn't stop them from having the odd sandwich and a few small glasses of vodka, but how they yearned for a pint of Brewster's best bitter in the "Snort" back home at Muddlecombe.

Just after eleven o'clock in the evening two coaches left the President's palace full to bursting with the Special Forces together with Andrei, Dense and Boris. Some fifty of the Special Forces were in traditional Cossack dress while the other fifty were kitted out in full combat fatigues together with a considerable arsenal. They weren't going to take any chances.

The remaining "real" Cossacks were taxied back to the Ukrainian Socialist Workers (Affiliated) Social club for the night. However some of them managed to escape and find their way downtown to the "Pink Pussy" club.

## Chapter 33. The return home.

Tuesday morning was another hustle and bustle morning especially in Nickola's boudoir as she and Igor had to pack for a permanent holiday. They weren't exactly sure where to go for their holiday but it all depended on the generosity of their captors. Igor knew he had eight million US dollars in his account in Switzerland but also knew that his daily drawings limit had been actioned by Andrei and his Cossack pals to pay for their expenses but felt that there should still be enough to go round.

Midday approached and Nickola and Igor brought their suitcases down to the coach and jumped inside to wait for it to leave.

Andrei, Boris and Dense had little to pack although Boris had his money belt that contained the profits from his Morocco visit together with Chekov's initial investment.

Andrei went into Igor's office and collected all the cheque books, statements and letters and stuffed them into a large envelope which he added to his hand luggage.

The other dozen Cossacks who had stayed overnight to guard the castle jumped on board as well. They had all been offered lucrative positions in the security company that Mykola Doroshenko worked for guarding the large oil fields around Baku. They had also received romantic propositions from the local ladies that they could not refuse as well.

They could see a line of six black limousines coming up the drive to the castle and watched as Andrei prepared the welcome for Ilkin and his gang.

A guard of honour of fifty "Cossacks" were waiting in the driveway as the cars slowly drew closer. Andrei, Boris and Dense stood outside the big front gates as the leading limousine slowed to a halt and they watched as Ilkin, his financial manager and his muscle men got out of the first car.

The others slowly stopped and parked in front of the gates next to the coaches. Everybody slowly got out of their cars and with Ilkin leading the way, walked through the guard of honour into the main hall. There Ilkin could see his captured henchmen standing in a row all tied together with the short-arsed little bald bloke in a white coat adjoining them.

Andrei and Boris stopped Ilkin who looked to his financial manager who handed him a briefcase.

No words were spoken as Ilkin opened it and slid it across the floor to Andrei and Boris.

Boris stood still, rubbing his hands as Andrei picked up the briefcase and put it on a table and started to check each wad of dollars in a wrap.

Just as they were counting the money, Dense walked around the hall nonchalantly and came up behind the short arse bloke in the white coat and gave him a hefty kick in the backside. He screamed as Dense scampered back behind Boris just in case of any retaliation.

This caused much tittering from the assembled group as Andrei eventually finished his counting and gave Ilkin a nod, threw over a bunch of keys and then turned to the guard of honour.

They all put down their unloaded Kalashnikovs, formed a line and marched out to the coach followed by Andrei, Boris and Dense.

The "Cossacks" immediately boarded the coach and collected their fully loaded service issue Russian AS Val (Avtomat Special'nyj) automatic rifles they had hidden under the seats and walked straight back into the castle to be met by fifty of their other Special Forces colleagues in their black combat uniforms who had quickly come out of their hiding places and had surrounded Ilkin and his men who all now had their hands in the air with a stupid grin on their faces.

Andrei, Boris and Dense jumped on the coach with Nickola and Igor and the other Cossacks and got the hell out of it, down to the Ukrainian Socialist Workers (Affiliated) Social Club just outside Baku.

They arrived outside the social club as the dozen Cossacks jumped off and said their fond farewells to all their friends with promises of keeping in touch and messages of best wishes to their relatives back in the Ukraine.

The other Cossacks who had spent the night at the social club, or part of the night there, moved all their hold luggage which contained their shaskas into the coach as they boarded and waved as they drove away. There were some bleary eyed passengers who'd only just got taxis back from Baku in time for the coach to depart.

Mykola and Natalya were there to see them off and wave, albeit with a tear in their eyes. It wasn't quite sure if they were tears of sadness or laughter.

Probably just a bit of dust in their eyes as the coach pulled away.



Brewster Kegworth had spent some considerable time working in the Stock Exchange in London before events had placed him in Muddelcombe for obvious health reasons. But it was good to be back in London and Heathrow to smell the aviation gas and get the buzz of an international city again.

Boris and Dense's little project had given him a small challenge and he had risen to it. It wasn't exactly rocket science, trying to find a charter airline company with no time restraints and with oodles of money as Brewster had worked out after his conversation with his Swiss banking colleague.

What was even more satisfying was to be the only passenger on this Ryan Air Ferries 737 flight out to Istanbul. Four hours after they arrived there and with a short time to refuel they were then on their way to Baku, another three hours when Brewster could lie back and enjoy being completely spoilt.

Having said that, it wasn't in the lap of luxury exactly. The seats weren't the height of business travel

luxury and the food wasn't haute cuisine but he could understand the need to be cost effective.

Although the flight times weren't exactly user friendly he had managed to get a reasonable amount of sleep and as they landed at Baku he was a damn sight better refreshed than some of the business flights he had been on in his banking days.

It was just after midday as they touched down and by half past twelve he had cleared customs and immigration and sat in what was jokingly called the departures lounge to await the arrival of his colleagues and, well he wasn't quite sure what to expect. A bunch of howling Cossack heathens?

Baku International airport wasn't exactly buzzing as Heathrow was so it didn't take him long to recognise a lone coach pull up and disgorge a bunch of passengers with a great big fat one in the middle and small one in his shadow. Good old Boris and Dense.

No howling valkyries? Just a bunch of grizzly looking characters some of them quite clearly with hangovers from last nights carousing down at the "Pink Pussy" club.

Brewster slowly walked over to Boris and Dense with open arms, careful not to get too close to Boris' bear hug as he was quite fond of his ribs. He managed a big hug for Dense as Boris was nearly in tears envisaging a line of pints of Brewster's special bitter awaiting him.

Andrei was introduced to Brewster and as they shook hands Andrei handed over a large brown envelope.

'It is nice to meet you Mr Brewster after our conversations on the telephone. Poor Boris and Dense can't wait to get back and drink some of your famous best bitter. Anyway here is all the documentation from Igor's safe and I've taken the precaution of confiscating his passport which I feel you will need to keep to discourage him from trying to escape.'

'Thank you Andrei my friend. It is nice to meet you too and I feel as if you have been some sort of guardian angel for my friends here. Thank you for all your help.'

It was then that he noticed a couple of rather attractive ladies in the entourage and he was duly

introduced to Nickola and Igor by Andrei. He wasn't quite sure what to make of Igor of whom he had a completely different idea in his mind after listening to Chekov and Boris talking about him.

Anyway Brewster guided everybody over to the passport office and through the immigration onto the waiting plane. Their luggage was loaded and the stewardesses got everybody settled as they awaited the pilot's request for take off from the local air traffic control with a window to land at Kiev Boryspil International airport in the Ukraine.

Half an hour later they had taken off and after doing a one hundred and eighty degree turn over the Caspian Sea headed due West for Kiev.

The majority of the Cossacks had accepted a cup of black coffee and then fallen sound asleep. Boris was fidgeting because he was wearing a money belt with all Chekov's dollars and the other ones he had found lying about in Morocco. Brewster asked him if he knew how much he had there and helped him count them out.

'Da, da, yes, yes, what I do with boss's money?'

'That's a good question Boris. He asked me to take care of it for you but I haven't worked out a decent portfolio yet as I haven't seen how much Igor has in the kitty.'

Just then Andrei came over with the briefcase full of more dollars and sat down in the empty aisle seat next to Brewster. He handed him a large envelope out of the briefcase with all the documents they had found in the desk in Igor's office.

'Mr Brewster, here are all the documentation for you from Igor's office. Bank books etc. I have been thinking about all this money and I don't think I need to come to Switzerland with you now that I have our friend Ilkin's money. There is plenty there for all of us in our village in the Ukraine and we have already paid our men from Igor's cash withdrawals so I think we are extremely happy with what we have already.'



Andrei my friend. I don't know you other than talking to you over the phone but I'm warming to you already.' Brewster and Andrei laughed.

'Listen, I know that there is a considerable amount in Igor's bank in Switzerland but I don't know if he has any other money stashed away. So I think you may be able to get a bit more out of him.'

Just then Boris got the old familiar tingling sensation between the ears and started to speak.

'Da, da, yes, yes, I got idea!' He missed out the bit about hurry home big boy.

Brewster and Andrei both turned to look at Boris. Well, it wasn't that often that Boris had an idea but it seemed that on such rare occasions they always seemed to lead to something extremely useful.

They waited expectantly for this idea to thrash its way out of Boris' brain into some form of communication.

Boris quickly picked up on this and said, "Da, da, yes, yes, why don't I give Chekov money to Andrei. I get more money in Switzerland and perhaps I get statue in village back home?'

Now that was down right bribery but it stopped both men in their tracks who looked to each other and smiled. They shook their heads and laughed out loud.

'Boris, I don't know where you get these ideas from (Brewster had a pretty good idea) but by god I can't think of anything better can you Andrei?'

Andrei was still laughing as he was given Boris' money belt under some duress but he could hardly refuse.

Boris scratched several of his bellies hard and said, 'that much better, I feel comfortable now,' with a big sigh of relief after taking the money belt off.

'We got anything to eat here?' was his next sentence to a passing stewardess.

The food trolley eventually came round but they couldn't wake Dense as he was in a deep sleep back in Muddlecombe in the arms and other parts of the body of his lovely wife, Dollianna. The lucky bastard.

Three hours later they landed at Boryspil International airport just outside Kiev. The next air traffic slot for them was in two hours time for their flight to Zurich. They had to wait their turn due to the priority of the other national airlines using the airport. The pilot had radioed ahead and requested use of the transit lounge while they were waiting so they all got off and said their goodbyes.

Andrei and his Cossack warriors all gave Boris a rousing chorus of "The Cossack Farewell" song much to the amusement of all the other transit passengers. They filed past Boris shaking his hand, ensuring they didn't get too close for a bear hug. Then repeating this for Dense only the hand shakes were usually accompanied with a wink and a little clenched fist salute.

The Cossacks all went off to departures waving as Brewster, Boris, Dense, Igor and Nickola boarded the aircraft again.

## Chapter 34. Stopover in Zurich.

Another three hours later they landed at Zurich, at Kloten Airport, Switzerland's largest international airport. They said their goodbyes to the Ryan Air Ferries staff and disembarked through customs and immigration and got a limousine to the Storchen Hotel on the Banks of the Limmat River in the Weinplatz old part of town.

It was raining as they were welcomed into the lovely old hotel, registered minus Andrei and were shown their rooms.

Brewster, Boris, and Dense had a shower and met up at the bar downstairs for a quick supper and a not so quick drink before retiring for the night and collapsing into their beds. It had been a long day and Dense wanted to get back into the dreams of his beloved. It didn't take long.

Breakfast was served in the Restaurant La Rotisserie on the terrace overlooking the picturesque river Limmat and the other side of the city. As the sun was now out they decided to take advantage of the terraced outside tables as Brewster found a telephone and confirmed his appointment with the bank.

They finished their breakfast and met an hour later in the hotel foyer.

'I think we can dispense with the lipstick for the time being Igor.' Brewster looked to Igor. 'And Boris I want you to take special care of our friend here ok?'

'Da, da, yes, yes, no problem Mr Brewster. You be good boy now Igor, ok?'

Igor grunted and fiddled with his bra strap.

The hotel organised a people carrier and in ten minutes they were dropped off outside the bank and allowed into the halls of one of the gnomes of Zurich.

Its impressive high ceilings with ornate cornices and Grecian columns gave an overpowering sensation of a temple of money. They approached the reception area and within minutes were ushered into Tebos Eggenburger's plush office.

'Hallo my friend Mr Kegworth. Please come in.'

'Thank you Mr Eggenberger. Thank you for seeing us so promptly.'

'I always welcome your short visits my friend. They always seem so, what's the word I'm looking for.....?'

'Profitable?' Brewster confirmed.

They both had a little laugh.

'Now you seem to have a lot of friends here with you today although I have to say I don't recognise Mr Badlotski.'

'Mr Badlotski has had a rather nasty accident and is going through what we must call a change of life process.' Brewster pointed to Igor who shook hands with the bank manager.

'Welcome Mr Badlotski, it's nice to see you again even under such changed circumstances. Please take a seat.'

'Here are all his papers Mr Eggenberger and these friends are to be the recipient of Mr Badlotski's generosity who is going to transfer some of his funds to them. This is my friend Mr Boris Slobovitch the President of Borisky Diamond Co Ltd, and this is my friend Mr Dense Dimmock one of Boris' shareholders and currently in the employ of the British Intelligence.'

'And has been awarded the Order of the British Empire if my intelligence has been correct.'

'I'm impressed Mr Eggenberger.'

'Along with the Gold Star of Azerbaijan with his friend here as well.'

Mr Eggenberger nodded to Brewster who looked seriously impressed now.

'Ok, gentlemen and lady of course who is.....?'

'This is Miss Elasticova, Mr Badlotski's personal assistant.'

'It's nice to meet you young lady and nice to have someone so good looking in the company. Please be seated.' He smiled at Brewster who gave a little giggle knowing Mr Eggenberger as a ladies man.

'My friend?' Mr Eggenberger looked to Boris who was standing behind Igor, 'please take a chair.'

'Niet, niet, no, no, I have to look after my friend here who have problem with back after accident.' Boris slowly and very gently rubbed Igor's neck from behind.

'He's a sort of male nurse and he's also my power of attorney so to speak.' Brewster explained.

Igor new damn well that this nursing would end up as a "snap, crackle and pop" if he didn't obey orders and started to sweat.

'In that case I'll have to ask Mr Badlotski to sign a form of local power of attorney which will move things along a lot quicker.' He called through on his intercom and a few seconds alter a secretary called in and dropped the form on the desk.

'Mr Badlotski please. If you could sign just there and I'll fill in the account details for you.'

Boris allowed Igor to move forward to do the signing. As he sat back Boris continued the gentle massage in a vain attempt to relax poor Igor who was lathering up nicely with sweat.

'Ok, my friends, now do you have all your passports please, and how do you wish to proceed Mr Kegworth.'

'I think the first thing we need to establish is the current state of Mr Badlotski's account.'

Mr Eggenberger pulled out a brown folder from his "in" tray and opened it and passed a statement over to Brewster. He took the large brown envelope that Brewster had dropped on the desk and opened that up at the same time.

'Yes, this is a little out of date here, you have the latest statement now my friend.'

Brewster managed to figure out all the accountancy hieroglyphics and gave a deep intake of breath.

'Hmmm, I wasn't far out. Plenty to go round.'

Brewster sat back with a smile. 'Mr Eggenberger I think we need to open some new accounts with you please if that's ok?'

'You know I always welcome new business with you my friend. Have you got the details?'

'Yes, I think Mr Dimmock will need an account as will Boris.'

Mr Eggenberger pulled out some forms and let Brewster continue.

'Boris my friend, you owe Chekov about two hundred thousand dollars plus the bonus you picked up from Morocco all of which you gave to Andrei. But I have spoken to Chekov and although he will want to see a return on his money it can all go to Borisky Diamonds Co Ltd in his name as a major shareholder and Managing Director. You need to then put in some more capital as a shareholder and president and this money then needs to be spent on new premises for your company and updating the Community College once you have moved all your stuff out.'

"черт возьми!" was all that Boris could think of right now which roughly translates to "Kinnell!"

'Da, da, yes, yes, but I don't get any money to spend on beer.'

'Boris my friend I have a suspicion that you will have plenty of money to spend in my humble establishment.'

Boris looked a bit confused here, 'can't I spend it in your pub?'

'Sorry Boris, yes, that's my pub.'

Boris let out an enormous sigh of relief.

'What I intend to do is set up a pension fund for you which will not only be earning a nice rate of interest but as it's banked with my colleague here in Switzerland be even more tax efficient.'

Brewster looked over to Mr Eggenberger who just gave him a gentle nod in return together with a large smile.

This was all going over Boris' head, but at least he had been assured that he would have enough to spend on Brewster's Best Bitter so he just relaxed and continued with the gentle massaging of Igor's neck. Igor could feel the tenseness gone now and he let out an enormous sigh.

'So the first account will be "Borisky Diamonds pension fund", Boris will be a signatory and I'll get Chekov added as well. So we need to transfer say three hundred thousand dollars in the name of Chekov

Yeboleksi and say one million in Boris's name. Now don't forget that some of that money goes to setting up your own diamond cutting project somewhere outside the Community College.'

'Da, da, yes, yes, I understand Mr Brewster.'

Poor Igor watched on as his empire slowly started to dwindle away.

Mr Eggenberger took Boris' passport and started to fill in a form which he then passed over to Boris to sign twice and Brewster to witness plus his own signature.

'Ok, that's your retirement sorted Boris. So now you'll need some pocket money eh?'

'Da, da, yes, yes,' Boris licked his lips at the thought of being able to buy lots of Brewster's Best Bitter.

'I don't think Igor will mind one million dollars going into that fund will you?'

Igor felt the pressure slowly increase on his neck and quickly nodded.

'Da, da, yes, yes. That should last a few weeks.'

This brought the house down as everybody cracked up. Boris however couldn't see the joke. Brewster could now see his profits getting back up and running in the uphill direction again once Boris was back home.

'Mr Eggenberger, I presume that the pension account will be in your best reserve account?'

'Of course my friend and Mr Boris' beer fund will be in a current account with a good rate of interest with a minimal level of funding.'

'Ok. Now can you do the same for my friend Mr Dimmock please?'

'No problem. A pension fund and a current account. One million dollars in each account?'

Mr Eggenberger knew the total available in Igor's account and naturally presumed equal amounts for both parties.

'You are a shrewd cookie Mr Eggenberger.'

'That's my job Mr Kegworth. Can I have your passport please Mr Dimmock?'

Dense handed over his passport. He didn't have a clue what was going on but the fact that his name had

been mentioned at the same time as some million odd dollars was of mild interest to him. He didn't even realise that the worldwide sales of his pornographic video had already made him a millionaire. Surprisingly, his best sales were in Albania, probably on account of his passing resemblance to Norman Wisdom.

He was totally unfazed that he was married to probably the most beautiful woman in the world and had an apartment in Mayfair and a new Porsche.

He was completely unfazed by having been awarded the OBE and now the Gold Star of Azerbaijan. He thought this was the normal sort of happening for a young lad from Muddlecombe.

Ignorance is bliss and he was about to get another couple of million blissful dollars.

It's a tough old world isn't it?

So he put his signatures on some form or another and sat back into his normal day dream of the lovely Dolianna.

Each to their own.

Boris was dreaming of pints of beer and Dense was dreaming of a couple of other things.

'Is that it Mr Kegworth?'

'No, now there is a matter of the new Muddlecombe village hall cum cricket pavilion project which I'm sure my colleagues here will not mind sharing some of their or rather Igor's ill begotten gains.'

'Da, da, yes, yes. I go along with that. Dr Rammy will be so happy and perhaps we get new bats and balls also?'

'I'm sure Dr Rammittin will be well pleased, but I don't know why we should pay for all the balls you keep hitting into the duck pond.'

Doctor Rammittin Chutnabuttee being the local village doctor from India who had organised the village cricket team and also taken them out to Botswana to play their national team whose president just so happened to be his uncle.

'So if we just open a Muddlecombe village portfolio up with my wife Fiona and myself as signatories and pop



a million into it, that'll be just fine. Oh, you'd best put a Mrs Mildred O'Riley and Mrs Dimmock down as signatories as well.'

Brewster said it as if he was dropping his loose change into a charity box. His wife Fiona, a Scottish accountant, looked after the financial affairs of everybody in the village who knew what a bank account was. Mildred was part of the village committee with Mrs Dimmock in charge so she should really be included in any village activities.

'Ok Mr Kegworth, leave that with me. Anything else?'

'There's just the matter of my invoice to be settled for my consultancy fees, the charter plane and a few sundries.'

He handed the invoice over to the bank manager.

'I presume you would like this in cash?'

A stupid question, but all part of the formalities.

'Sterling?'

'That'll do nicely my friend.'

Tebos Eggenberger called on the intercom again and after getting Igor to sign a withdrawal form gave his secretary the form which duly arrived back with lots of lovely crisp ten pound notes for Brewster.

Meanwhile poor Igor had to sign a few more withdrawal and bank account transfer forms but at least he realised that he still had over a million dollars left in the fund.

'Brewster my friend, it has been nice to meet you again and to do business with you.'

'Tebos, I've no doubt that our money will be safe with you.'

After all the transactions had been signed sealed and agreed it was time to revert to the informal use of Christian names as Tebos and Brewster shook hands.

'I will leave you in the hands of my under manager who will sort out your new cheque books, credit cards etc. If you want any cash please ask him and I hope you will enjoy your stay in Zurich my friends although I can see there are other priorities calling.'

They all breathed a sigh of relief as the under manager guided them out of the large office into a waiting room and discussed all the arrangements with Brewster.

Brewster turned to Igor, 'Igor my friend, you are free to go now. Boris will be missing you of course, but I hope you will enjoy your retirement. Don't forget to pay for your hotel rooms before you go.'

Boris waved a handkerchief in mock sorrow as Igor and Nickola got up to leave.

'Give that bastard Chekov my love and kisses!' Igor hissed as he left.

Just as they were leaving, Nickola rushed back into the room and gave Dense a little kiss on the cheek. As she walked back to Igor she took out a tissue to wipe away a tear. A sort of *in memoriam* tear for her last good shag.

Dense looked a bit bemused. Probably because he had very little recollection of the event being as high as a kite thanks to the little bald short-arsed bloke in a white coat shoving pentothal into him like it was going out of fashion.

They watched as Igor and Nickola left. She had realised which side her bread was buttered on and had correctly worked out that her best chance of survival was with Igor.

She was a little tired of relationships with men, especially a whole brigade of Cossacks and could see a new life looking after Igor and his money. She had quickly and rightly assumed that he still had plenty left in the kitty as she purred holding his arm, walking out of the bank into the fresh Swiss air and a fresh start in life.

Somewhere as far away from Boris as possible.

Somewhere warm they had agreed on as Igor breathed a sigh of relief that Mr Eggenberger had forgotten to mention his bonds. They skipped to the nearest travel agency and asked for a map of the world.

Meanwhile back at the bank, they all sat down as the final formalities were concluded and Brewster collected up all the paperwork.

'What a strange name?' Dense puzzled

This stopped everybody in their tracks as they turned to Dense who was looking skywards in anticipation of his next momentous statement.

'His Mum must have worked in MacDonald's then?'

There was a pregnant pause as everybody tried to realign their thought patterns to come somewhere close to Dense's. A lost cause.

'Er, Dense, what are we talking about?' Brewster might as well be the sucker to ask the question.

'That bloke in there. Egg Burger or what ever. What a strange name. If I had kids I don't think I'd name them after summat out of MacDonalds?'

Dense stopped and called out, "'Double mac and fries," your dinners ready!' as a sort of practice run with their new names.

There wasn't a lot of use trying to question that sort of logic unless you were a quantum physicist, and that would only end in tears, so they all went outside and found a patisserie and had a yummy cream cake and a coffee and sat out in the morning sunshine contemplating their own individual thoughts on what they were going to do with all this money.

And what not to call their children.

Brewster had spent some happy hours coming out here to Zurich during his time working in the city in London and felt he should share his enjoyment with his colleagues. They stepped out of the patisserie, waited while Dense wiped the cream from his face and walked to the riverside where most of Zurich's sights are located.

Within the area on either side of the Limmat river, between the main railway station and Lake Zurich, the churches and houses of the old town were clustered, as were the most expensive shops along the famous Bahnhofstrasse. The Lindenhof in the old town is the

historical site of the Roman castle, and the later Carolingian Imperial Palace.

As they walked through the picturesque streets of the city Brewster got the feeling that taking them to the Zurich Museum of Art , the Swiss National Museum , the Centre Le Corbusier, the Rietberg Museum , the Museum of Design, the Uhrenmuseum Beyer and the Guild houses would be a waste of time as he could see his colleagues had other ideas.

Boris was licking his lips in anticipation of a couple of pints of Brewster best bitter lined up for him in the "Snort and Truffle" while Dense had his mindset on another couple of Dollianna's best points with the beer to follow.

He walked them round the Zoological and Botanical Gardens to pass the time of day and they ended up in the Tram Museum.

If nothing else they had worked up a thirst and found the Restaurant Zeughauskeller, in the Bahnhofstrasse which served up several draught beers and a range of bottled beers.

Boris had tried three draught beers and six bottled beers and came up with the conclusion that they failed dismally to match Brewster's best.

He complained of the "bottom burps" with this sort of beer and the last place you wanted to be was downwind when Boris had the "bottom burps".

Brewster smiled inwardly knowing they wouldn't take to the gassy European beers. Dense seemed quite happy but clearly was not on the same planet as his colleagues. His planet "Dollianna" still held him firmly in its sensual gravitation pull.

Back at their hotel, Brewster asked the hotel's business service for travellers to book him three first class tickets to Heathrow for the next day and left his colleagues time for a siesta and a shower before they met in the Restaurant La Rotisserie for an evening meal.

Although Boris had travelled widely with his old KGB boss Chekov, it rarely involved eating in fine restaurants.

It normally meant eating on the "hoof" so to speak after the disposal of some politically incorrect conspirator.

As to Dense, well, although he'd actually eaten at Buckingham Palace, it only involved a finger buffet which was what Dense was good at.

Therefore the meal took a little longer than normal as Brewster had to explain the finer points of all the shiny equipment spread out in front of them and around the table, all the various types and sizes of crystal glasses and what to do with all the linen and then explain the nuances of the menu.

Although Mrs D had schooled Dense in the basics of table manners and etiquette there weren't many places in Muddelcombe where one could practice them.

Although he worked at Muddelcombe Hall, he never got invited to any of their soirees and he was now facing more equipment than he had in his toolbox

Posh waiters being what they are, they were extremely polite and receptive to some of Dense's requests but very apologetic when returning from the kitchen explaining that the chef hadn't been given enough warning for their arrival and his requests for spam fritters could only be fulfilled with a decent forewarning.

Brewster narrowed down a relevant selection for his friends and made sure they got a considerable side portion of pommes frites to assuage any non acceptable cuisine.

Wine was ordered but after a tasting Boris and Dense reverted to type and ordered some beer.

It didn't take long before the starters were served and Boris thought they were nice samples but when would the proper food be coming?

Fortunately Brewster had warned the kitchen and double portions of fillet steak were served up much to the satisfaction of the culinary philistines.

They found one of the waiters who spoke a little Russian and was recruited to try to understand Boris' various needs and they shared a joke or two and got on famously satisfying most of Boris' needs.

Brewster's table was fast becoming the centre of attraction as Boris and Dense's appetites were sated and everybody relaxed talking in numerous languages.

However Dense's request for spotted dick after the main course had the complete catering staff perplexed, the problem being they had no internet in those days to refer to.

A "Bombe Alaska" was suggested by the head waiter who had great difficulty explaining to Dense that it was hot on the outside and cold on the inside.

This took some time before it arrived on a sweet trolley with a procession of waiters, one to tuck a bib into Dense, two to put a plate in front of him, three to lift the ornate silver dome and four, the head waiter who poured Brandy over the large white creamy looking mountain and set fire to it.

This took Dense completely by surprise but he was led back to his seat and after five minutes, had consumed it and stood up and shook hands with the head waiter as gesture of understanding, goodwill and complete satisfaction.

The rest of the restaurant had been watching the whole ceremony of this pudding process and stood up and applauded Dense's effort.

Brewster, the sophisticated traveler and epicurean, sat back in total amazement as "Little and Large" polished off enough food to feed an army in one of Europe's most sophisticated restaurants and ended up best mates with all the waiters who swore eternal friendship in several languages with nobody having a fucking clue what they were on about.

Brewster, who had given up trying to be sophisticated after the spotted dick episode, when he thought for a horrible moment that Dense was about to undo his zip, was well into his second bottle of Chateau Lafite Rothschild by this time. He didn't really have a fucking clue either and was in no position to care.

There was no rush the next day as they had time for breakfast, (where the hell did they put it?) and said their

fond farewells to the hotel staff who were nearly in tears. Nobody was quite sure if they were tears of sadness or laughter.

A taxi dropped them off at the airport and they made their way to the Swissair first class lounge and eventually boarded.

They slept most of the way to Heathrow missing all the fine food and drink that was on offer in the posh part of the plane.

Once through customs they made their way to the car park and Brewster's Range Rover. They settled down for the drive back to Muddlecombe, each with their own dream, that is apart from Brewster but even he was day dreaming of all the lovely profits that would be generated by the return of our heroes to the "Snort and Truffle".

Of course he'd overlooked the rather extortionate consultancy fees he had charged the expedition to get them home plus his commission from his mate Tebos in Zurich.

It's a tough old world, eh? Dog eat dog, well in Boris and Dense's case, dog eat elephant.

## Chapter 35: Back home.

Mrs Dimmock hustled and bustled across the village green in her shawl and bonnet carrying her wicker basket towards Primrose Cottage for the next Interplanetary Standards and Ethics Committee meeting.

Once inside, the external clothing was quickly discarded and the smart business woman emerged. The homemade biscuits were quickly plated and put on the dining room-cum-boardroom table as she got all the papers out of the leather attaché case hidden in the basket and then went into the kitchen to put the kettle on.

It was nice to have her son back after all his adventures, not that she'd seen much of him as he was still upstairs in her spare bedroom with Dollianna and had been since his return.

It will probably be all that jet lag stuff she surmised. Anyway, back to business as she shuffled the papers and laid them out in order on the table. The kettle just boiled as the door bell went and the committee members arrived.

Gerantinium III took his place at the top of the table and quickly asked Mrs D to pass the biscuits. One of the advantages of being Chair was first go at Mrs D's biscuits, not that anybody got a chance anyway and it was now tradition to wait for whatever crumbs were left as well.'

'You're looking well Mrs D since your lad and young Boris have returned?' Mildred's sarcasm wasn't lost on Mrs D.

Poor Mrs D was all of a flummox and didn't know what to say. This was a unique occasion but obviously Mildred had figured out that she held a flame for Boris.

'Yes, well, let's get down to business shall we?' Mrs D got her voice back and changed the subject quickly before the rest of the committee figured it out.

'Jolly good show Mrs D.' Gerantinium stamped his authority on the meeting.



There was a small gap in the conversation as Mrs D pulled out the minutes of the last meeting and then ran briefly through them and after taking a breath, 'any questions?'

If you had any value on life you wouldn't even think about putting forward any queries and so Mrs D continued.

'You've probably noticed that Boris and my lad have arrived back safely from their secret mission in that country.....?'

'Azerbaijan.' Mildred confirmed.

'Thank you Mrs O'Riley,' a formal response was needed during the proceedings. 'And they have in their travels been rewarded with some considerable amount of money and they feel under the circumstances that the village should benefit from their rewards which I think is very civically minded and should be applauded.'

She looked around the room and eventually she got a few harrumphs and coughs.

'So the nice Mr and Mrs Kegworth drove Mrs O'Riley and myself down to London to a branch of a Swiss bank and a nice gentleman there took all our details down and Mr Kegworth handed over a large file and we are all signatories of a Muddlecombe village bank account and can sign these new fangled cheque book thingies and spend money on our village requisites.'

'What's a requisite Mrs D?' asked Nostradamus the thinking man's philosopher.

'It's a need. Something that can benefit the village as a whole.'

'So a Rolls Royce is still out of the question then?'

'Certainly Hercules. We might take into consideration a new tractor which could be useful but a Roller only gives one person a benefit and that's you.'

'I could take everybody for a ride round the village.' Hercules was pushing his luck.

'A nice Gothic Town Hall or perhaps a cathedral.' Ignatius cautiously put forward his suggestion.

'Thank you Ignatius but as we don't live in a town or a city I can't quite see the point. Now does anybody have any sensible suggestions?'

'Ignatius Cromwell, when was the last time you went to church,' butted in Hercules.' If my memory serves me right it was when Betty was playing the organ after she'd just come back from her holiday in Tenerife, showing all her brown bits off!'

'Gentlemen, gentlemen! I must demand decorum.' Mrs D gave everybody her "withering" look which meant she might have to call for backup if you didn't behave and you didn't really want to go upstairs for the wrath of God.

There was a pregnant pause as the severity of the threat sank in and then there was a spluttering from the head of the table as Gerantinium started to talk.

'Didn't we mention toilets and drains and things in our last meeting Mrs D?'

'Thank you chair. It's refreshing to have somebody with a pragmatic view.'

'I didn't know I had one of them,' muttered Gerantinium. 'But I could murder another of your fine biscuits Mrs D?'

The biscuit plate was pushed back up to the top of the table.

'The chair has brought us down to earth thank God. So now, can I ask if we know of anybody who still has an outside toilet?'

'I think the new fangled inside toilets are all installed now. Although I'm not quite sure what you do with a second toilet with a tap in it.' Hercules was a farmer and not up on modern domestic bathroom plumbing. 'S'pose I could clean me wellies in it.'

'Moving on. How about central heating? Are we all up to date on that?' Mrs D quickly bypassed any further toilet humour from Hercules.

'Mrs Chester in number five has it but doesn't know what to do with it. The weather being so mild this time of year. She still does her smalls in one of them old fashioned tubs with a mangle and a large wooden ladle.'

'Can I ask how you know about this Ignatius?'  
Nostradamus had a wry smile on his face.

Mrs D quickly intervened on Ignatius' behalf. 'That's interesting. She has central heating but could probably use a new modern washing machine now then?'

'It'd have to be a big'un to get her smalls in it.'  
Hercules brought his farmyard humour back into the arena which caused a couple of smirks.

He got another withering look from Mrs D who continued. At least she didn't get any back chat from Pablo Hemmingway who was still in cloud cuckoo land dreaming of naked women and hunting lions in Africa.

'Ladies and gentlemen I think what we need here is a forum or sub committee to ascertain the level of domestic appliances needed for the village. Mrs O'Riley would you be so kind as to organise this please and you have the authority to kick arse with your sub committee members who will be helping you out on this.'

Ignatius, Pablo, Nostradamus and Hercules got the withering look.

'I would be only too glad Mrs D. Leave that to me.'

Hercules sat there with a big grin on his face looking forward to being kicked in the arse by the beautiful Mildred.

Mrs D gave a sigh and continued.

'Getting back to our chair's suggestion concerning the drains I feel that now would be as good a time as any to bring in the village hall project.'

'Cum cricket pavilion,' interjected Hercules.

'Cum cricket pavilion as you so rightly said.' Mrs D continued. 'This project would circum navigate the central area of the village and bearing in mind the other community college and "Borisky Diamond" factory projects as well, will need some considerable civil engineering expertise and so I feel that we really need to introduce somebody who knows what they are talking about.'

Blank expressions all round the committee until the head of science and technology, Nostradamus McAdam

came up with one of his most profound statements of the millennium.

'That'll be an expert who knows about drains and building village halls then.'

This committee work is extremely intellectually demanding and thirsty work as they all poured out of Primrose Cottage and made their way across the village green to the "Snort and Truffle".

As a sub contracted MI6 Consultant, Dense had to give telephone contact numbers. There was the one at his Mayfair apartment in London and the other in Muddlecombe.

As there were only two phones in the village, one in Primrose Cottage for John to use in an emergency if he was in trouble moving the gold bullion he found lying about at Heathrow, and the other was in the "Snort" which was the hub of the village communications network. A sort of "Middle Ages URL".

So it came as no surprise to Brewster to answer the phone to somebody from MI6.

'It's for you Dense, it's MI6.'

Dense and Dollianna had surfaced from their sexual hibernation and come out to recharge their batteries. Not that Dollianna would ever need any.

Dense put his pint down and walked inside to pick up the phone.

After a brief conversation, well obviously some conversation from the caller and a lot of head shaking and mumbling from Dense, he came back and sat down outside the pub.

He finished his pint and looked around to everybody waiting with baited breaths for him to tell them of his next secret assignment.

'And?' an excited expectant query started the ball rolling.

'And what?' Dense looked up from his pint. This was an extremely heavy call.

'What was the phone call all about?'

'Oh, that was somebody called Judy Bench. She wants me to go down to London and debrief her.....'

Somebody quickly jumped in. 'You dirty rotten lucky bastard.'

'What I think Dense meant was that she wanted him to be debriefed after his assignment in Azerbaijan.' Brewster tried in vain to clear the air.

'I don't mind who debriefs who, there's got to be some pleasure involved somewhere?' Harry "Hercules" got his "below the waist" humour in quickly.

'Any way can you drop us down to London next Tuesday please Mr Kegworth?'

'No problem Dense my boy. And who is the "us" other person?'

'Oh, she wants Boris to come down as well.'

'You want to drag Boris away from his beloved beer?' Somebody with a mute point there.

'My god I'd like to be a fly on the wall at that debriefing.' Brewster voiced the whole village's thoughts on that one.

## Epilogue.

Brewster dropped Dense and Boris off at a meeting point just outside London and left them with Miss Judi Bench who then poured them into a waiting limousine and drove off to Pinewood Studios.

She explained on the way that MI6 had read the official report from the Ambassador in Azerbaijan but felt it was missing some salient points that perhaps could be better explained in a more relaxed atmosphere outside the limitations of the Official Secrets Act with both participants points of view. That and the fact that two very important movie moguls wanted to listen to their story to see if they could make a film out of it.

Dense and Boris sat back in the limousine well impressed and eagerly awaited the meeting with these two important people.

'Ere Boris didn't you say Cossacks was related to them Monguls?'

This stopped the conversation stone dead which confused poor Dense, once again, so he just shut up and sat back and poured himself a drink from the drinks cabinet in the back of the limousine.

Dense got a little disorientated as they turned east off the M25 off down the M40, then at the first exit turned back west down the Slough road then due north back up past the M25 to the large arch welcoming them to Pinewood Studios.

The security guard waved them through as they drove round to the offices of Aon Productions Ltd. The receptionist registered them with a quizzical look and then pressed the intercom announcing their arrival.

They were sent up to a palatial office and greeted by two men. Judi Bench introduced Dense and Boris to Chubby Broccoli and Harry Pepperman of Aon Productions and after the receptionist had poured out the coffees and offered everybody biscuits they settled down.

'This is my colleague Mr Dense Dimmock who does consultancy work for us now and then and this I believe is his colleague Mr Boris Slobovitch.'

Boris was a bit miffed that his full title of "Seven Bellies" had been omitted but overlooked it for the time being. He nodded to the two gentlemen as Judi continued.

'I don't have any authority over Mr Slobovitch but am extremely glad to make his acquaintance having seen his name mentioned in our field reports and extremely interested to hear of his accounts. I am also extremely interested in my colleague's unofficial report of his little expedition to Azerbaijan.'

The gentleman called Chubby intervened and started off the proceedings.

'Hey guys, can we cut all this Mr and Mrs crap and let's get down to the nitty gritty. Me and my partner Harry, well we sort of produce movies of people and situations similar to where you guys have been, well that's what we read in the papers anyway?' He looked to Harry who just smiled.

'So we'd sort of like to hear your side of the story 'cause these bloody press boys, well they sort of blow things out of all proportions. Do you hear what we're saying here?'

Harry jumped in. 'So guys, we want you to relax, this ain't no government debriefing,' he looked to Judi. 'Just tell it to us like it was, ok?'

Chubby came in then. 'So how did you guys meet. I mean, gee, Boris you're Russian, how the hell did you get involved with our little hero here in England?'

There was a considerable gap before Boris got his act together and came up with, 'Da, da, yes, yes, we met in "Snort".'

Chubby and Harry gave each other a puzzled look.

Dense, quick as a flash picked up on this and joined the conversation.

'That's the "Snort and Truffle", our local boozer. Brewster does a stonking good pint there I can tell you, eh Boris me old mate?'

There was a sigh from the moguls. 'Ok, so you guys met in the pub. So Boris how did you get from Russia to the snort.....?'

'Snort and Truffle. Da, da, yes, yes. I join Russian army in Kiev with my friend Chekov Yeboleksi and we go to Moscow and he get good job in the Lublanka.'

'Isn't that the old KGB interrogation centre?' Harry looked puzzled again.

'Da, da, yes, yes. My boss good at interrogation and I do plenty of work for him. I am a sort of gopher. He tell me who to kill and I go and kill them. Of course I have to clean up mess afterwards.'

'Of course,' Chubby wasn't quite sure if he wanted any more information.

'So you were a sort of assassin then?' Harry wanted a bit more.

'Da, da, yes, yes. But then Russia go to pieces and my boss don't have a job but he know lots of people and lots of information and he asks them to give him stuff and they say ok and he starts in business back in Kiev. The Kiev General Business Company.'

'The KGB?'

'Da, da, yes, yes. My boss very smart and he send me all over world to look after his business and make sure everybody do what they told.'

'What sort of business my friend?'

'Oh you know, usual, protection rackets, drugs, prostitution, gun running, money laundering. Oh, da, da, yes, yes, then I meet John in Tenerife.'

'John. John who?'

Dense could help them out here. 'John, 'es from our village. Owns Primrose Cottage where his lads come sometimes to lie low. He found this gold bullion lying about in Heathrow and sets up business in Tenerife.'

Judi's eyebrows went up a couple of inches.

'Da, da, yes, yes and my boss got bank there, Kiev General Bank.'

'KGB?' Chubby didn't look that much surprised this time.



'Da, da, yes, yes and I help John to put gold in bank and John tell me all about pension fund and give me lots of money as I help him out and I start pension fund and take some money from business but John tell me I supposed to tell boss about this but I buy some diamonds and send diamonds back to brother in Kiev for my pension but I think my boss watching me and brother and John tell me to go and lie down .....

'Lie low Boris.' Dense corrected.

'Da, da, yes, yes, so I go to Primrose Cottage and meet nice people and drink nice beer.'

There was a pregnant pause as everybody tried to gather their thoughts but Chubby felt the need for further investigation.

'So, is that it?'

Dense had been waiting for his chance to shine.

'Well, Boris puts it to the lads in the pub about his problem and he says he can't go back to Kiev but can we help 'im out like. So me 'an old Captain Creighky O'Riley volunteers for a bit of a laugh and off we goes. Boris never told us we was supposed to bring back diamonds, but hey ho, I'd never been outside the village and it was a bit of a holiday. So off we goes.'

'And this Creighky O'Riley chap. Where does he fit in?' Harry wanted some light at the end of the tunnel.

'Oh, that ponce. Got a load of medals in the Korean War, couldn't stop talking about it. All wind, pee and broken biscuits but he's been around a bit so knows his way round airports and things.'

'So you went over to the Ukraine?'

'Yeah, we pops over there and meets the brother who works in the hotel and we picks up a couple of bits of local atmosphere so to speak.'

There were more puzzled looks.

'A couple of tarts. Well, excuse me 'cause one of them's me missus now.'

The puzzled looks were coming fast and furious now.

'So it turns out they're old KGB and is after information and, well me and this girl had a great night

so they tell me. Poor old Creighky, well he only ends up with a dead body, well she was caught short in the middle of an asthma attack while he was on the job so to speak. We only finds this out later, but we had to run a bit smartish.'

Poor Judi's mouth was wide open.

'Sorry maa'm, but you said tell it like it was.'

Dense felt a pang of remorse. But only a little pang.

'Yes please carry on.' Harry and Chubby were on the edge of their seats by now.

'Well anyway, our luggage with Boris's diamonds gets sent to London and we gets put on the wrong plane to Moscow. And we're wanted for murder and all that and gets arrested at the airport but Creighky gets us out and a nice gentleman gives us a lift to the border with Finland. Any way to cut a long story short Creighky gets sent to darkest Africa out of the way while the dust settles and I gets back to meet up with Boris. And this bird I was with in Kiev wants political asylum claiming diplomatic immunity and arrives in London and gives my name as a referee and so we hits it off together and she sings like a bird and gives me all the Russian secrets and I gets to meet the Queen.'

'I think this is where MI6 comes in. My friend here helps us out in similar cases now and then, and so we asked Dense here to help us out on this Azerbaijan project.' Judi bench could see Chubby and Harry were slowly losing the plot.

'I'm a bit confused as to where Boris fits into all this'' Harry queried.

'Ah, well, there's the rub.'

Dense was enjoying this. People actually sitting back and listening to his every word. He was still a bit confused as to why these two nice gentlemen didn't look like Monguls, but hey ho.

'While Boris is tucked up nicely thank you in our village, his boss, Chekov, goes off looking for him in Tenerife and who does he bump into, none other than the lovely Mildred O'Riley. She's out there on holiday with the other girls from the village while Creighky is

still stuck out in darkest Africa. Chekov and Mildred hit it off like Romeo and Jill or what ever her name is.'

There was a lot of cringing in the room but Dense carried on regardless.

'So he follows her back to the village and who does he bump into, none other than our Boris here.'

'Da, da, yes, yes, but we don't have problem with pension and he help me set up diamond company and I give shares to my friend Dense here and also to Mr O'Riley.'

'And it's going very nicely thank you and then I gets the call from your lot Miss and pops off down to London and sits and listens to some plonker prattling on for a couple of hours.'

'I'm awfully sorry about that Mr Dimmock. That'll be our agent "Z". He's been "promoted" to the library since your visit.'

'Cor, he didn't 'arf go on and in the end we pops out for a cup of coffee and you walks by Miss and cool as a cucumber says, "Ah, you're the guy that's popping off to Azerbaijan then? Good luck old boy".'

Dense stopped for a drink of coffee then looking round the bewildered and amazed company, who obviously were awaiting the rest of the story, carried on.

'So, back in the pub, me and Boris is testing Brewster's best bitter to make sure it's up to standard, an' I says to me mate here "where's Azerbaijan?". Only I didn't know it was called that then but me missus and Chekov who's in the pub with Mildred all over him like a rash, gives me all the right information.'

'Da, da, yes, yes, and my boss and I remember we go to Azerbaijan before and we think of all people we meet and we give them a call and we talk to Igor and remember he was a naughty boy and boss have to interrogate him, but let him off gently so he still living. And he is warlord now in Azerbaijan and boss asks for information and he says what you give me. So boss, who can read people like books offer him nice bag of

hashish. So I have to go to Morocco to get stuff to give to Igor.'

'So I sets off to Azerbaijan and your lot gets the RAF to take me there.' Dense looked to Judi Bench for some sort of confirmation or even sympathy. Not a cat's chance in hell.

'Well, those RAF boys, they've got a strange sense of humour I can tell you but they gets me to Baku and the boss man there in the Embassy picks me up. So I kick me heels while waiting for Boris to arrive. But bugger me I sees this poster in the city about some Cossack choir concert. Old Boris will like that I says to meself.'

'Da, da, yes, yes, we got secret plan to go in disguise as Cossack singers and dancers but I go to Morocco first to get hashish but the man there tells me price now double. My boss warn me about dealing with Arab gentlemen but I don't think that's playing cricket.'

'Has Boris told you about you about the village cricket team's tour of Africa?' Dense interrupted proudly.

Astounded blank looks all round, so Boris continued.

'Da, da, yes, yes so I don't like this man so I kill him.'

'You killed him?' Even more astounded amazed looks.

'Da, da, yes, yes, but I take four seconds, not good so I kill his friend too and I get time down to three seconds. That a bit better.'

'Good for you mate.' Dense wanted to clap but felt under the circumstances and the blank amazed looks that this probably wasn't the time or place.

'Da, da, yes, yes, so I get hashish and I find some more and some money lying about and I take it and then I have to get back on boat and we go to The Ukraine and I go back to my village to ask a few friends to help me in case of any problem with Igor.'

'This is where you pick up a few Cossacks my friend?' A puzzled Chubby Broccoli had a gap in his amazement schedule to pop in a question.

'Da, da, yes, yes, we have big party in my village and we have recruiting drive but everybody want to come as they all enjoy a good fight so the boss man, Andrei selects sixty good men and off we go to Azerbaijan.'

'Sixty, that's damn nigh a whole bloody company?' Harry had a gap in his amazed schedule as well.

'Da, da, yes, yes, company of good men. All friends and boss man Andrei my cousin so it ok.'

'Ok to start a bloody war!'

'Only small war. So we get to Baku and do concert and do survey of Igor's castle and work out plan.'

'So where were you all this time Mr Dimmock?' Judi got a quick question in there.

'Ah well, yes, while I'm waiting for Boris and his plan, I go to the BAP social club where our missing Dr Pete Chemical or whatever 'is name is, was working before he gets high jacked. I meets his pals and they take me down to Baku to show me this "Pink Pussy" night club where they saw him last.'

'The Pink Pussy club?' Another amazed query from Chubby who looked over to his colleague Harry as they both shook their heads.

'Yeah, bit of a dive. Me and the boys had a few drinks there and then this tart comes over all friendly like and wants me to buy her a drink. Well, I can tell you, I gave her the elbow a bit smartish and we gets a taxi back to the social club for a decent drink and then I gets a taxi back to the Embassy only it takes me off to this castle place instead, and who's there but this tart and then I gets to meet Igor. A nasty bit of work I can tell you and he only starts asking questions about the secret service. Well, I tells 'im straight that I've signed the Official Secret's Act and I ain't telling him nothing!'

'Good man Mr Dimmock.' Judi jumped in.

'But then there's this bald short arsed bloke in a white coat who sticks this bloody great syringe into me and the next thing I know is waking up in bed with this tart and Boris scribbling stuff kneeling down beside me.'

'Before Mr Dimmock goes into too much detail here,' Judi intervened at this point before it got a bit messy. 'We at MI6 have sub contracted him to help us debrief certain people claiming diplomatic immunity.'

Chubby and Harry looked puzzled again but this time at Judi.

'He has certain attributes that we found helpful in getting information from young ladies which bypasses normal interrogation procedures.'

Chubby and Harry looked to each other again and very slowly, in unison said, 'he's got a big putz!' They both broke out into laughter.

Judi Bench blushed.

Dense and Boris were the ones with the puzzled looks.

'Let's hear it for good old British Intelligence!' Chubby and Harry gave each other high fives. The laughter eventually subsided.

'Sorry boys, so Boris how did *you* get to be there besides our hero here in bed?'

'Da, da, yes, yes, we got plan. We attack at night. Andrei worked out attack from front and back. Boys with shaskas crawl across field at the back and crawl up castle wall. They don't expect visitors, so boys chop heads off which don't make noise and then we march up front drive playing music and singing traditional Cossack songs.'

'You just walked up to the front of the castle playing music?'

'Da, da, yes, yes, old Cossack trick. People inside castle wake up and look to the front while boys chop heads off all guards at the back of castle. No noise at back, so people look to front. Simple.'

'Of course, silly me,' Chubby shook his head in disbelief.

'So, this tart's blabbed off a load of information while taking advantage of me and I must have remembered it and Boris wrote it all down. And bugger me there's the address where they're holding this petroleum geezer hostage.'

'Da, da, yes, yes, but poor old Igor got accident when one of boys missed head with shaska but chopped off little bit down below.'

Chubby and Harry winced.

'But we get him to hospital and he ok now. Moved up to front row of choir. But he got lots of money and grows hashish in basement and got lots of guns to sell.'

'So Boris' boss Andrei works out the next plan to rescue this hostage fella' and we talks to the boss at the British Embassy and his secretary knows people who live in this village and the Cossack boys set up another choir concert there.'

'Da, da, yes, yes, and I still got a load of hashish from Morocco and take it up to village and we have drinks at half time and I put hashish in all drinks except ones for the choir and then in second half we start to sing songs from each country and we watch who singing these songs because we know people who hold hostage are Chechnyans.'

'Sneaky bastards!' Chubby confirmed.

'So Andrei already have Cossacks hidden in the industrial estate and waiting to see who come back from concert. So we make friend of all Chechnyans and some go back to village and some walk off to industrial estate and we call boys up there and they now know which unit to attack. So we wait for two hours and bring up choir from village and we attack the warehouse.'

'So the old back and front trick with shaskas chopping heads off?' Harry felt pleased with himself with that.

'No, nothing like that mate,' Dense interrupted. 'They'd found these Kalashnikovs at Igor's place, kicks the bloody doors down and goes in all guns blazing.'

Scared the shit out of me I can tell you, and I was on the outside.'

'So you found the hostage alright?'

'Yeah, we'd got a volunteer, Harry, who knew Pete from the BAP to come along with us, now he really was shitting himself, but he found Pete alright. High as a kite but ok.'

'Gosh I bet that was a relief?' Harry asked. 'What about the Chechnyans?'

'Well after all the shooting I think everybody in the bloody village was awake and the local mayor turns up with the local copper and the Cossacks help him lock all the Chechnyans up. Then the press arrive then the TV crews arrive then Sir Robert drives up from Baku and cowboy Joe from the BAP.'

'Cowboy Joe?' Chubby queried.

'Yeah, this yank. Silas something-or-other the third. Although I never saw hide nor hair of the other two,' Dense replied.

'Silas H Sawyer the third. Current president of the British American Petroleum Company.' Judi confirmed.

'Yeah, him and Sir Robert gets well oiled as the whole village bought out drinks and food and it was a rare old piss up. Whoops sorry Ma'am.'

Poor Judi Bench couldn't have cared less by this time and gave a perfunctory nod.

'Da, da, yes, yes, then we go back to Cossack club in Baku and do some singing and dancing and Sir Robert turns up in this skirt.' Boris said.

'I think that were a kilt me old mate Boris. Something the Scotch wear a lot. Sorry, Sir Robert, he'll will kill me for saying that. It were what the Scottish *wear*, he just drinks the *Scotch*.'

'Da, da, yes, yes, and he get very drunk and the girls get him to dance and skirt....'

'Kilt!'

'Da, da, yes, yes, kilt, it get very high and all girls get lot of looks.....'

'An eyeful.' Dense confirmed.

'Da, da, yes, yes, but everybody very happy.'



'Cause then we got to sort old Igor out, and bugga me if some other dopey warlord tries it on while we're all out enjoying ourselves.'

'Da, da, yes, yes, only we leave plenty of men behind to look after castle and these other warlord people try same trick, but we ready for them and so we do other old Cossack trick.'

'Another old Cossack trick?'

'Da, da, yes, yes, we wait till first people come over top walls and we chop heads off. Then we hide. Then because there no noise other people follow and fall over bodies and look around but don't see anybody else and don't understand why their friends don't have heads on shoulders.'

Chubby, Harry and Judi just sat there shaking their heads.

'So what happened next?'

'Da, da, yes, yes, they all get to top of castle wall and they all stand around with hands in air but don't find anybody to surrender to. All Cossacks have a good laugh and eventually come out of hiding with nobody hurt.'

'Apart from the first unfortunate two?' Harry felt he needed to get the details correct.

'Da, da, yes, yes, but they don't count, so now we got prisoners and they tell us who sent them and we ask their boss man over.'

'So you get to meet the other warlord?'

'Yeah a right little gobshite. And he rolls up in his flash limos and all his bodyguards and Boris takes exception to one of them.'

'Da, da, yes, yes, I don't like the look of him so I kill him. Down to two and a half seconds, not bad for an old man eh?'

'Good on yer me old mate.' Dense was proud of Boris. 'You showed 'em eh?'

'Excuse me Boris my friend but just run this killing bit by me please. I take it this was in front of a lot of people, did you use a gun, a knife?' Harry wanted a bit more information for his screen writers.

'Niet, niet, no, no, I just shake hands then break thumb and when he on ground I turn head round wrong way. He don't feel anything.'

'Apart from the thumb being broken?'

'Da, da, yes, yes.'

'Old Cossack trick?'

'No, KGB.'

There was another pregnant pause as everybody, except Boris and Dense, shook their heads once more in disbelief. Dense then felt it necessary to take up the initiative.

'So then that puts the shits up this new warlord fella and him and Andrei has a little talk and they agrees a nice round figure of one million dollars and the castle is his like.'

'Da, da, yes, yes, then we have to go to Presidential Palace and give another concert and he gives everybody a medal.'

'The Gold Star of Azerbaijan. A very prestigious award gentlemen.' Judi was proud of her men as well.

'Then Andrei and the president does a deal and we offers him this new warlord chap to him as a sort of political present. Well, he's chuffed to bits and so he gets his Special Forces to dress up as Cossacks and they go back to the castle with Andrei and Boris and me while the rest all goes back to the Cossack social club ready for the flight back the next day.'

'So we turns up for this meeting with this new warlord fella' and he thinks the Cossacks is all dressed up as a guard of honour for him. He gives Andrei the money and I gets to give the little bald, short arsed git in the white coat a good kicking and we all leave the castle. Only the Special Forces is already hidden around the castle and the ones who have just left pick up their special weapons in the bus and pops back in to arrest the warlord and all his cronies and all the drugs factory and all that.'

'So what happened next?' Chubby was on the edge of his seat.

'Yeah, right, so we gets in the bus and gets the hell out of it and picks up the rest of the boys at the Cossack social club and shoots off to the airport. Old Brewster from the "Snort" has arranged a charter flight for us and off we takes. We drops Andrei and his Cossack mates off at Kiev and then we comes home.'

Brewster had felt it best that Dense and Boris shouldn't mention the stay over in Zurich in the presence of a government representative, albeit an MI6 representative. He was sure she must have had some sort of liaison officers with the Inland Revenue.

Chubby, Harry and Judi Bench sat back in disbelief and completely exhausted.

Chubby eventually took the initiative. 'I guess you guys could murder a drink right now?'

'Da, da, yes, yes!'

Ten minutes later he and Harry showed them back to their waiting limousine and waved goodbye to them.

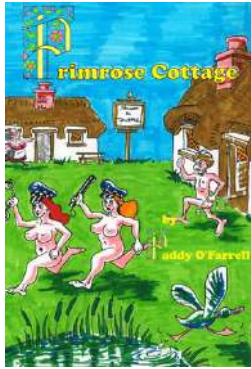
They both collapsed into their chairs and finished off a stiff whisky and looked at each other before summoning up the energy for a discussion.

'Gee Chubby. What did you make of all that? That has got to be some movie hasn't it?'

'Ah, come on Harry. Who the hell would believe all that shit?'

Have you read  
Paddy O'Farrell's  
other books?

Also available on Amazon, W H Smith  
and Waterstone's web sites.



## Primrose Cottage

The villagers of Muddlecombe-cum-Snoring were perplexed as a Spitfire flew over their sun drenched hay fields and a load of strangers went into Primrose Cottage: the Head of the Russian Mafia; his minder Boris "Seven Bellies" Slobovitch; two undercover CID policewomen; a London Solicitor and the young doctor newly arrived from India.

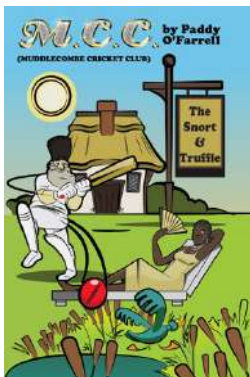
And what was Captain Creighky O'Riley MC doing on a murder charge in Moscow together with the village idiot "Dense" Dimmock? And what was his Mum, Mrs Dimmock, going to do for her committee meetings in lieu of Primrose Cottage?

And what was the village Postmistress and Church warden doing in a brothel in Tenerife whirling her knickers in the air singing "Jerusalem"? And why did she and all her girlfriends from Muddlecombe, end up as high as kites in Amsterdam?

And what was going to happen to the village drains, not to mention the church roof? And will Gerantinium O'Deighy III, chairman of Mrs Dimmock's Interplanetary Standards and Ethics Committee, be getting an inside toilet?

Questions, questions?

Just read the bloody book!



## MCC (Muddlecombe Cricket Club)

Dr Rammittin Chutnabuttee, University College Hospital, Jodhpur (failed) was always destined for Muddlecombe-cum-Snoring.

This picturesque village twinned with Shangri La and Brigadoon is home to Chekov Yeboleksi; (ex head of KGB Interrogation, Boris Slobovitch, Chekov's retired hit man; Mildred O'Riley now in love with Chekov and her husband Lt Col Creighky O'Riley, currently in Botswana where he meets a Somali beauty called Xalwo and also Dr Rammy's long lost uncle Krishna, who heads up the Botswana Cricket Association and invites his nephew's team out for a game of cricket.

Boris' diamond company is low on stock until Xalwo dangles some juicy carats in front of them.

Chekov flies out to set up a deal with not only diamonds but marriages of convenience.

How do they nearly derail the Angolan peace talks?

Why does Creighky get kidnapped?

How do they get mixed up with the real MCC?

How do they get the diamonds back to Muddlecombe?

Who the hell is Mrs Dimmock?

Bringing in Gerantinium O'Deightry III, Sharon and Tracey, two undercover CID ladies and Pinky and Pongo from the MCC now would probably really confuse the issue, unless of course you read the book!



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