

# Primrose Cottage



Signpost:   
SOUTH   
by   
TAVINNE



by   
Paddy   
O'Farrell



# Primrose Cottage

By Paddy O'Farrell

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## **Paddy O'Farrell**

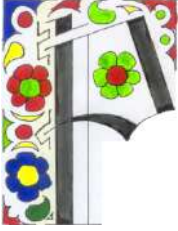
He always wanted to be a writer when he grew up; one out of two ain't bad! Born in Canada in 1942 with a father born in Hong Kong and a Grandfather born in the Channel Islands, he attended 11 schools before signing up for 15 years in the RAF in Electronics.

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.

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



rimrose  
Cottage

by  
Paddy O'Farrell

This book is dedicated to my lovely wife Fay, who watches Eastenders and thinks this book is a load of shite.

Author's note: The majorities of names used are fictitious, and bear no resemblance to anyone alive or dead unless they are daft enough to have the same names as those used in the book then they deserve to be misrepresented.

And bearing in mind it is a fiction/fantasy there may be discrepancies in the time differences between events such as the Korean War and the introduction of e-mail. But, hey lighten up a bit smart arses and enjoy.

## Primrose Cottage by Paddy O'Farrell

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List of characters in chronological order

<b>Brewster Kegworth Sidney Sidenose Fiona Kegworth Mildred O'Riley</b>	A retired stockbroker, now landlord of the "Snort & Truffle". A solicitor from Shoreditch. Brewster's Scottish wife, an accountant. The doe-eyed wife of Capt Creighky O'Riley, Governess of the local school / community college.
<b>Mrs Dimmock Lucinda D'Arcy Landacre Betty Boring</b>	A phenomenon. Lady of Muddlescombe Manor. Post office proprietress, choir mistress and church warden.
<b>Gerantinium O'Deighy III</b>	Village elder and Chairman of the Interplanetary Standards and Ethics Committee.
<b>Boris Slobovitch</b>	Minder, gofer, hit man and hired hand for Chekov Yeboleksi.
<b>John and "the boys" Capt Creighky O'Riley MC Blossom Deecup Denis "Dense" Dimmock Chekov Yeboleksi</b>	Entrepreneurs" from London. Mildred's errant husband, village bore and roué. Barmaid of the "Snort & Truffle". Mrs Dimmock's dyslexic son and village handy man. Head of the Russian mafia, ex KGB Interrogation expert. Chekov's bookkeeper.
<b>Serge Ledgeroff Dimitri the Dim</b>	Another minder, gofer, hit man and hired hand for Chekov Yeboleksi.
<b>Sharon &amp; Tracey Brian</b>	Two undercover CID policewomen from Essex Sales director of an industrial abrasives company.
<b>Col Svetlana Koffinski Dollianna</b>	The Black Widow, a FSB agent in Ukraine. Another FSB agent in Ukraine, but a bit younger & more attractive.
<b>Dr Rammittin Chutnabuttee Dudley</b>	The village Doctor, newly arrived from India A diamond cutter from Birmingham



## 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, tranquility 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?'

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

The Lord left Gerantinium 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 Gerantinium down to try and recover the situation 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.

'Ok, 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.'

## Chapter 1. Muddlecombe-cum-Snoring

'John?'

'Yes Dad'

'I've been contemplating.'

'You'll go blind.'

'No, seriously son, when you get to my age you start reflecting on life. Especially this place.'

'What, you mean the village or the cottage?'

'Both. Don't they seem weird to you?'

'Yeah, but come on. Not a copper insight. It's got to be heaven sent.'

'Precisely. And that Mrs D. and her committee, using the cottage every now and then. And that old geyser. What's 'is name?'

'Old Gerantinium?'

'That's the boy. How old is he got to be? And that jewboy solicitor, Sydney somebody, that we first bumped into?'

'Yeah, now that was weird. You and your visions of a chocolate box cottage, a village green, a duck pond, a church, a pub.....'

'And he bumps into us in a boozier down the smoke, as casual as you like and offers us a nice little getaway hole just when the law was breathing down our necks. How handy was that! And he drives us into the middle of nowhere and through some weird forest on top of this bloody great hill and then there it is!'

'Bloody Shangri La!'

'Precisely, my point exactly son. Fucking wierd. I mean it's all too good to be true. I'm sure I'm in heaven.'

'Yeah, you're right Dad. Weird.'

'And then, you wouldn't believe this. I bumps into old Knocker the other day.'

'Old Knocker Harris?'

'Old Knocker Harris? Bleeding hell, he must be knocking on a bit, eh? You get it ? Knocking on a bit.....?'

'Very droll son. Any road up where do you think he's working?'

'In a monastery?'

' Yeah. That'll be right. No, he's a security guard in a gold bullion warehouse.'

'You've got to be joking?'

' You couldn't make it up could you and he wants us to pop down and have a little chat with him. He reckons the place is wide open.'

'Holy shit. This sounds all too good to be true.'

'It's this village. It's this cottage. It's all just some sort of dream. Some sort of fairy tale.'

'Well, let's hope it's a goose what lays a nice big fat golden egg fairy tale.'

'Anyway, he says to come down and meet him somewhere near Heathrow. He works at a place called Brink's-Mat in one of the industrial trading estates.'

'Hallo Knocker. How you doing me old china?.'

'Not too bad John and your self and the lad.'

'We're all right. Got this lovely little drum up North somewhere. Ever so peaceful.. Straight off the front of a chocolate box, thatched roof, roses and all. The villagers is all loopy or in-bred. Mrs D's son. 'E's a sandwich short of a picnic. Mind you 'e's a good little worker. Keeps the cottage painted and decorated and looks after all the electrics. What's 'is name, Dense or something. We slips 'im a tenner now and then which keeps 'im 'appy and his Mum seems to run the village. Not a bleeding copper in sight.'

'Sound like heaven to me.'

'It is mate. It is, isn't it John?'

'You wouldn't believe it. There's this lovely little pub, beer's still the price is was after the war, so Dad keeps telling me, and you want to see the barmaid?'

'Calm yourself lad. Now what have you got to tell us Knocker. You must be coming up for retirement soon. Don't you want to give it a rest.'

'I do mate. I do. But this is so big and so easy I can't resist just one more big one and then I can retire. I tell you its child's play. The place is run by idiots.'

'I can see that Knocker. They employed you to start with!'

'Thank you for that John! Any way the security is shambolic and they've got loads of cash and some bits of gold lying about as well sometimes.'

'Bloody hell. What we going to do with that gold. You still got those rip off time share schemes running in Tenerife lad?'

'Yeah. Why d'you ask Dad?'

'I dunno. Just an idea. Just to get the stuff out of the country for a while.'

'Oh, hang on just a mo. This is too good to be true.....'

'What you on about lad?'

'You would not believe this.....'

'Don't tell me. It's a fairy tale?'

'No, listen to this Dad. Me and the lads go down to this boozer in Playa. That's Play de las Americas in Tenerife. Lots of typical Spanish pubs selling Spanish Watney's Red Barrel.'

'Sounds like little England to me?'

'It is. Full of bleeding Brits. But in this one pub, we meets up with this Russian geezer.'

'And?'

'Well, he works for a Russian bank. Sort of security.'

'Sort of like me?'

'Yeah, Knocker only ten times as big as you and you don't want to mess with him I tell you. Part of the Russian Mafia like.'

'What you getting at son?'

'How you going to move the money or the gold?'

'Yeah, I see where you're coming from. Good thinking lad.'

'And he likes his English beer, and'e don't 'arf put it away, and we're pals, the boys and me like.'

There was a silence as everybody stopped to think.

'This is getting all too easy by half. But 'ang on a mo. How we going to get the stuff over to Tenerife?'

'I know a man with a stonking great big 30 metre Sunseeker motor yacht that goes like shit off a shovel. He runs back and forward to blighty now and then. I think 'es in the drug racket. Got this bloody great holiday home with tarts lying about the place half naked. You can't tell me 'es straight? 'course he'll need a bit of pocket money no doubt so you'll have to count 'im in'.

'I tell you lads, you could count the bloody Queen of England in with this sort of dosh involved.

'Bloody hell Knocker, you reckon it's that big then?'

'You'd better believe it mate.'

'Dad, what about that jewboy geezer?'

'How d'you mean John?'

'Well I reckon he's got to be bent. I mean, give 'im a couple of bundles and I'll bet you he could do some money laundering for us, eh? I mean he put us into Primrose Cottage ....'

'Primrose Cottage?'

'Yeah, Primrose Cottage sounds idyllic don't it Knocker?'

'Bloody hell, you'll be having tea and cake on the front lawn next?'

'Don't knock it Knocker!. You've got to see it to believe it. Any way get your brains in gear mate and knock us up a nice plan and then come up to Muddlecombe....'

'Muddlecombe?'

'Yeah, Mudlecombe-cum-Snoring.'

'Mudlecombe-cum-Snoring? You're having me on. There ain't no such place?'

'You'd better believe it mate. You'd better believe it.'

\* \* \*

Brewster Kegworth did not like Mr Sidenose. He couldn't put his finger on why he didn't like him it was just that every time Mr Sidenose came into his life he got a sense of foreboding.

The foreboding was always in the shape of large amounts of cash. Extremely large amounts of cash. Either for Brewster to invest or his commission, or a bonus on top of his commission or a tip on top of the bonus. Sidney Sidenose, a sallow skinned solicitor from Shoreditch, always wore a camel haired coat, in all weathers, and he was always rubbing his hands together.

This all started twelve months ago.

Brewster Kegworth left university with a degree in business studies and started working immediately in the stock market in London. He had worked on the stock exchange floor for several years, enjoying the cut and thrust of the trading then progressed to the investment offices where he worked on large corporate portfolios.

Brewster started life in the stock market as a young lean twelve stone floor walker. As he progressed through the stages in the investment offices he became less active and was now sixteen stone and starting to lose his fine head of hair. Although he was six foot tall he was vastly overweight and at the age of fifty was heading for the usual stockbroker's stress related problems.

He had been working hard all day and in the evening went to one of the city's inns for a drink with his friends. After half a bottle of wine he got a strange tingling sensation between his ears and at the same time a vision of an old lady with a bonnet, wearing a shawl and carrying a basket walking across a picturesque village green with a duck pond, a church, a thatched cottage and a village pub surrounding the common. This gave Brewster a pleasant warm sensation of well being.

His reverie was disturbed by somebody bumping into him.

'I am so sorry.' said a voice behind him as Brewster turned to see a man with a sallow face in a camel haired coat and a trilby.

'It's Mr Kegworth isn't it?'

Brewster looked surprised.

'Mr Brewster Kegworth?'

Brewster was even more surprised.

'How did you know my name?' He asked.

'Are now then, a friend of mine or should I say a client, had been given your name and asked me to contact you with a view to investing some of his a capital.'

'I don't normally deal with individuals Mr.,.....?'

'Sidenose, Mr Sydney Sidenose, I do apologise for not introducing myself. I am a solicitor working out of offices in Shoreditch. I do understand your predicament as does my client but he feels that together we may be able to offer you an extremely attractive deal.'

Mr. Sidenose took out a bulky envelope from his coat and gave it to Brewster.

'I will leave this with you Mr. Kegworth. Here Is my business card, please give me a ring when you have decided or I am usually in this wine bar every Friday at the end of the month.'

With that Mr. Sidenose immediately got up and disappeared leaving poor Brewster totally confused. He quickly but the brown envelope into his coat pocket, finished his drink and looking around made a quick exit from the wine bar.

He rushed home to his large detached house in the gin and tonic belt to Fiona his lovely Scottish wife. She worked in the city as well as a chartered accountant and you could say they were pleasantly rich.

He rushed in the door, threw his coat on the floor and sat down in the lounge, staring at the brown envelope. He tore the envelope open and stared at the bundles of used twenty pound notes. He didn't need to count them; he knew what one hundred thousand pounds looked like.

Just then Fiona walked into the lounge and stopped and stared at the money as well. After several seconds they eventually looked to each other.

'Holy shit!'

'Exactly my words,' said Brewster.

'Where the hell did you get all that money?' Asked Fiona?

'Well I was in the wine bar when this solicitor chappie bumps into me and says he knows me. Then dumps this envelope into my hands. Says he has got a good deal for me and then buggers off.'

'A likely story. How much wine have you had to drink?'

'That's not all. Just before this bloke bumps into me I get this vision of an old biddy walking across a village green with a duck pond, a chocolate box thatched cottage and an old world pub.'

'How much did you say you had to drink?'

'It does sound a bit peculiar doesn't it?'



'To say the least. So this bloke gives you one hundred grand and just buggers off. What the hell are you going to do with it?'

'I haven't got a fucking clue. I think I will have to sleep on it.'

'Now you always talked about all the opportunities that you've missed, so now why don't you just take the chances and go for it. It's not your money so you have nothing to loose.'

'By god! You've got it. You have just banged the nail on the head. Beautiful with brains as well!'

Brewster went over and gave her a big kiss as they went off to bed. He slept like a baby dreaming of a village green with a funny old lady stumbling across it. An old Norman church, a duck pond, a thatched cottage and an idyllic pub set in a picturesque background.

He rushed to work early the next day. Banked the money in a private account and set about initiating a brave portfolio. He sent a copy of the portfolio to Mr. Sidenose and sat back and waited for the end of the month. He couldn't believe his luck as all the gambling chances hit the jackpot. True to his word Mr. Sidenose was there to meet him in the wine bar. This time he had two envelopes: a large one and a small one, giving them both to Brewster. He thanked Brewster for his wise choice of investment, tipped his hat to him and disappeared.

Once again Brewster was bemused and quickly put both the envelopes in his coat pocket and rushed home. He opened the envelopes to find another one hundred thousand pounds plus ten thousand pounds with a small note thanking him for his trouble. He tried to ring Mr. Sidenose but kept getting engaged. So he continued with his investment plans and waited until the end of the next month when he saw Mr. Sidenose again and explained that his commission was already included in the portfolio. Mr. Sidenose explained that he fully understood that and gave Brewster another two envelopes before disappearing once more.

By the end of the year Brewster was getting a little worried if not embarrassed. He always wanted to ask where the money came from but felt he should hide behind the "CCC" (Customer Confidentiality Clause) or the "LTC" clause: (Lots of Tax-free Cash).

He had been a stockbroker for twenty years now and was thinking of Mr Sidenose when the heart attack happened and funnily enough when he awoke in hospital Mr Sidenose was in the private ward along with Fiona.

'The nice Mr Sidenose is here to see you darling, and he has made us a very kind offer.'

Brewster went into foreboding mode immediately and after several seconds silence Mr Sidenose took the offensive.

'Me and the boys.....'

"The boys?" Brewster was taken aback never thinking of Mr Sidenose as a family man. The thought of him breeding and starting up a dynasty was too much to contemplate.

'I'm sorry; the old grammar's a bit rusty. The boys and I, I should say. Or should I say, my clients and I really.' Mr Sidenose continued rubbing his hands together.

Brewster did a little cough prior to going into another phase of foreboding.

'My clients and I feel we owe you a little bit more than just commission for all your valuable services and.....' Mr Sidenose stopped, looked up at the ceiling for something to say.

Brewster was going into warp speed foreboding. He looked plaintively at his lovely wife for help, but she was just smiling at the nice Mr Sidenose.

Money laundering, illegitimate trading were some of the valuable services he was thinking of but felt it best not to bother Brewster with the details in his current fragile state of mind.

"....Your shrewd investment plans." That sounded a bit better.

'Yes, we feel you have looked after our money both wisely and shrewdly. And my major client, a certain John feels it only right and proper that he should offer you something in return. Viz-a viz, somewhere where you could convalesce in comfort and solitude.'

"Oh my God!" thought Brewster "They're going to take me on a cruise and put me in cement boots."

'John's got a little drum, sorry, a little cottage in the country, that has given him many hours of peace and tranquillity.'

'And he's offering it to us rent free darling,' came the quick interjection in a Scottish accent. More of a confirmation as she then looked to Mr Sidenose.

Brewster slid down the bed a few more inches trying to hide under the sheets and escape any increase in the foreboding syndrome.

'Yes, I have had words with John and he agrees we should divest you of all stresses and strains and let you have full use of his cottage until you have returned to the rudest of health.' Mr Sidenose gave a little smile as this was the full extent of his humour.

'Oh, and it sounds so beautiful darling.' Fiona finalised the meeting with confirmation that she and Brewster had agreed to Mr Sidenose's kind offer. 'It's in a lovely little village called Muddlecombe-cum-Snoring.'

Brewster couldn't get much further down the bed and was in no condition to argue.

'And. it's called Primrose Cottage.'

\* \* \*

Some would say that the origins of the river Snoring were based on the Ewing-Donn hypothesis of glaciation when the Moraines tore up valley floors through the millennia and carved the way for great raging rivers which eventually eroded into the small local rivers of today.

Some would say that was a load of bollocks.

Some would say that the River Snoring was once a raging river called Snörrabrou (roughly translated meaning 'Snörri's Street'), which plunged through deep ravines and was named after the Icelandic hero Snörri.

As the River Snoring was now only a dribble of a stream piddling into a picturesque duck pond there was a high probability that this hypothesis was a load of bollocks as well.

What was true was that some places were still hidden away from civilisation because of such probabilities. They were usually called romantic names like the Lost City of Atlantis, Brigadoon, Shangri-La or Muddlecombe-cum-Snoring.

There was little evidence of mammalian evolution during the Pleistocene era due to the plunging temperatures, migration and the onslaught of the Ice Age. This was still the case for some of the inhabitants of Muddlecombe-cum-Snoring. The traffic still bypassed the village using the same route as the Dinosaurs had trodden a million years ago. This picturesque village nestled in the valley amongst the gentle rolling hills between Muddlecombe Magna and Muddlecombe Parva somewhere in the middle of England.

\* \* \*

A large black limousine driven by Sidney Sidenose picked up Fiona, Brewster and their luggage and headed north. After an hour they turned off the motorway and after another hour they were in open countryside driving through narrow country lanes when they suddenly turned off into a field and into a cart track.

The track led up a gentle incline towards a forested rim at the top of the hill. The trees became thicker as they drove deeper into the forest and as the track became narrower and it seemed as if the trees gently moved aside to let the large limousine through. They must have reached the top as they now started to go down hill. As they descended the trees thinned and a valley came into sight.

It was about this time that Brewster started spluttering and pointing down to the valley.

'What's the matter Brewster?' Asked Fiona.

Brewster still couldn't speak properly, still spluttering and pointing.

'What *is* it Brewster?' Repeated Fiona getting a little worried now.

'This is it!' Brewster managed to splutter some words at last.

'This is what?' Queried Fiona again getting more worried by the second.

The pointing and spluttering increased until he managed a full sentence.

'That's the village. That's the village I was telling you about. The one I had a vision about.'

Brewster was getting quite agitated by now and another sentence was about to be spluttered out.

'Look!' Brewster started pointing fervently. 'Look, there's the village church. And the village pub, the duck pond and look, there's that thatched cottage!'

'Brewster darling, it's beautiful.'

That floored Brewster. It was along time since Fiona had called him "darling".

But looking down into the valley, he could understand her feelings. It was probably just like the first explorer viewing the Ngoro Ngoro crater in Africa.

Instead of herds of grazing wildebeest and zebras, there were little cottages dotted around a large central common or village green. At the edge of the green sat the Norman church with it's graveyard and further along were the gates of a large manor house in several acres of land and out buildings. Then came the duck pond surrounded by bull rushes and then the pub with some villagers sitting outside on the rustic benches.

Then the village shop and the school house with a play ground continuing in a circle and at the end backed by a little copse sat a large double fronted thatched cottage with a white picket fence and a gate leading down the path to a rose covered porch.

The limousine had now reached the age of the village, as Mr. Sidenose drew towards the thatched cottage. He stopped the car and got out to open Fiona's door. Brewster opened his door and got out to stretch his legs. Just then an old lady came walking across a village green.

Brewster starting spluttering again.

'I don't believe it! I just do *not* believe it! Look, there's that old biddy coming across the village green.'

Brewster watched as she came over and started talking to Mr. Sidenose.

'Sidney my boy, well done.'

*Well done?* Brewster's brain wondered what the hell was going on.

The old lady turned to Brewster walked over to him and shook his hand.

'Mr Kegworth welcome to our little village. I'm so glad you could come and with your lovely wife Fiona.'

*I'm so glad you could come.* Brewster's brain had gone into warp speed.

Mr. Sidenose introduced the old lady.

'This is Mrs D,' said Mr. Sidenose, 'sorry, Mrs. Dimmock. I do apologise.'

'Sidney you naughty boy,' said the old lady who came over and gave Brewster and Fiona a large hug and kissed them both on their cheeks.

Brewster recovered, gave Fiona very strange look and shrugged his shoulders.

'Well I don't just stand there Sidney, bring their luggage and let's show them the cottage.'

Mr. Sidenose picked up their luggage with help from Brewster and walked towards the thatched cottage. Mrs. Dimmock opened the white picket fenced gate and started walking down the garden path to the rose covered porch.

Fiona grabbed Brewster's arm, stood and looked around her and said, 'oh Brewster, isn't it just beautiful.'

"Just fucking weird!" thought Brewster.

\* \* \*

Brewster Kegworth still couldn't make up his mind about Mr Sidenose. Since he'd been at Muddlecombe-cum-Snoring he had regained his "rude" health and was enjoying the peace and tranquillity of this charming little village.

The sense of foreboding had long since gone. He was at the funeral of John, the owner of Primrose Cottage, and Mr Sidenose was there. John, or to give him his full name, Old John, had died somewhere else but his last wishes were to be buried in the village and Brewster and Fiona felt it only right and proper that they should attend. They were the only ones apart from Mr Sidenose, and four nice men in dark overcoats with their collars turned up and trilby hats with their peaks turned down which was very strange as it was a beautiful summer's afternoon, as it always was.

As some elderly village gentleman with a long white beard muttered something incomprehensible as the "boys" lowered Old John down to his final resting place.

Mr Sidenose quietly walked around to Brewster and Fiona and whispered reverently that it was ok for them to stay on for the foreseeable future in the cottage. John's son, John, or to give him his full title, Young John, was a bit tied up at the moment with his business interests overseas and trying extremely hard not to help

the Police, Customs and Excise and Inland Revenue with their enquiries.

Brewster and Fiona were blissfully unaware of this and were just happy to remain in Primrose Cottage having fallen under the spell of this magical village.

There was the small problem of the local committee who used the cottage on every other Thursday in every second month. Which meant they had to pop out to the pub for the evening which was hardly a life threatening event. It just seemed so strange that when they returned to the cottage it felt so sanitorised. Like a flash flood of Harpic had washed through the cottage. A nice feeling really but definitely quite the opposite of foreboding. A sort of uplifting, a little holier than thou sort of feeling which didn't last long anyway.

\* \* \*

Even now, Brewster still couldn't make up his mind about Mr Sidenose. He was at another funeral, that of the landlord of the "Snort and Truffle", the local pub and Mr Sidenose had turned up once again to handle his estate.

However Fiona had other ideas and was about to start being incredibly nice to Mr Sidenose.

In-between the death of the landlord and the funeral, Fiona and Brewster had talked about this and that, the meaning of life and other mundane matters. Fiona's double entry fiscal mind could see a load of advantages in staying in the village and had mentioned this to Brewster as an aside now and then in between more important matters as to how did they get the washing machine repaired.

Plan "B" was now in full swing and it was Fiona who sidled up to Mr Sidenose, or Sidney as he was about to be called.

'Mr Sidenose, my friend, how are you?'

'Oh, it's you Mrs Kegworth. You caught me by surprise.'

"That'll be a first," thought Fiona, catching him on the hop. 'Just call me Fiona, please.' Fiona took a deep breath and sailed into plan "B". 'Sidney, I understand you are looking after the estate of the late landlord?'

'That's right, Mrs Kegworth, sorry, Fiona.'

'And would this estate, or can I call it, the pub, be up for grabs so to speak. Sorry, would the "Snort and Truffle" be on the market for sale?'

'Well, do you know, I'd never given it much thought, being so distressed with the death of my client, Old Bert so to speak.'

Sidney looked up to the heavens for a brief moment and then back to Fiona. 'Well, do you know, there is a slight possibility that it just might be available now that you come to mention it.'

"Well bless my soul," thought Fiona, there's a coincidence.

'Now then Sidney, can you cast your mind back to the days when Brewster was in gainful employment in the City and you rewarded him with extremely lots of extremely generous bonuses?'

'Oh, those were the days, yes, I don't know what I've had done without Mr Brewster. Yes he was my saviour alright.'

'Well, how much of your generosity would you like back in return for the deeds of the pub?'

'Well, do you know, I'd never given it much thought. Let's say a hundred grand shall we?'

'Let's say fifty grand, shall we Sidney darling?'

It had been a long time since anybody had called him by his first name so many times. He could vaguely recall his mother using that name but darling? That was a first. He was flabbergasted to say the least.

He was well known for his negotiating skills. After all he was a good Jewish boy. He had a bit missing off his willy. He had struck Adolf Hitler off his Christmas Card list. He could trace his lineage back to Moses and probability had some of Gerantinium's DNA in his chemical make up as well. But he had never come across a Scottish brick wall like Fiona before.

To say that she was thrifty was an understatement. Being an accountant to boot enhanced her reputation. She took cost effectiveness to a new level. She would turn the windscreen wipers off going under a bridge!

Sidney eventually managed to stutter some words that vaguely sounded like:

'Shall we ... er ..say seventy five grand?'

'Sixty grand. Cash!'

'Done.' And a hand shake sealed the deal.

'Brewster dear, I've got a little surprise for you,' Fiona mentioned as she snuggled up closer to him in bed that night.

"Hey up!" thought Brewster. But this surprise really caught him off balance. And the old heart took it without hardly a murmur.

So plan "B" went into action.

Fiona could see the pub as a nice little tax loss, and as she was now building up a nice little consultancy business on her own, Brewster could now have a hobby to keep him quiet. With only half a dozen clients every night she couldn't envisage too much strenuous work involved in running the pub.

So they sold their house in Virginia Waters (whoever she was) and Brewster had to pop over to Switzerland to draw out some of the foreboding money Mr Sidenose had given him. Brewster always was a cautious man. One of his sayings was "If I don't know where the money's came from, no bugger else will."

Fiona was more your actual "thrifty". So between cautious and thrifty they had secured themselves a nice quiet tax efficient peaceful existence for the rest of their lives.

Fat chance!

\* \* \*

Now Brewster and Fiona were assimilated into village life fairly quickly. Brewster didn't take long to figure out the workings of the pub together with the company of the village male population and their down to earth discussions of politics and the barmaid's chestal area.

Brewster had found an old distillery in the cellar of the pub and wasn't too surprised to find a local farmer who grew hops as the climate seemed to be exceptionally agreeable. It only appeared to rain during the night and left the days with clear blue skies. After several false starts he managed to produce a very drinkable bitter albeit slightly on the strong side.

Fiona brought up in Morningside, the better part of Edinburgh where they spoke "awfully far back" a sort of left over from the Miss Jean Brodie days, meanwhile was made very welcome using her favourite three letter swear words VAT and TAX and found a niche market in financial consultancy but at the same time fell in with a bad lot.

The Junta, the unelected village rural council.

This was not to be confused with Gerantinium's Interplanetary Standards and Ethics Committee run by Mrs Dimmock.

Well everything was run by Mrs Dimmock although nobody realised it as it's agenda was far too strategic to comprehend even for the committee members.

The Junta was headed up by Lucinda who left finishing school looking for a rich husband and was dragged into the Muddlecombe vortex and married Reginald D'Arcy Landacre owner of most of the land around Muddlecombe and the very nearly stately home of Muddlecombe Manor.

Betty Boring who with her husband Bill, ran the local Post Office cum general store cum gossip centre and also helped out as a Church Warden and whipping the choir in to a frenzy every Sunday morning.

Then there was Mildred, wife of the adulterous, bedswerving, pecker roaming Captain Creighky O'Riley. She ran the school cum Community College. This was an euphemism for a posh shed with table and chairs and a room set aside for eating and ablutions where they could have their daily pint of milk and fresh orange juice. This was pre Thatcherite days obviously.



Mildred O'Riley was still considered a stranger in the village even though she was born and brought up there just like her father. It was her mother who was an outsider or an import as they call them.

She was a beautiful young courtesan arriving in the village with a millionaire industrialist considerably older than her escaping the Victorian dogmatic society who looked down on such liaisons. They were quickly sucked up into the Muddlecombe vacuum and when he died his widow turned a new leaf and built the village school-cum-Community College from his proceeds to keep young ladies off the streets so to speak.

Not that there were any streets in Muddlecombe, just a few well worn paths and a cart track leading in and out of the village. So when Mildred's parents died she took over the running of the school in the form of a Governor.

She had inherited her mother's beauty with doe eyes and eyelashes that could floor any man within a twenty mile radius. She was now in her forties with an hour glass figure and the misfortune to be married to the village roué.

Fiona had signed up to the local community college "Keep Fit" classes and to keep her figure in trim. She would occasionally drag Brewster down to the college during the day as part of his convalescing regime. She struck up a friendship with Mildred and was introduced to the other "outsiders", those who did not come from the descendants of the village. That is apart from Betty who ran the local shop and seemed to be an exception to the rule of the generally inbred local population.

So six months later Fiona was sitting on the lawn of Muddlecombe Manor with Betty and Lucinda, the lady of the manor, awaiting the last member of the "coven" or social committee to arrive.

One could, today as of any other day, feel the atmosphere belonging to the long hot summer days of the Second World War and expect a fly past of Spitfires any minute now doing a Victory Roll over the harvested hay bails. It was another lovely warm summer evening as Mildred O'Riley skipped down the lane from her cottage to the village green.

Mildred however was somewhere else. On the back of a white Arab stallion holding on with all her life to Omar Shariff who had just rescued her from the White Slave Traders and was escaping to his secret oasis. The white charger came to a sliding halt in a flurry of sand as Omar dismounted and lifted his damsel in distress off the ornate leather saddle and carried her into his Bedouin tent where he was about to ravish her and make mad passionate love to her. He was in the process of taking off her last

diaphanous veil and start the ravishing bit when her reverie was rudely interrupted.

'Even missus ohryelee, teeheeee, teeheeeee..'

'Oh, hallo, er, ....good evening, er...Mrs, er.....'

Mildred was frustrated into being brought back to reality by a passing villager whose name she had completely forgotten. Instead she looked across the green to the Post Office-cum-shop run by Bill and Betty Boring which was next to the Church. In a secluded corner of the green, next to the village pond, behind a well-trimmed privet hedge and with a newly painted white wooden gate, nestled Primrose Cottage which was currently empty since Brewster and Fiona had taken over the pub, Mildred's husband's second home.

Mildred met Betty coming over from the shop and at last they arrived at Muddlecombe Manor and were welcomed by Lucinda, Lady of the Manor. 'I sorry I'm late; I bumped into one of those .....

'Not one of those villagers?' asked Lucinda. 'One of those Crumbs, Dumbs, Dimms.....er the, er, the whassenames?' she continued.

'Dimmock,' replied Mildred. 'That's it. Mrs Dimmock, I can never remember her name.'

'Oh that'll be young Dense's mother. The handyman we employ,' confirmed Lucinda.

'That's the one. Isn't his name Dennis?' enquired Mildred.

'Yes, but you know how thick these villagers are so we called him Dense and it stuck,' Lucinda concluded haughtily, much to the general tittering of the assembled ladies.

Mildred like Fiona had been invited to join the "coven" through her contacts. Her grandfather was a northern industrialist who had eloped with one of the local bordello "ladies" and found Muddlecombe by mistake. When he died she married a local lad and had Mildred. She started up the school-cum-community college which was built to help educate young ladies to become self-sufficient, with such courses as macramé, lapidary, aromatherapy, self-defence and MIG welding.

Doe-eyed Mildred was still in her early forties and had that slim, lithesome figure and complexion of someone who'd been kept in a jar all her life.

Her husband Captain Creighky O'Riley MC had swept her off her feet at the local barn dance many years ago but had since moved his affections elsewhere, wherever his roving eye landed.

The four ladies gathered on regular basis at Muddlecombe Manor. Lucinda was another "import" into Muddlecombe and came with a considerable dowry to sustain the manor's upkeep.

So the girl's Saturday night out proceeded at Lucinda's with the usual game of whist only after they had enjoyed a nice meal and some wine. They had just started playing cards when the

conversation unusually got round to higher things and Mildred said her thoughts out loud.

'I've always wanted to learn to play bridge, you know, and especially with that nice Mr Omar Shariff.' She was off in Mills and Boon dreamland again.

'Come on Mildred keep your thoughts out of the gutter,' tittered Lucinda quickly followed by a general sniggering.

'No, I really think I would like to get involved with bridge. It sounds like such an interesting game.'

'I don't think it's much different from whist,' said Fiona. 'We played it at University when we had nothing else better to do.'

'Ooh, could you teach us Fiona?' said Mildred.

'It was a long time ago. I've forgotten more than I learnt.'

'I do remember reading somewhere about a holiday learning to play bridge. Let me go and have a look. I'm sure it was in one of those magazine supplements. I'll just pop into the sewing room, excuse me ladies, carry on without me.' Lucinda bustled out and came back with a weekend supplement rustling the pages in great apprehension.

'Just look at this girls, see here,' as she opened up the pages to show everyone. 'Learn how to play bridge in the Canary Islands for only £199 all inclusive for a week.'

'Let's have a look at that Lucinda?' said Betty taking a sudden interest.

'Me too,' said Fiona, even stirring the heartstrings of an accountant. It was about time she was due a break, having nursed her husband through his convalescence.

'Ooh, that's sounds ever so romantic. Do you think Omar Shariff will be there? Is it close to Egypt?' cooed Mildred with her brain in never-never land once more.

'At that price, fuck the bridge!'

Lucinda brought the evening's committal proceedings to an end with her usual succinct closing statement.

They all agreed to take a serious look at this holiday proposal and meet again. Betty, Fiona and Mildred gaily tripped out of the Manor in synchronised skipping mode and fell flat on their faces on the village green giggling their heads off.

## Chapter 2. Mrs Dimmock

The Lord, God bless him, was if nothing else, a belt and braces man and after he had decided on sending Gerantinium on his little mission felt that there should be some sort of back up involved.

So as there was a good woman behind every successful man, a PA behind every CEO, there needed to be someone handy for Gerantinium. After all it was fairly unknown territory and who knows what could happen.

He was currently chairing one of his committees, the AA Committee, that is the Archangels Association, not Alcoholics Anonymous, and sneaked this into the minutes under any other business. He looked at the agenda and saw a few Marys in attendance: Moses' sister; Jesus' mother; Mary Magdelene but stuck a pin in the plane Mary who happened to be scuttling around making the tea and generally bossing everybody about.

That's the one he thought and cornered her in the kitchen.

"Mary my dear, how are you up for a bit of a change?"

"Oh, hallo boss. You caught me unawares," she quickly brushed her fingers through her hair and tightened her apron strings.

"What have you got in mind?"

"Well, I've got this Greenfield situation coming up and need a backup for old Gerantinium."

"Old Gerantinium, God bless him. He's lovely isn't he? Needs a bit of a shakedown now and then but he's got a heart of gold. How can I help?"

"Well, I've got this new project for him to kick start a new world so to speak. Nothing dramatic, just a little sort of holiday home. A fresh start to try and iron out all our cock ups that we've had in the past. As you can imagine I wasn't all that chuffed about what they did to my boy Jesus."

"Oh, that was uncalled for wasn't it?" interrupted Mary.

"Yes, well any way, I have asked Gerantinium to keep it simple and feel that a little guidance wouldn't go amiss Do you see where I'm coming from?"

"Got you there boss. Say no more. I'm your man, so to speak. Perhaps we could keep in touch with the Association as an extra precaution? I've already got a few in mind who could help out in times of a crisis. Young Sidney, he's a good Jewish boy? "

"Mary, I knew I could depend on you. I'll leave it all up to you then. Re evaluate the situation once you've seen the lie of the land. Gerantinium should have everything ready to start soon. So liaise with him and God bless you my dear."

So Mary arrived but in keeping with the local traditions felt it best to change her name to something simple. Dimmock sounded relevant, to keep her profile low and uncomplicated.

Now, having the advantage of a member of the "AA" gave her various advantages over the normal worldly personnel.

To keep it even more simple she shortened the name to Mrs D. Being 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 to monitor all the other projects the boss had in hand.

This cadre was all part of Mrs D's strategic plan towards the benefit of Muddlecombe and we have already seen how the agents have been utilised to this end with the introduction of Mr Sidney Sidenose.

Yes, our solicitor from Shoreditch was all part of the heavenly plan.

By day she would be seen stumbling around the village in her shawl and bonnet picking up the local gossip but then at night

things changed. She became an erudite sophisticated business woman in her role of the secretary to the Inter Planetary Standards and Ethics committee.

This basically meant organising the meeting every other Thursday of the second month in Primrose Cottage. She had to provide the tea and biscuits (homemade), write the minutes, administer and implement the strategic project plans and generally sweep 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 shuffling the papers about a bit more.

'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,' 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. 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.

Gerantinium brushed the crumbs from his beard and gave a confirmatory cough. '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 of tea and the chair opened up the meeting.

Gerantinium started asking his various committee members how they were getting on but after an hour gave up and said, 'now how about the old crime rate ..... how's that coming along?' He looked to one of the committee members.

'Well there are a number of smaller influences getting in on the act as usual. You know, you stamp out one lot of baddies and along come another lot. The Russians have taken over from the Sicilians in the Mafia mode. It really is too much. I'd just got that Italian lot back into reasonable controllable areas such as Sicily and Las Vegas and these bloody Russians have started it all over again.'

'Oh, by the way, could I have a word please Chair?' Mrs Dimmock whispered humbly.

'Yes, certainly Mrs Dimmock.'

'Concerning our strategic immigration policy.....'

'God, yes, I'd forgotten all about that.' Gerantinium quickly intervened as the children in Muddlecombe were growing up a bit beady eyed and playing the banjo a lot. 'You have some fresh blood coming in?'

'Yes, well, it's about these Russians, I've taken the liberty of booking one of them in to Primrose Cottage in the next few days.'

'Well done Ms Dimmock. Where did you find this one? The chair enquired.

'Oh, good old Sidney.'

'Ah, the erudite Mr Sidenose. How is young Sidney these days?'

'Oh, you know Sidney. Always got his fingers in some pies or others,' Mrs Dimmock said matter-of-factly.

'Yes. And sometimes the pies go off. Any way well done Mrs Dimmock. And Mr and Mrs Kegworth seemed to have settled in jolly well wouldn't one say?' Gerantinium looked from her back to the committee.

'Oh arr, that's a cracking pint of bitter he serves up now eh lads?'

'Here, here,' was the general cry as Mrs Dimmock tried to get the committee back on track.

'I think the committee will welcome any help, I mean we have only had six new breeding imports into the village in the last two hundred years, and apart from our new young Asian doctor they don't seem to have done very well do they? 'Well, that is apart from Captain O'Riley,' Mrs Dimmock said in her defence.

'Yes, he definitely makes up for all the others doesn't he?' Gerantinium had a little chuckle to himself, which quickly spread around the room. He stopped himself and gave a couple of polite coughs and continued.

'Yes, well, anyway, I think Mrs Dimmock has a valid point there,' Gerantinium nodded thoughtfully.

'And,' Mrs Dimmock continued, 'there is also an area of concern with John over a recent London Bullion Robbery which needs attention and this can only help with the crime figures as well.'

'I don't follow you there, Mrs Dimmock?' Gerantinium was back to scratching his head again.

'Well, it just so happens that this Russian chap is tied in with that project as well as our erstwhile landlord of Primrose Cottage, young John. He doesn't know it yet but he will be pretty soon and we just may be able to kill two birds with one stone.'

'Well done Mrs Dimmock,' Gerantinium clapped his hands, 'Jolly good show. Now, any other business?' He looked around the room expectantly.

'Oh, and we have we had any replies from any of the other planets yet Mrs Dimmock.?' Queried Gerantinium.

'I am writing to them on a regular basis chair but nothing so far.'

'Damn bad show, damn bad show. Anyway, keep up the good work Mrs Dimmock.' Gerantinium added his motivational end to the proceedings.



### **Chapter 3. Boris Slobovitch**

Boris Slobovitch had served his country well through the Cold War. He had been trained to kill and was good at his job but now was demobbed after working for his old friend from Kiev, Podpolkóvnik or Lieutenant Colonel Chekov Yeboleksi in the infamous KGB headquarters in the Lubyanka building in Moscow. Since the break up of the Russian federation he had followed his friend into private commerce, the Russian Mafia.

He was then 'posted' to the Canary Islands to help set up the Tenerife connection. One of his duties was a security courier for one of Chekov's Russian banks where he was a well-known visitor and had befriended all the staff.

You really didn't want to 'be-enemy' Boris if you could possibly help it as Boris was six foot four and weighed in at twenty two stone.

His English friends he'd made in the local pub got to know of this and asked him if he could make contact with the Bank and arrange a transfer of goods for them in return for money where Boris would receive a nice little bonus. The Englishmen's spokesman, a man called "John" had found these "goods" lying around in an Brink's-Mat hangar in Heathrow and had borrowed them for a while.

So Boris walked in on one of his usual visits to the bank and plonked these 'goods' onto the manager's desk. It nearly broke the desk under the weight and the Manager's eyes nearly popped out of his sockets when he opened up the Hessian wrapping to reveal a lump of gold, or 'Ingot' to give it's correct title. But to Boris it was just a heavy lump.

He was staring at several hundred thousand dollars worth of 'lump' being offered by someone who probably knew nothing of foreign exchange rates let alone the vagaries of the Russian economy. He would put a bet on that he probably did not even know the gold rate.

The Bank Manager got up from his chair, walked round the desk and put his arm around Boris. Well, partially around Boris.

'Boris my friend,' the manager started trying not to drool too much. 'What do you want me to do with this lump of metal?'

'I understand it has a value and you give me money for it,' simplified Boris.

'Err, well, err, yes, sort of my friend. It is a highly irregular request, which has to go through the necessary channels and will take some considerable time to process.'

'I need money now!' simplified Boris with a bit more conviction.

The bank manager quickly figured out that "now" actually meant "now" or he would be another of Boris' victims.

After considerable amount of discussions concerning the world economy and the administration of money transfers, the bank manager offered Boris about a half of what the gold was really worth.

'Well Boris you certainly know how to drive a hard bargain,' continued the manager desperately trying to contain a scream of total elation.

'I'll get the cash for you right away. It will have to be in local Pesetas which will give you, let me work this out....eerrr. well my friend, you are the lucky one. Nearly one hundred million Pesetas!' He was feeling in a generous mood and had only rounded the exchange rate down by twenty five percent.

So Boris went back to his English friends with the money and was greeted with 'The robbing bastards!' They all looked at each other and apart from Boris, and burst into laughter.

Boris was duly rewarded with 1,000,000 pesetas and couldn't believe his eyes.

'That's not bad profit for a days work now then is it Boris me old mucker?' queried John the spokesman.

This intrigued him. He couldn't quite understand these nice Englishmen who allowed him to make this thing called profit. They made their profit, if his translation was correct, from something to do with "drink's mats". This totally puzzled him. If his memory of English Pubs or even the local pubs in Tenerife was correct, drinks mats were usually given away and got very wet and soggy.

He would have to look into this later.

Then one evening a blinding light hit him when the talk got round to pensions and retiring, like it does in the local.

'БВАПУ ЪФТ,' roughly translated meant 'Kinnell'.

Boris hadn't done anything about his retirement. They explained that, in England, when you put money into one of these pension things, the people you worked for put some money in it for you as well. And then the Government put some money in as well and gave you a big lump sum and a steady income when you had decided you were fit enough to become a pensioner and could stand not going to work every day.

'Yes, I must have pension,' he thought to himself in the Beefeaters Bar in Playa de Las Americas after his tenth pint of bitter. And so he went out and got a pension.

Boris continued his gold laundering service for his mates and was beginning to enjoy this.

The Bank Manager wasn't. It was very difficult to argue with Boris. One: because Boris didn't understand the essential 'fors' and 'againsts' of the argument, and two: he was one big son of a bitch. So the poor Bank Manager had to make do with only a forty-percent net profit margin.

Then in true Capitalism style, Boris took some of his employer's money and then a bit more out of his office expenses to compensate for what he thought the government should give him as his share of his pension and took some more lumps of gold to the bank etc. etc.

Then with the help of the nice Indian gentlemen he knew who'd worked in a diamond mine in South Africa, Boris brought some nice bits of jewellery, well, it hadn't been actually made into jewellery just yet, just nice bits of glass. He sent this home by one of his special couriers to his brother Ivan in Kiev to put in a security deposit box for safe keeping as you do, ready for his retirement.

And this was his pension fund. His friends in the pub all agreed this was by far and away the most tax efficient and fastest solution for somebody in his position to be able make up for all those lost years.

Boris had met Manuel who had just graduated from Barcelona university in Computer Science and he set him up in his office and started sending e-mails, faxes and letters that could be read. This was the new technological era and Boris was tickled pink to be a part of it.

Boris had 'Teknology'.

This is when things usually start to go pear shaped.

Boris had made e-mail contact with his brother Ivan back home in Kiev but he was getting some funny messages. He had suggested that he come out to see him on holiday and was now reading e-mails saying that his brother was having difficulty with his passport.

Very strange.

Around about the same time, he was talking to one of the lovely ladies in one of his Escort Agencies that he had to look after like you do, when all of a sudden she came out with 'I suppose you'll be tickled pink to see your old mate Checkoff again?'

Boris was stunned.

'Hallo Boris?' she said after a full minute's silence waving her hand in front of his face. 'The lights are on but there's obviously no one in.'

'I'm sorry, can you say that again please Miss Whiplash?'

'Yeah OK, I hear some geezer called Checkoff is coming out from your head office to see you as he hasn't seen you for a long time'

'Who told you that?' Boris quickly enquired. His mind was now back into gear and about to go into warp speed. Warp speed for Boris being about the same as second gear for a normal six-year-old.

'I dunno, I heard some of those important mates of yours talking amongst themselves. They was in a right old two and eight'

'They was in a what?' Boris inquired incredulously.

'They seemed a bit .err.....what's the word? Distressed. That's it. But they says that you and him is old buddies and that this geezer Checkoff.....What a funny name? Well any way,' she continued. 'They says he is really looking forward to seeing you. That'll be nice, eh Boris?'

Boris stood up, dumping the poor Miss Whiplash Labelle unceremoniously on the floor.

After some more blank stares Boris resumed.

'This most irregular. I have tekhnology in my office and yet am not getting tekhnology from head office. I must speak with Manuel,' and promptly walked away, his mind obviously on completely different matters than that of several minutes ago.

'Oh well, you win some, you loose some,' sighed Miss Whiplash.

Boris rushed back to see Manuel to investigate his "technology".

'I've checked all e mail messages from head office for the last two weeks, and it has only been stationery requisites and your new drop areas for the next consignment.'

'OK Manuel. I go for further information,' this meant he didn't have a clue what to do next, but a good stiff drink would probably clear his head. Boris walked out of the office and off to his other head office, the "Beefeaters' Bar" in Playa de Las Americas.

Boris was on his eighth pint when his English friends joined him.

'Hallo Boris me old china, what's eating you?'

Boris started to tell them about his old friend and boss, Chekov, coming to see him and how he hadn't been told him about his visit. And then about his brother's problem with his passport.

As they all knew about Boris's scam with the diamonds having helped him set it up, so they started putting two and two together.

After a few minutes conversation and the rearrangement of Boris' English into understandable logic, the picture started to become a bit clearer to them all.

'Let me get this straight then Boris, you've found out by mistake that your old mate and governor, what's-is-name, is coming to see you over here. Now he also happens to be the Big Man in the Organisation in your head office in Kiev. Is that right?'

'Da, da, yes, yes, he is doggies bollocks as you say,' replied Boris still in a state of deep thought.

'Now then, there's your brother Ivan back home in Kiev who can't seem to get out to see you. OK?'

'Da, da, yes, yes, Ivan having problems with visa.'

'So your boss hasn't told you he's coming and your brother can't get out of Russia, right?'

'Right' said Boris who could see that something was going to come of this conversation and perceivably brightened.

'So, have you told your boss about your pension scheme Boris?'

'No, why it in rules?'

'I take that is a "No" then?' replied John visibly cringing.

'So the employer's contributions haven't exactly been explained to the employer?' John continued in a clarifying mode.

'You don't tell me about that my friend?' Boris queried pensively.

'Silly me,' said John.

There was what you call a pregnant pause then, with Boris looking to everyone for the answer and everyone looking away from Boris not daring to give him the answer he didn't want to hear.

John, the main man, eventually plucked up courage.

'Do you think your head office may have noticed a certain trend in the turnover going in the wrong direction since you have introduced your pension scheme Boris?' he put forward with some trepidation.

'Ah, I know about these figures 'cause I got tekhnology now, well Manuel got it for me, any way, I'll go and speak to him.'

'Boris, me old mucker, what would happen, say, hypothetically speaking, if your boss found out someone was ripping him off?'

'Oh that's easy,' brightened up Boris, relieved to get a question he could answer.

'I get telephone call and go and kill him,' he said quite pleased with himself.

There was another pregnant pause.

'Boris, I don't think you've got time to go and speak to Manuel, I think you're in deep shit and need to be anywhere but here right now,' John said looking deeply into Boris' eyes.

'Deep shit?' inquired Boris.

'Yeah, that's English for trouble Boris me old mate, real nasty trouble and if I know your lot, you ain't got a lot of time to be somewhere else.'

This pregnant pause delivered the goods to Boris' brain this time

'БВАПУ ЪФТ,' roughly translated meant "Kinnell", 'I understand now, and I am in deep shit.' Boris looked round to all his friends in the sudden realisation of what they had just said.

'But you said pension idea very tax efficient,' he spluttered out.

'Yeah, but pension schemes are usually worked out in negotiations with the employers, not by the worker on a DIY scheme dipping his podgy little fingers into the till without telling his boss.'

Boris was astounded and stood there gobsmacked until John grabbed him by the arm and they all walked out into the street. Boris was a valuable asset to John and his mates and even though Boris may have been the old cold war enemy, he was definitely an ally with immense potential even yet.

'I think we need to get a lot of readies for you Boris me old mate and get you out of town a bit smartish. Where's your bank?' John said marching Boris in the direction he gave.

'Now then get as much dosh as you can and we'll meet you down at the bar at Puerto Colon in one hour. I know a man down there with a nice little boat with twin inboard Volvo Pentas that'll get you a long way away, bloody fast without any of them silly time wasting custom formalities.'

'And I know just the place back home where you can go and lie low until the heat's died down.'

They all hurried Boris along.

'Here Harry, where's that nice quiet little village where me Dad had that drum in the middle of bloody nowhere, were we sent Slasher and also that stockbroker bloke to lie low for a bit?'

'Christ Johnny, I can't remember, weren't it somewhere in Sussex?'

'No, it was Wiltshire wasn't it?'

'I thought it was Kent?'

'No, you're getting mixed up with the Welsh Borders.'

'Something like, err...Biddle, Fiddle, Muddle, Jesus, I can't remember. Oh, weren't it something to do with err. . 'snoring'... as well?'

## Chapter 4. Captain Creighky O'Riley MC

The sun shone brightly over the small village of Muddlecombe-cum-Snoring and even more brightly out of the backside of Captain Creighky O'Riley MC., late of the Irish Guards, whose smooth tongue could charm the knickers off Margaret Thatcher, not that you'd particularly want to!

His tall six foot two inches frame and dashing rakish looks combined with his patter still managed to turn a few female heads several decades his junior. As long as their boobs were bigger than their brains.

Now in his late fifties, his past cavalry exploit's (not all of which had been done on a horse) seemed to have blessed him with the ability to maintain a military posture that belied an inveterate roué and piss artist.

Captain Creighky O'Riley was one of those fortunate people in life who had not only swallowed the whole bloody Blarney Stone but has also been well in front of the queue when they were dishing out four leafed clovers. He was at the front of the queue for most other things as well, but lucky..... He could win the lottery without buying a ticket!

He was always in the right place at the right time. He would bend down to tie up his shoe lace just as a native assegai spear hummed over head, imbedding itself into some poor defenseless fellow in his regiment who quite obviously had been at the back of the queue in the luck strakes. He would then walk away in total ignorance and carry on as if nothing had happened.

Ignorance was another benefit he had been blessed with but unfortunately he was totally ignorant of this.

Now it is generally known that Creighky was quite well up on his horses but it is generally not known how this came to be.

Creighky's story, like most of his exploit's, was only partly true. He wasn't actually 'in' the Irish Guards, more 'at' the Irish Guards being detached to them from the Pioneer Corps.

His love of horses stemmed from his early days as a stable boy back in Ireland with one of the famous Irish racehorse trainers. After a particularly heavy session in the local and trying to increase

profits in the Guinness organisation single handedly, he chanced his arm with one of the fair local maidens who guided him back to the stables with the promise of ever-lasting love and good shag.

Unfortunately his navigation skills had a lot to be desired and he ended up bedding down with a lovely all right, a thoroughbred racehorse. He wouldn't have known the difference between Red Rum or Raquel Welch in the state he was in, and his young amour felt it best to leave him there for the night but thought it a good wheeze to tell all the other lads of his predicament.

So when he awoke in the morning his colleagues greeted him with great mirth.

Has it been mentioned that Creighky swallowed the Blarney Stone? He gets up as cool as you like in the morning and brushing himself down, announced to the assembled crowd that he had finished his Horse Whispering duties and that the horse would be fine now.

So from then on he was known as the Horse Whisperer, among other things.

The Army took advantage of this specialist knowledge in the Pioneer Corps by putting him in charge of the Local Terrain Logistics Transport Division. Pack Horses or Donkeys as they are more commonly known. That was how he ended up in Korea moving ammunition up to the front line on his packhorses when he made contact with the Irish Guards and they subsequently made good use of his heroic escapades for their own propaganda.

The official line was that he had courageously charged the North Korean lines in total disregard for his own safety and overrun a machine gun post single handed, which subsequently led to the capture of a vitally important hill overlooking strategic positions.

The facts speak slightly differently.

With his social image in mind for when he returned to Blighty, he was practicing Polo one night after a particular heavy drinking session in the Officers mess. His horse was then bitten by a rabid dog and panicked and charged towards the enemy positions at a mighty gallop.

Pissed out of his brains and with his boot stuck in the stirrup, with his shirt tails flying in the air, Creighky passed as a fearful sight flaying his Polo stick about which the newly arrived Chinese conscripts, never having set eyes on a "White Devil" before, mistook for a bazooka and subsequently fled fearing a further squadron of white skinned hellish banshees coming at them from out of the gloom.

The rest of the Mess thought this was a jolly good prank and followed the lunatic Subaltern (he was subsequently promoted fairly rapidly) across the enemy lines. Not realising his impediment, they fêted this great act of chivalry and when the Nobs at the War Office



got to hear of this, made the most of it as propaganda and dished out an immediate Military Cross, and so the legend of the capture of Hill 122 was established.

He had twisted his buttock muscle and knee in the escapade and this made for an excuse to get rid of probably one of the most stupid members of the Regiment on medical grounds and at the same time gaining maximum publicity, thus killing two birds with one stone.

The Muddlecombe time warp swallowed him into oblivion but with some sort of hazy gallantry reputation that preceded him and with a pretty decent pension to boot. It was lust at first sight plus his shiny boots and the uniform that caught Mildred's eye as she tried to pick him off the floor at the Young Farmer's barn dance. Her Florence Nightingale mentality and the lack of anything else decent in trousers for a fifty miles radius formed the bond that drew the two young innocents into a fervent lustful partnership. How times had changed.

Anyway, ignorance is bliss as they say, and Creighky was pretty blissful today apart from this bloody contraption he was fighting with and his bliss was about to be blighted. The blue sky and warm balmy weather had lured him out into the garden tendered by his loving wife. Mildred loved the garden not Creighky. The bees were humming amongst the profusion of colour in the garden as he wrestled with the mechanics of a deck chair.

Horses, aircraft and women you always mounted on the left, but deck chairs posed an altogether trickier proposition to Creighky. At last he had the deck chair assembled and after collecting his book and a glass of Pimms he turned the chair into the sun and gently lowered his gaunt frame down into what promised to be a beautiful afternoon of relaxation when the whole contraption collapsed.

After much spluttering, arm waving and kicking he managed to catch enough breath to call for assistance from his loving wife.

'Mildred!' He screamed. 'Don't just stand there you silly cow, give me a bloody hand with this fucking stupid thing'. His Irish temper coming to the fore.

Mildred was jerked out of her reverie.

Mildred inhabited two worlds, the real and the Mills & Boon version. She was just about to go down on Warren Beatty when someone's screams pierced her gossamer haze and dragged her screaming back into the real world.

'Coming sweetie pie,' she gasped. 'We all know who's a fucking stupid thing,' she muttered under her breath as she raced towards the thrashing figure trying to escape from the hell of a man-eating deck chair.

'There you are dear,' she spluttered out of breath after helping the gangling buffoon from the entangled mass of wood and canvas. Your actual ordinary Cavalry or Hussar type of persons are very good on horses but when it gets down to things close to the ground they tend to act as if they had left the oxygen used for the brain in the upper atmosphere.

'You really must be a bit more patient with these simple things in life, dear. Here, let me put it up for you.' Her mind slipped back to Warren Beatty.

'Err, there you are, dear. Now just sit down gently and I'll get your book and your drink and you can just lie back and relax.'

"I hope it chokes you," she mused sneeringly, handing him his drink with the sincere smile of a rattlesnake.

'It's about time we got some decent garden furniture,' he grunted as he lowered himself gingerly into the deck chair.

'Now look, the bloody Pimm's spilt. Be a poppitt and get me another will you?' He said holding his glass up like a beggar hoping for a penny.

Creighky was unaware of Mildred as she took the glass and went slowly back to the house in the summer sun, gently brushing the flowers as she walked. She felt a skip coming on but remembered her age and quickly dismissed the idea.

'I'll give him poppitt.' She thought.

'I get some arsenic and "poppitt" into his Pimms.'

"Poppitt into his Pimms."

"Poppitt into his Pimms."

A little tune started to germinate in her mind as she started to break out into a skip. The idea not only germinated but also initiated the uncontrollable skipping motion, which she found quite enjoyable and found quite easy to manipulate in a sort of senile way.

'Poppitt into his Pimms,' Mildred hummed trying to pluck a relevant rhyme to match the words. The skip had lifted her spirits and she was now smiling to herself in a sort of inane way. Suddenly realising someone may be watching, she felt a bit of a silly billy and slowed down replacing the grin with a frown. Looking nervously around, she was relieved to find nobody was watching and walked calmly into the house.

Filling the Pimms glass up with fruit made an easy hiding place for all sorts of exotic variations. What could she pop in? Rummaging through the kitchen cabinets she found an old plastic ice cream container with lots of small bottles. Her eyes focused on a small dusty bottle of Senakot.

The afternoon sun was still shining brightly in the heavens as Mildred skipped back out to her beloved who by this time had was

having difficulty with, not the deck chair but the paper in the gentle afternoon breeze.

'Here's your drink poppitt,' Mildred said brightly handing him the time capsule for disaster and with a demure smile she turned and went back to her horticultural duties in the garden. Everything in the garden was suddenly looking a lot rosier so to speak and Mildred applied herself vigorously to the trimmings and weeding with added zest. Today was Saturday and Mildred was going round for a game of whist with the "girls" this evening.

It was Creighky's turn to have his reverie broken by Mildred who said, 'I'm off out with the girls tonight poppitt, oh and by the way we are all going away on holiday together. Oh, and we're all going to Tenerife' she mentioned in passing.

'Yes dear, I'm probably going down the pub,' muttered Creighky, as an automatic reply, thinking Tenerife was probably a new supermarket or something.

The hazy summer afternoon slowly passed in to the early evening sunset without a Spitfire in sight. Mildred finished up her gardening duties pottering about tidying up with her highly technical engineering devices, as Creighky looked upon them. He awoke from his slumber beneath the paper under the sun with gentle stretching movements indicating that something active was about to happen in the not too distant future.

Little did he realise how much action he was going to be involved in and how embarrassing it was going to be for him.

'Can I pop anything into the oven for you dearest?' She added knowing full well what the reply was going to be.

'Don't you bother yourself sweetest. I'll get a bite to eat at the "Snort". You never know, there may be a bit of Craic there tonight as well.'

Creighky had gone down to the pub nearly every Saturday night for the past ten years. And Mildred knew the sort of crack he was after. Only it will be the other people in the bar who will be getting the craic at Creighky's expense tonight.

\* \* \*

At this point we should really talk about Blossom Deecup. She is obviously a lot easier to look at than talk about but this was one of Gerantinium's little projects that he had carried out all on his own. He used his own initiative without any help from the boss and he didn't even have it down in the committee's minutes. He felt very proud about his little achievement and it gave him great satisfaction to think about it let alone look at what he had achieved.

It wasn't that he thought Fiona ugly, she was in many aspects quite attractive but she was an accountant and was more and more being involved in the community so Gerantinium decided

that Brewster could do with a little help in the pub. The was of course a small matter of making an old man very happy but he felt he owed it to the village as a whole to give them some happiness as well. The majority of them were old men anyway so he felt it only right and proper to share his benefits with them as the community elder.

So he put an ad in the local paper : "Wanted, someone to make an old man very happy."

He eventually managed to plough through the hundreds of sexual deviants , fetishes, she boys, erotic, hot & horny , happy ending home massages, etc until he came across "I'm a barmaid and I don't get any complaints from *my* customers!"

The interview was a little one sided as Gerantinium could hardly speak in between saliva sodden lips. The eyes nearly popped out of their sockets as he showed her around the village and got a unanimous vote from every one, well the male voters any way until he hit the Fiona barrier.

"I'm not having *that* in my pub!"

It was then that Blossom pulled out a piece of paper from Oxford Brookes University showing a masters degree in Philosophy.

"I do the washing up as well !"

Brewster had the largest smile hiding behind Fiona as did the majority of male villagers who had followed Gerantinium and the new recruit around occasionally slipping over their own drool.

Brewster managed to wipe his smile off his face pretty damn quickly as Fiona whipped round to glare at him until he managed to say. "This will give you a lot more spare time in the community darling and I'm sure there could also be the possibility of a rise in the turnover and subsequent profits."

"Profits" was a word our dour Scottish accountant loved to hear and so it was settled and another soul entered the wonderful, whacky world of Muddlecombe cum Snoring.

And a lot of men were made very happy.

The "Snort and Truffle" pub was filling up nicely for a Saturday night in Muddlecombe as Blossom Deecup was clearing up the glasses from the tables when Creighky walked in. Blossom was the only thing that kept many men sane in Muddlecombe. Her chestal areas were in most normal men's dreams most of the time in Muddlecombe. They were on Creighky's mind *all* the time.

However he was now confronted with a lesser-known part of her anatomy as she bent over, and taking advantage of an ample builders bum target area, plunged his hand into the void.

'Hallo you old Shag bag,' he oozed with all his charm.

Crack!

Thud!

The slap to Creighky's face echoed around the lounge bar as grown men winced and closed their eyes in disbelief as to the unbelievably stupidity of the careless Casanova. The thud as knee met testicles was not so audible but none the less extremely visible as Blossom's automatic reaction slowly gleaned into the face and body actions of Creighky.

Blossom had been practicing this little routine in the Ladies Self Defence classes at the Community College and was extremely gratified to have been supplied with such an easy target this early into the syllabus.

Creighky's body slowly doubled up as his eyes filled with tears, as did all the other men's in the room.

It was round about then that Mildred's time bomb kicked in. To be fairly precise, it was exactly then. The expression on Creighky's face was an absolute picture as he suddenly became aware of, not only the pain on his face and lunch box areas, but now a warm sensation to the rear was slowly dawning on him.

The three sensations completely clouded his judgment as he stood in the middle of the bar not knowing what the bloody hell to do next.

'Oh, it's you Creighky,' Blossom said with a twinkle in her eye turning round in feigned surprise and looking round the room to gain maximum effect and plaudit's.

She continued, 'I'm awfully sorry Creighky, I didn't know it was you, I hope I haven't hurt you me Old Fruit.'

This brought much amusement from the rest of the audience in the bar who had stopped everything by now and were desperately trying not to break out into hysterical laughter at Creighky's predicament.

Trying to stand up, he became even more aware of the warm sensation to the rear spreading itself around a larger surface area with every movement. The initial winding effect from Blossom's blows now turned to convulsions as Creighky's contorted body tried to accommodate the numerous sensations in the various parts of his anatomy.

His brain was shouting at him, "you've coughed in your rompers you stupid bastard, but for Christ's sake don't try anything clever like trying to stand upright or your balls will fall off!"

The next message advised him to keep his hands on the bits that hurt most or things would get a lot messier. Then try walking from the knees down keeping his thighs pressed together as hard as he could and get to the nearest convenience a bit smartish! The communication channels in his brain eventually sorted themselves

out into some reasonable logical sequence and the muscles started to kick into action trying to co-ordinate with the memory cells as to the direction of the nearest Gents.

The place was in total hysterics by now watching this demented human figure trying to respond to all these various instructions from the brain at the same time. All this, without recourse to any external communications, apart from a few splutterings and groans.

'Christ alive Blossom, you've bandjaxed the poor bastard!' and 'Phew, what's that bloody awful pong,' were some of the comments flying about the bar, from those who were as doubled up as Creighky was, only with hysterics.

Creighky crabbed his way, in a newly invented walking motion that kept the top three quarters of his body totally motionless, towards the toilet. He eventually made it to the safe haven and once secure in cubicle began to take stock of the situation. The ever-warming sensation to the rear now prioritised itself in the order of action points and he set about trying rectifying this problem.

'Bloody hell!' he muttered under his breath looking around in desperation for a Fairy Godmother as he set about peeling his lower garments off.

Several minutes later he opened the cubicle door slowly hoping to find a handy launderette with a discrete washerwoman.

Lucky! Has it ever been mentioned that Creighky was lucky? A few minutes later after completing his ablutions he heard a whistling noise from outside and rushing back into the cubicle; he stood on the toilet and managed to open a small window to see someone passing by in the car park to the rear of the pub.

'I say there Old Chap?' he hissed loudly trying to get his head sideways through the aperture to make contact with his prospective savior. The passer by stopped in his tracks and looked round.

'How'd you fancy making a few quid there my friend?' the whispers grew in confidence.

'I'm in a spot of the old bother here. It's the old war wound don't you know,' he said getting the old charm offensive into gear.

'Could you be getting me some trousers from somewhere? I'd be the most grateful person on this whole planet. And that's a fact!'

'Da, da, yes, yes, oh, ya. I am being in war myself, Comrade. Sorry, my old friend,' came the reply in a strange middle European thick accent. 'You are wanting trouser, da?'

'Well actually, a pair would do nicely there,' replied the side ways face with a rather sheepish grin. 'And there's a few quid in it for yourself,' the charm continued.

'Da, da, yes, yes, I am having trouser in cottage and will go. Please to wait, I not longing. I rush now and be back in bloody fast time.' And with that he lumbered off.

Creighky spent the longest five minutes of his life hoping no one would come into the Gents. One, because of the smell and, two, to catch him talking to some strange foreign Johnny through the loo window. Mercifully his pride was in tact as the foreign gentleman returned and handed him a pair of trousers through the window before anyone entered.

'God bless you there Sir. You're a scholar and a Gentleman, so you are. Now I've just to drop some clothes out which I'll be round to collect later and you must come into the bar and let me get you a drink. Is that a deal?'

'Da, da, yes, yes, I am enjoying drinking in English pub. I will be coming around pretty damn smart.'

With that Creighky waited till he'd gone and deposited his laundry out of the window before releasing himself from his 'cell'. Cleaning himself up, he returned to the freedom of the lounge bar.

Creighky's charm and natural ability to lie his way out of any situation saw his safe return into the bar. He walked in, holding up the extra large pair of trousers and coolly took his place at the bar as if nothing had happened.

'Blossom darling, that's a wicked left hook you've there, to be sure, but didn't I forget to tell you about me old war wound,' he announced more loudly than usual to the barmaid as he entered back into the bar.

'Do you know Creighky, you must have overlooked it completely,' Blossom replied sarcastically.

'I'll do you a deal Creighky,' Blossom continued looking up from her bar duties. 'You keep your hands off my arse and I'll keep my knee off your balls. Is that fair enough?'

'You've a sweet tongue in your head, so you have Blossom,' Creighky agreed.

'It's a gift,' Blossom muttered under her breath getting back to her duties.

'I like you're new trousers Creighky, very becoming,' said one of the local wags.

'Da, da, yes yes, they are becoming from me,' came a cheery if not quite correct English voice that boomed out from behind.

A stillness came over the bar as a dark shadow loomed across the floor and a pretty good imitation of a grizzly bear walked, well lumbered, into the bar towards Creighky.

'To be sure, there you are my friend,' Creighky said turning round to be confronted by a large figure of a middle-aged man with

the ruddy complexion of a country bumpkin. Only you wouldn't be arguing with this bumpkin.

'Now then, what's it to be my friend?' Creighky hastened.

The bumpkin waddled over to Creighky's side and looking at Blossom said, 'I'll be having something large and warm please. I think a pint of your smashing bitters please,' he said licking his lips.

Taking Creighky's hand in his shovels, the grizzly bear warmly pumped them up and down. 'Boris Slobovich at pleasure of you my old friend.'

Creighky, who was no lightweight himself, felt the earth rumbling about him as this pumping action slowly stopped and he was released back into freedom. Trying hard to smile and rearrange the bone structure at the same time, Creighky choked on the words. 'Well, Blossom, you'd best be getting this nice gentleman a drink then.'

'Da, da, yes, yes, you are schoolboy and gentleman,' Boris continued, mistranslating.

Da, da, yes, yes was Boris' way of double-de-clutching from Russian into English. A trick he had learnt during his earlier two years stay in London whilst learning English. He changed gear from Russian into neutral and then, from neutral in to English with another gear change giving his brain time to assimilate the new language.

'I am loving your English beer my friend, and what is being your name please?'

'Oh sorry old chap how damn rude of me. The name's Creighky. Creighky O'Riley. Captain Creighky O'Riley MC, late of the Irish Guards don't you know. At your service Boris old chap.'

'You are guarding Irish please?' questioned Boris. He did not realise the enormity of his mistake in allowing Creighky to open up a whole new can of worms with his repertory of muck and bullets about the Korean War and anything else that he could get away with in front of a brand new audience.

Creighky visibly straightened and was about to launch into his oratory when his hour was cruelly cut short by a voice behind him.

'Dense, how the devil are these days? I haven't seen you for some time,' a voice from the bar called out to the person just walking in.

Creighky looked round to see the newcomer walk into the bar.



## Chapter 5. Dense Dimmock

When Boris walked into a room there was a partial eclipse of the daylight. When Dense entered a room, there was the opposite, a sort of white hole.

At five foot eight and weighing in at ten stone dripping wet he was what one would call, insignificant. His permanently happy smiling face, dimples either side of his wide grin, belied someone who didn't have a care in the world. If he knew what "ignorance is bliss" meant it wouldn't make a great deal of difference because of his ignorance.

But he did have two things going for him:

1. His mother, Mrs Dimmock
2. and an extremely large penis.

The ubiquitous Mrs Dimmock has already been covered and no doubt item 2 will pop up later, but right now he was about to become extremely useful.

Everyone in the 'Snort' knew of the consequences of introducing Dense into the conversation but this was now in everybody's best interest. Rather than listening to Creighky's pack of lies for the umpteenth time, they felt the better of the two evils to be with Dense. And anyway, you could have a laugh with Dense. Well sometimes.

Dense Dimmock, whose proper name was Denis, had his basic stupidity at school mistakenly diagnosed as dyslexia. He thought such a long word like that must be very important and also quite a useful talking point. You didn't really want to introduce Dense into things like conversations as they tended to get a bit convoluted.

Oh, Oh, this looked like it was going to happen all over again.

'I used to be dyslexic but I'm KO now,' sneered Creighky haughtily, in a non-too quiet aside. He was a tad pissed off at missing out at the chance of launching into his full 'muck and bullets' routine. Unfortunately this wasn't quite quiet enough and most people at the bar picked it up and chortled quietly to themselves.

As did Dense.

'Yes, well, I did OK, didn't I?' came the natural slow, steady reply from Dense in his straightforward manner.

The shutters of silence came clattering down all around the bar and all you could hear were the frantic movements of neurons in the brain cells trying to pick up any threads of evidence with an outside chance of being vaguely connected to this newly introduced topic of conversation.

After a few seconds Creighky thought he had grasped one.

'So, err...you err.. did all right then Dense?'

Dense slowly sipped his pint as if nothing untoward was happening

'Oh yeah,' he continued nonchalantly. 'I was OK with that.' Another few seconds of silence and fervent brain cell movements passed.

'Right, then Dense, so you were OK then?' Blossom put her bit in to keep the momentum going.

Another slow sip followed by the reply from Dense without bothering to even lift his eyes. 'Yeah, I was OK with OK.'

Silence.

Creighky had a go but for the life of him couldn't quite understand how he had drawn the short straw to enter into this particular debating circle.

'You were OK with OK then Dense?'

This really focused every body's mind now as all the brain cells had surrendered a long time ago.

'Yeah, like you said the,... dis...dix...dick...this bloke what was like me, had a problem with his OK's' like they come out like a KO.'

Silence.

Some of the brain cells had been kick started and were forming into a pattern that nearly meant go! Everybody was waiting on baited breath for the continuing saga from Dense. After another long drink he continued.

'Yeah like I said, I'm OK with OK, '

The brain cells all gave up again. Dense continued.

'I can spell OK, OK, you know , like , not KO, but your actual, OK, don't you see?'

The brain cells and every body's breathing, started up again as their world was slowly being reintroduced back to reality again.

"So you can spell OK, OK, then Dense?" were the words that nearly came out of Blossom's mouth but her brain managed to stop this process. She knew full well it would only lead to another reply from Dense and another brain seizure which could be as painful as the last one. Unfortunately the very same words came out of Creighky's mouth.

All the brain cells ran for cover.

'Yeah, that's it in a nut shell,' Dense picked up brightly with the realisation that somebody had figured out that being able to spell OK was a real advantage in life and that he could be considered a really useful member of society. Dense had put down his pint and was looking around smiling at the thought that they had recognised the genius in him at long last.

Blossom took the initiative and grabbing Dense by the shoulders, turned him back to the bar and offered him another pint.

There was one set of brain cells that had actually not got involved in this battle of the intellects. But then they were Russian cells and could be excused for missing out on this particular exercise. Boris was blissfully unaware of the social calamity of engaging into conversation with Dense and got on with his favourite pastime, drinking English bitter. He was particularly taken with this beer as it had a unique taste and decent bite to it as well.

Turning to Creighky he commented after finishing his third pint in about 10 seconds.

'My good friend, I think that must be best pint of lovely English beer I am having for long time.'

'Blossom darling could you be so good as to get this nice gentleman another drink?'

'How can I resist you Creighky, that's if you have the money?'

'Here you are me darling,' said Creighky sliding the money over slowly but still well away from Blossom in order to try and get her to bend forward.

'I am having knicker name of Boris seven bellies,' the voice boomed out next to Creighky.

That was quick promotion for you.

'Knicker name? oh, you mean nickname?' replied Creighky.

'Well, here's your drink Boris my friend. Now don't you be rushing this lovely English drink? It should be rolled around the mouth and the taste savoured before you swallow,' said Creighky. This meant don't drink so bloody fast you buffoon or you'll cost me a fortune.

He was about to explain that there was a certain beer from across the Irish Sea that was far better quality than your actual English rubbish when he suddenly remembered the price of it. This left a small gap in the conversation around the bar for some 11 microseconds.

'Where do you come from Boris?' said a voice beside Creighky.

This caught Boris by surprise as he was just initiating this new tasting procedure recommended by his friend and rolling the beer around his mouth. Choking on this he spluttered some froth all over the bar and after wiping his mouth with his sleeve replied.

'I am coming from Canaries,' said Boris, and quickly returned to the task at hand.

Creighky could see all sorts of complications coming up here and stepped back letting Dense continue the conversation which no doubt was going to be very interesting if not confusing. The rest of the brain cells in the vicinity of the bar all ran for their helmets again.

'Did you just say you are a canary?' queried Dense thoughtfully.

'Da, da, yes, yes my friend, I'm coming from the islands,' Boris replied quickly returning to his drink.

The sorts of mental pictures going on in Dense's mind were zooming around everybody else's minds. There was going to be another neuron explosion soon. Every body could see it coming.

'The islands?' Dense continued with the inquisition.

'Uh her,' spluttered a faint reply from between the lips of Boris and his pint. There was not a lot going to stop Boris with his favourite pastime, which was not partaking in sensible conversations with anybody whilst he had a pint of beer in front of him.

'He's a canary and he comes from the islands,' continued Dense slowly to himself.

Meanwhile Boris had finished his task at hand and had placed the glass on the bar licking his lips and looking around at the company who were all trying to hum, or whistle, or do anything except get involved in the current conversation.

'I am thinking I am being rude person and should be getting drinks for all my friends.'

The brain cells leapt back into action amazingly fast.

It was Fiona's night off tonight as she had gone off to her regular 'committee' meeting at Lucinda's with the girls and left Brewster, the landlord in charge. Brewster had come round to join Blossom behind the bar with the feeling that something of interest was about to happen. Having overheard the initial conversation he put his tuppence in for all it was worth just to stir things up a bit.

'My good friend, as a visitor to our village I'm sure your host should be looking after you and my friend Mr O'Riley is deserting his duties.'

'My friend O'Riley OK, but I buy drinks now,' with that he banged his hand gently on the table as a sign of a final decision. This nearly broke the bar top but definitely focused the minds of those within sight of the bar and nobody was going to argue with Boris.

Creighky heaved a sigh of relief at his get out clause as he could see an expensive evening coming up.

'I am buying drinks now for all friends and Mr O'Riley will have to wait next round.'

Creighky nearly choked on his beer. Brewster could see some fun and games coming up tonight and every danger of a profitable evening for a change. The bar bell rang out as Brewster announced that the nice Mr Boris was getting everyone a drink and was nearly killed in the rush.

In the commotion that followed Boris handed Brewster a duty free bag full of well-fingered money, which were not coins of the realm. Well not coins of *this* realm. There must have been about a million pesetas scrunched up tightly in the bag. Brewster could see a very profitable evening coming up.

'Boris my friend, a little word in your ear sir.' Pulling Boris aside he continued.

'We have a wee problem here. This is not in Sterling my friend.'

'Sterling?' Puzzled Boris.

'Oh sorry, yes I am understanding problem. I am having rush from port and forget to change money. Is this not OK?'

'No problem my friend. I'll look after you. I can get this changed on Monday when I go to the bank. I'll count it out now and give you a receipt and we'll make sure you can carry on drinking, with your own little account behind the bar, is that OK, do you understand me my friend?'

'Da, da, yes, yes, you a schoolboy and gentleman my friend. You give me bit of paper with writing on OK?'

'No problem there Boris. Now let's just agree the amount. Meanwhile I'll get the lovely Blossom to give you and your friends a drink'.

Blossom duly agreed while Brewster counted out the money, and calculating the exchange rate, which included a handsome commission charge, got Boris to sign for the dosh.

'Oh, you come from the Canary islands!' was the cry from Dense in sudden realisation. The conversation was brought to a grinding halt once more as everyone looked at Dense completely stunned until they slowly regained the thread of the last conversation.

'Isn't that were they have all them raving parties with lots of bubble bath?' continued Dense.

'I think you're getting mixed up with the Ibiza there Dense,' advised Brewster in desperation. Continuing he turned back to Boris.

'There's your receipt my friend. So you're saying you're Spanish from the Canaries. Which one?' He asked.

'No I am Russian from Tenerife,' he replied quickly, picking up his beer and starting immediately to try and drink it before it

evaporated. You weren't going to get much sense out of Boris for the next few minutes.

Poor Dense stood there, with an even more puzzled look on his face, totally bewildered. His mind had traversed three continents in as many seconds and this hurt. This concussed everybody else as well and the conversation had what you call a pregnant pause.

'Are you staying in Muddlecombe?' Asked Creighky.

There was another pregnant pause while Boris finished his pint and licking his lips again replied.

'Oh yes I am staying in friend's house from Tenerife.'

Brewster enquired further. 'Which house would that be Boris?'

'Oh lovely English cottage. I just arrived. I think name like some flower.'

'That wouldn't be Primrose Cottage by any chance would it now?'

'Ah, the old Primrose Cottage,' Dense confirmed not really wanting a reply and he wasn't disappointed.

Dense was a popular lad in the village. He worked for the D'Arcy-Landacres on their estate doing all the odd jobs that nobody else would do and Lucinda in her modern thinking had sent him on as many courses at the local community college as she could. There were several reasons for this.

One, it improved the quality of Dense's work.

Two, it was bloody sight cheaper than employing a separate plumber, electrician, chippy, gardener, builder etc.

Three, it was extremely tax efficient getting all sorts of government training grants, and four, she could hire Dense out on a subcontract labour basis during his quiet times and earn a nice little profit.

Dense was never short of a bob or two as not only did he work for Lucinda but also for his Mum, Mrs Dimmock in looking after Primrose Cottage whenever it was left empty without any tenants.

He had rewired the place completely putting them new fangled square pin electric sockets in, and taken delivery of van loads of new fangled electric bits of equipment like televisions, video recorders, telephones (Dense had to leave that to some engineer from the city who only took six weeks to find the place and parked anywhere he liked) and all sorts of modern cooking appliances which Dense had not the slightest idea what to do with. But he made sure they worked and put them away. He wasn't sure if some of them were cooking appliances at all. But that's change for you. Dense had watched Brewster and his wife come and go, as tenants of Primrose Cottage and could now see another tenant in the shape of Boris.

Boris was now on his ninth pint much to the alarm of Creighky who was wishing he had never made such a generous offer. But considering all things equally he could be still stuck in the loo in a very compromising position. So Creighky sighed and resigned himself to fate, hoping Boris would soon fall over and relinquish him of his duty.

Boy, was he in for a big disappointment.

Dense and Boris were deep in conversation. Nobody understood what the other was saying but that didn't matter much as long as the drink was flowing. Dense had made an offer to help with any problems about the house and was now going into the technicalities of drinking.

'So you're a bitter man then Boris?' enquired Dense.

'No, I very happy man,' came the unexpected reply.

'No, Boris what I'm saying is that you obviously like drinking the old bitter. The English beer?' Dense had raised his voice at the same time as he raised his glass and pointed to it.

Brewster, Blossom and Creighky were all sort of involved in this conversation. They were all trying to pick up any intelligent life in the way of meaningful words that may pop up now and then but generally speaking after the initial confusion, kept at arms length until the probability of being called back into some form of intelligent resumption of activities.

Brewster was waiting in case another bag of pesetas came his way again.

Creighky was waiting for a chance to get in with his Korean gallantry monologue, but at the same time realised that this exercise could be extremely expensive by the way Boris was throwing beer down like he had a death wish.

Blossom was waiting in case Creighky started up his Korean gallantry thing and to make sure he didn't try and sneak out of his obligation to keep Boris going in beer. Meanwhile there was a terrible noise of dogs barking and cats and screeching coming from outside. Someone walked into the bar and Brewster quizzed them.

'What the bloody hell is that racket going on outside?'

'It looks like some dirty tramp has left a bag of old clothes out the back by the car park and the cats and dogs are fighting over the rubbish. Smells like a bag of shit to me Brewster,' the man replied.

Creighky's face went into a pained look as he closed his eyes in agony. That was his new cavalry twills gone for a Burton.

'You feeling OK there Creighky?' inquired Blossom mischievously.

'Oh, yeah, OK thanks Blossom. It's the old war wound playing up a bit there don't you know.' Creighky said very humbly, desperate for a hole in the ground to come and swallow him up.

'Have you never tried Lager Boris?' Dense asked.

'Sorry my friend?' Boris looked up from his pint.

'Have you ever tried to drink lager instead of the bitter?' Dense held up the glass as an example. This had interrupted Boris' drinking routine but he thought it was a fair enough question.

'Oh, da, da, yes, yes, I have been drinking the Pils, I mean the lager. But I am getting the bubble bottom.'

'The what?' said Dense puzzled, as was everyone else.

Boris continued drinking his beer and after finishing his mouthful, about half a pint, thoughtfully carried on. 'The Pils giving me the bubble bottom, bitter is no problem.'

'Bubble bottom?' Was the general enquiry.

'Da, da, yes, yes, the Pils is a lot of bubbles going in and a lot of bubbles coming out.'

Dense's brain cells rejoiced in having got the solution so fast and loudly proclaimed for all to hear.

'Oh **FARTING!** You mean, farting Boris?'

Everybody winced.

'Farting, da, da that's OK my friend. But English bitter is no farting.' Boris continued looking round to Brewster with an empty glass.

'Creighky you're not looking after your visitor?' Blossom interjected to the misery of Creighky. Things were going down the pan for Creighky, but hotting up for everyone else this Saturday night. The introduction of the jolly red giant into everybody's life in Muddlecombe was going to be a lot of fun.

Creighky's fairy godmother stepped in once more.

'No. I think I should get our friend here a drink. What's it to be Boris?'

Dense had never had anyone call him 'my friend' before and he felt this was quite an occasion and that he could afford to push the boat out now with his new found friend.

'You are very kind my friend,' came the reply from Boris compounding Dense's new status.' Pleased to be having another bitter Dense.'

Someone had actually remembered Dense's name as well, this really was a red-letter day.

'Another beer for my friend,' Dense accentuated the 'my friend' bit showing off his new found acquaintance.

'Now can I get anyone else anything?' Dense was in his element now holding the floor and loving it. He nearly got killed in the rush but that added to the moment.

After the gold rush had died down, Boris gave his friend a big hug and continued querying Dense. 'My friend I must please be asking. You have tekology please?'



Dense had his moment of pride dashed with the introduction of a new word into this vocabulary which stopped the brain dead. But he was in good form so continued.

'Technology?' he mused. 'I must have done technology.' He was sure it had been mentioned on one of the courses he'd been on at the local college and like dyslexia was probably important.

'You must have done an NVQ in technology Dense?' Interspersed Blossom with a smile.

It was lost on Dense though.

'Technology?' he mused again. He'd been on so many courses, well four or five, for Mrs D'Arcy-Landacre that it was all a bit confusing.

'I'm sure I done technology.' He continued. 'Let's see' Dense put his fingers up for a count.

'I done that maffematics and all that like them ,.....er. algem.....algebrars, them you know, them that's it, them algebramic equations.'

The next finger was placed on alert. 'Then I done them logarims with them charts and log books and things. I done them fractionals, and I done trigger nomitry but....' His puzzled look then changed to despair. 'It were them decibels I couldn't get the hang of, where you had to move the bloody dot along'.

'That's right Dense, you did a few of them courses at the Community College didn't you?' said Creighky trying to get into the conversation.

'You have been doing teknlology my friend?' Boris egged Dense on.

Brewster felt he ought to help Dense out, especially as he was now contributing to his pension fund. 'Which bit of technology were you after Boris?'

'I am needing the television teknlology with the...' Boris was stumped here but bravely tried to transfer his brawn into brain. Why couldn't I just have stuck to killing people he thought?

'I am needing television picture with....' he held his hands out, fingers down, in a sort of puppeteers dance routine. Like two bunches of bananas on an introductory ballet course.

'With.....boarding keys,' he smiled in relief at getting the words out that he had remembered Manuel using. This had the same effect as one of Dense's anecdotes. Silence all round. Stunned silence.

'Oh you mean key boards?' Brewster picked up after a few seconds delving back into his I.T. days at the stock exchange.

'Da, key boards.'

'Key boards with a television, a....monitor?'

'Da I think that part of the technology?'

'You want a PC, a computer?'

Bang went the fist on the bar top as Boris's frustration was vented into the sudden realisation of the correct term he had been desperately searching for. The foundations only gave a couple of inches.

'Da, Da, that the word, Pee See!' grinned Boris.

'A PC?' Mumbled Dense bringing the darker side of life back into the conversation.

Brewster could see things going down hill again. 'Personal Computers,' he reaffirmed to stop Dense getting into the realms of policemen.

'Ya my friend' said Boris grinning.' That technology.'

'Oh you want a Computer?' said Dense as if he could have saved half an hour's guessing game.

'I tell you what my friend,' continued Brewster. 'I've got to go into town for the bank on Monday for your money; I'll get some prices for you then.'

'You all very good friends here.' said Boris nearly in tears, but not quite. 'But I need teknoogy to Net boarding as well.' The bananas did a pas-de-deux encore. 'I need talk with brother.'

'Run that one by us again will you Boris?' Creighky thought he was just getting into the conversation when he suffered another set back.

'I think our friend means he wants to do a little surfing on the net, if I'm not mistaken eh Boris?' All the stock exchange buzz words were coming back to Brewster now.

'Ya, that's it. Surfing net. I need to net brother in Kiev.' Boris was getting quite excited now.

'I did computers at college,' interrupted Dense. 'Them things with a sort of television screen and a, you know, one of them, keying in things.'

'Keyboards.' Boris reasserted with an enormous grin, and promptly slapped Dense on the back. Brewster washed the bar down while Dense was still spluttering.

'Keyboards, my friend.' Boris said again testing out his teknoogy.

Dense thought he was going to get another congratulatory slap on the back again and took evasive action.

'I think Dense has got the message now Boris,' Creighky interrupted.

'Da, I get teknoogy ok now?'

No one quite knew if this was a question or a statement of fact.

'Don't you worry Boris, I'll see you OK my friend,' confirmed Brewster. 'We'll have you surfing the old net before you can say Jack Robinson.'

'Who this Mr Robinson?' enquired Boris.

Creighky felt it was high time he should get back into the conversation by hook or by crook.

'Boris, my old friend let me get you another drink, you must be dying of thirst?' he said jokingly.

Boris suddenly realised that all this talking of tekhnology had cost him dear in the drinking stakes and he hadn't had anything to drink for a least five minutes.

'Da da, my friend Creighky, same again please.'

Creighky was trying to lead into his muck and bullets epoch. 'So were you in the army then Boris my old friend?'

'Oh Da da, yes my friend. I am young Cossack in Kislovodskiy Kazachiy Krug, and have many friends leaving army going to Great Moscow Circus with horses.' It looked like Boris was going to get carried away and beat Creighky at his own game.

'You're into the old equestrian bit then Boris?' said Creighky. He was now up against someone who sounded like he knew what he was talking about when it came to horses and this could be a bit of a problem. No one yet had figured out that the Irish Guards wasn't a cavalry Unit, but it looked like the time might well come so he shut up.

'So what's this surfing thing then?' interrupted a puzzled Dense.

\* \* \*

Brewster had organised the delivery and installation of a new PC to Primrose Cottage for Boris and between the installation engineer, Dense, Creighky and Brewster they managed at last to get it up and running.

Creighky was more in your actual supervision rôle but had his usefulness in making the tea and looking after Boris' spiritual side and keep him away from the activity during the installation for his own safety. They went down the pub. Brewster had used a PC at work and at university and learning from the installation man and his help line, they slowly picked up the basics of the new fangled 'windows' bit , and managed to tame the 'mouse' and get connected to the outside world via a modem. They had to rely on a bit of help from Dense with some new electrical extensions and cabling and were pleasantly surprised when the modem and PC spat into life and everything worked.

Dense had done very well really on the electrical side of things after his basic electrician's course at the college. He had managed to eventually tell the difference between live and earth. Initially, he was the difference between live and earth, but after several belting good electrical shocks he managed to figure the difference out. He put his good fortune in still being alive after

several non medical heart restarts, to one of the many advantages of being dyslexic.

So between them they got Boris' his 'teknology' and he was able to try out his e-mail prowess although he still needed someone else's fingers. They were having so much fun that they hardly missed the ladies at all and, like a gang of naughty children, they spent their hours now watching this marvelous new 'teknology' and the benefit's of 'surfing' the Net.

They could hardly believe their eyes with some of the accidental websites they came across with all their miskeying on the keyboard, but eventually made contact with Boris's brother and their e-mails started whizzing around the world.

They had grown into quite a close-knit group and Boris had warmed to his new colleagues and the quiet country village way of life. He could foresee his future in Muddlecombe but needed to get his hands on his frozen assets in the safe deposit box in his brother's bank in Kiev.

Boris had no other avenue open to him but to ask his new friends to help him out in getting his pension funds back for him. It was quite clear, even to Boris by now, that he could not go to Kiev and from the recent e-mails; his brother was still having difficulties getting out of the country and was obviously being watched by his Head Office or somebody in with the local bureau.

So Boris opened up his heart, well some of it, and explained that he had put his pension funds in safe keeping and needed help in getting at them. However he didn't want to return to the old country because he was wanted by the KGB for not paying his National Insurance stamp.

Seemed a reasonable enough story.

Dense couldn't understand why he just didn't go to the Post Office like every one else.

But Boris made them an offer they couldn't refuse to pay for their airfares and hotels bills plus a sizable bonus. All that, plus a short weekend vacation to Boris's homeland. It was the best offer they'd ever had and Boris made it seem so romantic with his story of the pleasant friendly people, the Cossack history in the Steppes of the Ukraine and the lovely ladies who worked on the farm bare breasted in the summer.

That did it for Creighky.

They all felt this was a fantastic wheeze and they smelled the air of excitement already.

Dense said he felt like the Magnificent Seven. His maths letting him down again until they changed to Enid Blyton's Famous Five. Unfortunately Brewster was tied to the Pub with Fiona being away on holiday, and had to drop out. So with Boris unable to go, it looked like the Magnificent Two.

Dense and Creighky.

Not exactly your Four Musketeers but what the hell. Creighky felt it was high time he relived his Korean adventure and no better time than the present with Mildred being away.

With his luck how could they get into any trouble?

Dense had never been outside Muddlecombe before and although he should have been filled with trepidation, he was basically, far too stupid.

An ideal partnership

It was just a pity Boris hadn't told them the full story of why his Brother was unable to travel because he was being watched by somebody and virtually under house arrest. And why Boris had been rushed to Muddlecombe to keep out of trouble away from those nasty Mafia types who tend to shoot first and ask questions after.

Or what was the connection between Primrose Cottage and those nice English gentlemen he had left so abruptly in Tenerife.

Or why he had laundered millions of dollars worth of bullion for those nice men through one of his own company banks and hived the profit's off into his own pension fund.

And why he had forgotten to tell his Head Office about all this.

Or how they were going to smuggle a half a million dollars worth of diamonds out of the country, let alone back into the UK.

And what would those nice people watching his brother have to say about all this.

Never mind. It would probably be all right on the night, as they say. It was probably for the best anyway. The less Creighky and Dense knew the better. And boy, were they at the top of the class for not knowing any better. So they got ready for their great adventure. Boris explained that they would need visas with their passports and was able to give them a telephone number at the Russian embassy where he had worked previously and a special reference code that they should use, which would speed up their application.

This was another thing Boris forgot to tell them. Actually Boris probably didn't even know why he had been given such a special passport coding himself and probably wasn't aware of the advantages and disadvantages that this coding could bring. All he knew was that it seemed to help him in getting through those little nuisances of traveling inside Russia like immigration, passport control and those irritating police checks.

The Muddlecombe Post Office was hard put to find the Passport application forms as nobody had asked for any for such a long time, that is until Bill suddenly remembered his wife and the other ladies had used them. Now where did they get them?

Ah, yes, under the cheap sherry.

Their passports came back in time with their visas and they managed to find two seats on a Ukraine International Airlines flight PS502 from Gatwick to Boryspil Airport, Kiev, leaving in a few days and duly booked up.

Boris had e-mailed his brother in Kiev and they had arranged to stay in a posh hotel in town, which would be better than at his house. Boris once again forgot to mention the reason for this but explained it was the best hotel and that they deserved to stay there for all their trouble.

This would give Boris' brother the opportunity to utilise his old friend who worked in the hotel to place the "pension funds" somewhere securely in their luggage while they were out of their rooms. His brother would give them a simple savings book with a few thousand Rubles in to look good and to satisfy their curiosity.

So the plan was all set. Simple and uncomplicated. No hiccups. Or were there? Sending Creighky and Dense together could either be a devastatingly clever ruse or a complete and utter cock up.

## Chapter 6. Chekov Yeboleksi

With the ending of the Cold War, the KGB had been disbanded. Some of the more shrewd, cunning and devious operators (which covered quite a few) had the foresight to plan ahead and make use of the old regime's structure and take advantage of the change of Communism to Capitalism. Not that there was much difference except that the parties excess funds now had to be called profit's.

Colonel Chekov Yeboleksi had started life as a lowly interrogator in the Secret Service upon joining the KGB as a young lad and had done his job to the best of his ability, but lacking the technical training, always had problems understanding the bit about amps and volts in his interrogation techniques.

He fully understood the anatomy bits and where best to stick the electrodes but it was all a bit too technical when it came to turning the knobs and switches bit.

However Chekov or 'Count' Yeboleksi as he was also known for reasons that will become apparent, got results and that was what the party hierarchy wanted. A lot of his 'customers' had to 'count' the various parts of their anatomy on a 'before' and 'after' basis after his interrogation and a lot of them returned home to be moved up to the front row of the church choir. So his promotion to Colonel was rapid in relative terms of the stagnant non-commercial atmosphere of the KGB.

However he had the foresight to see the writing on the wall when the Cold War end was nigh, he could see a vast logistics set up, albeit not a very efficient one, about to be disbanded and lost forever. He had built up a lot of friends and contacts worldwide and felt it a waste not to put this conglomeration of individuals and resources into some form of gainful use in the new era.

So at the end of the cold war, he set about obeying his instructions, to mothball a considerable amount of defence equipment and resources under the guise of disarmament.

Mothballing was a euphemism for channeling resources to a more profitable advantage and with the judicious use of war surplus paint and some good redundancy counselling (blackmailing was

probably a better name), he set up, or rather rearranged, a considerable amount of the Russian defence system into a new logistics organisation.

Travel companies (smuggling), shipping companies (gun running), airlines (illegal immigrants), freight companies (drug dealing), banking (money laundering), they all evolved slowly but surely into a new enterprise.

The Russian Mafia.

Competition was a bitch, but had to be accepted in this new market oriented capitalistic world. To start with there were problems. They lost the occasional airliner now and then with spares problems but they were only internal flights and the press was slow to pick up on the casualties.

The Luxury Cruise liners left a bit to be desired initially on the "Luxury" point, but could still manage to transport a hold full of suspicious substances to offset the losses on the other operations and pay for any irritating litigation.

By the time these minor problems had been overcome they had began to understand the niceties of quality control, Health and Safety and International legislation. They had the internal market sown up nicely and began expanding into the real world and the cut throat Global market area of profit

Chekov was back in business. His old department of the KGB was ironically now the Kiev General Business Company (they hadn't quite got to grips with the marketing bit yet) with branches worldwide and everything was back in place as it was in the good old days and everything was business as usual.

Serge Ledgeroff had been with Chekov since the good old days but had to change his accounting practices to accommodate the Western system. He was slowly managing it with the help of a correspondence course from the Golders Green School of Accountancy and was getting the hang of most of it. He was still not quite grasping this double entry bit. Nobody had been asked to make things balance in the good old days.

He was currently preparing his end of year accounts and in doing his analysis figures had spotted one set of figures that was going in the wrong direction.

Down that is, not up.

Profit's that is.

'Chekov, I seem to have found some unusual variations in our books,' he said walking slowly into Chekov's office without bothering to knock.

'What sort of unusual variations my friend?'

'Err, sort of, downward types of variations.'

'Which bits are going downward Serge?' Chekov said, slowly, raising his eyes to the accounts clerk who was about to bump into



the chair if he didn't take his eyes off the enormous ledger he was carrying.

'Oops, sorry. err..... the profit's bits.'

'I didn't think the profit's bits were supposed to go down Serge?'

'No,..... That's what I thought Chekov,' he mused studiously. He was definitely getting the hang of this capitalism bit by now.

'Show me these profit bits that are going down Serge?'

Chekov got up from his desk and started to take an interest in what he generally considered to be the most boring side of his work. Bookkeeping. But when the words 'profit' were mentioned and then in the same breath, the words 'down' were mentioned as well, then he started to take a decidedly keener interest in the whole issue.

Chekov stared vacantly for the first few seconds into the array of hieroglyphics that constituted accountancy speak. Ledgeroff slowly ran his finger along the various columns and down the various rows until they hit a heading.

'What does STB mean Serge?'

'Err..... Let me cross refer to one of the other nominal ledgers,' he said, slowly flicking the large pages over until he reached the reference list.

'Err... here it is Chekov.....the South Tenerife Branch.'

'South Tenerife Branch?' he said lifting his head in thought.

'That's old...Boris.... Boris... eerr, Boris Slobovich isn't it?'

\* \* \*

'Serge, why are they clapping?' asked Chekov, himself feeling a bit more relaxed now that the plane had landed.

'I don't know, Chekov,' replied Serge.

'Why don't you ask that nice old lady sitting next to you?'

Serge duly turned to his fellow passenger and then back to Chekov.

'She's happy.'

'Why is she happy Serge?'

Serge turned once more and replied, 'Because we have landed.'

'But nobody normally claps when they land?'

This was repeated to the old lady.

'Because we have landed all alive.'

'Is this a sort of local custom?'

Again the three-way conversation was passed on.

'She says it's a custom since the last Russian Airways crashed into the hill at the northern airport.'

'Which Airline was that Serge?'

Passing this on Serge replied rather sheepishly.....'Er..... One of ours Chekov.' He continued opening up his ledger that never left his side. 'There you are Chekov,' Serge continued passing his finger down one of the many columns. 'We made an Insurance claim at Lloyds in 1976'.

Chekov gulped and said nothing for a few moments.

'Serge', he started slowly. 'Which airline are we traveling on?'

'One of ours of course Chekov,' replied Serge still looking through his beloved ledger.

Chekov gulped again. 'Don't you think we should do some marketing exercises and try some different airlines the next time Serge?'

'That would be very interesting Chekov. I hear some of them have beautiful stewardesses and free drinks and films and things like that.'

'Now he tells me.' Chekov muttered to himself as he crossed his arms and cursed the loyalty of some of his staff.

It had been a long journey from Kiev to Tenerife and there were not a lot of home comforts on this very old plane but they had been able to stop at Frankfurt and get off and acquire some hot food and drink there. The old Tupulov 104 eventually taxied to a stop and opened up the cabin door letting in the warm balmy Tenerife air.

They cleared customs and found most of their baggage and were met at the reception by a large man with a large sign with Chekov's name on. Chekov rushed over to their waiting chauffeur and started haranguing him reminding him that this was supposed to be the secret service when he suddenly remembered that he was out of the KGB now and running a commercial organisation.

He apologised to the poor astounded chauffeur and they loaded the Mercedes up and drove out of the airport turning south to Playa De Las Americas.

Chekov and Serge had to undo their warm overcoats and ties in the tropical heat and settled back and relaxed as best you can in a car hurtling down the road at ninety miles an hour.

'Why are we driving so fast?' enquired Chekov of the driver.

'Local custom,' he replied matter of factly.

'Oh, I see.' Gulped Chekov slowly. 'We have custom in Russia of staying alive.' Chekov continued.

'Oh, da, very funny,' the chauffeur chortled. But his amusement wasn't matched by the two passengers in the back seats.

'We go to hotel first Mr Chekov?' continued the driver.

'No, I think I'd like to go straight to Boris's office.'

'OK you're the boss.'

'Yes,' muttered Chekov sternly but without much effect.

As they drove under one of the bridges they saw the sign post to Annabel's Escort Agency and Serge as ever with his nose in his ledger commented briefly. 'I think that's one of ours Chekov' lifting his eyes to point out the sign to Chekov.

Chekov briefly looked out, but by this time it was too late as the speeding car carried on towards Playa in the chase down the main road. They slowed as they passed Los Christianos and the outskirts of Playa and then turned off up into the hilly part of Playa and eventually pulled up outside Boris's office.

Chekov felt the urge to clap but dismissed the idea immediately, noting the drivers name and putting into his memory for future action. They got out and walked up the stairs of the dusty partially whitewashed office block which hadn't finished being built properly, or had it?

By the time they had climbed the stairs to his office they were both sweating considerably in the midday heat and pulled out their handkerchiefs to wipe away the beads of perspiration.

A knock on the door was greeted by an explosion of Spanish which took Chekov and Serge completely by surprise and stepping back they looked at each other. Chekov took the piece of paper of his pocket and looked at the address on it. He looked back at the number on the office door and looked at Serge.

They shrugged their shoulders.

'Try the door again Serge?' Chekov asked.

Serge knocked again and was met with the sound of someone moving chairs and a person walking to the door, which opened slowly bringing a young local lad into view with a puzzled expression on his face.

'Hola?' the face said slowly.

Chekov and Serge looked at each other and then to the youth.

Either Boris had been on the eternal youth pills or this was the wrong person.

'Boris?' Chekov enquired slowly.

The face looking through the small gap in the doorway brightened considerable.

'Oh you want Boris?' came the reply as he opened the door wider.

'Come please, my name is Manuel, I am secretary to Boris, please to come in.'

They walked slowly into the small office and Chekov confirmed his observations.

'Boris not here?'

Blindly obvious, but Manuel played along.

'No, Boris not here.'

'Where Boris?' A simple but straightforward question.

'I don't know,' said Manuel.

It suddenly struck Manuel then that these must be the people from Head Office that Boris was so worried about over the lost communications about their arrival.

'Ah,' continued Manuel. 'You must be from Head Office in Russia?' he visibly brightened and started to make room for them to sit down. It was a strange picture of two large military men and a small student looking at each other in amazement and trying to play musical chairs in the tiny office.

'Err. Yes,' stuttered Chekov and Serge together. Their visit was supposed to be a secret from Boris. And to think that a global organisation as large as theirs was being run by a school boy was a bit mind boggling to say the least.

'You are expecting us?' queried Chekov a bit puzzled.

'Oh yes,' said Manuel. 'But we lose your e-mails somewhere. I very sorry he not here to meet you properly. Mr Boris probably out on business. I have not seen him for many days now since weekend.'

Both Chekov and Serge looked at each other totally surprised as to how their secret meeting had been sussed and why Boris was still working if he had known of the reason for their visit.

'Manuel, you called Manuel?' Chekov quizzed Manuel.

'Si, Senor, Er.....Yes, Manuel that OK.'

'Manuel, tell me?' Chekov continued the questioning. 'Will Boris be coming back here soon?'

'Oh I would say so, yes he has to come back for office messages from your Head Office and instructions.' Manuel suddenly realised that as they were from Head Office that would probably be a waste of time.

'But now that you arrive OK. You can tell him yourself, eh?'

Chekov and Serge stood looking at each other again thinking that Boris must be either incredibly stupid or have half the Soviet Army as his bodyguard. Or perhaps those strange profit figures going the wrong way were all a mistake.

'Serge my friend, I think we should have a little talk? Manuel, thank you for your time. My friend and I will go to our hotel now and come back to see Boris later.'

'Can I get Boris to come and see you at your hotel?' Manuel enquired innocently.

'We don't know where we're staying yet.' Chekov retorted quickly, denying any information just in case. He wasn't sure just in case of what, but it seemed a good idea at the time.

With that, Chekov dragged Serge quickly out of the small office down the stairs to the waiting Chauffeur who quickly stamped out a cigarette and opened the doors of the Mercedes for the two hurried passengers.

'I think we'd best go straight to our hotel,' Chekov ordered the driver.

'And I think we had better have another look at your book again Serge,' he said turning to Serge as the car sped off back into the centre of Playa. Chekov was puzzled a bit by all this as his contacts back home had been watching Boris' only relative, his brother, and with a little help from some old friends who were still in the old bureau of investigation, had been able to keep him from traveling too far. Unfortunately they had not been able to pick up any information about any money coming into the country.

Poor Manuel sat down in the office with a puzzled look on his face.

Where the hell was Boris? He did sometimes go away for several days at a time but always let him know in advance. He hadn't heard from him now for a week since last Friday when he gone off to think about the missing communications from Head Office. And now these two gentlemen had turned up and he was still none the wiser.

\* \* \*

Neither were Chekov or Serge. They had reached the hotel, booked in and were now at the bar going through the numerous pages of Serge's ledger double-checking all the entries. They had just received a fax from the bank with the new quarterly figures and were going through them as well.

Rather, Serge was going through them, correlating the figures into his large accounts tome. Chekov was bored out of his mind but very thirsty.

'God it's hot here, would you like another drink my friend?' asked Chekov.

Serge, with his head still stuck into his bible muttered a brief, 'Yes please Chekov,' and carried on with his accountancy duties.

They had already quickly consumed two litres of Sangria on the house, well they did own the place, and were now given a third carafe which went as quickly as the others. This, plus the fact that they had not had the best of flights and that it had taken 12 hours as well, did not help their brains with double entry figures.

They couldn't have coped with single entry figures in their current state, but Serge plodded on with a somewhat glazed

expression in his eyes and poor Chekov had given up the ghost a long time ago.

'Have you found anything yet Serge?' Chekov questioned, purely as a conversation opener.

The sight of all the happy holidaymakers in festive mood running around the hotel did nothing for his formal supervisory duties at all. Especially when watching the younger guests of the female persuasion with hardly a handkerchief to keep things covered. Chekov's long career in dusty dungeons and undercover assignments had not prepared him for the sight of such Capitalist beauties.

A couple of not so young ladies, but still the best thing since sliced bread as far as Chekov was concerned, were sitting close by at the bar and had obviously drunk similar quantities of Sangria.

*They* hadn't come to Tenerife for any bookkeeping exercises and were puzzled as to why two grown men in shirts, ties and braces were so obsessed with this enormous book in the middle of a plush holiday hotel.

'That must be a good read?' one of the ladies casually mentioned in passing in the general direction of Chekov and Serge.

'I bet it beats the hell out of Mills and Boon,' giggled the other causing much amusement, that is except with Chekov and Serge.

Chekov looked up sheepishly and tried a small grin in acknowledgment and in the vain attempt to get some reaction from Serge.

No chance. Serge ploughed on with his investigations.

This is where the jet lag kicked in. Chekov didn't have a clue who the hell Mills and Boon were but hazarded a guess as a starter.

'We don't read many cowboys stories,' he stuttered in his best English.

This had the ladies in hysterics and it spread to Chekov as well who was beginning to feel the effect of the Sangria.

'Here, you're a laugh,' one of the ladies spluttered in reply, still in spasm. They were well ahead with the Sangria.

'I bet you're a one in the saddle,' squirted the other. This had them both in stitches by now and Chekov was beginning to get the hang of this game.

'Yes, and I have big shooter,' he said referring to his 9mm Makarov issue pistol for the want of anything better to say.

Well, this brought the house down.

Chekov figured out that this game was based on whatever he said, as a foreigner, would be funny and tried another line.

'But my friend only has a little one and it only shoots blanks.' Accountants hardly ever got issued with guns but Serge had once used a starter's pistol in an emergency.

The ladies collapsed in a heap in tears with this. Chekov had the giggles as well by now and they all tried to point in the general direction of Serge who had totally missed the moment. Chekov still didn't know why he was laughing but was definitely starting to enjoy himself. An unusual feeling, but one he thought he should cultivate in order to gain a better insight into these strange capitalistic ways.

Basically, he was pissed.

When Serge eventually looked up, having realised everyone was looking at him; he gazed at the sight of all these shaking bodies in puzzlement and uttered the words.

'Sorry, I am having problems with my entries.'

Chekov fell about laughing at this without having a clue what he was laughing at. Serge scratched his head in bewilderment but tried a brave smile anyway.

'What can't you enter?' squealed one of the ladies.

'I can't enter my ....eerrr.....my, I can't enter....' Serge suddenly realised he didn't know what he couldn't enter and didn't understand why he'd been asked such a stupid question in the first place.

'I am sorry?' Serge continued now completely bewildered, 'I am not understanding why I have to put something in?'

After the ladies had finished their convulsions and Chekov had got his breath back and wiped the tears from his eyes, he felt he should really take the pressure off his colleague.

'I think Serge, that we had all better have another drink.' Turning to the ladies he continued. 'Now then ladies, may I please be allowed to get you a drink while I get my friend refreshed as well?'

'Ooh that would be lovely,' tittered the nearest lady, a brunette. 'But I think you'd best sort out your mate first, he must be gagging for one.'

'Where do you come from then?' Enquired the other female, the blonde one.

'Oh, we come from the Ukraine,' said Chekov and waved to the barman for some more drinks.

'Oh, that's nice,' said the blonde not having a clue where the Ukraine was.

'We're from Essex. I'm Sharon and this is my friend Tracey.'

\* \* \*

The brain cells felt it was really time that the rest of the body should start to react to the messages they had been frantically trying to transmit. However as a mark of respect of the several millions of their colleagues that had been killed in the last twelve

hours, they felt that the mourning period could probably last a bit longer.

It wasn't for the lack of trying, but the bodily functions weren't quite sure what to expect when things got back into motion and when the memory bit could tell everybody what to expect.

Pain was on the priority list of messages to be transmitted. Nausea was probably next. The question of where they were was a sure third. Who they were with? And another thing, what had happened between that somebody else, if there was anybody else, came up as well?

All sorts of unanswered questions were now being built up into a table in the central processing regions. The optical section leader was having none of it until he got some sort of cohesive report from the memory. The eyelids and focusing equipment were not going to respond until they had been given a rough idea of what to expect.

Unfortunately the memory was a tad busy at this moment of time, running a de-fragmentation process after having lost a considerable amount of resources last night, and was in no fit state to come up with the goods.

Eventually, after what seemed like several hundred nanoseconds, a jumbled report was coming through to the brain for onward transmission to the optical section leader.

'Ok eyelids, can we have an ongoing opening situation here please,' was the first clear message to come through the system and slowly but surely there was a flutter of movement. The priorities suddenly kicked in. Pain, nausea, to name but a few, which translated into an oral reaction.

'БВАПУ ЪФТ' roughly translated means 'Kinnell, oh shit, my head!'

Bingo, the memory came through with a clear message for the results table.

'We are Russian and we have the mother of all hangovers. So can we give it another go please opticals?'

'Ok, if you must.'

Pain kicked in again but was overridden by curiosity and then it was the turn of focusing. Memory was slowly starting to get some blurred information through by now.

We have ourselves in room. A hotel room. A hot hotel room. An unfamiliar hot hotel room.

No, no, there were some familiarities coming back now. Yes, it was similar to the room that had been visited previously for putting luggage in.

Yes, we have been on a journey and this is foreign. Ah, it's all coming back now, Tenerife. That's it!

Phew, we're cooking on gas now.



The optical muscles started a scanning movement and suddenly focused on a large mirror with some sort of writing on it.

It was in red.

SEE YOU BY THE POOL BIG BOY.

'OOPS, back to square one boys,' said the memory.

Suddenly there was a loud explosion of noise that startled the subdued bodily functions. The central processing immediately jumped into action by attenuating the noise and evaluating it down to a range of possibilities starting with a nuclear explosion down to a fire engine in the room and eventually settling for a telephone.

An arm extended, fingers groped and eventually the source of the disturbance was discovered and moved to area of the mouth and ears.

'Da, da.....errr, .hallo,...Chekov?'

Hooray, the memory chorused, we now have a name but there appears to be a conflict of languages. A voice at the other end responded.

'Hallo Chekov, your chauffeur here, will you be needing me for the rest of the day?'

'Oh, yes, er, I mean, I think so,' Chekov stumbled on.

Obviously the memory section for 'other peoples names' had been among the casualties last night.

'Why don't you go and get some breakfast and I'll be down shortly to discuss the day's schedule.'

'Not bad,' said the central processing section after considerable effort of utilising a depleted memory section.

'But it's four o'clock in the afternoon,' came the reply as the brain went into rejection again.

'What!' exploded Chekov, causing all sorts of activities to go into overdrive.

'Oooh, my head,' he was reminded once again of the priorities of pain and nausea.

'I'll be down shortly, get some lunch or tea or something and I'll meet you in the foyer. Oh, and please get me some pills as well.' With that Chekov started the painful process of getting up and doing his ablutions.

He rang Serge, who was obviously going through the same process he had just gone through, and arranged to meet him down stairs. His eyes were drawn to the lipstick message on the mirror again as he dressed and left, still in a state of shock.

\* \* \*

The pills and water were followed by plenty of black coffee and the interrogation started. Unfortunately it was himself he was interrogating.

'Ok, Serge, what did I do last night?'

'I am having a problem trying to remember exactly what happened myself Chekov. But if my memory serves me right, I think it was very pleasurable and I think we both enjoyed ourselves.' Serge said with a silly grin.

The chauffeur smirked but it soon changed as Chekov glared at him.

'I think we had better discuss this later. The problem is I think we may have put ourselves in a compromising position and I think it best that we take immediate action not to diminish the security of our organisation.'

'Yes, Chekov,' Serge confirmed. Unfortunately this wasn't the answer Chekov wanted and had to think again for a solution.

'Do you still have the book Serge?'

'Oh, yes, I have it safe.'

'Oh, good, that's a relief,' sighed Chekov. He was deeply ashamed of letting himself go and getting carried away with some complete strangers. Albeit he probably may have enjoyed himself, if he could remember what had happened, but that was irrelevant. He had a job to do and he must act professionally. He had seriously jeopardised their security and must not let himself go again.

'Do we have any other outlets here?' Chekov continued querying Serge.

Serge pulled his trustee book out of his case and after sometime going through the pages said. 'We have the bank, several casinos and escort agencies and of course we have another hotel in the Northern section in Puerto de la Cruz with the usual back up facilities as well.'

'OK,' muttered Chekov with his mind now in deep thought mode.

'I think our best action is to go back and see if Boris has returned and then go straight up to Porto, er thingy. Whatever, and make contact with our Northern agent and try and get some information from him. Is this place far away?' He questioned the chauffeur.

'No problem. It will only take two hours at the most.'

Chekov visible shuddered at the thought of another hair-raising ride through the countryside.

'OK, Serge, we'll book out now and can you make a booking in Porto... in the Northern Hotel?' he asked the chauffeur.

\* \* \*

The two ladies were about to be left in the lurch and unable to fulfill their holiday romances. They had been watching this scene

from a discrete distance and turned and give each other a little smile.

Sharon and Tracey, also known as Detective Constable Sally Fuzzelli (The Fuzz) and Detective Constable Lil Scrubbs, (The Screw) no relation to Wormwood, were the Starsky and Hutch of the Metropolitan Police.

When you'd been grabbed by the 'Fuzz' and 'Screwed' was the *in* joke back at the Yard, and like Yeboleksi, they had achieved results. Nobody was quite sure if these results were legitimate but the figures spoke for themselves.

They always seemed to be in the right place at the right time, and right now they couldn't believe their luck. They were in Tenerife on an under cover job for a London Bullion robbery and had accidentally been handed the complete operations plan for the whole of the European chapter of the Russian Mafia.

It didn't take much of the ladies basic detective's training to get all the details from two jet lagged and lubricated men. In fact they didn't have to do anything at all other than just lie back and enjoy themselves (and think of England of course) and all was revealed. So to speak.

It didn't take to much effort to pick up Serge's precious ledger as soon as he had passed out and ask the duty porter to photocopy it for them for a few pesetas. Beats the hell out of all that silly nonsense with a miniature camera. The fact that this had nothing at all to do with their current assignment was neither here nor there. But it was probably worth a fortune to someone, somewhere.

Chekov and Serge hadn't realised they had been picked up by the 'fuzz' and 'screwed' 'cause they were foreigners and didn't realise what they had just been through, so they were excused.

Detective Constables Fuzzelli and Scrubbs, for the want of anything better to do other than lie back on their sun loungers, picked up the photo copies of Serge's ledger and started to thumb through the pages of mumbo jumbo accountancy speak, albeit in Russian.. Well actually, as Serge's training manual had come from Golder's Green, a lot of it was in English.

Pretty boring stuff in reality apart from the Banking figures which attracted their attention. The profit side of this venture seemed to be on a sharp increase recently in the Tenerife branch. And funnily enough, the dates coincided roughly with the time the two ladies had been sent out here from London.

'Ere Lil, get a load of this. Them Banks is making an awful lot of money all of a sudden ain't they? See these figures 'ere?' She passed the pages over to Lil.

'That's the Tenerife branch ain't it ?' Passing them back to Sally.

'Yeah, but look at them dates. It sort of coincides roughly with our little number, give or take a month or two don't it?' Lill leaned over from her sun lounger to have another look.

'That's interesting isn't it? What's that address down there? Isn't that a name and address in Tenerife as well? Looks like Doris or something?'

'That's a Playa address, can't be far from here. What d'yer reckon, got to be worth a little look. Eh?'

'Yeah, come on, let's give it a go.'

And with that they got up, dressed and went for a little drive.

\* \* \*

Chekov and Serge arrived at their hotel in Puerto de la Cruz after another hairy drive, booked in and after a quick clean up and a stiff drink, met Serge in his room. They tried to ring the Northern Branch manager, Dimitri, but with no success.

'I don't understand where Boris could have got to?' Chekov scratched his head.

'Chekov,' interjected Serge. 'I've been going through the books again and come up with some interesting figures. I think I would like to go back to Playa de las Americas later and do a little more research. If that's ok with you?'

Chekov went pale with the thought of another scary car ride.

'Serge my friend,' he said walking over to Serge and putting his arm around his shoulder. 'Why don't you go off back down to Playa on your own and I'll wait here for developments from the northern guy. How does that sound?'

'Yeah, OK, you're the boss Chekov' said Serge without a second thought.

'I'll get hold of the driver then and get something arranged straight away. Keep an eye on Boris's office while you're down that way as well,' said Chekov. 'And keep in touch with the developments in Playa. Take your time and make sure you cover everything.'

'OK boss,' said Serge as he stood up and left the apartment still with his ledger under his arm.

'Before you go see if you can get in touch with the Northern Area man will you Serge, or leave me his number before you go, OK?'

## Chapter 7. Mildred in Tenerife

They were in a high old state as they scribbled notes to their beloved ones and set off like a gaggle of young schoolgirls on their first summer holiday.

Flying from Luton on the Tuesday charter flight they only just made it in time getting thoroughly lost in the duty free shop and having to be called by the airport security. They only delayed the plane by ten minutes and were tickled pink when everyone clapped them on board. Mildred had never been treated quite like this before but put it down to Lucinda's good breeding and that someone must have known they were coming. They settled down as best someone could who had never flown before and were as nervous and excited as Bambi on Benzedrine.

Chaos was probably a better word, but at least they didn't lose control.

The cabin staff, that is. The ones that had been driven to despair by the constant demands and questions from these gang of idiots. They had figured out that the snooty one and the Scottish bitch must have been psychiatric charge nurses looking after the other two on an outing from the local mental hospital.

The fact of the matter was that the mixture of the airsickness pills and the cheap drinks had turned into an explosive cocktail for the less experienced of the travellers who had succumbed to altitude sickness as well.

Mildred and Betty were legless.

Betty Boring ran the local Post Office-cum-supermarket with her husband Bill. They owned half the commercial property in Muddlecombe, so they knew about most of the external communications and being landlords virtually had the monopoly on the planning permission for the commercial development of the village. Not that anyone with an ounce of enterprise would want to invest in Industry in Muddlecombe. That was a contradiction of terms.

Bill and Betty were on the local Church Diocese committee, if it ever remembered to have any meetings. She was the Church

Warden, the organist, the bell ringer and the choir at the local church. That's if the rotating parish shift vicar ever managed to find the village, and everyone got a bit confused over the rotating shift anyway.

Betty, only just entering the bloom of middle age, had an air of sexuality hidden behind the numerous layers of tweed and aertex. Undo her bun and let her hair down and you always felt there was the potential for a little excitement and a still firm figure which had missed the rigors of childbirth confirmed this belief. Fortunately or unfortunately, this had been kept under control with considerable self-discipline.

She had never tasted anything stronger than altar wine before, and was now starting into the third chorus of Jerusalem before the cabin crew could get to her to shut up. She was on her third miniature bottle of gin and at an altitude of several thousand feet higher than the plane.

Mildred wasn't far behind although she had settled down with one of her romantic novels by now which was proving to be hilariously funny and the stewardesses were hovering in case of similar outbreak of frivolity. They were both reduced to fit's of the giggles for the first two hours before becoming comatose and the giggles reverted to snoring which was nearly as bad as "Jerusalem".

Lucinda and Fiona, who had tried to restrain their friends, weren't entirely blameless; having encouraged the two less experienced travellers into their current state.

They were enjoying the benefits of duty free as well, only without such a zealous approach as Mildred and Betty. It was at their suggestion for overcoming the fear of flying that their friends had over indulged purely in the cause of medicine. So you could say time flew for our intrepid passengers as they arrived at Sofia Reina airport in Tenerife in various stages of physical and mental fatigue.

Getting them off the plane was not all that difficult really. They eventually managed to get Mildred out of her coma but unfortunately Betty was hanging on in there and proving to be a bit of a problem. She was not exactly looking like the prim and proper Church Warden. More your actual disheveled wreck of the Hesperides.

By the time they had lifted her out of the cabin onto a luggage trolley she looked decidedly uncouth. Scarecrow was the image that came to mind immediately but that would probably have initiated litigation from the Scarecrows Union. The cabin staff was having great difficulty arranging her legs in some form of ladylike position, as they kept reverting to the rag doll mode displaying stocking tops and underwear to the world. Thank Christ they were clean. Well, so far that is.

Mildred was still in fun mode when she awoke. Probably as a result of the delayed medicinal properties of her recent imbibing. She fell in love instantly with anything in trousers that came within ten feet of her and was cooing and drooling at the sight of any of the dark skinned uniformed authorities such as the immigration officials and the policemen. Most of the time her legs managed to keep her up, it was the compass bit that let her down.

"Oooweee!" shrieked an unsteady Mildred pointing to an armed Policia officer. 'He's got a big one,' bursting into a fit of giggles and trying to imitate John Wayne.

Lucinda and Fiona, by this time, were not amused. They had to hold on to Mildred, find all the documents, guide the trolley with Betty in through passport control, hold Betty's head up for immigration to compare her passport photo, find their luggage. Oh! It was just a nightmare.

Fortunately they were the last of the line on a slow day as far as Tenerife was concerned and didn't hold too many people up apart from the waiting Tour Operator's representatives who were beside themselves with worry having heard all sorts of rumours and reports from their travelling companions. One rumour had reached them that one of them was dead.

It was hard not to miss them. A sort of disaster area of frenzied bodies and luggage, staggering around looking for somewhere to happen.

They eventually managed to peel Mildred off the young local Policia who, fortunately, was fairly new and had only just finished his 'Customer Relations with Tourists' training seminar. Just as well it wasn't his 'Firearms' certification.

They managed to board the ladies on to the coach eventually after ascertaining they were on the right tour, getting Betty out of the trolley and setting off out of the airport, they turned north towards Santa Cruz.

It was a lovely warm summer's evening as the sunset over the Atlantic and the Muddlecombe gang set off for their adventure in paradise. The sunset was wasted. They were all asleep within minutes. They had obviously had enough adventures for the time being. But no doubt there would be plenty more. You could put money on it. Whether they would be enjoyable was the big question? And who would they be enjoyable for?

\* \* \*

It was a beautiful sunny day in Puerto de la Cruz in the high eighties, but with a bit of cloud about that is the norm in the Northern part of Tenerife. Lucinda and Fiona were out by the hotel pool trying to forget their experiences of the previous day's flight.

They put it down to jet lag. More likely alcohol lag. They were taking advantage of all the hotel waiters, demanding their drinks be refreshed every half an hour to overcome the layer of fur left from the previous evening.

Fiona was starting to relax and her mind was going back to her introduction to Muddlecombe. Fiona was from good Scottish stock but had initial reservations about marrying Brewster Kegworth, not because she disliked him or anything like that, Fiona Ursula Cameron had problems with her new married initials. She very rarely talked about her middle names. She came from the posh part of Edinburgh, Morningside, where they all speak 'awfully far back' and sounded like one of Miss Jean Brodie's students.

It's a fallacy that the Scots are mean.

They're just canny.

'You *canny* expect me to pay that price!'

It's just that all Scots are inbred accountants, so it fell to Fiona to take advantage of her breeding and join God's most boring career. That is apart from Status Quo's drummer. This was the reason Fiona had been accepted into the coven even as a newcomer to Muddlecombe.

She understood these dirty little three-letter words like 'TAX' and 'VAT' and had been most beneficial in increasing the 'per capita' income of the more wealthy members of Muddlecombe's society since her arrival.

The Muddlecombe Mafia that is.

Lying on the sun bed feeling the heat of the sun on her body, Fiona was revelling in the warmth and luxury of the surroundings. As Lucinda had put it so succinctly 'Fuck the bridge'.

It was time to catch up on their beauty sleep.

\* \* \*

Betty had the mother of all hangovers and had demanded instant euthanasia upon waking. She had been dumped unceremoniously by her colleagues without any pity into her room and had woken in the same rag doll position she had been left. Enough was enough. They had carried her and her luggage up to her room with the help of a porter and a metal luggage rack on wheels, which was as unstable as the airport trolley.

She could bloody well do the rest herself.

After the eyes had eventually plucked up the courage to open and the brain realised that it had to get used to this pain, she had rung room service. Vast volumes of coffee and fruit juice were swallowed along with several pills and she returned to bed until the trauma of her first hangover had passed.



Mildred felt that it was only fair that someone should at least do the honest thing and try to improve his or her lot. So after a hearty breakfast she attended the Tour Operator Representative's presentation. She had taken in all the benefits that the hotel facilities had to offer and what guided tours were available. She enrolled in one of the bridge classes for beginners and was allocated a partner and herded off into the lounge for the start of her lesson.

She still had a hangover of sorts and had problems trying to concentrate on the instruction being given to her. The students were given plenty of time to practice and discuss the vagaries of bridge with their partners and other table colleagues. They had been put into a rotating table system to get them used to the etiquette of Duplicate Bridge and were moving to a different table after playing two hands of cards. This was a problem in itself just trying to remember where to go next after each round of cards, so Mildred was in some state of distress to start with.

She eventually had the time to look up and view her surroundings and had spotted a sallow distinguished looking gentleman playing with another person both of whom were obviously foreign. She could hear them talking to each other in a strange language and yet at the same time were able to talk in English to the other people at their table.

The taller of the two was probably slightly older than Mildred with black hair and distinguished grey hairs around his temples, which gave him an air of sophistication. The dark shadows under his eyes were vaguely reminiscent of Omar Shariff. Mildred immediately connected the words "come to bed eyes" with those of the person she was now drooling over.

Anything in trousers was vaguely reminiscent of Omar Shariff to Mildred. He didn't have as much wavy hair but the sallow complexion prevalent amongst those who spend long hours in dungeons or casinos was enough to remind Mildred of her knight in shining armour. He was clean shaven and probably taller and more gaunt, but if he wasn't Omar, he most certainly could be her Dr Shivago as far as Mildred was concerned. This was another distraction, which didn't help her concentration on the bridge lesson at all and she was distraught when they had to change tables and opponents to find herself sitting adjacent to her Dr Shivago.

She had glanced at him very briefly with fluttering eyelashes but had turned quickly away with a blush every time he had looked at her.

Then all of sudden he spoke to her. 'Please excuse me madam but I feel I should point out that your next bid should be *three Clubs* after my two Spades, not *two Clubs*'

Mildred was about to wet her knickers.

She was now not only sitting at the same table as her Dr Shivago but he was talking to her as well! She went bright red and tried to say something, which didn't come out quite as planned.

'OOOspss, I am most awfully sorry, I am such a silly billy.'

'Please do not distress yourself my dear,' he said realising now that she was in some form of agitation. He put his charm training into full gear.

'May I be so humble as to explain the bidding structure? As I understand from our Instructor it is in alphabetical order. Therefore as Clubs come before Spades in this hierarchy, you must go to the next level of bidding after my bid.'

'Ooohh , yes,' drooled Mildred, extremely close to very damp underwear.

He gently took Mildred's hand in his and continued, showing her the four suit's in his card hand. 'Would such a charming lady be offended if I demonstrated this to you?' He pointed out the suits in order. 'Therefore as I bid two Spades, your next bid must go up another level and be three Clubs.'

He gently guided her fingers over the suits in the order that he had explained them. This was far too much for Mildred as he was now actually not only talking to her but also holding her hand.

She fainted.

\* \* \*

As the owner of the hotel, Chekov used all his influence to get Mildred moved up to one of the Penthouse suites on the top floor. When she awoke she looked around her and was completely unfazed with the sight of the luxurious surroundings and the flowers everywhere. This was quite normal as was expected in her romantic novel world.

That is until the hang over kicked in.

She came back to earth with a bang!

She suddenly felt very vulnerable and started to panic. Had a ruthless white slave trader kidnapped her?

Would some ugly old man come in and start ravishing her?

Mildred was beside herself, but slowly opened her eyes again and seeing the telephone gingerly picked it up and waited for a reply. The Hot Line phones from the penthouse suites were always monitored by the reception staff and this one even more so after Chekov had left strict instructions.

'Hallo is that Mrs O'Riley?' came the reply. Chekov had done his homework.

'Eerr, yes,' muttered Mildred slowly. 'To whom am I speaking?'

'Oh, this is reception here. Mr Yeboleksi has asked us to make sure you are feeling all right. Can we get you anything?'

Feeling a little reassured she continued.

'Eerrr, yes,' she said clearing her throat. 'Can I have a large pot of tea please?'

'Certainly, I'll get someone to bring it up right away Mrs O'Riley.'

Mildred breathed a sigh of relief and got up to walk round the lovely suite and view the beautiful furnishings. She opened the curtains slowly to a panoramic view from a large balcony overlooking the Atlantic Ocean. It was breath taking. She was still breathing in the clear clean air when someone knocked on the door.

She rushed back into the room and slowly opened the door.

It was Chekov with a tray of silver service tea set on white linen with small delicately cut cucumber sandwiches and a single rose laid across the top.

'Mrs O'Riley, may I apologise for all this embarrassment and may I enquire as to your health please?'

It was him. Mildred was near to soggy knickers again, but managed to control herself long enough to reply, 'Oooohh, I, er, I'm feeling OK now, thank you very much.'

'I am most sorry for being so rude. May I formally introduce myself? My name is Chekov Yeboleksi and I am, how you say, a part of the Management Team of this Hotel.'

'OOOh,' squeaked Mildred demurely. Taking her eyes down.

'After you recent faintness I have taken the liberty of upgrading your accommodation to a more comfortable environment. I hope you will forgive my presumptuousness but it is nice to be able to take advantage of one's position now and then. Don't you agree?'

'OOOHH, yes,' squeaked Mildred again doing her utmost to sustain dry underwear.

'And it's not often I meet such a charming lady as yourself,' Chekov continued.

Jesus Christ. Has anyone got a cork or something thought Mildred!

'Mr Yoo...hoo...Bolecki, you have been far too kind. I can't really take advantage of you like this.'

What did I just say!

Mildred tried to give herself a bloody good kick up the arse, metaphorically speaking that is.

'My dear Mrs O'Riley. I realise this puts you in an insidious position, but please accept my offer. I would be distraught if you turned me down.'

'Oh, all right,' she said in a millisecond, breathing a sigh of relief.

'And would you be upset if I invited you to be my guest tonight in the restaurant?'

'OOOHH , well , I suppose so,' she said, lowering her eyes demurely.

'May I meet you at the bar; shall we say at eight o'clock this evening then please?'

'Oh, all right then,' Mildred's vocabulary was getting quite verbose by now.

'Good, I look forward to that. Meanwhile I will leave you to enjoy your new room and, Oh, look at me; I've been talking so much I have forgotten all about your tea. Please forgive me. I'll get out of your way and let you get on. Until tonight then Mrs O'Riley. Asta mañana.'

With that he left the room.

Mildred just made it to the toilet in time.

\* \* \*

Mildred could hardly contain herself as she ran down the stairs to find her friends. She eventually found Lucinda and Fiona by the pool and gave a little cough standing over the two prostate ladies on their sun beds.

'Hallo, yoo hoo? Anyone in?' she said distraught with excitement. There was some movement from the bodies as they looked up, shading their eyes from the sun.

'Oh, it's you Mildred' said Lucinda. 'What do you want?' They had gone through hell yesterday with her and Betty and were in no mood to be pissed about again.

'Ohh for God's sake, you will not *believe* what has just happened,' Mildred blurted out.

Lucinda slowly yawned and tried her hardest to sound interested but it wasn't going to work.

'Don't tell me Mildred, you've met Dr Shivago and he's asked you out for dinner?' she said sarcastically, and went back to her prone position.

There was a pregnant pause.

'How the hell did you know that?' squealed Mildred dejectedly. 'I've only just this second left him.' Poor Mildred turned in despair and started to walk away.

'Mildred?' came a slow retort, stopping her in her tracks. 'What did you just say?'

'How could you possibly have known what has, just this second, happened?'

Another pregnant pause.

'That's what I thought you said,' replied Lucinda frowning doubtfully.

By this time Fiona was starting to take an interest in the proceedings and was trying to sit up.

'Mildred?' the second inquisition was about to begin. 'Mildred, can you please tell me what is going on?' Fiona put her penny's worth in, not having quite grasped the initial conversation.

'I was trying to, but someone's obviously already told you, by the sounds of things,' said Mildred, still in despair with her head hanging low.

'I'm sorry Mildred but I think I must have just missed something. Can you start again?' interjected a puzzled Fiona.

'Well, I've had the most incredible thing happen to me and already it's all around the place.' Mildred said pouting furiously. She was still upset.

'What's all around the place?' Fiona was getting a bit lost here.

'Dr Shivago!' exclaimed Mildred giving her friends both barrels.

'Dr Shivago!' there was a double echo around the pool.

'Well, he's not your *actual* Dr Shivago,' Mildred carried on a bit sheepishly, and then in full voice. 'But he *is* Russian, and he does *own* the hotel!'

Mildred stood proud and erect as if to proclaim her innocence against all the guilty charges.

'Who's Russian and who owns the hotel?' Fiona and Lucinda now had Mildred's full attention.

'That's was what I was trying to tell you, but Lucinda said she knew all about it.'

Both Fiona and Lucinda shook their heads in disbelief and tried once more to get some sense out of Mildred.

'Mildred, let's pretend that we know absolutely nothing about this, this err.... Dr Shivago, and can we start all over again from the beginning please?'

'You mean you haven't heard anything about him?' Mildred replied innocently.

Fiona and Lucinda had their heads in both their hands by now and were shaking them slowly.

Another long pregnant pause again.

As Mildred hadn't received a reply she didn't know quite what to say so waited for their cue.

It took a long time coming. Lucinda and Fiona both looked at each other as if to say, no you go first, and continued.

'Mildred, can you please put us out of our misery and just tell us what has happened?'

Mildred started her story.

Twenty minutes later Lucinda and Fiona were trying to calm down an extremely excited Mildred.

'So what do I do?' Mildred had finished the details and was now into question time.

'Mildred, for Christ's sake how do you know he isn't a white slave trader or something?' Queried Fiona.

'Oh, he's not one of them. He's ever so nice.' Mildred spoke with authority.

'Oh, yes, and you know all about these types then do you Mildred?' Lucinda got in on the action.

'Well, he's not; he's an owner of the hotel. And he's really nice. So there!' Mildred was getting really ratty by now.

'And I suppose your actual white slave trader would come up to you with his calling card saying "white slave trader plc, rape, prostitution and pillage specialists, member of the professional institute of white slavers, now just pop up onto that stage darlin' and smile to the boys and show'em your teeth and tit's and I'll do a good deal for you," with a bloody eye patch and a wooden leg?' Fiona said sarcastically to Mildred.

'Fiona!' Mildred said shocked.

'Aha my little beauty, let me carry you off to foreign parts and sell your body to the highest bidder!' Fiona was rubbing it in by now.

'Sometimes Mildred you can be extremely naïve, a white slave trader's job is to be nice Mildred,' confirmed Lucinda sympathetically with her arm around Mildred's shoulder.

'Anyway, take us up to this penthouse for a quick shuffy round so as we can look for the bondage leather and the whips,' Lucinda said feeling desperately nosey, grabbing her towel and a wrap and pushing Mildred back to the hotel.

'Don't make fun of me girls,' said a pouting Mildred being guided gently into the hotel foyer.

\* \* \*

'Holy shit' Lucinda's words were a fairly accurate cross representation of what both her and Fiona were feeling upon entering Mildred's new suite.

'I see what you mean now Mildred,' said Fiona standing aghast in the middle of the room.

'Will you get a load of this scenery,' Lucinda walked over to the window and had managed to open the curtains to let in the brilliant sunshine and the view from the balcony at the same time.

'Wow. Mildred, you have certainly fallen on your feet here,' Fiona was now beginning to take the other view of Mildred's benefactor.

'So, what do you think girls? Mildred enquired.

'What do we think?' was the only reply Lucinda could currently come up with at this moment of time being somewhat spell bound and breathless with the overall impression of the luxury of the apartment.

Fiona didn't have the time to tittle-tattle; she was on a walk about, looking for the whips and bondage equipment.

'Hey, come over here and take a look at this,' called Fiona from the bathroom.

They all dashed into a spacious bathroom and Mildred was the most amazed.

'What the hell is that thing?' she said pointing to a large round marble bath raised on a plinth with lots of holes in it.

'That, my dear,' said Lucinda with an air of authority, 'is a Jacuzzi.'

'A whoozi?' said Mildred positively ignorant of these new fangled contraptions.

'It's a sort of machine that puts the wind up you dear,' said Fiona trying to show her experience in these matters.

'It does what?' continued Mildred.

'It gives you a blow job darling,' Lucinda was showing off now.

'Don't even ask,' interrupted Fiona extremely quickly.

'You mean oral sex?' said Mildred without even blinking.

'Mildred, I'm ashamed of you.'

All three ladies collapsed in a heap of laughter and nearly fell into the bath. It was that big. They managed eventually to control themselves and staggered back into the bedroom.

'Well, what do you think?' Mildred raised the question again.

'I think you one hell of a jammy bugger,' Lucinda finalised.

They all stood in the middle of the room and took stock of the surroundings once more.

'Yes, but what do I do about tonight?' Mildred needed some professional counselling here about her hot date.

'I don't know, what do you think Fiona?' Lucinda was still in total awe.

'I, eerr, I think we should, err.....why don't we come down to dinner *with* you Mildred?' Fiona had finished in the awe department for the time being.

'Hey, that's not such a bad idea,' Lucinda was with them again.

'What, you mean I have to share my date?' said Mildred a little disappointedly.

'No, I don't think we need to actually join you, I think though that we should just keep an eye on the proceedings.'

'From a distance,' followed up Fiona.

'Yes, why don't we eat at the restaurant with you, and then if there's going to be any white slave trading we could always get in on the bidding?' Lucinda introduced a wee bit of sarcasm.

'Ha, dee ha,' said Mildred. 'Very funny I'm sure.'

'No, honestly, we can be around and monitor the situation for you Mildred and keep in touch so to speak.' Fiona brought them back to reality.

'OK, but don't cock it up, please?' begged Mildred.

'What time are you seeing him?' queried Fiona.

'I'm meeting him in the bar at eight o'clock, next to the restaurant' said Mildred.

'OK, girls, let's synchronise our watches, shall we?' Lucinda was pissing about again.



## Chapter 8. The girl's first night out abroad

It was eight o'clock and Mildred was done up in her Sunday best. Actually it was her Monday best. Lucinda and Fiona had popped into town with her in the early evening and done a bit of retail therapy on her behalf, and acting as advisors, had found her a beautiful little cocktail dress, just right for the balmy evenings.

And they couldn't get much balmier than this lot.

She looked every inch the sophisticated lady. Now all she needed was to act sophisticated. The large Sangria was helping as she tried to sit at the bar and look nonchalant. Lucinda and Fiona were sitting over at the other side of the room monitoring events when Chekov walked in.

He too had taken advantage of the shops and had bought a nice black silk shirt with matching microfibre trousers and the beige Italian shoes matched his smart new German Marino wool jacket.

Mildred caught a glance at him as he approached with a small bouquet of flowers.

"Bugger! I'm going to wet my knickers again," she thought, but then remembered the litre of Sangria she had just drunk.

His dark complexion even now fulfilled Mildred's romantic vision of her Dr Shivago.

Lucinda and Fiona were nudging each other as he closed in on his white slave.

'Good evening Mrs O'Riley. May I enquire as to your health?'

Mildred tried to clear her throat and eventually made a stab at speaking.

'Eerr,..well, er,,,, actually, I feel very lovely , I mean I feel a lot better thank you very much,' she eventually blurted out in deep embarrassment. Her eyes fell as he looked at her.

'I'm so glad to hear it. Would you be offended if I offered you these flowers?'

"Oh shit, I'm definitely going to pee myself," she thought.

'Oh, you shouldn't have really, er... Mr Popo,,,,,, Yobo,,,,,er.'

Mildred was saved more blushes as he quickly took the initiative.

'I'm most sorry about my name; it is Yeboleksi, Chekov Yeboleksi. But I would be honoured if you would call me Chekov?'

'Yes I think that is a lot easier than ere....Yobo.....er ...whatever you just said,' Mildred giggled.

What with the fluttering eyelashes and the demure giggle, Chekov was being driven to nearly the same state as Mildred viz a viz soggy knickers. The hint of cleavage was not helping too much either.

'Mr Chockoff, would you excuse me, I really just need to pop into the powder room.'

'Please call me Chekov, and I would be delighted to escort you that way where I can put these flowers in water for you to take up to your room later. Please allow me.'

With that he stood up and offered his arm and guided her out of the bar.

Lucinda and Fiona made a dash for it when it was all clear and met up with Mildred in the ladies.

'Holy shit Mildred, that is one smooth looking hunk of a man,' whispered Lucinda loudly.

'You lucky sod,' followed on Fiona.

'Excuse me girls I must just pop in here quickly,' and with that she dashed into the nearest closet.

'Well, he certainly looks OK to me,' continued Lucinda. 'If you get tired of him give us a shout.'

'He's all right, I suppose,' Fiona said unconvincingly.

The two ladies busied about their make up and eventually Mildred appeared back and tidied herself up.

'Ok, let's get on with it. Give me a couple of minutes start eh?' Mildred put her lipstick back into her handbag and walked slowly out of the ladies as if she was walking on to a stage at the launch of a new production.

She joined Chekov in the hotel lobby and they slowly made their way into the restaurant. The waiters all started running around like headless chickens as soon as they entered and started fussing over Mildred like mother hens. One of them pulled her seat out and then undid the linen serviette and folded it gently on to her lap.

They then looked after Chekov and started handing out the enormous leather menu holders and wine list holders and generally ponsing about like bella donnas.

'Mrs O'Riley, may I say how lovely you look tonight.'

'Oh, really, Mr Cockoff'...

'Chekov,' he interrupted in a nice way.

'I am so sorry, I not very good with names. Chekoff.? .....is that right?' Mildred was nearly there.

He nodded. 'You make it sound so nice.'

'Chekoff, I must apologise for the unfortunate incident at the bridge table.'

He quickly interrupted her. 'Mrs O'Riley, I understand you had only just arrived the previous night. And I understand this hot weather is not usual in England. So, therefore it is normal for somebody as delicate as yourself to be overcome by the elements.'

'Well yes I did have rather a bad flight.'

'Tell me where do you come from. You're not from Essex are you?'

'Oh no,' Mildred conceded.

A sigh of relief was visibly evident.

'Don't tell me, .....you're from London. You must live in Mayfair?'

'Oh goodness gracious no. I come from a little village just outside London.'

'Oh, where about outside London?'

'Just about half way between London and the coast.'

'Oh which coast would that be?' Chekov asked further.

'I remember my Mother taking me there on holiday when I was little. It had a lovely beach and donkey rides and ice cream.' Mildred was off into her other world again.

He wasn't getting very far here so he brought her back to reality with the menu. 'It sounds like a charming place. Now, what about eating. Have you chosen your meal yet?'

'Oh, I'm so sorry; I get carried away now and then. And it's all so far away now, and I'm here in a far off land and, gosh what a big menu.' Mildred came back to earth with a bump.

'Gosh, I'm not supposed to eat all that am I?'

Chekov was utterly charmed with her innocence and guided her through the vagaries of the menu and the wine list. How different from the two Essex ladies.

'Mrs O'Riley, may I suggest that for medicinal purposes, we open a little bottle of Champagne? It saves all that waste of time looking through that big boring wine list, don't you agree?'

'Ooh, I think that would be a lovely idea.' Mildred said with a sigh of relief, not wanting to be shown up by her lack of knowledge of wines.

\* \* \*

Lucinda and Fiona were having great difficulty explaining to the Head Waiter that they wanted to go into the restaurant where Mildred was.

The Head Waiter was having great difficulty explaining to Lucinda and Fiona that as they were booked on an all inclusive package, they would have to eat with the other plebs in the main

Dining room and that this restaurant was by appointment only. "These stupid Ingleyzzi don't understand the difference between A la Carte and Table d'hôte," he thought to himself.

The fact that this man could not speak English properly was making Lucinda even angrier and she was going to have to resort to the tried and tested method of upping the decibels to get her message over.

Either that or bribery.

Unfortunately it is extremely difficult to bribe someone with just a credit card.

Meanwhile Mildred could hear all this commotion and was desperately trying to turn round and see what was going on. Eventually Lucinda managed to understand 'appointment' and they agreed to book a table for later on that night. Unfortunately there was nothing free for another hour and a half so they decided there was nothing else to do but to wait at the bar.

All this to save Mildred from the White Slave Trader. He didn't look anything like a White Slave Trader to either Fiona or Lucinda but they felt it their duty to keep an eye on Mildred anyway. So the bar it was.

\* \* \*

Mildred was well into her second glass of Champagne and loving every drop of it.

'Did I tell you that I was in England many years ago?'

'No, when was that?'

'Oh, let me see, it must have been, oh, such a long time ago now. But I was in London and with some nice English friends who had a big house out in the country and did a lot of entertaining. But the weather was not always very nice. Much the same as where I come from. Some more champagne Mrs O'Riley?'

'Oooh, I think I might just try another small glass if I may. Purely for medicinal purposes you understand. Especially after this morning's little problem.' Mildred held up her champagne flute, which was quickly grabbed by a waiter who appeared from nowhere and was promptly filled with all due pomp and ceremony.

'Where do you come from Tickoff?' the champagne was going down like Castrol GTX.

Chekov had given up on trying getting Mildred to get his name right. It was just pleasant to watch this lovely lady enjoying herself.

'I come from a large city in the Cossack Country.'

'Oh, you are a Cossack?'

'Not in the true sense, no, but all Ukrainians feel they have Cossack blood in them.'

'So you can't ride a horse?' Mildred said disappointedly.

'Well, I used to, when I was younger but I find the car is much more comfortable now. Well sometimes anyway.' Chekov remembered his recent hair-raising ride up to the hotel from Playa.

'So what is the city called?'

'I live in Kiev which is the capital of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic.'

'Oooh, that sounds important.' Said Mildred vastly impressed.

'We have a population of over two million. Which is small compared to London but still a big city?'

'Gosh that does sound a lot. It's a lot bigger than Muddlecombe.'

'Pardon, where do you come from?' asked Chekov missing the name.

'Muddlecombe. It's only a small village I'm afraid,' apologised Mildred. 'But we do have a duck pond and a school *and* Macramé classes.' Mildred was very proud of her Macramé classes.

'It sounds very romantic,' Chekov was now becoming initiated into Mildred's world.

'I'm afraid that's it!' Mildred broke the spell.

'Oh, we do have a pub, the "Snort and Truffle",' she'd nearly forgotten where her husband lived. She *had* forgotten about her husband.

'Of course, it's mandatory. Every English village has a pub. And yours must be very charming.'

'I don't know. All I know is that there is a barmaid there with a large chest,' giggled Mildred.

'I think that is mandatory as well, isn't it?' Chekov joined in the laughter.

The cow.

Mildred didn't want to dwell on the past.

'Tell me more about your lovely city?' she was now looking into Chekov's eyes.

We'd best not go into the Chernobyl bit thought Chekov, trying to keep the romantic atmosphere on an ongoing basis.

'Kiev. Ah, .....the beautiful city of Kiev.' He sighed

'Where to start?' he sighed again

Mildred sighed. She was now back into full romantic mode again. She was riding in a sleigh with Dr Shivago.

'The river Dneiper divides the city. On the Right Bank are the hills and opposite is an extensive flat plain.'

Chekov continued.

'Oooh, it sounds so beautiful,' sighed Mildred.

Chekov continued trying not to break the spell.

'It sounds all so romantic.' Mildred was well away now.

\* \* \*

So were Lucinda and Fiona.

Having to wait at the bar, they had made good use of their room key as bar tabs and it was their turn tonight to take advantage of the local atmosphere. The local atmosphere being a young barman named Paulo and a litre of Sangria.

Their second litre.

They were in the middle of Spanish lessons when Fiona dug Lucinda in the side and pointed to something wandering aimlessly around the lobby just outside the bar. It was what could only be described as a passing resemblance to a mortician's dummy.

Actually it wasn't just a passing resemblance. This one was vertical and moving, but that was the only difference. Not moving very fast, and not sure in which direction to move either.

'Betty!' the scream nearly blew Betty over as Fiona rushed over to her and guided her over to the bar.

'How are you old girl?' Lucinda asked. This was a rhetorical question, knowing full well the answer was going to be 'a bag of shit.'

Spot on.

'Holy shit Betty, you look terrible. You look as if you've just spent a honeymoon with Dracula.' Fiona in one of her "let's be frank" moods.

Nice to have such comforting friends.

Very slowly Betty started trying the "talking in sentences" bit. 'Can someone tell please me where we are and how we got here?'

'That is a long story Betty.' Lucinda guided her over to a comfortable chair.

\* \* \*

'I did that?' Betty was finding the story Lucinda and Fiona had cooked up about the flight a little hard to believe. This didn't improve her countenance one little bit either.

'I think you should try a drink to kill the hair of the dog Betty,' suggested Lucinda.

The barman over heard the unfortunate story and interrupted.

'Please, I have good drink for your friend.'

'No thank you,' said Betty. 'I don't want to touch the stuff ever again.'

'No, this very good. Trust me I have been using this for long time.'

'Go on Betty, what have you got to loose?' piped in Fiona.

'My liver?' said Betty looking at them both.

'Please, I go to kitchen for one minute. Please watch bar.'

And with that the barman was off for Betty's prescription.

When he returned he emptied the contents of something from a bowl that he had got from the kitchen into a glass, turned his back and added something else and handed Betty the drink.

'It's OK, it on the house,' he would do anything to get people back on to the drinking habit to push up the bar profit's.

'Now you drink in one go,' and with that he handed Betty the drink and gave her no options but to go ahead and drink it.

She threw it down in one swallow and pulled a horrible face and handed the drink back to the barman.

'Eeeuuuuuuuuuuuuuukkk!.'

'That good, eh, Betty?' Lucinda was in a flippant mood.

'Now, please to sit down and rest and you OK in half an hour. Now we continue with Spanish lesson OK ladies?' Which roughly translated said: this silly cow has interrupted my cash flow situation, now let's get back to the buying drinks mode!

'Another Sangria?'

'Paulo, you certainly know how to look after us don't you?' Lucinda and Fiona exchanged dirty looks at each other and smiled.

\* \* \*

Mildred was in total awe of Chekov who had ordered the most delicious meal she had ever had. They had started with smoked salmon and a mustard and dill sauce, which was served up with a tomato cut to look like a rose.

Then some more champagne.

Then a sorbet.

And a little more champagne.

A fish course locally caught and barbecued with some local herbs sprinkled on top.

Another glass of champagne.

Mildred was in seventh heaven.

Chekov was holding her hand and asked.

'Mildred, (The 'Mrs O'Riley' had been vetoed by Mildred after the sorbet.) I have a very personal question I would like to ask you. I hope you will not feel I am being too presumptuous?'

'Oohh, please, do go on.' Mildred never argued with anything she couldn't spell.

'May I ask you to be my partner please?'

Oh shit, it was decision time. What was it to be, wet knickers or feint.

Before the decision making process had come up with a solution, Chekov continued.

'I feel we would make very good Bridge partners, don't you?'

Back down from red alert. Phew, that was a close shave. However the old heart was still in the pounding mode when Mildred eventually got round to replying.

'My dear Cluckoff, I would be honoured. But you *do* know that I am only learning and I hope you won't feel that I'm holding you back.'

'I am also learning, but I feel it would be so much more fun together don't you?'

'I think you are so right. I don't want to get too serious though, do you?'

'Precisely. After all we are on holiday, aren't we?'

'Well I am, but I thought you were on business?'

'My dear Mildred, the moment I set eyes on you I got rid of my business colleague for a few days so I am on holiday now, officially, OK?'

'Oh, I hope you don't get into trouble?' said Mildred in a very concerned mood.

'Don't you worry about a thing? It's all taken care of. Now, what are we going to have as an entrée?'

'Chickoff, I feel stuffed already. I don't know if I can handle anything else just yet.'

Steady boy thought Chekov.

'I think I should have another glass of champagne, don't you?' Mildred was getting the taste for this bubbly stuff. Mind you she picked up the taste for the gin on the plane just as easily.

'A sound idea,' agreed Chekov.

\* \* \*

'Where's Mildred?' came a noise from Betty. She had suddenly realised that there was somebody missing. Betty was getting some colour back into her cheeks.

Green.

'Mildred. Christ, I'd forgotten all about Mildred!' said Lucinda.

'We should be getting our table by now,' replied Fiona.

Betty sat looking at the other two with a blank expression.

'Was it something I said?'

'Bit of a long story Betty,' Lucinda got up and started speaking to the barman.

'Is there anyway we can check to see if our table's ready please? She enquired of the barman.

'No problem, I go see Luigi,' and off he went towards the restaurant.

Meanwhile Betty had gone in the other direction.

Lucinda looked one way then the other.

Fiona looked the other way and then back.

'Where the hell's Betty gone?'



'I think she dashed off that away,' confirmed Fiona.

'Where?'

'Over there, towards the loos I think.' Fiona wasn't too sure.

'She didn't look too good. I think the barman's medicine is beginning to work.'

Betty came back from the toilets having regained her original colour, grey.

The barman returned from the restaurant.

'Your tables ready now ladies' he stopped and looked at Betty.

'How you feel now?' another rhetorical question.

'A bit lighter' said Betty with a sheepish grin. 'I think I've got rid of my trouble,' she continued.

'Ok, so the medicine, she work ok?'

'She work OK,' confirmed Betty.

'OK, so you go and eat now?'

Betty went another funny colour again.

'Come on Betty, we've got to keep an eye on Mildred in the restaurant,' explained Lucinda.

'Keep an eye on Mildred. What's she done?'

'She's been captured by a White Slave Trader,' Fiona continued the explanation.

'A White Slave Trader?'

'Come on Betty, we'll tell you all about it.'

They grabbed Betty's arms and walked her slowly to the restaurant.

'Good evening ladies, I have your table ready for you now.' The Headwaiter's attitude had changed now that he could see the prospect of some paying customers.

'Oh, sorry, Ladies, you want table for three now please?'

'Oh, yes please, our friend will be joining us.' Lucinda had forgotten that they'd only booked for two.

'Is no problema. Uno momento!' And with a professional flourish he dashed off to their table and quickly added another place. He came mincing back to the ladies and showed them to their seats. Just as they sat down Mildred and Chekov passed them on the way out.

'Wasn't that Mildred?' Betty turned round in astonishment. 'Wasn't that a man with her?'

'Oh, fuck!' Lucinda muttered under her breath.

'Scoozie?' The Head Waiter was caught unawares with this sudden aside.

'Lucinda, what the hell do we do now?' muttered Fiona nearly as loud.

'What is going on? Will someone please tell me what is happening?' Betty was getting exasperated. Lucinda stood up and motioned to the exit.

'Come on ladies, we've got to stay with Mildred,' she then turned to the Headwaiter and said 'Scoozie!' Pushing past him on the way back out of the restaurant.

She grabbed Betty and with Fiona taking the hint, they all walked straight back out of the restaurant.

The Head Waiter was struck dumb.

For only a few seconds that is.

'Fucking Ingleyzzi!' It was his turn to mutter.

\* \* \*

The gang of three rushed out of the hotel in pursuit of Mildred and partner. They stopped outside the hotel entrance and looked either way in forlorn hope of catching the two elopees.

'Fuck,' another quiet aside from Lucinda.

As they gathered their breath, Fiona continued. 'Look girls we must keep an eye on Mildred, now where the hell did she go?'

'Can somebody please tell me what the hell is going on?' Betty was still in the dark and just trying to get her bodily functions back to the normal human being mode of operations.

'It's a long story Betty' said Fiona.

'Look why don't I go off down there and you and Betty try up there towards the town centre and we'll meet up here in say, half an hour?'

## Chapter 9. Sharon and Tracey

“Sharon” and “Tracey” couldn’t believe their luck when they bumped into Serge again. They had received information from their boss at head quarters to check out the Mafia connection as well as their current bullion robbery investigations. He said that there may be a link somewhere and gave them some more time to further their information gathering activities.

Information gathering, more like an 18-30 holiday!

Oh well, best get on with the job again!

And they did.

Poor Serge didn’t know what had hit him when he returned from his trip up to Puerto de la Cruz and found the girls waiting for him at the hotel bar again. So he had no choice other than to lie back and think of Russia.

Unfortunately he wasn’t able to give the intrepid detectives a great deal more information than they already had on the movement of money from Boris to the Bank. Serge being an accountant didn’t have the reasoning to put two and two together and connect anything out of the ordinary. The Branch Manager had been interrogated by Serge, well, asked nicely really, hardly interrogation, about the sudden increase in the bank’s profitability.

The Branch Manager had also learned of Boris’ disappearance and felt he could turn this to his advantage by inventing a story, which would credit him with a few brownie points. So according to him he had made Boris’s acquaintance through his normal security duties and his regular visit’s to the Bank. Boris had come to him for some help about how to invest some of his money and together they had set up a small portfolio on the various world stock markets. The Branch Manager explained that by rare good luck they had hit upon some extremely high yielding stock and by some *more* incredible good luck had bought and sold at the right time to give an extremely good return for their investment.

He said that Boris was so grateful that he had felt it best to return the favour to the Bank by re-investing his investment surplus back into the Bank and therefore increase his Corporation’s long

term stability and security which in turn would benefit his own long term employment prospects.

What a load of crap!

But Serge fell for it as it all tied in nicely with the dates in his ledger and duly passed on his findings to Chekov. Even to the point of verifying the changes in Boris's office meager fall in profit's to the same dates as the bank's sudden vast increase in profit's.

So Boris was squeaky clean now and the golden boy of the moment and the branch manager was up a few thousand brownie points as well.

Serge was happy that his figures matched and that was that.

There was still nothing linking Boris to the gold.

It was a slow process filling in the blanks, and it seemed a little more time had to be spent to try and get hold of some more tenuous links concerning the bullion robbery and this Russian lot. Sharon and Tracey had already obtained details of Boris' watering hole, the Beefeaters Bar in Playa, so felt that they had best go and see if they could pick up any clues there.

They had been there over two hours enjoying the English television when in walked four men in expensive silk shirts and Cockney accents. They were obviously well known there as the barman greeted them like long lost relatives.

The girls looked at each other after a few minutes and with a little nod went into action.

'Allo handsome, I like your shirt?' Sharon made the first move closing in on one of the Londoners.

'Yer, it's a bit of alright ain't it,' he replied preening himself and eyeing up the two girls. 'You gets them down the Sunday market at Los Christianos. Here feel that.'

This was all too easy for the girls who now moved into phase two of the interrogation routine.

'You on holiday then?' Sharon continued.

'Yer, sort of,' and with that he gave his mates a little wink.

'Where you from then?' Tracey came into the action.

'Me? I'm from London.'

'Coo, that's a coincidence, me and Sharon are from Essex.'

They both put money on the next line to come from their new friends.

'Ere lads, this lady and her mate Sharon are from Essex,' he said turning round to his friends with a large grin on his face.

The group of men all started giggling.

'Allo ladies,' the leader of the group interrupted. 'as Nobby offered you a drink yet?'

'No,' said Sharon. 'Is that really 'is name, or is 'e just pleased to see us?'

Everybody fell about laughing.

The laughing abated as the headman managed to get a word in.

'What d'you say to that Nobby?' more tittering, as he turned to Sharon and Tracey. 'Now what you want to drink then girls?'

'Oooh, what about a couple of big Sangrias, that would be nice, ta ever so.'

Nobby had been thinking of how to get his revenge and while the barman was getting the drinks ready came back with, 'Er, John, how do you know if an Essex girls been on a computer?'

The girls had just won their bet.

'I dunno Nobby, how d'you know if an Essex girl's been on a computer?'

'There's tippex on the screen. Ha, ha, ha!'

It's always the case that the person telling the joke is usually the one to laugh loudest. Laughter all round as Sharon and Tracey gave each other a little nod again. Their drinks came and the girls kept the ball rolling.

'You lads are a load of laughs,' Tracey continued.

'No offence darling,' John tried to apologise as he handed out their drinks.

Knocker then turned to the fourth member of the group between drinks and came up with another joke. The laughter filled the bar again as Sharon and Tracey made a mental note of all their names. Now all they needed to know were their addresses.

They managed their drinks amid the banter of the bar and Sharon picked on Nobby again.

'Which part of London d'you come from then Nobby?'

'Me, I'm an East ender darlin'.'

'Oh yeah, which part of the East End then?'

'East Ham darlin'.'

'No you not Nobby, you comes from bleedin' Dagenham,' John butted in.

'Yeah, but it's near East Ham aint it?'

'Yeah, but you *actually* comes from Dagenham Nobby, don't you?'

'Isn't Dagenham in Essex?' came a shy inquiring voice from Sharon.

This started more mirth, which Nobby didn't take too kindly to.

John could see an entry for more jokes here and started, 'Nobby, you must be an Essex boy then?'

Sharon came to his rescue and cuddled up to Nobby, 'So what's wrong with being an Essex Boy then, eh Nobby?' She looked up at him to give him added confidence.

'Yeah, and anyway where do you come from then Harry?'

'Me, I come from Wanstead.'

'No you ain't Harry, you comes from bleeding Brentwood.'

'No I don't, well, I might 'av just passed through there once .....' he was quickly interrupted by Nobby who was on the offensive now.

'Just passed through? You was passing through there for about twenty bleeding years.'

'Yeah, well I might 'av.....'

'You lived on the bleeding Mountnessing Road when I first knew you,' interrupted Nobby again quickly.

This was all going far too easily for the two ladies who stood back and watched the proceedings with the occasional prompt now and then. They had their first names and were slowly getting their addresses now, but they still didn't have any connections with either Boris or the bullion job, but they had a hunch something would turn up sooner or later. The Sangria was flowing and everybody was having a good time until Sharon meekly asked, 'anyone seen Boris lately?'

Well, you could have cut the atmosphere with a knife.

The fun and laughter came to a grinding halt as the men stood still like statues with only their eyes moving, all in the direction of John, who they were obviously looking to for inspiration and to take over the role of spokesman.

He eventually managed to get out a sentence between wiping his mouth from the drink that had spilled after the word 'Boris' came out.

'Sorry darling, didn't catch you there?' John muttered.

'Er, something I said was it?' came back Sharon. 'Only I was told by a friend of ours that we might bump into Boris here?'

'Boris?' said John looking up into the heavens for inspiration. 'Can't say as I know any Boris darlin'. What's 'e look like then?'

'Well, that's just it,' Tracey came to Sharon's aid, 'we don't actually know him like, just been told to look him up here. We got a sort of mutual friend what knows of him.'

'Did someone mention Boris?' The English landlord casually remarked cleaning his glasses. He had seen a considerable fall in bitter sales since Boris had disappeared and was coming in half way through the conversation. If looks could have killed he'd have been cremated by now as the lads all whipped round to glare at him.

'You know Boris then?' Sharon took up the lead quickly.

'Boris, no, me? No, never heard of him.' He quickly got out of the mire.

Sharon looked at Tracey. She obviously wasn't going to let go so easily now that the lead was getting hotter.

'Weren't he that big Russian lad?' mused John. The game was quite obviously up now.

'Didn't we have a big foreign lad in here a few weeks ago Nobby?' They would have got the over-acting Oscars for this little staged presentation.

'That big foreign lad you mean John?'

'Yeah, big bugger weren't he?'

'Was he Russian then?'

Sharon and Tracey smiled inwardly to themselves. They now had the connection. They knew their names, where they came from, that they weren't on holiday as they'd been here several months and that they quite obviously knew Boris. Not a bad day's work.

There was going to have to be a bit more work now put in on the connection with the gold and this bunch of London lads and Boris.

Plan B.

Backs to the beds.

Now, who should they start on?

'Ere Nobby, where d'yer say you got them shirts, they don't half feel nice?' said Tracey continuing where she came in.

'Yours is a bit nice John?' cooed Sharon closing in and stroking John's arm.

'What, you on about darling, me shirt?' John winked to all the lads with a dirty laugh.

Looked like it was going to be Nobby and John for tonight then.

## Chapter 10. The girl's second night out

Chekov had always been an early riser, so was disgusted at having to find out that it was already half past nine. But as he opened the curtains it was a beautiful day and the birds were singing and the sun was shining and .....oh, what the hell, he was in love.

What another simply enchanting night he and Mildred had spent last night. Her pure innocence and simplicity and that sophisticated bit about her was making her all the more endearing to him.

Anyway, down to business, for a bit anyway, and then he could continue his wooing.

Now where was he, oh yes, he was getting that old feeling creeping up the back of his neck that something wasn't quite right. You don't get to be head of the KGB interrogation department without knowing when someone was following you. He was normally the one doing the following and asking the questions but things didn't quite seem as if he was in control.

He picked up the phone and tried the number of the Northern Tenerife agent again.

'Dimitri, is that you? It's Chekov here. Chekov Yeboleksi. Yes, that's right, the one from Head Office in Kiev. Yes, your boss. Yes I'm here in Tenerife. Yes I'm here now. By airplane. You know, big bird in sky.' At this point he put his hand over the phone.

'БВАИУ ЪФТ!' or roughly translated, 'Kinnell, what am I dealing with here, a Neanderthal man?' Chekov said discreetly under the breath.

'Hallo Dimitri, how are you?'

'Good. Now please listen to me. I'm staying at the, the ..... the.....at our Hotel in Puerto de la Cruz. Yes, that's right, the big white one on the front.'

'Yes thank you, it's very nice thank you, now I want you to do something for me please. I have this feeling that I'm being followed so I want you to .....'

Chekov went into the details of the operations for Dimitri and checked through the details with him again.



'Please Dimitri, just remember, this must be done discreetly.'

\* \* \*

There was no sign of Mildred at breakfast or lunch the next day, but the 'Girls' had caught a glimpse of her at the bridge sessions and had briefly met at the bar in the evening before Mildred rushed out with her new paramour. They managed to gulp down some food before setting out on their evening patrol duties once more. They walked out into the warm evening sunshine and after taking their bearings set off down the road.

They were unaware of the large Mercedes following them until it stopped beside them and the driver got out and opened the back door of the stretched limousine.

'Good evening ladies, taxi, please.'

'No thank you my man,' Lucinda's words were forcefully fired through her lips.

The Chauffeur slowly allowed his jacket to open up revealing a leather appendage under his armpit.

'Why's he got leather braces on?' asked a bemused Betty.

'I hate to tell you this girls but I don't think those braces are for holding up his trousers.' Fiona was refreshingly accurate.

Just then, the whole car's suspension dipped, rose up again, and as to what could only be described as a Yeti in a suit got out of the other door to extend the welcome offer to the ladies. Like Boris, the Northern Tenerife's agent's job description had been carefully and systematically narrowed down through the KGB's Human Resource Management's evolution and was now perfectly and clearly defined within narrow parameters.

### **Job description:**

1. Termination of personnel as designated by the Bureau.
2. Disposal of said personnel in an unobtrusive manner so as not to raise the profile of the Bureau to any official authorities involved.
3. Ensuring safe passage of other personnel from A to B as designated by the Bureau and ensuring they are **not** terminated.
4. Ensuring safe passage of goods from A to B as designated by the Bureau. The goods herein being money, precious metals or other substances as designate by the Bureau.
5. Ensuring knowledge of said transportation to be minimised to any official authorities.
6. Any person belonging to that specified in clause 5 to be actioned as in clause 1.

7. Perform any other duties as designated by the Bureau as long as it doesn't involve long division
8. JDI. (Just do it)

Similarly the person specification had clearly defined parameters as well.

### **Person Specification:**

1. Big
2. Stupid

These facts flashed briefly through the minds of the ladies and persuaded them that they really should take advantage of such a generous offer. Safely inside the luxury of the Mercedes they sped off into the unknown.

'Can someone please tell me what the hell is going on?' Poor Betty was still bemused.

\* \* \*

'So what you are saying Dimitri is that you picked up the people following me and that these three women are working for someone that starts in MI?'

'That's it boss.'

'MI5?'

'Eeerrrr, .....dunno, boss.'

'MI6?'

'Eeerrrr, .....dunno, boss.'

'And they are looking for a White Slave Trader?'

'Eeerrrr, .....yes boss.'

'And you are sure about this Dimitri?'

'Eeerrrr, .....yes boss.'

'Well, this confirms my suspicions, but I didn't realise we were up against the British Secret Service, and that we have some new competition and some pretty nasty competition by the sounds of things to.'

'Do you want me to do the usual boss?'

"Dimitri the Dim" as he was known to his friends, well not actually his friends. Like Boris, it was always best to *befriend* Dimitri rather than get into any other sort of relationship, as the only other sort of relationship you would get would be with earthworms. Anyway, Dimitri always liked doing the terminating thing rather than this cloak and dagger stuff which tended to use up too many brain cells, and that hurt. So here was his chance to show off his prowess to Chekov after his stunning success with the interrogation bit.

'No, Dimitri, we can use these ladies to our advantage I think. You have done a good job there Dimitri, and I presume you were discreet?'

'Er, ...beg pardon boss?'

'Discreet.'

'Eerrrr.....'

'You were *discreet* with these enquiries weren't you Dimitri? You understand "discreet"?''

'I thought you said use the "Discipline Suite".'

'What's the "Discipline Suite" Dimitri?'

'It's a sort of, er, ....room, boss'

'A room Dimitri?'

'Eerrrr,..... yes boss.'

'Where is this room Dimitri?'

'In a, sort of, er,..... house, boss.'

'What sort of house Dimitri.'

'A sort of, er,..... leisure centre, sort of house boss.'

'A leisure centre?'

'Er, yes boss, but, it's ok, it's one of ours.'

Dimitri had suddenly grasped that things were not going at all well and he was relieved to be able to put in some sort of positive note in to the conversation.

'One of ours Dimitri?'

'Er, yes boss.' Quite obviously this bit of information hadn't placated his boss at all and he felt another bout of intense interrogation coming on.

'If it's one of "ours",' continued Chekov. 'Then it must be a casino, a hotel, a betting shop, a bank or a brothel?'

'Er, yes boss.'

'Which one was it Dimitri?'

'Er, a sort of escort agency boss.'

'A brothel?'

'Er, yes boss.'

'And this "Suite" you mentioned..?'

'Er, well, it's not exactly a suite, boss, er..., more your actual sort of , er....., bedroom, er, boss.'

'A bedroom?'

'Er, yes boss.'

'Whose bedroom, Dimitri?'

'Er, Miss ,er, Whiplash Labelle's bedroom, boss.'

'And how did you get these English Ladies there Dimitri?'

'Well, er, me and the driver, er, sort of, er, invited them into the car, for a sort of, er ride, boss.'

'You kidnapped them?'

'Er, well, we did ask them nicely, boss.'

Chekov could not imagine that Dimitri, or that stupid speed crazy Chauffeur, would be able to comprehend the meaning of asking someone nicely at all. Just looking at Dimitri was not nice. It was quite frightening. It did have it's advantages, but as for the definition of 'inviting' this had to be amended to pure unadulterated threatening and intimidation.

'And did these nice English ladies enjoy Miss, er, what's her name's room?'

'Oh, we didn't need to use Whiplash's room at all boss.' Dimitri brightened up again.

'Oh, I am glad about that Dimitri. And why didn't you need the services of Miss, er, Whiplash?'

'Cause they was singing like, er.... Birds boss.'

'Singing like birds?'

'Yes, boss we got it out of them after they had the, er..... drinks.'

'You got it out of them?'

'Er, yes, boss.'

'What did you get out of them Dimitri?' This was probably the hardest interrogation session Chekov had ever had in his life. As a professional interrogator, his subject was one of the most unwilling and stubborn interviewees he had ever come across, and he was on his side!

'The information you asked me to get, boss.'

'And they just came out with it after a few drinks?'

'Yer,...er, boss, er.....well, we helped them along a bit.'

'You helped them a long a bit?'

'Er, yes boss.'

*Definitely,* one of the hardest interrogation sessions of his life.

'How did you help them Dimitri?'

'Well, boss, er, with some of them substances what I deliver, boss.'

'Drugs?'

'Er, yes boss.'

'Let me get this straight, Dimitri. This discretion of yours so far, is up to kidnapping and drugging. Am I right?'

'Er, yes boss.'

'Anything else?'

'Er, no boss . We didn't need to use anything else. But we did have a good laugh.'

'I can't wait to hear how you got a good laugh Dimitri.'

'Er, ....pardon boss?'

'Please continue with the report Dimitri.'

'Yes. Er, boss. Er.... well, like I was saying, after a few cocktails, these two birds, er, ladies like, was telling us all we wanted to know, but the other one was playing it real crafty like and pretending she didn't have a clue as to what was all going on.'

'So what happened?'

'Well, we gives her, er.... a bit more help like, boss.'

'A bit more?'

'Yer, like a few more substances like. Not a lot like, you understand boss.'

'Oh, I do understand Dimitri.'

'So she starts getting wild and starts entertaining the others boss.'

'The others?'

'Yer, the other punters what was in the joint already?'

'You mean this was all taking place in the open?'

'No, we done it inside.'

'I mean, there were members of the public there as well?'

'Oh, yeh. There's a big conference on in town and we gets a lot of business from them.'

'I know, we have the hotel full of them. So what happened with this, "bird" that wouldn't sing?'

'Well, she gets as high as a kite and gets on this table and starts singing and dancing and .....'

'Yes, I think I get the picture Dimitri. But did you get any more information out of her?'

'Er, no, boss. But we pushed the takings up for the day and we had a lot of satisfied customers.'

'So, she didn't actually come up with anything?'

'No, boss. She was on about some place called Jerusalem and some nasty bits of black satanic looking hills. Must have been some sort of code. Clever I reckon, but I thought I'd got enough information from the others for you, so we just, sort of, made the most of the opportunity, so to speak, boss.'

'You don't think for one moment that there was a possibility she didn't really know anything at all?'

'No, boss, too clever that one I reckon.'

'I see. And then what happened?'

'So then she er, .... Collapses after a few hours and the others is flat out anyway, so I takes 'em back to the hotel boss.'

'Thank you Dimitri. Remind me to put you on one of our "discretion" courses will you.'

'Er, yes boss.'

\* \* \*

Mildred had spent a lovely time in the last few days. Her Dr Shivago was fulfilling her wildest dreams of the true romantic hero. They had enjoyed a beautiful meal on their first evening and then a moonlit walk along the promenade and then into a lovely little street side café for a coffee and to sit, holding hands and just watch the world go by. And the weather was so warm and balmy.

Oh, what a wonderful evening.

She rebuked herself for sleeping in the following morning but managed to make it down for the bridge lessons in time. In any good bridge relationship there is always a master slave relationship with a dominant partner who controls the bidding auction and the general play.

It worked well between Chekov and Mildred and they had formed a good bridge relationship on this basis with Chekov in charge. They had won a few minor events and were progressing far above Mildred's expectations. The other relationship was progressing as well only the master slave situation was reversed here. Little did Mildred realise that she was in the driving seat here with Chekov totally besotted with her. There was every danger that the ex Head of Torture, KGB, could be able to apply for the human race, and get accepted.

They were both in a world of their own and the past was of little consequence to them.

So Mildred was brought back down to earth with a bump when she walked into the hotel lobby after another romantic evening to find a mass of humanity, which she suddenly recognised as her friends, slumped all over the hotel's lounge furniture in various states of dishevelment.

After several attempts to gain recognition with her friends they started to respond.

'Yoo, hooo Mee, meee meee,' Lucinda was having a bit of difficulty getting the old vocal chords back into some sort of working operation.

'Em, eye, em, eye, em ,eye, em, eye.....' It was no good.

'MILDRED!'

Fiona had a long last recognised her and confirmed what Lucinda was trying to say. The problem being she had told most of the hotel and some of the suburbs in Puerto de la Cruz as well.

'It's good old,... em, eye, em, eye, Mil, ....' Lucinda was still having difficulty.

Not only was she having difficulty with the verbal senses and the visual senses, which were having difficulty focusing, the bodily muscular functions were at a loss for co-ordination as well.

But she was happy!

So was Fiona. Her functions were a little better co-ordinated but not quite up to speed just yet. They had no doubt been *on speed!*

Betty was probably happy as well but it was difficult to really say what condition Betty was in as everything she was trying to do was in a slow motion process.

Lucinda wanted to tell Mildred of her wonderful time she had just had and she was going to have another go at the verbal bit again.

'Mil, Mil, ..we've been to a p,....p,....pa.....par.....part.....'

'PISS UP!' Fiona confirmed to the world at large.

There was much snorting and giggling apart from Mildred who suddenly realised it was pay back time, viz-a- viz the flight out.

It was her turn to look after her friends now.

She started to try and get them upright which was no mean feat and then to get them into the lift. She felt like a shepherd without a sheepdog, and a flock of bloody minded sheep on a bad day!

She couldn't help but notice that some of the other hotel guests, mostly men, well *only* men were waving and winking to Betty as they walked by and some even coming up to her and shaking her hand. Not that Betty was in any sort of receptive mode to be able to acknowledge them. But they obviously held her in great esteem!

One of them even held up his fist in salute and shouted 'Jerusalem!'

Most peculiar.

Never mind, Mildred was on a mission and she had to do something for her friends even though they had quite obviously let the side down. But they were her pals, and she must stick by them. The snorting and giggling continued up the lift to their rooms until there was only Betty to take care of.

This was the easy bit now as she wasn't putting up a fight and managing to obey most of the instructions.

'Just put this foot in front now Betty, that's it, and then bring the other one round to the front now,.....that's it, ...well done!'

Pretty basic stuff, she had done ever so well really.

Mildred at last managed to get her into her room and flopped her on to her bed.

But Betty was still a little agitated.

She squirmed about until she had her dress up and was examining her under wear.

'Mi,.....mil...mil.....'

'Mildred,' Mildred felt it easier to help out to save time.

'Mil,..Mildred?' Betty was getting there.

'Mildred,.er, er.. wh.....wh.....wh..'

'Why?' Mildred had a stab at it for Betty.

'Mildred,.....why.....are....my,,,,,,,,,n.....n.....knickers...on..on  
....the....wr....wr..wro.....wron ...wrong .....on ...back to front?'

\* \* \*

Betty woke up with that feeling of *déjà vu*.

Another hangover with the desire to cease living again.

But she was old hand at it by now and realised the symptoms immediately and set about to try and obtain some relief. The getting dressed bit wasn't too bad, the teeth cleaning bit brought some relief for the taste buds but the make up bit was not going too well at all. She eventually gave up with the lipstick and wiped most of it off the various parts of her face and tried the walking bit again.

She had had this terrible nightmare about being kidnapped and being made to sing and dance but now that she was more or less awake she put this behind her in an effort to seek relief for this hangover. When she arrived down stairs she found Lucinda and Fiona in the hotel lounge with some disgusting drinks in their hands.

'Betty, you're alive?'

'That's a matter for discussion,' Betty mumbled slowly.

'You'd best have one of Paulo's specials Betty,' offered Fiona.

'God, not that concoction again.'

'You know it works'.

Lucinda looked up to the bar and waved to Paulo.

'Good evening ladies, I see your friend has joined you again, can I get you anything?'

'I think our friend wants another of your specials Paulo.'

'No problem and another for you ladies or do you want to try something else now?'

'You on the medicine as well?' Betty enquired looking at both Lucinda and Fiona.

'Fraid so, and I wish someone would tell me what happened yesterday?' said Lucinda.

They all looked at each other with puzzled expressions until Betty managed to speak.

'I had this terrible nightmare about being kidnapped and taken off in some enormous car to some sort of weird place where we had some sort of party.'

'Oh good,' said Fiona. 'So that confirms my nightmare as well,' she continued.

'You mean you had the same dream?' asked Betty.

'Yeah, both of us,' confirmed Lucinda.

'You're joking? Said Betty.

'I'm afraid not.'



'Oh, no!' continued Betty, that means.....'

'Yes, you've got it in one,' Lucinda's words were confirmation of their worst nightmare.

'You mean.....' Betty was trying to work all this out on her own.

'Your drink madam.' The thought process was interrupted by Paulo with his medicine. Betty downed it one.

"Eeeuuuyyyyyuuuuuukkk!.'

Lucinda and Fiona waited for Betty to put her facial muscles back into place before they spoke to her again.

'I'm afraid it would appear that something very strange happened to us all yesterday.'

'Jesus Christ Fiona, that's the understatement of the century,' Lucinda was obviously quite sure on this point.

'So what do we do?' Betty had done some of the figuring out but not all.

'I don't know what can we do?'

'Well it's quite plain that whoever kidnapped us kidnapped us back to where we started.'

'So what you're saying is that technically speaking we weren't kidnapped.'

'No I think what Lucinda is saying is that we were kidnapped twice.'

Betty was bemused again.

'Oh.'

A pregnant pause.

'But we *are* back to where we started, aren't we?' said Betty.

'Yes, that may be so, but have we legally speaking been kidnapped or not?' Fiona was getting bemused now.

'Doesn't something have to happen to you when you get kidnapped?' Betty had thought this through all on her own.

'Something nasty?' confirmed Fiona.

Lucinda was obviously not up to scratch on this legal point.

'Well, did anything nasty happen?' she threw the question back to them.

'I sort of didn't get that far in my dream.'

'Nor me,' said Fiona.

'Eerr, nor me,' said Lucinda solemnly.

'I thought we had some sort of party, didn't we?'

'Yes, I think there was something like that. Weren't there lots of men there as well?'

'That's right. And didn't they take some sort of shine to Betty?'

'Me?' Betty was bemused again. 'I can't remember anything like that at all.'

'Oh, yes, I seem to remember Betty was involved in something.' Fiona was hard in thought on this point.

She continued. 'Oh yes, that's right, didn't you.....'

'Didn't I what?' Betty was hanging on Fiona's words.

Another pregnant pause.

'Err, no you couldn't have done that. It must have been one of the other girls.' Fiona finished abruptly.

'What other girls?'

'I think Fiona is talking about the waitresses. Weren't there some sort of waitresses there Fiona?' Lucinda hurriedly tried to change the conversation with the realisation of probably what really *did* happen.

'Err, probably, look I think we had better get something to eat before I die of hunger. Oh, Christ, where the hell's Mildred. I'd forgotten all about Mildred?' Fiona was up to speed on the situation as well

'Oh she's ok; she's playing in a cards tournament or something. Something to do with this Bridge thing.' Lucinda kept the thread coming from Fiona.

'Can somebody please tell me what you're talking about?' Back to base with bemusement again with Betty.

'Scuzzi ladies,' Paulo interrupted. 'I have a request from the gentlemen on the table over there if you would accept a bottle of champagne from them?'

They all turned round to look at their prospective admirers.

'I don't fancy yours.'

'If he can afford a bottle of champagne who the hell cares,' replied Fiona to Lucinda.

'I don't think I can handle anything right now,' Betty was still in hangover bemused mode.

'OK, I tell the gentlemen,' and with that Paulo was off.

'Look I think we've had enough excitement for a lifetime, that's if someone will tell me what excitement I've had, and anyway I need some breakfast right now not a bottle of Champagne.'

'Breakfast! Betty, it's six o'clock in the evening, I think you're a bit late for breakfast.'

Lucinda and Fiona both looked at each other and then back to Betty.

'Oh for Christ's sake, what the hell is going on?'

'Betty! Watch your language!' They both giggled, as they looked at Betty in mock horror. 'You've been asleep for eighteen hours, that's where you've been.'

'No wonder I'm so bloody hungry. Oops what am I saying? I'm getting as bad as you lot. What will the choir say back home if they could hear me now.'

'If I remember correctly Betty, you *are* the choir,' said Fiona.

Just then Paulo returned and interrupted them. 'I'm afraid the nice gentlemen say no deal without the *swinger*.'

'I beg your pardon?' Lucinda looked down her nose at the impudent barman.

'They say, no deal without, er, ....., ' he then looked at Betty. 'Without the Senorita here, er, Betty, is right name?' he looked inquisitively at Betty.

'Yes, I'm Betty,' she looked up to Paulo in puzzlement.

'They say they want *you* to join them.'

'They say what?'

'They say you are "swinger", I don't understand please, I only pass message.' With that Paulo felt it best to get the hell out of it.

Bemusement was going to be a permanent mode for Betty by the looks of things.

'Listen, I think we had better go and get something to eat. I think they have me mixed up with someone else.' With that she stood up and Lucinda and Fiona joined her. It was funny how neither Lucinda nor Fiona denied or added anything to what Paulo had said. There are some times when it's best to keep one's mouth shut.

\* \* \*

'But I still say we should report this to someone.' Betty was well into her solids by this time in the restaurant.

'I agree with you old girl, but don't forget you're in foreign parts now and the local Gendarmes will probably lock us up for not understanding the local lingo let alone giving them some cock and bull story about being kidnapped and then being brought back again.' Lucinda had a point. Fiona took up the plot.

'Don't forget we only have a couple of days left anyway, and we could be interrogated for weeks.'

'I mean, has anyone been actually harmed?'

'Well, I have my suspicions,' chirped in Betty between bites.

Lucinda and Fiona looked at each other for inspiration for diversionary tactics.

'I don't think anybody did you any bodily damage did they Betty?' whispered Fiona.

Betty lowered her voice and bent forward. 'Well, I'm not so sure, but there's a lot of things I can't remember.'

'Such as?' ventured Lucinda.

'Well, that's just it, I can't remember them.'

Another of those pregnant pauses again.

'Betty, if you can't remember them, how do you know if they did or didn't happen?'

'That's it, anything could have happened.'

Pregnant pause again as Lucinda and Fiona looked at each other in puzzlement.

'What could have happened?'

'I don't know,' hissed Betty.

'Such as?'

'Well, you know,' whispered Betty furtively.

'Er, no, we don't know Betty?' puzzled Fiona.

'You know,' hissed Betty between her teeth.

'Why are we all whispering?' Lucinda whispered loudly trying to get the conversation back to normality.

They all relaxed and sat back as Betty continued with her meal.

'All I'm saying is.....' Betty was cut off in mid sentence.

'Yes I think we've got the message Betty, thank you.' Fiona felt it best to try and head Betty off at the pass.

'Another steak Betty?' Lucinda enquired sarcastically.

The rest of the meal passed off relatively quietly with Betty making the most of the silence to catch up with her body's lack of proper nutritious substances and so after the pudding trolley had been decimated the conversation returned to some form of relative normality.

Until Betty said, 'Ok Girls, it's about time we got some of the local atmosphere and explored the native countryside. After all we've still got a lot of holiday left.'

'You call Friday and Saturday morning a lot of holiday,' added Fiona.

'I beg your pardon,' said Betty blinking.

'This *is* Thursday evening Betty,' confirmed Lucinda.

Betty buried her head in her hands. 'Jesus Christ!'

'Betty!' Lucinda was caught by surprise again.

'I don't believe it,' said Betty in despair.

'You've been blotto for most of the holiday Betty,' Fiona said with some sympathy.

There was a considerable period of silence until Betty suddenly sat bolt upright and announced, 'well, we'd better get a bloody move on then girls. Come on. Last one to the discotheque's a sissy!'

Lucinda and Fiona looked at each other in amazement and as Betty jumped up from the table and picked up her handbag, they realised that she meant business.

'What are we hanging around for,' chirped in Lucinda as they all bounced out of the restaurant. Betty stopped and gave Luigi a big kiss on his forehead as she left.

Luigi was speechless, even in Spanish!

Fiona and Lucinda had a job keeping up with Betty as she strode towards the door swinging her handbag in the air. Betty's

first stop was the bar where she grabbed hold of Paulo by the lapels and said in an extremely unbettylike manner, 'OK big boy, hit me with whatever it takes!'

Lucinda and Fiona looked at each other and smiled.

'Make it three, big boy!' was the universal cry with the hands punching the air.

It's incredible what a change in air can do.

A group of conference delegates sitting in the lounge came to life and the 'girls' must have thought that they were a charity, as all of a sudden everybody wanted to buy them drinks.

\* \* \*

Brian, a London Engineering Company Sales Director, was one of those taking advantage of the hotel's conference facilities. He had taken his sales team out as part of their bonus for reaching their targets and had utilised Annabelle's escort and massage parlour a couple of nights previously. It was there that he had been impressed by Betty's sophistication, elegance and poise especially when she whirled her knickers round her fingers during her second verse of Jerusalem. This was during an impromptu performance of a mix between a frenzied Can Can and a bump and grind routine dancing on a table.

He had seen her potential as her hair bun had collapsed during her frenzied movements and her hair had fallen around her shoulders framing her face.

He had seen her potential busting out from a blouse and a bra two sizes too small.

He had been amongst those who had caught her when she threw herself off the table into the crowd, or had she collapsed in a drunken stupor?

He had helped carry her out to the waiting Limousine with the help of one of the Clubs bouncers. Now *he* was a big lad. So it came as a bit of a blow to his morale when she had turned down his offer of champagne. His fellow salesman had ribbed him mercilessly.

'You've lost your touch, Brian, that's what happens when you get over forty.'

'I can remember the days when you had one every night of the conference. Definitely over the hill I'm afraid me old mate.'

Brian and his pals were still at the bar when Betty and the other two ladies came out of the dining room and he had just watched her throw down her second Tequila Slammer.

Having had sufficient bravery poured down himself since his rebuttal, he now felt it time to re-establish his street cred amongst his peers.

'OK lads. I think it's high time I showed you that there's still life in the old dog yet.'

'Woof, woof,' came the tittering reply.

'Go for it Brian. We'll bring the Zimmer along in a few minutes.' Much tittering again.

Brian turned to his mates after careful consideration and said.

'Come on then, put your money where your mouth is then rent-a-gob.'

That shut his colleagues up,.....for 30 seconds.

'All right Brian. Fifty quid says you don't bed the Swinger then.'

That shut Brian up .....for 45 seconds.

His pride, street cred, and management reputation were all up for grabs here. He was in a cul-de-sac. He had nowhere to go. He had backed himself into a corner.

'Fifty quid it is then.' He could fiddle that through his expenses if the worst happened.

By the look of things it wouldn't be too difficult to get her into bed by the way she was throwing back the Tequila Slammers. But what they did in bed would be another story.

But the bet was "to bed".

So he straightened himself up, slid his tie up to his collar and made a purposeful walk to the bar.

\* \* \*

'Allow me to get this round, please.' Brian addressed Betty. 'Now what about you ladies, what can I get you?'

Betty and the girls spun round to face their benefactor.

Not recommended for Betty in her current state after three Tequila Slammers, spinning that is.

'Ill have a ...whoops,' Brian grabbed her arm as she nearly fell over.

Betty managed to focus on the tall stranger.

'I don't mind if I do,' she eventually mouthed in an agreeable response.

'Didn't you ask us before dinner young man?'

'That's right Betty; you don't mind if I call you Betty do you?' Not that she had a choice as he carried on. 'The champagne offer still stands. It's a beautiful evening and how can I resist the company of three most beautiful ladies?'

'Cut the crap big boy,' muttered Lucinda under her breath. But, what the hell. There were only two nights to go of their holiday and funds were a bit low.

'Exactly. How *can* you resist? Let's hit the champagne, er..... I didn't catch your name?' enquired Lucinda, always the one to formalise proper introductions.

'Yeah, let's go for it,' confirmed Betty in a somewhat louder voice so that most of the bar and surrounding area could hear.

'Er....., good, er,..... Brian.....' he wasn't quite sure which question to answer first. 'Er, ..Paulo, can we have a bottle of your best champagne for these lovely ladies please?' He snapped his fingers at the barman to show off his authority.

'Cut the crap big boy,' muttered Paulo under his breath, but it came out, 'Si Señor, no problema. Champagne for the lovely Señoritas.'

Señoritas! Christ, thought Paulo, they were nearly senior citizens. 'That's me on a bonus tonight then,' he said to himself as he went back to the stock room for some chilled Champagne.

\* \* \*

Betty slowly tried to open her eyes. It must be morning again she thought, and I must have another hangover. I'm getting used to this by now. She slowly started to get the normal things initiated that one does every morning, like trying to remember where was she?

What had happened last night?

How much pain was she going to be in?

Where were the nearest pills?

She was lying down, and I'm in bed, OK so far.

She wasn't in that much pain, really.

One eye slowly made it to the eyelid opening stage. The next problem was getting the focus bit right.

Yes, she began to recognise the room as her own hotel room. That's right the one in Tenerife.

So far so good.

There was however a new experience starting to come through to the brain.

She could have sworn she felt a warm glow coming from the back of her.

Oh, Oh!

She started putting two and two together and she was coming up with all the wrong answers. She slowly rolled over in bed and looked behind her.

Four!

'Kinnell' she mouthed between clenched teeth. 'What the hell am I saying?' She was really lowering her standards since she'd come on holiday and by the look of things behind her she had lowered them even more last night.

The eyes closed again as if in great pain and she slowly rolled back and lay as still as a possum, not daring to breath.

She started trying to recollect her movements of last night. That was supposing this *was* morning. A quick peep confirmed daylight trying to crash through the curtains.

Sunshine.

Ok, so far so good again, it's morning or there about.

Now what happened last night?

No, nothing was coming through.

She tried her best but it was hopeless.

Mustn't panic she thought. Mustn't panic.

After ascertaining that there was no movement coming from behind her, she slowly rolled back and peeped at her newfound acquaintance.

Male, not bad looking either, no bad breath or snoring like Bill, in fact she could smell a pleasant faint odour of some perfume or probably after shave that hung to him as she slowly nosed closer to get a better look. Must have been an expensive after-shave to last that long. His dark hair in lazy curls framed a sun burnt face, which was probably handsome if it was the right way up. She cocked her head slowly to get a better look.

All of a sudden the face opened an eye.

Kinnell!

Don't panic!

'Good morning?' said the face.

That seemed to be a reasonable thing to say? Or should she just start screaming?

'Hallo Betty,' his gentle warm voice took her by surprise. It continued.

'How are you this morning?'

'I'm very well, thank you,' she replied as you do, to a total stranger in your bed.

However Betty felt strangely comfortable with *this* stranger. There appeared to be no threatening gestures so far. She felt as if she should know him. And she felt as if *had* she known him, he would have been nice to know.

She relaxed a bit.

He said nothing, just stared at her in an admiring way, smiling gently, not daring to move lest he break the beauty of the moment.

Eventually Betty cleared her throat and managed to slowly say, 'and you are?'

'Brian,' that was all he needed to say for the time being.

Betty felt as if she should have known the name.

'Hallo Brian,' she said in reply.

That was all *she* needed to say for the time being.



They just looked at each other for a few moments.

They just lay there looking at each other as if to confirm their own acceptance of each other. Betty coughed and managed another eloquent sentence.

'Er,.....Brian, er,.....can I ask you a rather personal question.....?

She was cut short in mid sentence.

'No Betty, we didn't,' he said, looking at her straight in her eyes. His reply was warmly reassuring,

Betty had often dreamed of a moment like this.

'Well, I think we ought to, don't you Brian?'

With that she slowly moved closer to him and started running her hand over his chest and bent her head over him to nuzzle her cheek against his.

Brian was one of those people who always seemed to be in the right place at the right time. Lucky bastard!



## Chapter 11. The boys fly out

So far everything was going according to the plan.

They made it down to Gatwick, checked in and managed to find the right boarding area with relatively few cock-ups and actually got on the right aircraft, flight PS502. There was a bit of trouble trying to understand the stupid coding system that airlines use for seating arrangements. They thought they could sit anywhere to start with, but were eventually shown to their correct seats.

There was someone in the window seat already which left Creighky and Dense with the middle and aisle seat. Upon initial scrutiny Creighky could see it was a woman and upon further inspection could see that she was, in a strange way, fairly attractive. In her mid forties perhaps at the most, but very well dressed, albeit in mostly black, but a good figure for someone of her age and the open neckline promised better views at the right angle. A smart business type obviously reading a woman's magazine through dark glasses

So Creighky offered to take the middle seat and looked around for somewhere to put his luggage. Dense was being pushed from the rear with the weight of passengers queuing up to get through to their seats and was also looking in all directions but upwards to try and stow his luggage.

The stewardesses, trying to find out what the delay was, eventually managed to get down the queue of a hundred deep passengers and show the idiots, sorry customers, where to put their belongings.

Creighky nearly got crushed under the weight of Marks and Spencer's bags falling down upon him as he opened up the overhead locker and was thanked profusely by his new potential neighbor after putting them back. Her English was not very good but the words "thank" came out many times with the gestures of someone who was very grateful.

'Don't you be worrying your pretty little head? It's all sorted now my lovely,' came the charm school offensive from Creighky after everything had settled down, that is apart from the hundred exasperated fellow passengers still awaiting to find their seats. Dense had been pushed up against Creighky by now in a scramble

for the other passengers to get past before the aircraft took off. The ones at the back were starting to wonder if they'd see their seats by the time the aircraft had landed.

So Creighky squeezed himself into the economically sized seats alongside his newfound friend and Dense was thrown in next to him from the backlash of passing passengers.

'You've given old Marks and Sparks a fair old bashing then, to be sure?' He enquired of his neighbour.

She looked up from her magazine and took off the dark glasses to reveal a pair of deep blue eagle eyes that could burn a hole through Chobham armour at a hundred yards. Slowly she started to prepare her speech but was obviously having difficulty with the language.

'I sorry, I no understand. I am bashing someone please?'

'Oh it's only me. I was trying to say,' Creighky slowed his speech down to try to communicate better, 'What I was trying to say was that you have been busy in the shops?'

'Sorry, please. Schops?'

Creighky could see a lovely relationship going down the pan here so decided to ease off the charm pedal for a while and take his chances later.

'That's OK,' as he held up his hand to surrender the conversation for the time being. The plane was now full and everyone was seated. The cabin crew walked round checking everyone's seat belts and of course had to stop and go into the vagaries of buckling up for Dense. He also followed with great intensity the safety talks the cabin crew gave with all the arms waving about and got his safety card out from his seat back and studied it intensely trying to keep up with the instructions.

The plane was now taxiing and they were off on the start of their adventure.

As the engines increased their power and they started to take off, Creighky noticed his business lady friend pulling out what looked like a plastic pipe with a sawn off end. It was a small blue plastic "L" shaped tube affair, which she suddenly stuck into her mouth and started to press on a button and suck on.

She put it away as fast as it had come out and after a few deep breaths sat back and relaxed as they left the ground and headed off on their journey to Kiev.

'Hallo, I think she must be a junkie,' thought Creighky to himself having never seen a Ventolin inhaler before and when he caught her eye, gave her a little knowing wink just to confirm that it OK by him if she wanted to get high or whatever they did.

She frowned and returned to her magazine with greater effort to try and hide from this strange person who was winking at her.

Dense was the only one getting high at this moment watching all the comings and goings of the crew with all the buttons and knobs at his disposal. He had the stewardess round twice asking him what the matter was after pushing his alarm. He had the reading light on and off and the fresh air ventilators open and closed as well.

The business lady was watching this from the corner of her eye wondering to herself, why had she been chosen to sit next to these two buffoons. It got even worse when all the drink and food trolleys came round and she had to show Creighky how to pull down his table from his seat in front or nobody else would have been served waiting for him to do something with his tray.

This prompted Creighky to thank her and launch into his, 'the last time I was on a plane was coming back from the Korean War in an old RAF Transport Command flying bucket with none of your actual luxuries such as food and drink.'

Once again she feigned language difficulties, gave an inane smile and got stuck back into her magazine which she had now read from back to front several times. This was not helping Creighky to get a good view down the front of her cleavage. He had looked out of the window several times now ostensibly to see outside but was always thwarted by the bloody magazine.

She was obviously a lady of some bearing and sophistication, with a good dress sense albeit in black, but a certain allure about her that made her attractive to the opposite sex and she had obviously kept her figure in good shape. Probably a businesswoman he thought, on the Board of Directors as well. A Personnel Director or something like that and probably a raving lesbian as well.

'Ah well, you can't win them all,' thought Creighky and sat back with a sigh of disappointment ready for the rest of the journey.

They landed at Boryspil airport and after some waiting eventually managed to get off the plane and join the long queue for Immigration and Passport control. Creighky handed both of their passports into the Immigration Officer who was obviously on a long shift and bored already with the stream passengers. But when he looked at the documents he seemed to become considerable more alert.

'Please, you are traveling together?' was his first question.

'That's right,' said Creighky looking at Dense.

'Please, one moment,' the official said to them as he picked up a phone and started gibbering away in Russian to someone at the other end in a highly excited state.

'I most sorry for delay,' he continued after putting the phone down. His stance had suddenly changed from one of total boredom to complete subservience

'Please to be coming this way, I have friend coming to clear you through the other channels and we get your luggage for you and get good car for you to go to hotel.'

Creighky and Dense looked at each other in amazement. They were promptly guided through the airport by another official, jumping all the other queues and quickly shown into a big black car that whisked them off into the city centre.

A tall lady dressed in black wearing dark glasses followed all this with some interest waiting for her turn to go through and speak to the officials and enquire about these two men she had been sitting next to on the plane.

She was a bit pissed off as well as they had just taken her official car.

\* \* \*

Ivan was even more pissed off as he had been watching all this with a sign held up for them as they were ushered straight past him. It was painfully obvious who they were by Boris' description and the fact that they blatantly stood out as English.

He had to rush back to his car and hurtle after them. He didn't stand much chance of catching up with them as they had a head start but he hoped they would go straight to the hotel so he sped off in the direction of the Hotel Dneiper. He turned into the eastern end of Kreshchatik, Kiev's main boulevard, on two screeching wheels just in time to see them getting out of the official car and disappearing into the hotel. He managed to catch up with them at the check in reception area. After he had managed to get his breath back he agreed to meet them in an hour.

\* \* \*

Ivan collected them from the hotel and gave Creighky and Dense a quick, guided tour of Kiev visiting all the usual tourist spots. They had visited the Kiyev-Pecherska Lavra, the cave monastery, the magnificent St Sophia's Cathedral consecrated in 1037 by Prince Yaroslav the Wise. They had done the Golden Gate of Kyiv, the Monument to St Volodymyr and his Hill as well. All this was a bit of a bore to Creighky

But it was something else to Dense who was totally gobsmacked by it all. Dense had been gobsmacked on the train to Gatwick let alone St Sophia's Cathedral. This was his first trip out of Muddlecombe.

Ivan had given them an envelope which he explained was the documentation for Boris's pension and said good bye to them

agreeing to meet up with them at the hotel bar later on in the evening for a meal.

They both went to their rooms and collapsed in a heap.

After their siesta they got ready and came downstairs to the bar. They ordered some drinks and were making conversation with the barman when Creighky suddenly turned to watch two women who had just walked into the bar.

It was none other than his flying companion, the lady in black with another younger blonde lady.

She was still in black but this time wearing a considerably lot less. She looked more beautiful now with a full pack of war paint on and the little black number showing off her elegance and poise to the full. The shorter blonde lady was of a somewhat more curvaceous persuasion. Probably not as sophisticated as her but showing her obvious charms to the full in a little red number with most of the front missing. They were obviously ready for a good night out. Creighky's mouth dropped open even further when the lady in black gave him a little smile as they were passing.

'Mary, mother of Jeysus, will you get a load of that?' wheezed Creighky as the ladies glided past them and sat down in one of the low expansive lounge sofas with some difficulty showing off the upper parts of their long legs and a glancing view of suspenders.

Creighky grabbed Dense by the jacket and shook him violently to get his attention. Dense turned round and immediately agreed with Creighky on his assessment of the situation.

Dense was gobsmacked again.

They watched stunned as a waiter went over to the women and took their order. He came back to the bar and made up the drinks. Creighky leapt into action. He caught the waiter's attention and indicated that he would be paying the bill for the ladies.

Rather, he would be putting the drinks on the bill at Boris's expense.

The waiter hurried back to the ladies and after a brief conversation with them they looked over to the men and lifted their glasses in salute. There was no time to be wasted; the military campaign must go into action immediately. Creighky got off the barstool and in full military manner walked over to the ladies.

He slowly turned in front of them and stood to attention.

'Good evening ladies. I don't believe we have been formally introduced. My name is Captain Creighky O'Reilly MC., of the Irish Guards.' With that he gave a little click of the heels and bowed.

'Well Captain, we meet again,' the lady in black held up her hand for Creighky to kiss. 'My name is Svetlana and this is my colleague Dollianna'.

Creighky hadn't noticed the change in attitude from a shy stubborn passenger who could hardly speak a word to a sophisticated lady in full command of the English language. He frantically beckoned Dense to come and join them, waving desperately in case this dream was going to vanish.

Dense looked in amazement around him as if he was waving to someone else and after pointing to himself and getting the nod back furiously from Creighky, eventually plucked up the courage to join the group.

'May I introduce my friend Dense to you ladies,' said Creighky using all his etiquette and breeding 'This is Svetlana and her friend Dollianna,' Creighky concluded.

'Captain O'Reilly, why don't you come and sit down here?' she beckoned him over to her sofa as the chesty blonde moved away and guided Dense to join her on another seat.

They all sat down in the luxurious setting of the lounge.

Dense was gobsmacked to a completely higher level by now with his eyeballs desperately trying to leap clear of their constraints and secure themselves on the frontal area of their new companion.

\* \* \*

It was about this time that Ivan returned to pick them up, having first called in to see his colleague, the Hotel Porter, to ascertain if the transfer of goods had been completed successfully.

Everything had gone according to plan, as he walked into the lounge feeling very happy with himself. Everything was going very smoothly indeed.

He was just about to have his hopes dashed!

He stopped in his tracks abruptly seeing his new friends in the company of the two women and went into reverse gear immediately before they spotted him.

Things were *not* going according to plan at all!

Things were going decidedly pear shaped all of a sudden.

He rushed out of the hotel in a state of total panic. Cold sweat was the order of the day as he got out into the cool evening fresh air. He took a deep breath and started to decide what plans to take. He decided to go to his friend's flat. This was where he had used the computer to do the e-mails, feeling it safer to use someone else's address. Apart from the small matter that he didn't have a computer.

So he ran, turning right into Kirov Street past the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, past the parks and the Museum of Ukrainian Art, past the Council of Ministers to the end and turned into Pervomaisky and to his friend's flat opposite the park.

He was out of breath by the time he reached there, knocked frantically on the door and thankfully his friend was in. They looked outside for any body following and went in.



'Ivan, you look all hot and bothered my friend. What's the trouble?'

'Valery,' Ivan said out of breath. 'Valery, please you must help me. I am deep shit. Can you send another message for me again?'

'To Boris?'

Ivan took another deep breath.

'Yes please.'

They went inside and switched on the PC.

\* \* \*

Once again it was Saturday night at the "Snort and Truffle" in Muddelcombe and Brewster was preparing for another exciting evening keeping the population of the village entertained. This was no big problem as long as Blossom was wearing a low cut dress and the beer was flowing.

Someone trying to take the door off it's hinges rudely interrupted his peace and tranquility.

It was Boris who appeared to be in a state of some agitation.

Fortunately the door managed to stay in one piece after Boris had closed it and he came rushing over to Brewster.

'Why don't you come in?' said Brewster sarcastically thanking God that the door was still in one piece.

'My friend, please to come fast I have teknoogy just coming in.' This, roughly translated meant he had received an e-mail and wanted someone with normal size fingers to operate the PC.

'OK Boris, I'll see what I can do.'

'Please to be rushing. I am feeling trouble in my water.' said Boris obviously very agitated.

'Blossom can you manage ok?' he shouted across to Blossom.

'No problem Brewster,' she replied as they vanished out of the pub door and ran over to Primrose Cottage.

'Why all the sudden urgency?' Enquired Brewster.

'I not expect any messages from Ivan. There must be "cock ups" as you say.'

They got to the cottage and Brewster managed to get the PC up and running while Boris was pacing up and down the room.

'Here we are Boris. You were right. It's a message from Ivan.'

'Please what does it say?' begged Boris.

'It says, "Boris we have big problem. Your friends have met the Black Widow. She has them in her net." I don't understand that, does it make any sense to you?'

Back at the pub Boris was on his third pint and still gibbering away in Russian and nearly in tears. Brewster and Blossom had tried to comfort him but to no avail. Just then Dr Rammittin Chucknabutte the new young good-looking Asian Doctor came in and joined the group.

Brewster slowly explained the story so far, or what he understood of it. Boris was obviously in a state of shock and unable to give any comprehensible answers to their questions.

'Boris my friend, please try these, I think they will calm you down a bit.' Dr Rammy, as he now was called, had found some of his extra strong heart complaint painkillers he had with him for Brewster. He worked out the normal dose for a human being, then one for a horse, and doubled it and popped them into Boris's beer without so much as a by your leave. He felt it wasn't worth arguing with Boris in the current state he was in.

The assembled company of Brewster, Dr Rammy and Blossom slowly watched to see if anything would happen and eventually Boris stopped crying and started to relax a bit.

'Boris my friend can you please shed a little light on the problem. It obviously has something to do with this e-mail you've just got?' Blossom tried to use her best bedside manner to try and soothe the Russian Bear and to find out what was happening.

Through the blubbering, Boris managed to pause to take another drink and then started to talk, looking very sheepish.

'I must apologise for I think I have put our friends in deep hole of shit.'

'Why is that Boris?' quizzed Blossom and continued. 'Who is this Black Widow?'

'Colonel Svetlana Koffinsky, the Black Widow is very dangerous lady.'

'Now don't you worry about anything,' Brewster interrupted. 'I'm sure Creighky can handle someone like that. After all he managed to overrun a machine gun post in Korea.'

'I think I prefer machine guns to Black Widow,' continued Boris.

'Oh I can't see that,' said Blossom.

'She is named Black Widow because she has problem with relationship with men.'

'Yes well, that's as may be, but I don't think Creighky will have time for any relationships in such a short weekend do you?' enquired Brewster.

'Oh he'll give it a damn good try,' interjected Blossom knowing Creighky's lust for life and a few other things.

'Yes that OK, but lady in black is not nice lady. She is Secret Police,' blurted out Boris.

This brought the conversation to a pregnant pause.

'Why would the Secret Police want to worry over Creighky and Dense?' came the joint query from them all.

'Maybe they have problems with pension book,' said Boris sheepishly.

'Bloody Hell, that's a bit steep. Just because you haven't paid your stamp, they send the bloody Gestapo after you?' said Dr Rammy.

'Boris I think we are missing the point here. Is there something you want to tell us? Now, why don't you have another drink old friend?' suggested Dr Rammy, giving Blossom a wink and waving the pills behind Boris's back.

'That's a good idea. Here's another pint coming up Boris and this one's on the house.' Brewster immediately started pulling another pint.

Boris all of a sudden went very quiet. At the thought of a free pint he normally went into jubilant hysterics. His eyes started to roll. His whole body seemed to relax and like the videos of buildings being demolished, he sort of "imploded".

'Whoops, I think I must of overdone it with the pills,' said Dr Rammy trying to steady the twenty stone dead weight of Boris as it slowly toppled off the bar stool.

## Chapter 12. The girls fly back

Betty spent the last full day of her holiday in bed.  
With Brian.

They made love, called room service for something to eat, talked a lot and then made love again and then fell asleep.

They called room service again.....and so on.

Betty had discovered that there was more to life than the bi-monthly missionary love making that Bill ordained. Brian had fond her 'G' spot, her 'H', 'I', 'J' and 'K' spots, and the rest of the alphabet to boot.

Brian didn't even know if they existed and he was supposed to be a man of the world, but with Betty they had both learned very quickly. There was no rush with all this, no frenzied passion.

Brian was confused at first when he tried connecting her with the visit to Annabelle's and the fact that she didn't ask for any money. She talked about how she was kidnapped and didn't remember anything after getting to the club until she had woken up the next day in her hotel bedroom.

On Saturday morning they decided to go for some fresh air. Brian left to get shaved and changed as Betty got herself ready to face the first day of the rest of her life. She felt as if she had awoken from a bad dream and couldn't contain herself with happiness as she got dressed and rushed down stairs to meet Brian in the reception and drag him into this new world of hers.

They walked out into the dazzling daylight, kissed and holding hands headed off into the town not knowing where they were going. They ended up in a small shopping precinct and Brian pulled her into one of the high fashion boutiques. It didn't take him long to persuade her to try on one of the sophisticated summer dresses they had in stock and several minutes later, Betty stepped back out into daylight.

She had been transformed from the ugly duckling to the beautiful swan.

Wearing a beautiful diaphanous summer dress that showed off her figure and her long legs to the full, her long hair now flowing in the summer breeze framing her face, this was Betty mark 2, the rediscovered Betty who had been smoldering away for

over thirty years under the guise of a Church Warden. She had exploded into the sunshine of love that she and Brian had just found together.

She grasped his hand as they skipped off into the sunset of eternal love.

Yeeuuuukkkk!

Their relationship was getting extremely messy.

\* \* \*

Bodily juices apart, Mildred and Chekov's relationship was getting extremely messy as well. Chekov had always felt that there was more to life than connecting battery leads to people's private parts

He'd had sex but had never what you would call 'made love' to anyone and was in a right 'two and eight' at present with not knowing how to approach Mildred or how to take their relationship further.

He didn't know if he was 'Arthur or Martha' in his current predicament. He had built up so much love and respect for Mildred but with the knowledge that she was a married woman he really didn't know how to take the next step in their physical relationship.

Little did he know that Mildred was gagging for it.

Unfortunately there was the problem of the 'wet knickers and fainting' syndrome to overcome. Every time he touched her she went like a rag doll and lost all control. She overloaded on Adrenalin. She was in a high old state as well.

They were like a couple of tongue-tied teenagers, acne excluded.

\* \* \*

Fiona and Lucinda managed to drag themselves off their sun-loungers for the last time of their holiday to get ready to go home. They had achieved nice suntans if nothing else but were a bit worried about Mildred and Betty.

They hadn't seen either of them for two days and were due to fly back home at midnight tonight. They had enjoyed themselves, but obviously not nearly as much as Betty or Mildred. They were quite envious of their friends. *They* were supposed to be the women of the world, not their unworldly village contemporaries.

But at least they would have plenty to talk about once they got back to Muddlecombe. That's if Betty and Mildred would *tell* them anything. The kidnapping episode was well worth a few dinner parties at least. But how were they going to keep Betty's

wild evening a secret, especially the bit where she took off her knickers and whirled them around her head whilst singing Jerusalem?

Lucinda and Fiona had their suitans and Betty and Mildred had their men, but what the hell they were going to do with them was another matter? The holiday was coming to an end now as they gathered in the reception with their assorted luggage, human or otherwise.

Lucinda and Fiona hardly recognised Betty as she came down the stairs into the foyer on the arm of Brian. She had totally changed. The shy retiring church mouse was now a long legged lovely showing off her figure to the full in her new dress. Her two fiends were gobsmacked. Eventually the benefit of their good education and articulation came through.

'Holy shit!' said Lucinda.

'Jesus Christ' said Fiona similarly astounded.

'Betty!' they said in unison looking at her slowly trying to take in the metamorphosis.

A few pregnant moments came to an end with Lucinda walking up to Betty and taking her arm she whispered to her 'Betty, what is Bill going to say?'

'Lucinda, I don't give a tuppenny fuck what Bill is going to say!' was the muted response that wasn't muted enough.

'Betty!' they both looked at her in amazement.

'Oh by the way can I introduce you to my friend, Brian?'

'I think we have already met actually Betty,' Lucinda jumped in quickly. 'Not that you would remember that bit Betty,' she continued in an aside to Betty.

'Oh, right then. Good that's the introductions over with then.'

They were still standing there when Mildred came into the foyer with Chekov. It was Mildred's turn now.

'Betty, what the hells happened to you? And who's this then?'

'Christ, all I've done is to buy a new bloody dress, and oh by the way this is Brian.'

Mildred did a quick acknowledgement to Brian and continued.

'Yes, but.....you've changed.....you look all.....thingy.'

'Thingy?' asked Betty puzzled.

'Yes, you know, .....all.....sort of.....different.'

'Different?'

'Yes, you all sort of .....' Mildred's sentence was left unfinished as she realised that she couldn't find the words and also that nobody was taking any notice of her as they were staring transfixed with horror at something outside at the front of the hotel.

She followed their gaze out of the foyer to the pick up area outside where a large limousine had just pulled up casting a large shadow over the front. Something else was casting an even larger shadow, a bad impression of a grizzly bear, which had just got out of the limousine.

Mildred regained her composure and tried the talking bit again totally ignoring the deafening silence that had cast itself over the gathered company. 'Oh, by the way, Chekov has organised transport for us to the airport.'

Betty was stunned at the deafening silence, turned and stared in blank amazement towards her. Several gulps and gasps were eventually turned into words.

'It's him. It's that car; we're going to be kidnapped again!'

Betty pushed Brian in front of her as a bodyguard.

'Jesus Christ, girls, don't just stand there. It's that bloody gorilla again. For Christ's sake someone do something!' Betty demanded.

Chekov looked around at the scene of the terrified ladies staring at the limousine and the driver who was now opening the boot.

'Excuse me please?' he pleaded with Betty. 'You have seen this man before?'

'Seen him? He bloody well kidnapped us and dragged us off and did things to us in some den of inequity,' Betty spluttered out in a state of some distress.

'Excuse me please, you say this man kidnapped you?'

'Yes, for Christ's sake, isn't someone going to do something?' Betty was getting near to hysterics by now hiding behind Brian and being joined by Lucinda and Fiona who now had their voices back.

'She's right,' Lucinda took control. 'That bloody ox made us get into that car and drove us off to some night club or something.'

Chekov looked at the ladies with a frown and then looked over to the chauffeur with an even deeper frown.

'Mildred, please stay with these ladies. I go to speak with my employee.'

He guided Mildred over to her friends who were completely stunned by now having heard the word "employee" used instead of something like "kidnapper".

As Chekov walked outside so the terrified group moved slowly to follow him into the daylight to watch the proceedings.

Chekov was six foot but still had difficulty raising his head to speak up to Dimitri.

This was quickly remedied after some brief heated discussions, turning now and then to the following group; then his knee had no problem in finding the right target which brought

Dimitri's hands swiftly down to his groin area and his red face down to Chekov's level.

Dimitri stayed in this position like some demented statue as Chekov walked back to the assembled audience.

Brian was watching all this with keen interest. He recognised the car and the driver from when he had carried Betty out of the 'night club' and watching Chekov had put two and two together and came up with four million.

He could see the situation coming that could be extremely embarrassing to all concerned. In fact the words "fan" and "shit" were trying to form a sentence in his mind.

Chekov arrived back, slightly out of breath and a bit flushed as he addressed the startled company.

'Ladies, I feel there has been a terrible mistake.....'

He was interrupted by Brian who took centre stage.

'I think what my colleague here, Mr, err.....? He looked at Chekov inviting a response.

'Er, Yeboleksi. Er, Mr Chekov Yeboleksi at your service,' he stammered caught unawares by this sudden intrusion.

Brian wasn't even going to try that name in the short time allotted to him and continued trying to save the situation.

'What my colleague here is saying is that he owns a model agency in town. Isn't that correct?' He turned to Chekov who stammered out a reply hoping this was going to lead somewhere.

'As my friend here quite correctly said, yes, a model agency, er, yes....'

His looked back to Brian to help him out.

'Bloody funny model agency,' muttered Lucinda in an aside to Fiona.

Brian ignored this and quickly moved on.

'A professional model agency that my company has had the good fortune to use in marketing and promotional work during our conference here in Tenerife.'

He took another deep breath and carried on.

'Now it is my understanding of such marketing and promotional agencies that they have a very tight and frenzied schedule,' he looked over to Chekov for some support.

Chekov wasn't quite sure where this was leading to but felt it was at least going in the right direction, out of the shit, and he confirmed this quickly.

'Oh, yes, er, as my friend so correctly states, we have a, er, a very fast life style indeed.'

'So what I see here is a very hectic schedule and a very conscientious employee who is looking to collect some models from this hotel. So, he arrives here and sees these lovely ladies and obviously mistakes them for models.'



Brian looked to the assembled party for confirmation before continuing. Chekov was beginning to see where this was leading.

'Now we have a tight schedule to stick to, and someone mistakes you for models and needs to resolve the situation quickly and presumably tries to get you into the car and off to the next location as soon as possible.'

'This boy's good,' another aside from Lucinda.

'And quite rightly you react and are upset but he obviously realises his mistake and eventually returns you to your hotel. I think you are probably being a bit harsh with your employee whose only sin is in being over zealous to do his job under a lot of stress.'

Everybody was gobsmacked again, even if they hadn't got an argument against this reasoning, Chekov more so, who was standing open mouthed and staring into space.

He suddenly came around, started to focus and started to giggle to himself.

'MI5,.....MI6,.....MI,.....MIL,.....MILDRED!' He exploded into a sudden realisation.

'Of course, MILDRED!'

Everybody stood looking at Chekov in amazement, especially Mildred as Chekov burst into a full spasm of laughter. He slowly subsided and brushing himself down he continued.

'Ladies, as my learned friend here so correctly says, it has been a most unfortunate and distressing experience for you to which I can only apologise on behalf of my employee, who has obviously been under considerable strain with his work load. May I please beg you to accept my humble apologies and ask that you still accept my offer of my chauffeur's services to get you to the airport? Meanwhile I will see to it personally that you are all recompensed for the terrible trauma that you have been put through and I will work out some way of offering you another holiday back here in Tenerife at my expense. This will give me the opportunity to make it up to you and see you lovely ladies again.'

There was a hush as Chekov went up to Mildred and taking up her luggage, offered his other arm and walked towards the awaiting limousine and the unfortunate Dimitri who was still trying to straighten himself to the upright position.

Brian breathed a sigh of relief and with the same gentlemanly move picked up Betty's suitcase, offered his arm and walked her towards the limousine.

Lucinda and Fiona looked at each other in disbelief, shrugged their shoulders, snapped their fingers at Dimitri, pointed towards their luggage and followed into the comfort of the limousine's leather upholstered interior.

\* \* \*

The flight back to Luton was considerably quieter than the flight out with everyone in deep pensive thoughts over their first holiday abroad. They arrived and Lucinda drove them back to Muddelcombe in her Range Rover with hardly a word said between them.

It took Mildred at least a week before she realised that Creighky wasn't there.

Betty missed both her choir and bell ringing practices.

## Chapter 13. Torture and death in Kiev

Creighky and Dense returned to the Hotel with their two lady friends after having had a splendid meal and cabaret in the "Khata Karasya" the Cossack's Cabin restaurant. Their hosts or hostesses as it was, had made sure they were kept up to date on all the latest Ukraine drinks and native "saluts" throughout the evening. They were in an extremely good mood as the ladies gently guided them into the lift and upstairs to their rooms.

Pissed was a better word.

What they didn't realise was that they were being taken to separate rooms for further interrogation. They got out of the top floor lift and were guided into their rooms. Svetlana slowly unlocked the door to her "office". This was where she did all her best work. Known throughout her branch of the Secret Service for results and the nickname of the Russian Mata Hari as well as the "Black Widow".

Creighky staggered in and stopped in amazement, looking at the luxurious apartment with the most beautiful furnishings.

Svetlana's office was a penthouse suite.

The central theme was based around the enormous bed in the middle of the wall with large mirrors overhead. Many a poor unsuspecting European or American businessman or politician had lost a lot more than his virginity beneath these ornaments.

'My brave Captain why don't you take off your jacket and lie down on that comfortable bed? Then I'll get you a nice night cap.'

Creighky was still standing looking at all the room totally gobsmacked. Christ knows what sort of state Dense would be in if *he* were here.

He walked around the room looking at all the rich furnishings, trying out each chair and touching each ornament. He tried to focus on them but gave up and eventually collapsed on to the bed. Svetlana came back into the room with two drinks and not a lot more else. She had undressed and put on a diaphanous dressing gown that left little to the imagination.

'Jesus Christ, you're a damn good looking shagbag, so you are,' slurred Creighky to himself as she approached him slowly.

'What are you saying, my fine looking Captain?' Svetlana enquired. She was hoping to hell he wasn't still on about his Korean War exploits. It was a miracle she was still awake. If she hadn't known any better she would have sworn it was *he* who was doing the interrogation.

'I was just saying that you're a damn good looking shagbag,' He suddenly realised what he had just said and gave a little giggle. 'That's Gaelic for a woman who was made by the fairies. Someone too beautiful to be seen by mere mortal mankind.'

"Jesus, that's a cracker," he thought. I must remember that one in future.

'Creighky, you're a smooth talking bastard,' she replied in a low husky voice, quite enjoying herself now. This was where she excelled in her work and obtained most job satisfaction, and results. The game was on and she was up and running on all cylinders.

'And you're one foxy lady. Now get your arse over here and I'll give you some smooth talking with my lips.' Creighky could play as well and was now in full alcoholic arousal. He shook off his jacket and undid his tie ready for engagement with the enemy. Only he'd never quite met an enemy like this before.

Svetlana put the drinks aside. This was going to be a push over.

She slowly dragged herself on to the bed, helping Creighky dispense with the rest of his clothes.

'Hmm, not bad for a man in his condition,' she thought, as her eye caught something that had just come up.

He in turn had managed, all on his own, to figure out how to untie her gown to reveal a firm body underneath with pert little breasts. Not bad for someone in *her* condition he thought slowly focusing on the full length of her lithesome body.

She smelt nice as well as he closed in on her and slowly started kissing her all over. He started kissing her nipples and gently mouthing them, which brought them up to attention like two school pencils with rubbers on the end.

"Whoops," thought Svetlana, nearly starting to enjoy herself. I'd best get back to work before things get out of hand. She slowly managed to pull Creighky's head up to her level and started the interrogation. 'Creighky darling, tell me who you have come to assassinate?'

'I've come to assassinate you with love you beautiful beast,' he replied and promptly got back to business.

"Oh no you don't!" And she gently pushed him back.

'Now then be a good boy and tell Svetlana the truth?' She whimpered in his ear.

'Don't know what you're fucking talking about,' he muttered under his breath getting on with the job in hand. He couldn't be doing with all this foreplay talking nonsense. "Let's get on with the shagging," he thought.

"This isn't going to be as easy as I thought. I've got a tough one here; I'll have to get back to basics," thought Svetlana in a puzzling mood. 'Tell me darling, why are you traveling on an official Diplomatic Assassination passport code number?'

"Jeysus, all these questions."

'How the hell am I supposed to know!?' Creighky retorted, in no mood for any more nonsense. 'What d'you want me to do, ring up Bill at the fucking Post Office?' he mumbled under his breath.

Things were getting a little heated by now with Creighky definitely in a commanding position. While she had been doing all this puzzling he had managed with all his cavalry skills to get her on to her back and was pinning her down ready for the charge, so to speak.

This is where it started to go all pear shaped for Svetlana. Things were not going according to the manual and now she was having difficulty with the weight of Creighky on top of her, which in turn was catching her breath. She tried to alleviate the position and get out from under this person masquerading as a cowboy on top of her.

Creighky misunderstood this for passionate writhing and was starting to enjoy the chase. He was now utilising all his old cavalry skills and enjoying every moment. He had his second wind by now and was back in his youth in Ireland riding the bucking maverick ponies to market.

Christ! This one was a frisky one beneath him that's for sure.

Svetlana was getting desperate by now and tried to reach for her Ventolin. But every time she moved her arms Creighky pinned her down and pursued his goal with even greater effort. She didn't have the energy or the wind to scream, let alone say "excuse me old chap, do be a dear and get off me please."

Not that that would have stopped Creighky, who by now had a full head of steam. All he wanted was a hunting horn and a riding whip to "tally ho" and ride off into the night.

The more she writhed the more he penetrated her and pinned her down.

'Jeysus, girl you're driving me wild!' panted Creighky who was now using every cavalry trick he knew to keep in the mounted position with this bucking bronco beneath him.

Svetlana tried to say something but was unable to speak and even her breathing was now extremely laboured. She needed all her energy to try and get free from this cowboy but it was

having no effect on him at all. The very opposite in fact, the more she struggled the more frenzied his passion became.

The more frenzied he became the more she struggled.

Things were going from bad to worse for Svetlana.

Things were going from good to "yippee eye eh" for Creighky.

Creighky had never been in such ecstasy before in his life and was slowly coming to a passionate conclusion. What was driving him on was disillusioned thinking that his partner was of the same conclusion.

Now there's not a lot of difference between an orgasm and an asthma attack.

They both climaxed together, only climaxing is probably not the right word for an asthma attack.

Termination would probably best describe it.

The twitching bodies writhed in agony or ecstasy for several minutes. Then the sweating bodies slowly separated as they ceased their struggling and collapsed in separate heaps, as limp as bean bags.

\* \* \*

Dollianna was fairly new to this game but she had a good teacher in Svetlana and an even easier subject in Dense. The poor chap was obviously in total subjugation from the minute he had set eyes on her. Her womanly charms were obviously in good working order.

Dense's chin hadn't come up from the floor yet since the first meeting and his eyeballs were sore by now, trying to reach their target. Dollianna held his hand and guided him up to her room like a butcher leading a lamb to slaughter.

"Oh, this is going to be so easy", she thought to herself as she unlocked the penthouse suite door and guided Dense in to the luxurious apartment, or torture chamber as they called it back at the office. Hers wasn't as well appointed as Svetlana's but it was still an eye opener to Dense who was gobsmacked.

Again.

He was in for a few more shocks yet. Literally.

She pushed him gently into the room and closed the door behind her. Dense was in a state of total shock by now and needed to be guided gently by the hand over towards the bed.

'Dense darling why don't you come over here and relax?' opened Dollianna. Obviously from the same manual as Svetlana. So far so good, as she led him to the bed and took off his jacket.

"What was next?" she thought. "Oh yes".

'Now then darling, you lie down and make yourself comfortable and I'll pop into something comfortable as well.'

Dense was still overawed by the apartment. His eyes had actually managed to tear themselves away from the frontal regions of Dollianna to take in the surroundings. Only for a few seconds though, as she re-emerged into the bedroom wearing just a red satin corset, bra, pants, stockings and suspenders. The corset, worn over her bra and pants, held in her waist and promoted everything else. It showed off her other assets to the best effect. And boy, did she have some assets!

She also was carrying a large brief case, which she opened, and took out some sort of apparatus. Not being as skilled as Svetlana, she had to resort to mechanical means to achieve her ends. She plugged this into the wall socket and switched it on. Then she opened up a polythene bag and took out lots of wires with little pads on the end and came over to Dense.

He had missed all this completely. He was concentrating on the two white globes that were bouncing about whilst all this preparation was going on.

She crawled on to the bed beside Dense and took off his shoes and socks and loosened his shirt. There was no struggling from him at all. He was putty in her hands.

"Ooh, I'm going to enjoy this. A nice quick job and I can get to bed early tonight."

That's what she thought.

She didn't realise who she was dealing with here.

A complete imbecile!

'Dense darling?' she started, kneeling in front of him showing off her assets to their best advantage.' We are going to have a little Russian sexy game. Would you like that?'

All Dense's energy was concentrated into trying to focus on the two large, white round globes bouncing in front of him. There was no spare energy left for anything trivial like speech. He tried groaning in a desperate attempt to convey acceptance of her offer, but nothing happened, so he resorted to shaking his head up and down.

'Oh, that's lovely darling. Now I'm just going to put these silly little suckers on your head and then we can start the game. Won't that be nice?'

Dense nodded furiously.

'There we are darling, all set up nicely,' which Dense was, well and truly.

'Now we can start our little game. Are you ready?'

Furious nodding again.

Dollianna sat astride Dense and gently smoothed his cheeks with her hands, moving her assets from side to side in front of his eyes.

'Now then Dense, I'm going to ask you some questions and this little machine will make a funny little noise if you're not telling the truth.'

Furious nodding.

'If the machine doesn't make any noise I'm going to take off a piece of clothing. But if the machine *does* make a noise, then I put it back on again. Would you like to play this game?'

Dense's head was about to come off with the violent up and down motion.

She was on a fairly safe bet here as this was a tried and tested routine where she had never ever got further than her bra and pants before the machine had come to the rescue.

'Are you comfortable?' she was kneeling beside him now on the bed watching for any other reaction that might give him away just to be on the safe side.

No bleep from the machine.

'Now then my handsome warrior,' bloody hell, she was overdoing it a bit here. 'Are you going to tell Dollianna who you have come to kill in Kiev?'

Furious nodding. This wasn't quite the answer she was expecting, especially as the machine had stayed completely silent. She gave it a kick and reluctantly started to peel off a stocking. 'Well done, this is fun isn't it?'

Furious nodding.

'Now my darling, please tell Dollianna that you *have* come here to kill somebody, haven't you?'

Furious nodding.

No bleeping.

Another stocking off.

'Dense darling, you *do* know that you have diplomatic immunity coding for an assassination officer don't you?'

Furious nodding.

No bleeping.

The corset was now off.

Dense's eyeballs were nearing the end of their tether. For Christ's sake will someone cut the tether!

'Dense, my handsome beauty,' she was getting desperate by now. 'Please tell Dollianna that you are telling the truth?'

Furious nodding.

No bleeping.

The bra was off.

That was it. There is a limit to a man's endurance and Dense's eyeballs had reached that limit.

Meanwhile Dollianna's eyes had slowly shifted from his face to the lower regions of his body and she noticed that something else had come up.



Not only that it had come up but that it was at an abnormally high altitude.

Dense was playing wigwams.

It was Dollianna's turn to have eye ache.

Now it can be said that in the path of evolution, the development of the size of mankind's brain was inversely proportional to the development of the size of his reproductive organs, and vice versa. This is evident in the Ostrich, which has a brain the size of hen's egg yet has the reproductive capability of twenty men. An Ostrich has as many as half a dozen mates and has to keep each one of them happy several times a day. So if any man ever gets re-incarnation papers, be sure to put down for an Ostrich in the next life.

Dense could probably trace his ancestral lineage back to the Pleistocene era that was the beginning of time for Muddlecombe. The development of his brain was still at that stage so it naturally followed that his reproductive organs had overtaken the cranium in warp speed in terms of evolution. Dense had always been the envy of the changing room lads at school after sports in the shower and the nickname 'Donkey' was often bandied about.

Dense put this down as another benefit of being dyslexic.

The situation had been exacerbated by the over use of alcohol and the introduction of electrical stimulation.

Ohms law states that electrical current is proportional to the potential difference and inversely proportional to the resistance. Therefore current must look for a potential difference between A and B.

The "A" being the electrode and "B" being the brain. The current from the electrodes on his head had given up trying to find his brain and had only followed all the other bodily energies going in the downward direction to the nether regions.

The "A" to "B" soliloquy was hereby transferred from the "B" for Brain to the "P" for the reproductive organs. Hence the process of enlargement of an object, that was already well in front of the development stakes for most of mankind anyway.

All of a sudden the questions started getting very easy and Dollianna's clothing was coming off at an alarming rate. She was now desperately trying to reduce the wigwam to it's component part. That is the totem pole.

The training manual had gone out of the window by now and natural forces had taken over.

Eventually she had managed to release the clothing from Dense who had just laid back and watched all this happen with total amazement.

So not a lot had changed there then.

At last the totem pole was free of it's encumbrances and it was Dollianna's turn to have problems with the eyeballs. She was

quickly astride of the laid back Dense who was still nodding furiously. Nobody had told him the game was over yet.

He now had other things to worry about as two enormous opportunities had presented themselves to him. It looked like the eyeballs were going to be able to achieve their objective after all and weld themselves to these two beautiful orbs now only millimeters away.

He grasped his opportunities with both hands.

Dollianna was having difficulty trying to assess the situation and how best to take advantage of her opportunity.

She eventually managed to lower herself onto the totem pole but only very gently at first. It was a little painful initially, but with the release of her natural bodily juices, became more enjoyable until she managed to take full advantage of the situation.

Dense, being in two minds as to which one to give the most attention to, was now playing windscreen wipers. He had grasped one pink nipple in his mouth and then changed his mind and concentrated on the other one. He was definitely having a problem on his concentration and decision making skills here, changing from one to the other in quick succession.

This only added to the heightened arousal of Dollianna who was by now fully engaged and had found out that by rotating her pelvis in any number of directions, could get strange feelings that she had never experienced before.

They hadn't covered ladies "G" spots in her manual.

She had never experienced an orgasm before. She had never experienced multiple orgasms before. She had never experienced several multiple orgasms before.

After an hour she collapsed exhausted in a heap.

Dense had been asleep for the last half an hour.

Fortunately the electrodes were still connected and the Ukraine National Electricity Generating Board had managed to maintain it's supply without any of the usual power failures throughout night.

\* \* \*

Creighky woke with a start.

His military training had gone into the auto alarm mode and had woken him at his normal waking time. Ten o'clock in the morning.

'Sweet Mary, mother of Jeysus!' Under his brash exterior he was a deeply religious man. 'I'll miss the fucking aircraft!'

He jumped out of bed and scrambled his clothes on. Always the romantic hero to the end, he lent over and briefly kissed Svetlana's forehead before dashing off.

'Sweet Jesus you'll catch your death of cold. You'd best get a vest on. And I'd do something about that blue lipstick!' he shouted to her as he rushed out of the door.

He managed to get everything packed and tried to ring Dense's room number but without any success. So he dashed down to Reception and started to look round.

No sign of Dense.

He went up to the receptionist and started trying to ask her where his friend was. A short tug of the arm and Creighky turned round to face Ivan who stood there stunned for a few seconds. Suddenly he grasped Creighky, giving him a big hug and a kiss.

'You are alive, my friend!' he shouted with joy as he put Creighky down.

It was Creighky's turn now to be stunned.

'Eerr, yes. I suppose I am,' he mumbled in amazement.

'Oh, I am so glad to see you. But what about your friend Dense?'

'I don't know where he is,' said Creighky looking around.

'I've just tried to find him. He's not in his room. I've just rung there. I suppose he'll still be with Dolliana somewhere. We've a plane to catch in two hours!'

'Wait here my friend,' Ivan shouted running off.

Within seconds he came back with his friend the Hotel Porter, in deep discussion. The Hotel Porter had a big bunch of keys in his hand and was looking through them as he passed Ivan and waved to Creighky to join him.

They ran to the lift and got to the top floor. The lift door opened and they quickly walked to a room and the porter started trying the keys.

'My friend here thinks he knows where they may be,' said Ivan looking to his friend now and then to see if the key would fit. At last they found one and they opened up the door and all three slowly eased their way inside.

They were greeted with an incredible sight.

Two naked bodies were lying flat out on their backs fast asleep.

Only one of the bodies was tied up like an experiment out of Dr Frankenstein's laboratory with wires coming from his head to a machine by the side of the bed.

What caught the eye though was a large thing sticking up.

A very large thing.

'Jesus, fucking Christ will you get a look at that.' Creighky was the first to eventually speak.

'ББАПУ ЪФТ!' roughly translated meant, 'Kinnell, what a whopper!' Ivan put his tuppence in.

'Dense my boy, are you one lucky son of a bitch!'

This was all wasted on Dense who was still asleep and also still plugged in to Ukraine National Electricity Generating Board grid lines which had, by all means, kept up a good record for electrical supply that night.

Ivan slowly walked round the bodies not knowing which way to look. To the very attractive blonde lady who was well endowed or the other well endowed one. Eventually they figured out that it really was in Dense's best interest to unravel the laboratory equipment from him and wake him up.

This was no mean feat.

Waking him up that is!

They had great difficulty getting him dressed. The clothes needed sorting first and then putting on. But eventually they managed to get him upright and between them dragged him out of the room leaving behind a still sleeping beauty. Creighky was in two minds whether to pop back in or not, but came to his senses and joined the stretcher-bearers party.

They got him back to his room and managed to get him packed and then the two of them booked out of the hotel and got in a taxi on their way back to Boryspil Airport.

Ivan and his friend looked at each other in blank amazement and also a sense of relief. Ivan walked slowly round to his friends flat in Pervomaisky. He knocked on the door and waited.

No reply.

He tried again and realising it was Sunday, walked away as his friend would be out with his family for the day.

Never mind, his English friends would soon be back home anyway.

\* \* \*

Creighky and Dense rushed through the airport, booking in their luggage and then on to departures and in to Immigration Control. Suddenly everybody became extremely courteous again as they did when they arrived. An official explained that they would be put into the VIP lounge while they waited for their plane and would be called when it was ready. So they sat down in this luxurious lounge and had coffee and biscuit's and were given the papers and magazines. They relaxed in the comfort of the leather chairs. They were extremely tired after their energetic night and rude awakening in the morning and especially after their mad rush to the airport.

They hadn't noticed how fast the time had gone, when someone eventually came over and asked them if they were the VIP party waiting to fly out.

Creighky looked up suddenly, waking from a daydream. He got up, shook Dense, who eventually woke as well and they were escorted off to their aircraft.

The aircraft was nearly empty and they were allowed to sit anywhere they liked. No lovely companions this time. They were knackered anyway and looking forward to getting on their way. Soon be home they thought.

No chance!

They fell asleep even before the aircraft had taken off and were gently awoken just before they landed.

At Moscow.

## Chapter 14. Creighky and Dense in Moscow

There's not a lot of difference between Gatwick and Sheremetevo 2, Moscow's main airport, that's if you've never been through arrivals at Gatwick before. There may be the occasional advert in Cyrillic here and there and most people talking in Russian, but apart from that they're more or less the same. You just follow the other passengers.

It doesn't help matters if your total memory has been swamped with the images of two large white pink tipped globes.

Dense was in lust.

He was however rudely awakened from his reverie by a constant noise coming from someone in a small cubicle in front of him with a queue of people behind him pushing him into this little man's tiny office with dark glass and a door to the side.

Dense hadn't noticed this door swallowing up all the passengers in front of him. He looked around and saw Creighky in another queue oblivious to the world as well.

The noises suddenly changed into English noises with the words 'Passport!'

Dense's neurons fumbled through the haze of two white globes until his brain registered the necessary responses and then he fumbled around in various pockets until the necessary document was found. Passing it to the nice gentleman in the kiosk he resumed contemplation of the two white globes again. He didn't notice the concerned look of the nice gentleman in the kiosk who picked up the phone and rang through to his supervisor.

It was a good few minutes before the supervisor and a translator appeared and led Dense off through the kiosk to another office to the side of the Immigration Control. They passed through a door into a corridor and then turned into an office with a desk and some chairs.

He didn't notice Creighky following behind him into another office.

After being invited to sit down the supervisor started with some questions via the translator.

'Mr Dimmock, my colleague and I would like to ask you a few questions please?'

'Beg pardon.' How dare anyone interrupt Dense's reverie?

'Did you say something?'

'Yes, Mr Dimmock, we would like to ask you why you have come to Moscow.'

'Beg pardon?'

Not only had they interrupted his dream but now they were asking bloody stupid questions.

'Mr Dimmock, why have you come to Moscow?'

'I haven't come to Moscow,' Dense frowned and looked at them as if they were completely off their trolleys.

'Mr Dimmock, you are in Sheremetevo 2 airport and you have a visa with diplomatic privileges that is only granted to certain members of the Federal Bureau. Please do not test me and my colleague's stupidity.'

'Can't you do it yourself then?'

These people really were stupid and they didn't know it!

'Mr Dimmock?' the voice was getting a little irritated. 'I need some answers and I need them now. If you do not co-operate I'm afraid we will have to resort to other means.'

'God, you customs boys here at Gatwick do like a good laugh don't you,' Dense, although having slept like a baby, had not had enough sleep for a totally satiated sexual athlete, and he was getting very irritable.

'Just pop me on my train and please let me go home.'

'Mr Dimmock, would you mind stepping this way please?' They all stood up and ushered Dense out of the room.

'Thank you very much. At last some common sense.' He stood up and followed the way they were pointing. They walked down a long corridor through several more doors and down some steps into another less well-lit corridor and into a smaller room with a lot less furniture but a lot more gadgets.

This was not the way to the station.

'Mr Dimmock?' the translator was pointing to a chair for Dense. 'I'm afraid my colleagues are not satisfied with your answers and are going to ask you to take a routine lie detector test please which we hope will not be of too much discomfort to you.'

Dense sat down as they undid a large brief case with lots of leads and electrodes which they started to untangle and place on Dense's head.

'Is that what they are? I thought they were .....' Dense trailed off with the recollection of the games he and Dollianna had played only 24 hours ago and his mind went all blank again.

Back to the two globes mode.

They eventually finished the setting up procedure after putting some pads on various parts of his anatomy and eventually one of them pulled up a chair beside Dense while the other sat at a

table with all the machinery and started fumbling with knobs and buttons. The one in the chair looked across to his companion.

'Ok?'

He got the nod from his technician and turned to Dense.

'Mr Dimmock, can you please tell us your name?'

'Yes.' He was an old pro at this by now, but the speed of his response even caught Dense by surprise.

'Yes what?'

'Yes I can.'

'You can what?'

'Yes, I can tell you my name.'

'And...and?'

'And what?'

The questions were now coming from Dense to his interrogator who was already confused after only one question. God knows what it was going to be like after half a dozen questions.

'Can we go back to the beginning please?'

'Yes.'

'I beg your pardon?'

'Yes.'

'Yes what?'

'Yes, we can go back to the beginning.'

'Good. Now where were we?' Much scratching of the head and looking to his technician for support.

'His name,' mouthed the technician.

'Oh, yes, now er... can you please tell us your name Mr Dimmock?'

'Mr Dimmock,' spot on. Well done Dense.

'Mr Dimmock?'

'Yes.'

'Your real name please?'

'That's it.'

'What's it?'

'That name you just said.'

The technician came over to the interrogator and whispered in his ear.

'OK, right. I think we have established your name now, so moving on Mr Dimmock, can you please tell us where you have come from?'

'Muddlecombe.'

'I beg you pardon?'

'Muddlecombe.'

'Can you spell that for us please?'

'Er,,,,,.....er....muh for mummy, .....er,.....uh ..for uncle,.....err, er...double dee for Donald Duck, ....ere, and er,.....where did I get to?'



The interrogator looked across to this technician who held up his hands in despair.

'OK, right, I think we'll move on to the next question. Why have you come here?'

'Beg pardon?' A puzzled Dense looked at his interrogator with a deep frown.

'Why have you come here?'

'To get back.'

'I beg your pardon?'

'I haven't come *here*, I've come *back*.'

'Could you run that pass me again Mr Dimmock?'

'Beg pardon?'

'Can you,.....I'll rephrase that, can you explain that to me?'

'What, that bit about coming back?'

'Yes please.'

'Well, that's it, I've come back.'

'I'm sorry, I think you've lost me somewhere?'

'How can I come *here* when I'm coming *back*?'

'Mr Dimmock, why have you come to Moscow?'

'I haven't come to Moscow; I'm come back to Gatwick.'

'No Mr Dimmock, you're in Moscow.'

'Am I?'

'Yes'

'Oh.'

Dense lowered his head and went into a deep puzzled mode.

The interrogator looked over to his technician who held up his hands in despair again.

'So what you're saying is that I'm not at Gatwick.'

'Yes Mr Dimmock.'

'Oh.'

Deep puzzled mode again.

Silence.

'Ah, Moscow must be the other London airport, right?'

Dense brightened visibly.

'Mr Dimmock, Moscow is the capital of Russia, several thousand miles from London.'

'Yes, that's it; I knew I'd heard of it somewhere.'

Silence.

'So?'

'So, what?' mused a puzzled Dense?

'So, why are you here in Moscow?'

'How the hell should I know?'

Dense couldn't be expected to know why he was somewhere he was not supposed to be.

Looks crossed between the technician and his colleague. Shoulders shrugged.

'Mr Dimmock, are you telling us you are not supposed to be here?'

'Oh, I am supposed to be here all right. But I'm obviously not in the right "here", am I?'

'I beg your pardon?'

'I'm here, but I'm not here.' Dense was getting very frustrated with these stupid people who couldn't understand the blatantly obvious.

'Mr Dimmock, perhaps we could move on to another aspect. Can you tell us why you have a passport with special concessions of diplomatic privileges?'

'Beg pardon?'

'Mr Dimmock, you have special privileges that are coded on your passport.'

'Have I?'

'Yes.'

'What privileges are they then?'

'You are allowed special diplomatic privileges.'

'Am I?'

'Yes.'

'What does that mean?'

'It means that ...' he was rudely interrupted by the technician and they briefly conversed.

'Mr Dimmock, could I please ask the questions?'

'Yes.'

'Yes, Oh, right, now, Mr Dimmock, it would appear that you are some sort of special agent, but we're not quite sure which side you're working for.'

The interrogator felt he was wasting his time leading in with the subtle questioning process and might just as well go straight for it. He had nothing to lose.

'Who do you work for, Mr Dimmock?'

'I work for Lucinda.'

'Who?'

'I work for Mrs D'Arcy-Landacre.'

Dense could feel things weren't going too well here at the moment, so he thought he ought to be a bit more helpful even if he didn't fully understand the questions.

'Ah, now, who does *she* work for?' Things were looking up, could this at last be a lead?

'She doesn't do any work.'

'But which side is she on?'

'Well, she's on the opposite side to the Church.'

'I don't understand. You are saying the Church is involved in this?' The Russians were always highly suspicious of religion and had heard that the Church was more powerful in other countries.

'Well, she's across from the Church.' Dense was trying really hard to be helpful.

'I don't understand, you say she is a cross?'

'No, her *place* is across from the church.'

'I'm sorry?'

'Her house.'

'Her house?'

'Yeah.'

The technician and the interrogator looked at each other and had a little committee meeting.

'Could I have a cup of tea and a sandwich or something please?' asked Dense after some considerable time waiting for them to finish their meeting.

It was getting late and Dense suddenly realised he hadn't eaten all day. No wonder he was so grumpy. 'And have you finished with all these stupid things on my head? They're extremely uncomfortable and making me itch.'

At that he started pulling them off which bought their committee meeting to a sudden end.

'Mr Dimmock, we haven't finished the questions.'

The technician came over and started up the meeting again. After some discussion they turned to Dense.

'Mr Dimmock, I think it would be in all our best interests if we had a little break and I shall try and organise some light refreshments. Would you be so kind as to come next door, it's a little bit more comfortable there. With that they all stood up and went into a small kitchen with a table and chairs and a small cooker and kettle.

'I couldn't half go a jimmy riddle as well please?' Dense suddenly realised he hadn't been to the loo all day either.

'Jimmy riddle?'

'Piddle'

'Piddle?'

'Yeah, you know, the loo,'

'The loo.'

'Jesus Christ man, I need a piss!'

'Ah, yes, the toilet.'

'Hurray!'

'Of course, my friend will take you.'

Dense was led away and when he came back they had boiled the kettle, got some cups out and within minutes someone had bought some chocolate biscuit's round for Dense to eat with his cup of tea.

It was dark by now and Dense was exhausted. He finished his food and drinks and sat down in a lounge chair while the two men talked away in Russian, looking at him from time to time. Now and then picking up a telephone and talking to someone else.

Dense fell asleep.

\* \* \*

'Psst.'

A shaking sensation.

'Psst.'

Another shaking sensation.

'Dense you dozy bugger, wake up.'

He recognised that Irish brogue anywhere.

Slowly Dense's brain cells disconnected from the globes thread and rejoined the human race.

'Why are you whispering Creighky?'

'Keep your voice down.'

Dense looked around and got his bearings in the kitchen, but without any Russians, with only a mad Irishman, shaking him and whispering loudly at him.

'Come on mate, we're getting out of here.'

'Getting out of here?'

'Yes you stupid sod, come on shift yourself.'

Dense stood up, still a little bemused and followed Creighky who was looking out slowly into the corridor, holding up his hand to Dense, and then beckoning him to follow. Dense followed, blinking, trying to get the sleep out of his eyes.

'Where are we going?' Dense whispered.

'Shhh, I'll tell you in a minute if we can get out of here,' whispered Creighky.

They walked along a long corridor, turning now and then, and after going up some steps, looking out through doors and checking occasionally, they came to two big emergency double doors at the end which they pushed open and walked out into a large hall. They had bypassed the Luggage Hall and the Customs and were now standing in the Arrivals Hall of the airport with a clear view of the exit doors on the other side of the hall.

It was obviously at a quiet time of Sunday night with only a few cleaners and drunks walking about as they made their way outside into the cold night air.

'Creighky, will you please tell me how we're going to get home from here, in Moscow?'

'Ah, that's where you mistaken Dense me old fella.'

'Mistaken for what Creighky?' They were now walking outside, Creighky looking up at all the signs.

'We're not in Moscow Dense.'

'That's what I told the stupid buggers back there, but they wouldn't have none of it.'

'Did you not see that Michael Caine fillum, where he gets held and tortured in what he thought was some Russian prison?'

'What was that one?'

'Oh, I forgot now, the "Cyprus File" or something, sure it was on the box a couple of weeks ago.'

'Oh, yeah, I think I saw it. Didn't he kill a lot of black savages?'

'No, that was Zulu. This was about spies and that.'

'Can't say as I can remember that one.' Dense looked puzzled trying to remember anything other than globes. A lost cause there.

'Anyway, as I was saying. They got Michael Caine in this prison and gets him to think he's really in Russia somewhere.'

'So.'

'Well, they put all these signs up in Russian and that, getting his mind all confused so as they can brainwash him.'

'Yeah, so what.'

'Well, all the time he's really in Peckham.'

'Is that close to Russia?'

'No, you dick head, it's in London somewhere.'

'Yeah?'

'So, don't you see? That's what they're doing to us.'

'So what you're saying is that this is Peckham?'

'Now you're getting the gist of it, although it surely isn't Peckham but somewhere outside Gatwick.'

'That's what I told 'em.'

'Told them what?'

'I told them this was Gatwick, but they didn't hold to that at all.'

'Course they wouldn't. They've got to get you thinking this is Moscow.'

'Yeah, but why do they want to brainwash *us*?' Dense was getting a tad confused here.

Creighky was a bit confused on that point as well, but nonetheless carried on.

'It's probably something to do with my war record. Them Chinese never like being beaten and probably have a file on me for doing them dirty over in Korea.'

'Oh, right,' said Dense slowly, assuming Creighky knew what he was talking about, although he couldn't for the life of him see what the Chinese connection had to do with Moscow airport.

'So, what's the plan then Creighky?' carried on Dense.

'Well, what we've got to do is get our way to the station and then we can just get on our train and off we go, home.'

'Great,' said Dense, 'but,' carrying on, 'I don't see any signs for any station. They all seem to be in funny writing.'

'That's it, don't you see, they're trying to confuse us with all these signs in Russian. You wait till we get out of here and see that everything will be back in English.'

'You mean, all these signs is fake?' This was a puzzle to Dense.'

'Yes, and they probably got a lot of actors running around waiting for us to make us think they're Russian as well. Look at them taxi's over there. There all painted up to look foreign, see?'

'Oh yeah, that's clever. I think they've started to get me confused already.'

'Don't let it get to you. That's just what they want.'

'Oh, OK, I'll try.' This was going to be a tough one for Dense.

'Now what we've got to do is catch some of these actors unawares. And get them to tell us where the bloody station is.'

'Oh, right, that's a good idea Creighky.' Dense didn't understand it at all but nonetheless he'd play along.

They walked over to the taxi rank and went to the first taxi and woke the driver up and shouted 'Station' to him.'

The taxi driver blinked in amazement and rubbed his eyes and stared back at Creighky.

'Station!' demanded Creighky.

The taxi driver looked at him and suddenly grasped the situation.

'Da, da!' with that he rushed back to the next driver, woke him up and started gibbering away.

'They're bloody good actors,' said Dense.

'Oh, yes, these secret service boys have got it all sown up,' confirmed Creighky in an authoritative manner. The taxi driver came back with his pal who started talking in English.

'English?' he said to Creighky.

'That's it me bucko, right on the nose. Now where's the bloody station?'

'Which station you want?'

'This one, here at Gatwick.' Creighky demanded. 'Watch their reaction,' he said in an aside to Dense.

'Please?' said the puzzled taxi driver still only half awake.

'The station here.' Creighky pointed to the ground several times. 'Here, Gatwick.'

'No understand.'

'What did I tell you,' said Creighky whispering to Dense.

'Railway station,' continued Creighky.

'Oh, da, railway, OK, Come my friend.' With that they were shown into the taxi and drove off into the Moscow Suburbs.

'My friend, you have rubles?' The taxi driver shouted into the back seat.

'Oh, yes, no problem there pal.' Creighky took his last bit of money out of his pocket and waived it at the driver. The driver took it out of his hand quickly and looked at the money briefly whilst still driving.

'No station, no much rubles my friend.' He explained.

'Bugger!' replied Creighky under his breath. 'Ok how far station?'

'I go five kilometers, you go two kilometers. Walk OK.' That was the deal obviously and there wasn't much they could do about it, so they sat back and watched the scenery as the taxi drove off into Moscow.

'They still got a lot of funny signs up in foreign Creighky?' said Dense looking anxiously up at the buildings and sign posts as they flew by.

'They have that me friend, they have that.' Creighky's voice faded off into uncertainty.

Dense was still confused as to how all this acting allowed them to drive on the wrong side of the road, with all the other traffic acting as well.

Oh well, never mind.

The buildings started getting higher and the traffic started getting busier as they got to more built up central areas and after twenty minutes the taxi stopped at a large roundabout. The taxi driver opened the door and pointed down one of the roads leading off the roundabout and said, 'OK you walk two kilometers.'

Creighky and Dense slowly got out and looked around their strange new surroundings in bewilderment as the taxi drove off. The Luck of the Irish, the Galway Fairy Godmother, whatever you want to call it, just happened to be passing a few minutes later in the shape of a large Volvo estate, which drew up beside the two puzzled pedestrians.

The driver's window came down and a head popped out. 'Can I help you my friends?' Came the lilting tones in near perfect English.

'Oh, er, yes, yes, you can that pal.' Creighky was initially taken by surprise. Turning to Dense he winked, 'what did I tell you Dense me old pal,' and he lowered his position to talk to the driver.

'Er, yes, er we are, er, trying to get back into the center of London.' He didn't sound too certain of his facts. 'To a station that's close by?' Again he wasn't too sure of which station he should be asking for.

'I think you'd better jump in.' It was a friendly reassuring voice that probably wasn't Russian, but none the less wasn't Peckham either but they felt he could be trusted and got into the Volvo.

'You say you want to go to London?'

'Er, yes, we've just got a taxi here and run out of money, and the taxi driver said there was a station two kilometers away.'

'Well, I've got some good news and some bad news for you my friends. Have you been to Moscow before?' A simple question,

but one that was the cause of much agony to the two intrepid travellers.'

'Er, no, not er *this* Moscow.' Creighky was doing all the talking as Dense's brain was by now totally traumatised.

'And you want to go to London?' Again, a fairly routine question, which threw Creighky into a wobbler.

'Well, actually, er, we , ere , thought this was London?'

'Well, the good news is that I am going in the direction of London as it happens and some bad news for you my friend is that it's a few thousand miles away.'

'So, er, this really is, er, Moscow?' Creighky said very sheepishly.

'I'm afraid so my friend.' It was the turn of the Fairy Godmother to be puzzled now.

'But I don't understand how you knew we were English?' enquired Creighky slowly.

'Let's just say it was intuition my friend.'

The cravat, army blazer and cavalry twill trousers with brown brogues were probably a dead give away on Creighky's part. Dense was another matter, not being the sartorial elegant type; he could have been taken for a country yokel anywhere.

There was a pregnant pause again as the Volvo picked its way through the early morning traffic and eased onto a wide dual carriage way going out of the main suburbs into the countryside. Both driver and passengers were in a state of bewilderment until the driver eventually opened up the questions again.

'I'm a little confused as to why you have Moscow and London mixed up?'

'So are we,' muttered Dense quietly.

'Well, er, it's a bit of a long story,' continued Creighky. 'But you say you're *going* to London?' His hopes were on the up.

'Well, not actually *to* London. I'm going in the right *direction* for London and in my job I get a little lonely driving all these miles on my own and a little company helps to pass the time of day. I come from Finland, but I travel all over the Eastern Europe for my company.'

'So, er, how far will we get to London?' A hesitant question from Creighky again.

'I have to go to Helsinki, and you should be able to get a ferry to London from there.'

'Well you're very kind, my friend. When will we get to, er, wherever, er, you just said?' another tentative stab in the dark.

'Oh, I should think we should make it to Helsinki by tonight as long as these bloody Russian roads don't have too many road works.' They were now driving out of Moscow on the Leningradsky Prospekt, on the road to Leningrad which would take them on to



the border with Finland and only a few hundred kilometers to Helsinki.

This was all too much for Dense who closed his eyes in the back seat and returned to white globeland.

\* \* \*

The morning shift came on at Sheremetevo 2 airport in the immigration control department only to find two of their night shift friends fast asleep in the office. After waking them up they checked the fax machine that had printed out it's daily report of the personnel to be checked.

It was then that they realised that their two detainees were nowhere to be seen. This caused considerable panic. Not nearly as much alarm as when the print out revealed the description of the two missing Englishmen as the description of those wanted in connection with the death of a Colonel Svetlana Koffinsky of the Kiev branch of the Federal Bureau Services.

The two off going shift officers looked at each other.

‘БВАПУ ЪФТ!’ which roughly translated means “Kinnell” with deep shit connotations.

## Chapter 15. The Committee Meeting

'Mrs Dimmock, I do hope there is a good reason for this extraordinary meeting?'

The sun was shining, as it always did in Muddlecombe and someone came out of the 'Snort' pub carrying a tray of drinks to a small bunch of people sitting to the side of the pub on rustic wooden chairs and tables. They were alone outside and nobody took any notice of them as there was nobody else there to take any notice of anyway and also they were the locals so it was just like any other local get together on an English summer afternoon.

The only difference from their last meeting in Primrose Cottage was that they had to use their local names whilst in public which sort of diminished the authority of this auspicious meeting of the Interplanetary Ethics and Standards committee.

'A pint for you wasn't it Gerry?' Hercules passed the drink to Gerantinium III respectfully.

'Oh, thank you Harry boy,' said Gerantinium with a wink.

Hercules passed the other drinks round and joined them swinging his leg over the bench to sit with the other committee members around the rustic table.

'Thank you gentlemen for coming at such short notice,' said Mrs Dimmock in a hushed voice.

'This had better be worth getting me away from my allotment. I've got my reputation to think of at the village fete flower competition with my hydrangeas, and I can't afford too much time. This is a critical time for me,' said Ignatius.

'What about my vegetables then, Iggy? You and your ponsey flowers. I've got my artichokes to think about,' replied Thor.

'Yes, well Gentlemen, I'm sure Mrs Dimmock has a good reason for this. I think you had better explain.' With that Gerantinium looked to Mrs Dimmock who accepted the responsibility of the temporary chair's status and proceeded.

'There's been a bit of a cock up, lads.'

'Tell me when there isn't a cock up. Who is it this time? The Irish, the Israelis, it's no doubt got the Yanks involved somewhere,' muttered Ignatius impatiently.

'Well, it could have international consequences but I'm afraid it involves us.'

'Us! How can it involve us? We're in charge?' Iggy was getting even more impatient.

'I don't actually mean us per se. I am talking about members of our village community.'

'Who exactly are we talking about then Mrs Dimmock,' said Gerantinium concerned.

'Well, actually it involves Creighky.....' Mrs Dimmock's sentence was rudely interrupted.

'That bloody idiot? What's he been up to now?' Said Iggy once more impatiently. 'Got a gal in trouble again has he. Dirty bugger!'

'I'm afraid it's a bit more serious than that and it also involves our Denis as well.' Mrs Dimmock hung her head in shame.

'Young Dense, God what's he done then. I can't wait to see if he's got someone in the pudding club,' chuckled Thor.

'Gentlemen, please. I think Mrs Dimmock needs to explain things a bit more. Can we please give her a bit of breathing space?' Gerantinium looked towards her. 'Please continue Mrs Dimmock. I must apologise for my uncouth friends.'

The other committee members shut up and got on with their drinks as Mrs Dimmock continued.

'You will by now have met the new tenant to Primrose Cottage, Boris, from Russia?' Mrs Dimmock started.

'Boris seven bellies? By heck he can't half put the old beer away,' said Thor.

'I'll bet Brewster must have doubled his turnover since Boris arrived,' confirmed Gerantinium.

'Yes, well, quite obviously he has made his presence felt in the village,' Mrs Dimmock continued. 'But you may probably not know why he has come here?'

She looked round the faces of those around the bench as Ignatius slowly replied.

'Doesn't he have something to do with the Russian Mafia,' he queried and continuing. 'You did mention this at the last meeting if I remember rightly?'

'That's correct. He worked for the KGB, then the Mafia and then made a connection with the London Bullion gang while he was out in Tenerife.'

'Tenerife? Isn't that where that stuck up bitch, Lucinda and her mates have just come back from?' Ignatius enquired.

'She gets right on my .....' Thor suddenly stopped short realising the presence of Mrs Dimmock.

'Yes, quite so. I'll get round to that later gentlemen if I may.' Mrs Dimmock managed to get in. 'As I said, Boris was involved with the Bullion robbery gang whilst he was out in

Tenerife and in helping the gang out got caught with his fingers in the till by his Mafia masters and had to make a run for it.'

'Back to Muddlecombe?' Hercules was getting a bit confused now.

'Who was the last tenant in Primrose Cottage then?' Thor could start to see some sort of link coming on here.

'John, er John somebody wasn't it?' Gerantinium said scratching his head

'Well, John had a son,' interrupted Mrs Dimmock. 'And his name is John as well and he is involved in this Bullion business and lives in Tenerife.'

Just then Brewster came out of the pub wiping his brow and looking around for glasses to collect and take back inside.

'Ow do, Mister Brewster.' Mrs Dimmock's accent suddenly changed to that of a country bumpkin, as did the others.

'Hallo Mrs Dimmock, hallo lads,' Brewster replied. 'How's it going then, lovely out here isn't it?'

'Oooh Aaarr,' came the rustic response from Hercules. 'The beer's going down like dandelion wine, Mister Brewster.'

'Good, that'll mean you'll be needing some more then? Same again, I'll bring them out to you.'

'You're too kind Mister Brewster. Drink up Gerry me lad.' Thor winked at Gerantinium. Brewster waited for them to empty their drinks, collected the glasses and went inside.

Ignatius looked round to the front of the pub and continued. 'He gone inside yet?'

'Yes, all clear,' confirmed Hercules.

'Now, where were we?' Said Mrs Dimmock. 'Boris, that's it, he had to make a hasty retreat from Tenerife in a hurry and with the help of our London man, Sidney.....'

'I thought Mr Sidenose's name would crop up somewhere along the line,' said Gerantinium frowning.

'He *is* the agent for the cottage Gerry me old mucker,' said Hercules most disrespectfully.

'Brewster has gone inside now Hercules, I think a bit of decorum can be applied now.'

'Ooops, sorry boss, er , Gerantinium, sir.' Hercules made a stab at this decorum bit but it fell flat on it's face.

'Yes, er, well, I think you can continue Mrs Dimmock,' said Gerantinium overlooking the sarcasm.

'So, Boris is now safely installed in the cottage but he has a problem. All his profits have been sent back to his brother in Kiev.....'

'Isn't that where Creighky and your lad have gone?' Thor was picking up the connection here again.

'Exactly. That's the reason they went because Boris can't get over there and his brother is being watched by the Mafia's

connection there and also the local Federal Services Bureau...'  
Once again Mrs Dimmock was interrupted.

'That's the old KGB isn't it?' Ignatius asked.

'Spot on Iggy, right up your street then.' Hercules joined in.  
'So what's old Creighky done then?'

'If you let me explain, I'll come to that. Meanwhile there is a complication.'

'Bound to be, if Creighky's involved,' said Ignatius.

'Boris' boss, a certain Chekov Yeboleksi, didn't take too kindly to the drop in profit's from the Tenerife chapter and went out there to investigate.'

'Don't tell me, he bumped into the girls out there and got that stuck up bitch Lucinda, up the duff?' laughed Hercules.

'Well, not quite,' Mrs Dimmock continued, coughing in trying to overcome her embarrassment. 'He did bump in to our village coven, but got involved with Mrs O'Riley instead.'

'She's been asking for it, I can tell you,' Hercules said lustfully.

'I think we can do without the seedy details,' Gerantinium tried to get some sort of formality back into the proceedings but unfortunately was interrupted by Brewster bringing out the drinks.

'Here you are lads. The shandy for you Mrs D. And that's your cider Gerry. Now whose round is it then?'

'Oi reckon it'll be mine, then Mister Brewster.' Gerantinium handed some money to Brewster who gave him the change and went back inside the "Snort".

'All clear? Now perhaps you can proceed,' Gerantinium stamped his authority on the committee meeting.

'Well, as I was saying. Mildred and this Chekov man have become an item, so to speak..... '

'Cooorrr, lucky bugger....', Hercules drooled.

'Thank you Harry,' Gerantinium quickly retorted trying to control the meeting.

'I'm afraid I'll have to disappoint you there Harry, but that apart, he is extremely dangerous as well as an extremely wealthy person. He was in charge of the KGB's interrogation in Moscow for some time but now works out of the Ukraine. His commercial headquarters are based in Kiev.'

'God, I'm getting confused!' Thor muttered.

'Sorry boss.' Thor forgot himself looking sheepishly at Gerantinium.

'Anyway, as I was saying,' Mrs Dimmock tried to pick up the thread. 'This Chekov is not only Boris's boss but also the owner of the hotel where Mildred and her mates stayed.'

'Oh, no,' poor Thor put his head in his hands, now totally confused. He continued slowly trying to put all the bits of the puzzle into place.

'Can we please just have a recap before we go any further. Now, if I'm correct, we have a certain Boris here in Muddlecombe. We have his boss out in Tenerife looking for him and his money together with a gang from London in on this Gold Bullion robbery and now we have Creighky and your lad Dense, over in Kiev, how am I doing so far Mrs Dimmock?'

'Not bad, but not quite correct and there are a few details which have been omitted...'

'Oh, no.....' Thor was in despair.

'It just so happens that the Metropolitan police have also been involved in this as well ...'

Oh...g.,.....' Thor started to moan again

'The Met have two undercover detectives over in Tenerife, two female detectives who have now picked up on the connection with Boris, but they now have been involved with Boris's boss Chekov as well.' Mrs Dimmock continued.

'Where does all this get us Mrs Dimmock?' Gerantinium asked.

'I feel that these two young ladies will be picking up the lead with John and from there to Muddlecombe.'

'Who's doing law and order these days then?' Gerantinium queried.

'That's down to Iggy here isn't it?' Hercules responded.

'Might as well lumber me Harry mate.' Ignatius gave Hercules a sweet smile.

'I'm getting lost here; didn't we start with a report on Creighky and your lad Mrs D?' Gerantinium was getting confused as well.

'Well, yes, I was getting round to that....'

'I can't wait,' said Ignatius who was getting impatient again.

'Boris laundered a lot of gold bullion money whilst he was in Tenerife, changed his profit's into diamonds and had them couriered back to his brother in Kiev. Boris's boss, Chekov has been watching Boris' brother and so Boris can't get at his so called "pension fund".'

'This is where Creighky and your lad come in?' Thor asked in desperation.

'Precisely Thor, that was where I was about to come in when I started.'

There was a pregnant pause here while they all had a gulp from their drinks in the heat of the afternoon sun but nobody dared interrupt Mrs Dimmock's flow.

'So Boris sends Creighky and my lad on some errand to try and get his diamonds back, but unfortunately this is where the problem has cropped up.'

Another pause and another few sips from the drinks. Mrs Dimmock continued.

'The Federal Service Bureau in Kiev have made contact with Creighky and Denis and things seem to have gone from bad to worse.' Mrs Dimmock stopped for a breather and a sip from her shandy.

'Mrs Dimmock,' Gerantinium could feel Mrs Dimmock was getting distressed. 'If this is too stressful for you please don't feel you have to continue....'

'She'd bloody better continue,' muttered Thor to Hercules in a quick aside.

'No, it's quite alright Gerry,' She continued. 'It's nothing too worrying for my Denis; it's Creighky that's the problem. Unfortunately the FSB agents utilised some extremely subtle interrogation methods on them and it appears that this has ended in the death of a leading FSB agent, a certain Colonel Svetlana Koffinsky....'

'The Black Widow!' Ignatius gave a startled gasp.

'You know her Iggy?' Mrs Dimmock replied.

'Know her? Half the western worlds' secret agencies have been after her for the last twenty years. She has been responsible for the death of hundreds of western agents and has given me a right old chase I can tell you.' Ignatius gave a deep sigh. 'And now you're telling me that Creighky's killed her, God, he'll get a bloody knighthood. Ooops sorry boss,'

Gerantinium intervened. 'Can we have a bit of decorum please Ignatius?'

'Well, he didn't actually kill her in so many words. It was sort of manslaughter, but the problem is that he doesn't know about this and right now he is totally blissfully unaware of the recriminations that this is going to have and the sort of international incident this could cause.'

'Holy sh.....Yes, you're right Mrs Dimmock. The mind boggles over what the Russian federation are going to say about this, not to mention a few other countries on the fringe of this and the United Nations will get involved and .....oooh, it doesn't bear thinking about.'

'Precisely, that is why I felt it best to have this meeting.' Mrs Dimmock said.

'Quite correct Mrs Dimmock. I'm glad you brought this to our attention. I feel we can probably do something about this now in the knowledge of your information. By the way where are Creighky and your lad? Do the authorities have them in custody? Is there anything we can do to help them?' Gerantinium asked the question to an open house hoping to find a way to get help to them.

'Oh, they're OK so far. They're in Moscow at present but I have arranged a little assistance for them and they should be safe in a couple of days.'

'What the hell are they doing in Moscow? I thought they went to Kiev?' asked puzzled Thor.

'I think we'd best not get into that right now. It's another story altogether, and no doubt Creighky will be telling his version when he gets back.'

'Oh, no, isn't there anyway we can keep him in Russia?' Hercules couldn't stand another muck and bullets boring session from Creighky.

'I think he will be out of circulation for some time,' said Mrs Dimmock knowingly.



## Chapter 16. Boris and friends go to Gatwick

Boris was at last coming round. Doctor Dr Rammy and Brewster had taken him back to Primrose Cottage after the injection had knocked him out and put him to bed. Well, put him on to the couch was the nearest thing they could manage. Taking a dead weight Boris anywhere was a logistical problem. Fortunately Brewster's keg barrel trolley had come in handy to get him from the pub to the cottage, but getting him upstairs was not a viable engineering project with the minimum of resources at their disposal. So the lounge it was for the night.

\* \* \*

They came back the next morning for a full medical check up and only managed to wake him up with some difficulty and a lot of cold tea towels. Eventually Boris came to after several cups of coffee and half a dozen bacon and egg sandwiches.

He was not a happy birdie and once his memory kicked in he was back to his previous morose state.

'My friends are not coming back. I have much sadness for my friends Creighky and Dense. I have put them to death. I am bad boy. I am very bad boy.....'

'Oh, for Christ's sake Boris, get a grip of yourself. I'm sure nothing's happened to them. I'm sure they're OK.' Dr Rammy's bedside manner was getting a bit thin but he had to keep trying. It was very difficult trying to calm a dinosaur like Boris. 'They should have arrived back late last night but could well have lost their way to the station or something simple like that.'

'Look, why don't we ring up Gatwick and find out if they have arrived? Their plane could have been delayed or they could have been diverted or something else, we don't know until we ring up and ask somebody.' Brewster was beginning to worry himself now. They should have rung when they landed to let them know which train they were getting.

'A good idea Brewster, Boris where's your phone?'

'Over there my friend.'

Dr Rammy went over to the telephone and then looked round to Boris.

'Have you got Yellow Pages, Boris?'

'Please?'

'Don't bother I'll ring directory enquiries,' and with that he dialed out their number and after a few minutes had written down a couple of numbers to ring.

'Hallo, er, yes, er, ...I'm enquiring about the arrival of a flight from Kiev last night. It was due in about eleven o'clock last night?' There was a short interval and then the conversation began again.

'It did, oh, good, and can I ask about two passengers on that flight please? Pardon, oh, yes, their names.....O'Riley and Dimmock,.....yes that's right, Mr O'Riley and Mr Dimmock.'

Again a short silence and then Dr Rammy started looking doubtful.

'I beg your pardon. You are saying they weren't on that flight.....they were on that flight.....but they didn't board at Kiev...yes I'll hold.' Dr Rammy covered the mouthpiece and looked worriedly at Boris and Brewster.

Boris buried his head in his hands.

'They are just double checking with the airline agents.....hallo, yes can you ring me back, yes here's my number,' again he covered the mouthpiece and looked at Boris. 'What's your number Boris?'

'Is here.' Boris showed Dr Rammy the number and he continued giving the details to the person other end at Gatwick. Dr Rammy put the phone down.

'It doesn't look too good. They were booked on the flight but didn't board according to this bloke I was just talking to, but he's going to check on that and ring me back.'

Boris was in despair. Dr Rammy bent over to him to try and put his arm around his shoulder as Boris sat dejected on the sofa. Well, a quarter of the way around his shoulder. It was a bloody big shoulder.

'Boris why don't you go and make us a nice cup of tea?' Brewster felt this was as good a time as any for another cup of tea. Boris rose slowly and left to go to the kitchen.

'I don't like the sound of this Dr Rammy me old pal, do you?'

'There's probably some perfectly good explanation.' Even Dr Rammy didn't sound very confident.

'I still don't understand what connection Boris has with this woman, the er, what's-er-name?'

'The Black Widow. Sounds all a bit too theatrical for me.'

'Me too.'

That was the end of that conversation until the phone rang and Dr Rammy jumped to pick it up.

'Er, hallo, yes, that's correct. O'Riley and Dimmock. You have no record of them boarding.....but you *do* have their luggage?'

Boris jumped up with amazing alacrity, 'Luggage. They have luggage?' he nearly screamed at Dr Rammy.

'They have their luggage?' puzzled Dr Rammy with his hand over the phone.

Boris beseeched Dr Rammy. 'Please we get luggage, please, very important.' He was now desperately pulling Dr Rammy's sleeve.

'OK, Boris OK!' He took his hand away from the phone. 'Can we come and collect the luggage please?'

There was another pause.

'No we're not relatives, but close friends.'

The conversation from the other end continued.

'We need a what?'

Pause.

'Evidence and an affidavit of our relationship witnessed by a Public Notary?'

Brewster and Boris by now were straining to catch the conversation.

Another pause and Dr Rammy continued, 'Oh, yes. Well actually I'm a Doctor.....'

Brewster butted in, 'I'm a Chartered Accountant?'

'And my friend is a Chattered Accountant.' He put his hand in front of the phone 'I never knew that Brewster?'

'Sorry,' Dr Rammy continued. 'Oh yes where were we? We need to bring some form of identification?' The other end carried on.

'And we can come any time, and ask for? .....got you. OK. And the department? Ok, say no more. Thank you for all your help, good bye.'

Dr Rammy put the phone down and after he had finished writing down some notes, looked up at his two friends who were waiting with their mouths agape in anticipation. 'Ok my friends. I've got all the details.'

Boris was the first to jump in. 'Please, we must go to airport now! I explain everything when I get luggage my friends. Everything will be muddy clear.'

'Crystal clear, Boris.' Brewster intervened, 'Crystal clear.'

'Yes my friend, I make crystal clear. Ok? We go now? Please?'

Boris' pleading voice had an urgency to it that caught Brewster and Dr Rammy looking at each other in bewilderment.

'We go now?' Dr Rammy confirmed to Brewster in a rhetorical statement.

\* \* \*

They finally found Gatwick airport after a lot of discussion between Dr Rammy and Brewster of how the roads had changed since they'd last been to London and eventually managed to park.

'Bloody hell, have you seen the price of the car parking?' exclaimed Brewster.

'Please, no problem my friend, no problem. We go now, please.' Boris was quite obviously in a mad rush. So they set off to find the luggage department.

One hour later, they managed to make contact with the department head who started to try to find their luggage. It was four o'clock on Monday morning by this time and the Sunday logistics shift were about knackered and in no rush to find some lost luggage. They had a few more priorities other than a few bits of baggage.

Poor Boris was about demented by all this delay and eventually when the luggage arrived he had an apoplectic fit.

He then had to wait for the paper work and the signing of the affidavit and witnessing of identification. At long last they obtained the two overnight holdalls and walked out in the early morning summer dawn.

They stopped at the car and Boris pleaded with them to open the luggage.

'Please my friends, please I show you something,' he said as he pulled out the toilet bag from the first holdall.

He pulled out the toothpaste tube and getting out a knife from his pocket very slowly slit open the tube and eased out the paste on to his handkerchief.

Dr Rammy and Brewster stood gobsmacked at the whole event and stared at the mess now covering the handkerchief. As they stared at it a bit closer they saw the lumps appear as Boris slowly stirred the paste around and moved little lumps around to one side.

He picked out a small lump and slowly cleaned it to reveal a bit of what looked like glass.

'My friends, this is my pension.'

It suddenly struck them that what Boris was holding up was a diamond.

'Holy shit!' exclaimed Brewster.

'Bloody Nora!' continued Dr Rammy, not knowing anything else to say as Boris slowly stirred out more bits of glass from the gooey mess. They watched in amazement as Boris slowly cleaned a considerable number of bits of glass or whatever they were.

He put them into his podgy hand and showed them proudly to his friends. No words were said until Brewster slowly came up with the obvious phrase.

'Jesus Christ, that must be worth a bob or two?'

'Please, a bob?' Boris was not up to speed on all English phrases just yet.

'A tidy little sum Boris my friend,' confirmed Dr Rammy.

The conversation was a bit minimalistic as they were still in a state of shock. Whistles and deep intakes of breath were the norm at present along with deep mutterings under the breath until Brewster made a stab at a full sentence.

'I reckon there must be , ooh, about, well at least, ooh, lets say for arguments sake,' much scratching of the head, ' well yes, there's got to be around about.....'

'A tidy little sum!' That was the final agreed figure confirmed again by Dr Rammy.

'Please my friends,' Boris opened the other hold all and pulled out another toothpaste tube from the toilet bag and preceded to operate on the tube with similar results, all the time looking around the car park from the boot when another movement was spotted.

'Kinnell!' The ultimate confirmation of quite a lot of money in value terms now came from Brewster. 'Boris, I think we'd best get in the car and get the hell out of here while you tell us all about how you clean your teeth!' Brewster felt that the open-air car boot sale atmosphere was not conducive to good security in the light of present events.

They all got back in the car and drove out of the car park in silence until they got back on the motorway. Once clear of the restriction of the built up surroundings of the airport they now felt secure to speak.

'So, Boris, what's this all about then?'

'And where do Creighky and Dense fit in with all this?'

Dr Rammy and Brewster started off the debate, which was now about to be dominated by Boris.

'Please my friends, I have story of the truth for you.' He sounded genuinely relieved to be able to get all this off his chest and unburden himself to his close friends. Now out on the motorway, Boris started his story.

'My friends I have long story. You know I work for KGB?'

'You worked for the KGB?' Said astonished Brewster.

'Da, Da, Yes, yes, I work for KGB in Russia for many times. I work for KGB in America, I work for KGB in Afghanistan, I work for KGB in Cuba, I work for KGB in London, I meet many friends in London I like English Bitter beer and I enjoy work in England. I work for twenty years for KGB doing all dirty work. I have same boss for twenty years as well. But then I get sacking. KGB closed

in Moscow and I don't get pennies for all my hard, dirty work.' Boris sounded a bitter man.

'I don't get no condensation at all.'

'Compensation I think you mean Boris' interrupted Dr Rammy.

'Da, Da, Yes, yes, I don't get no bloody money anyway. Then I work for KGB for my old boss.'

'I thought you said you got the sack from the KGB?' said a puzzled Brewster trying to concentrate on both the road and this amazing story which he couldn't quite see were it was going at present in relation to a load of minty fresh plaque free diamonds.

'Da, Da, Yes, yes, I move to KGB, different KGB, Kiev General Business company in Kiev.'

'Stands to reason,' muttered Dr Rammy.

'I work for old boss again and start to do dirty work again but this time I do bad work not work for the country.'

'The old KGB was good work then was it Boris?'

'Da, Da, Yes, yes, old KGB very honourable work for Soviets countries.'

'Only kidding Boris.' Dr Rammy said with a smile.

'Ok, so now I work again for my friend Count Yebolewski.....'

'A Russian nob then was he Boris?' asked Brewster.

'You say *nob*?' queried Boris.

'Sorry me old mate, what we call the nobility here, the nobs.'

'Nobility, oh I see, no, no, he was in Intelligence and got called 'count' as that what you have to do when you come out of his special room. You have to count the fingers and thumbs and.....'

'Yes, I think we get the picture Boris.'

'Ok, so you worked for this guy, and what did you do?' Dr Rammy was eager to get on with the story.

'I do same job as in old KGB. I get to do all dirty works again, only I don't get to go to Dachas at weekends. I get called funny Italian name, mafeeah.'

'The Mafia, the bloody Russian Mafia. Jesus Christ Boris you're in the Russian Mafia?'

'Well I was. But I have much trouble so I come here to lie down on floor to keep out of trouble.'

'Lie low, Boris, lie low. But what sort of trouble are you in then Boris?'

'Ok, well I tell you my friends. When I finish with old KGB I don't get any pennies, as you say, and now I working for the bad KGB I still don't get many pennies. I go to work in Tenerife and I meet nice English men and they tell me about special fund for old people, er, penny fund?'

'Penny fund?' Dr Rammy looked at Brewster.

'Pension fund, Is what I think you mean Boris. Pension fund?'

'Da, Da, Yes, yes, pension fund, that it ok. Special money put aside for old peoples home for when they go to bed.'

'I think you mean when they retire Boris?'

'Da, Da, Yes, yes, that it my friend, retire. Well I soon bloody well retire and I got no bloody money for my old home!' Boris was getting quite agitated by now.

'That's terrible eh, Rammy?' A sympathetic glance from Brewster to Dr Rammy. 'And you having to do all the dirty work.' They were winding him up a bit now.

'Da, Da, Yes, yes, I do all dirty work OK. And I don't get nice Dacha like old politicians.'

'Life's a bitch,' Dr Rammy whispered.

'So I was saying I meet nice Englishmen in Tenerife and he tells me all about money for old people and how pension fund must be filled up by both worker and by boss.'

'That's right Boris the boss has to chuck his bit in to help the worker out too.' Brewster put his financial background knowledge into the pot.

'But no boss puts money in pot for me. So I think that this not right. Then these nice friends of mine give me job to take gold to my Bank in Playa and get potatoes for it.'

'Potatoes?....oh you mean Pesetas?' Brewster continued. 'So that's where you got all that bagful of Pesetas from then? It's starting to fall into place now Boris, go on.'

'Da, Da, Yes, yes, Ok, so I get lots of money from Bank as I know the boss man there and I do special deal with him, and I make lots of money for my English friends.....'

'Boris, tell me what form did this gold take, what did it look like?' Brewster asked inquisitively.

'Gold, just like all gold.' Boris looked puzzled now.

'Sort of like necklaces or rings?' Brewster pushed him for more information.

'No, just ordinary bars.' Boris looked strangely at his friends. Surely they must have seen ordinary gold bars every day.

'Describe these bars please Boris?'

Boris opened his palms out to demonstrate the length of the bars and also the weight by grunting to show how heavy they were.

'Holy shit, Boris you're talking about Gold ingots, Gold Bullion. Do you know how much these bars are worth Boris?'

'Da, Da, Yes, yes, I get plenty Per,.. pot,...them perssater things.'

'Jesus I should hope so, you should be getting bloody millions of those pesetas things.'

Boris continued oblivious to the monetary loss he had sustained. 'So I make many pesetas and I ask about making home for old people and my friends show me nice Indian man ....'

'Sikh?'

'Da, Da, Yes, yes, I think he sick, he always have bandage on head.'

Brewster and Dr Rammy shrugged their shoulders.

Boris continued. 'He used to work in South Africa.....'

'And, don't ell me, he worked in the mines and he worked for De Beers.....' Dr Rammy remembered his Father's tales of some of his activities in Africa.

Boris scratched his head and interrupted.

'No, he work for money. I pay plenty pers..perset,.pesetas for diamonds and he come to English Pub many times but only drink Coca Cola....'

'No, Boris, what I meant was....., Oh, forget it,' Dr Rammy waved his hand at Boris.

'This nice man show me these diamonds and my English friends do special deal with him and I get plenty diamonds at damn good price.'

'Ah, I see now,' said Dr Rammy but Boris continued.

'Now I see what to do for Dacha for old people and I send diamonds to my Brother in Kiev....'

'Boris don't you know about Customs and Excise and taxes and things?'

'I don't like taxes. My company don't like taxes and we have many ways to transport people and things without paying nasty taxes.'

'That figures,' said Brewster.

'Ah, so this is where Creighky and Dense come in.....?' Dr Rammy interrupted.

'I can't quite see why you can't go to Kiev yourself though?' asked a puzzled Brewster.

'My friends, this is where fairy story really goes off with bang.'

Brewster and Dr Rammy shook their heads.

'Where the story really starts?' proposed Dr Rammy.

'Da, Da, Yes, yes, I have talk with my English friends and they tell me how boss pays to help the pension fund?'

'Right, the pension fund.' Confirmed Brewster

'Well, I take money from office money to help my pension fund.....'

'Don't tell me Boris, you forgot to tell your boss about this?'

'How you know about this?' Boris was amazed by the shrewd observation from his friends.

'Oh, it's a gift,' said Brewster.



'Then I was working in nice house taking customers to see nice girls who do work in office for the nice men.....'

'Pardon Boris, a secretarial agency?'

'No, they call it Escort Agency.'

Brewster and Dr Rammy shook their heads again.

'The nice lady tell me my boss is coming to see me, and I don't know why he don't tell me, I got tekology and he don't tell me? So I talk to my friends in English Pub and they get much worry for me. I tell them about Ivan, my brother who have many problems trying to leave Kiev and has his passport taken by security men. My friends ask me what happens if my boss wants to kill someone and I say I do all dirty work and they say that maybe he don't tell me because he want someone else to do dirty work, and they say the dirty work to be done to me because I take pension money from boss, and they say my boss watching my brother and that he in danger and .....

'Woo up Boris,' Dr Rammy couldn't keep up with all this gibbering. 'Talk us through that again. Are you saying that they had twigged that you were doing the dirty on them and that they were watching your brother as well?'

'Da, da. Yes, yes, they must keep record of my office and my money.....'

'That's what's called *accounting* Boris, it's quite a common occurrence in business.' Brewster confirmed.

'They don't do counting in old KGB,' Boris quickly retorted. 'So my friends in Tenerife say I in big trouble and they say best I get out of trouble and that I need drum.'

'Drum?' queried Dr Rammy.

'That what they say, so I get fast boat to England and come to drum in cottage in village.'

'Boris, can we just backtrack here a bit please. Let's just get this straight. You've been dealing in gold ingots, gold bullion as we know it, and selling it to a bank in Tenerife?'

'Da, yes that correct, my friend.'

'And no one asked any questions about these lumps of gold?'

'No my friend.' Boris was a bit puzzled by all these questions as to normal trading in his business circle.

'And this Bank Boris, you said it was one of yours?' Brewster continues the interrogation.

'Da, yes, one of many operations, like hotels, like ....'

'Yes, I get the picture, sort of global corporation this mafia bit then?'

'Da, yes.' Boris shrugged his shoulders as if this was the norm.

'And the name of this bank Boris?'

'Kiev General Bank.'

'I should have known.' Brewster shook his head in disbelief.

'Not a lot spent on the old marketing budget there then Boris eh?' Dr Rammy queried sarcastically, but it was lost on Boris.

'So do you realise that this is illegal Boris, and then these diamonds, they've got to be black market stuff. That's illegal as well?'

'Are you saying two illegals makes one legal then Brewster?' Dr Rammy shoved the sarcastic stakes even higher.

Brewster ignored the flippant remark as Dr Rammy continued.

'Of course if Boris is illegal to start with Brewster, it's all ok then isn't it?'

Brewster couldn't argue with this logic, which was all a bit over Boris's head anyway.

'What I'm saying is that Boris is in deep shit!' Brewster pushed his point home.

'Deep shit, da, that what John say to me.' Boris managed at last to get his tuppence in.

'Who the hell is John?' Dr Rammy asked.

'John, my friend from London in Tenerife in English pub who give me gold.'

There was a pregnant pause as Dr Rammy looked up for inspiration and said 'It's a funny old world isn't it. I remember the poor old boy that died in Primrose Cottage, his name was John and he came from London.'

'Oh. That's all right then,' interrupted Brewster. 'That narrows it down to 10 million people then.' The sarcasm was overflowing.

'Can I just get this clear in my mind Boris?' Brewster needed to sort this into some form of rationale.

'Your mate, John from London, in Tenerife, gives you some gold, right?'

'Da, ok so far,' Boris said contentedly.

'You give this gold to your bank, with no questions asked?'

'Da, OK,' Boris was still happy.

'This bank then gives you pesetas which you give back to John?'

'Da, da, yes,' so far so good.

'How do you make anything out of this Boris? How do you make a profit?'

'My friend John give me percent.' Any fool knows you work for a commission.

'Must have been a bloody big percent.' Dr Rammy interjected.

Brewster took some time to overtake someone on the Motorway. Fortunately the traffic was still fairly light at this time of the morning.

'Makes you wonder how much John paid for the gold in the first place if he's so bloody generous. What do you think Dr Rammy?'

'You've got a point there Brewster.'

'When I was in the commodities market, if you got your hand on that sort of gold Boris is talking about here, you made the most of it. Not give away percentages like Boris got.'

Boris was looking back and forward from Brewster to Dr Rammy trying to understand all this reasoning.

'Anyway, so Boris, you gets all this charity from your mate John. He puts you in touch with this Indian chappy from South Africa with all the dodgy diamonds which you send back to your brother in Kiev?'

'Da, da, yes, yes.' Boris said still a little puzzled.

'So you've been laundering money, smuggling diamonds.....'

'That *is* part of his job Brewster,' a sympathetic input from Dr Rammy.

'Laundry, what laundry?' This bit was new to Boris.

'Don't worry about that Boris, just terminology.' Brewster confirmed.

'Ology?' Boris was confused again.

Dr Rammy turned round to Boris and said. 'It's only Brewster showing off Boris my old mate. Don't let it worry you.'

Boris shrugged as Brewster continued.

'So then what happens?' Brewster asked.

'So I ask brother to go to Holland to do deal with diamonds with a contact I know there from working with old KGB.'

'Ah, right, and he gets stopped by KGB?'

'FSB.' Boris popped up with.

'FSB?'

'Not KGB now, FSB.' Boris confirmed and then carried on. 'But still have many old KGB there. They work with my KGB sometimes when they want help.'

'They work with your.....oh, you mean the new Kiev company?'

'Da, da, yes, yes.' Boris smiled. He was getting through to them at last.

'So they get the nod from your new boss after checking the accounts and smelling a rat?'

This threw Boris completely. Nobody had mentioned smelling pets or rats or whatever.

'No understand.'

'Ah, what I'm saying is that you've been sussed by your boss and he's made the connection with your brother and obviously wants to keep him around to see if there's any jiggery pokery going on.'

God, thought Boris. What the hell is he talking about?

'Er, sorry, no understand.....'

'Sorry Boris. In English what I'm trying to say is they need to keep an eye on your brother to see if he's connected with the missing dosh. Sorry, missing office money.'

'Oh, da, yes, I see now.'

'So what happens next? You said John and his mates get you on a boat?'

'Da, that right. I go to England on big motor boat. Four days in big boat going very fast, not feel very well.'

'I don't suppose you did. Don't suppose you went through any customs or port authorities when you came into the country?'

'Sorry?' Boris said puzzled.

'Didn't think so.' Brewster carried on. 'And then ...?'

'I get off boat and into car and nice man drives me to nice cottage.'

'Just like that. I suppose it was dark and you landed on a beach in the middle of nowhere.'

'And who would this nice man be, couldn't have been anyone from Muddlecombe?' added Dr Rammy.

'I don't remember much. I fall asleep, but I think he is lawyer or something in London, he has nice camel coat on anyway.'

'He didn't have a small black moustache and greasy black hair by any chance did he?' quizzes Brewster.

'Da, da, yes, yes, he come from Israel.'

'It's a funny old world isn't it?' said Brewster to Dr Rammy. 'That sounds horribly like our friend Sidney Sidenose the slimy solicitor from Shoreditch.'

'Da, da, yes, yes, Sidenose, I remember now,' confirmed Boris.

'Well, well, what do you make of that?' Brewster turned to Dr Rammy again.

'Pass,' said Dr Rammy, a bit puzzled by this.

'He's the geezer that I used to do business with in London on a very strange basis. All sort of cash basis, no receipt, the usually underhand stuff you would associate with the lower socio-economic class. Mind you, he paid out some handsome commissions I must say. And he was the one that gave me the keys to the Cottage when I was ill.'

'And I had to look after you, you grumpy old bugger!' Dr Rammy interrupted.

'Well, I was ill, wasn't I?' Replied Brewster.

'Bloody nigh dead with that heart attack, anyway I think I met this laddo when the old John died at the cottage and he came up from London to do all the paperwork. He was a bit of a slimebag if I remember rightly.'

Boris was in the dark here with this conversation.

'It's all falling in to place now, the cottage bit anyway. So Mr Sidenose drops you off at the cottage?' Brewster got back on the track for Boris who was getting a bit lost with all this.

'Da, da, yes, yes,' confirmed Boris with a start, now suddenly brought back into the conversation.

'So you're stuck here and your brother's stuck in Kiev and so you get Creighky and Dense to go over there and pick up your pension fund?' Dr Rammy was now filling in the pieces.

'But they don't know about diamonds?' Boris quickly jumped in to put another hurdle into the solution sequence.

This caused a pause in the conversation as Brewster looked up at the passing signposts on the motorway to make sure they were on the right road.

'Creighky and Dense don't know about diamonds?' queried Brewster to get the facts straight.

'No, my friends, I don't tell them in case of trouble. My brother fix it ok in Kiev with friend at Hotel just in case old KGB get up to tricks.'

'So they didn't know they were smuggling in the diamonds?'

'No, no, I only get brother to give them savings book for good story about pension.'

'Nice one Boris,' confirmed Dr Rammy.

'So all we have to do now is find out where they are?' Dr Rammy said.

'What was all that about this woman Boris? This Black Widow?' Brewster asked.

'That where trouble begin. She old KGB, now new FBS. Very clever woman, kill many spies. Ivan tell me she with Creighky and Dense at hotel. I have many worries.'

'Oh, that's charming Boris. *You* have many worries. What puzzles me is that their luggage gets through but not them.'

'That is strange, that is a puzzle alright.' Dr Rammy joined Brewster in the confusion stakes. Silence once again as Brewster changed lanes to change to another road.

'Christ! What we going to tell the girls?' Brewster nearly swerved off the road with the sudden realisation that the ladies would be coming back from holiday soon.

'When do they get back from holiday?'

'I dunno,' said Dr Rammy. 'Didn't know they'd gone away.'

'Went to Tenerife I think. But what the bloody hell are we going to say to Mildred?'

'What's with this *we* bit Brewster old pal?'

'Oh, great! You're some help. I'm going to need *some* bedside manner with - "sorry old girl but we've lost Creighky in Russia somewhere".'

'Maybe he dead,' moaned Boris.

'Christ man, don't be such a bloody pessimist. Knowing Creighky and his luck he's probably drunk in some pub somewhere boring them to death with his war stories.'

## Chapter 17. The boys start on the road home

'So there I was, under heavy machine gun fire from these yellow bastards, but I kept running at them, screaming like a banshee, with me bayonet's naked steel glistening in the moonlight and with bullets whizzing around me until they gave up the ghost and ran off like a bunch of yellow cowards.....'

Creighky was in full flow with a captive audience who had no way of retreat. The poor Fin, polite to the end was concentrating on the driving as they came out of the Leningrad outskirts on their way to the Finnish border. They had crossed the River Neva, past the Peter and Paul Fortress on their left, then Lenin Park and were heading North on the Kirovsky Prospect on the road to the Kirov Islands.

The poor Finnish salesman had wanted company but got a little bit more than he had bargained for. He really must have a word with Mrs Dimmock before he accepted any more projects.

Leningrad is a beautiful city, but all this was lost to Creighky and Dense. Dense was still in the arms of Orpheus or rather Dollianna and Creighky wasn't going to miss an opportunity like this to give a full and uninterrupted rendition of his unexpurgated heroic war saga. He had omitted several minor details such as: that he was caught in the stirrup of a crazed donkey; that he was totally rat-arsed, brandishing a polo stick not a bayonet with his mess dress shirt tails ballooning in the air as the donkey bucked, trying to rid itself of this irksome burden.

Neither did he mention the fact that he had accidentally come across a cadre of new Red Army conscripts, straight out of recruit training, who had never seen a 'White Devil' before in their lives and only acted out of instinct as the donkey bucked the unfortunate incumbent through the air, crashing onto their cosy camouflaged machine gun nest in the middle of the night, totally uninvited.

They shit themselves and ran off screaming like any normal person would, leaving behind a considerable arsenal of ordnance which Creighky proudly claimed as his together with the resulting Military Cross.

They stopped at a gasoline station, then over a bridge and onto the Primorsky Prospekt and set out on the road to Vyborg and the border. They drove on into the summer evening until they passed through Vyborg and out onto the road to Vaalimaa and at last they came to the border post between Russia and Finland.

The driver pulled over into a lay by and opened the car door to get out and stretch his weary limbs. His ears were burning as well. They had been through hell.

'Here you are my friends,' he exclaimed. 'We're at the border now. I have to get my documentation from the boot; you need to show the guards your passports.'

'Passports. Oh, now there's a thing.' Creighky looked round to the dozing Dense. 'Dense, Dense, will you wake up for the love of Christ.' He shook Dense until some movement indicated the likelihood of a living being. Dense slowly opened his eyes and blinked with the brightness of the border lights.

'Dense you dozy bugger, will you wake up man.'

Dense rubbed his eyes and looked around squinting until his eyes got used to the light.

'What's the problem Creighky?'

'D'yer have the passports by any chance there Dense?'

'Passports?'

'Passports,' confirmed Creighky.

'Passports,' reconfirmed Dense, starting to look round and trying to get the brain in gear at the same time.

'Passports?' Dense at last was beginning to understand the question. 'Right, passports,' he said trying to think of something to do next.

'Got it one there Dense. Now where the bloody hell are the bloody passports?'

'Don't you have them Creighky?' said Dense desperately looking through his pockets.

'Would I be asking the fucking question if I had them?' Nonetheless Creighky started looking through his pockets just in case.

'No, I suppose you've got a point there Creighky.'

It had been a long day, and they were both jet lagged. Shagged out is probably a better word, but they both tried to go back through their memory cells to remember what had happened to the passports.

'Oh shit,' Creighky got there first.

'We must have left them at the airport.'

'Them passport people never gave them back, did they?' Dense was surprisingly quick there as well.

The Finnish salesman had picked up on their conversation and could see a ray of light in his life by a means of getting rid of his fellow passengers.



'You have problem with passports, my friends?'

'Er, yes, it would appear we do have a small problem with the passports.'

They continued to make a token gesture by looking through their pockets again, but in vain.

'We seem to have, er, mislaid them.' Creighky was trying the humble bit now hoping he would get swallowed up by a bloody great hole in the ground, or failing that, his Fairy Godmother would swoop down to the rescue again.

Good old Fairy Godmother.

'Old Boris gave me an envelope, now where is it?' Dense started rummaging through his pockets. 'He said something about, if we ever got into any trouble to open it up.'

'Well, for Christ's sake man, where the bloody hell is it?' screamed Creighky.

Dense searched his jacket again until he pulled out a large brown manila envelope.

Creighky grabbed it and ripped it open to reveal a bundle of American dollar bills.

The Fin looked over his shoulder and slowly said.

'My friends, you have *passports*. Leave this to me,' and promptly held his hand out to receive the envelope which was given without any hesitation.

He disappeared towards the Customs office, licking his lips. As an old hand at negotiating with Russian border guards, he slowly counted the money and could see a tidy profit in it for him as compensation for his ear bashing. And he could get rid of his colleagues at the Finnish customs border to boot.

Not such a bad day after all.

He returned after ten minutes obviously in a rush.

'OK, my friends. Please get in car quickly. We must drive through to next control in Finland.'

Creighky and Dense didn't need to be told twice and jumped back into the car. The Fin put it into gear and drove past the Russian border guard with a little wave and stopped at the next checkpoint and pulled over into another lay by.

He looked at his friends and said, 'OK, I get you into Finland but you have to talk with the men here to explain passport problem and they get in touch with your embassy. You understand?'

'Ok, thank you for all your help my friend,' said Creighky getting out of the car. Dense followed into the warm night air, closing the back door.

'Yes, thanks for all your help.'

'Look, I feel as if we should give you something for the petrol at least,' said Creighky humbly to the Fin.

'No problem, my friends. Your company has been payment indeed,' he concluded with 500 US dollars in his back pocket and looked up at the sky thinking, "God strike me down for my sins". 'You look after yourselves my friends OK?'

'You've been great pal. If you ever get to England you must come and let us return the hospitality, you hear?'

As he hadn't told him where he lived it wasn't going to be a problem. He suddenly looked up again into the balmy summer air as a peel of thunder and a flash of lightning lit up the distant horizon.

'Missed!' he muttered under his breath. I really must have a word with Mrs Dimmock at our next Archangels' Association meeting about some of these projects we get lumbered with.

The Fin drove off into the night waving to the nice men. He briefly stopped at the border to show his passport and drove away leaving his two colleagues behind. He muttered something under his breath in Scandinavian, which roughly translated meant 'Pillocks!'

Creighky and Dense slowly made their way to the Border Customs Office door and went in. This was going to be another long night for everyone concerned.

\* \* \*

Captain Cecil Carruthers had lead a very easy life to date. But this was about to change.

Brought up in an Army family whose traditions went back to the Battle of Waterloo, he was educated at boarding school after the war while his father was abroad with the Army. Then did the normal routine of Marlborough, Wellington, Sandhurst, Guards, homosexual, saw action India and Korea, got demobbed and ended up in the Foreign Office through the Old Boy's network.

Unfortunately he didn't understand the homosexual bit, it was just that the 'Male Bonding' got a tad out of hand so to speak and he thought this was the normal thing. He would no doubt get happily married, have children and they would all do the same thing but probably end up in prison on drug charges.

He was a lovely lad basically, thick as a Ghurka's foreskin, but would do anything for you and at this moment of time was on night shift on Monday evening in the British Embassy in Helsinki when the phone rang.

'Hawwo, Bwedish Embassy, Cawuthers speaking, how can I help you?'

'I beg your pardon?'

'Yes this *is* the Bwedish Embassy.'

'Sorry, didn't get that old chap.'

'You've got what?'

'Two people, yes.....?'  
 'Two people with twouble with their what.....?'  
 'Pisspots?'  
 'Oh, passports, gosh awfully sowwy old chap.'  
 'And they're Bwitish you say?'  
 'Sowwy?'  
 'English?'  
 'And you are where?'  
 'Who?'  
 'Sowwy, didn't quwite get that old chap?'  
 'Wolly who.....?'  
 'Wolly.....er.....ma?'  
 'Wally, ma?'  
 'On the Wussian Border with Finland?'  
 'Got you old chap, yes?'  
 'Sowwy, can you speak to who?'  
 'Sowwy , I'm the only one here old chap, apart from  
 Gwunhilda, our telephone lady.'  
 'Awfully sowwy old chap.....'  
 'Yes, Cawuthers is the name.'  
 'Look, can I get back to you. I'll look up my Station Woutine  
 Orders and see what I have to do.'  
 'Is that Ok?'  
 'Yes?'  
 'I want what?'  
 'Your number?'  
 'Why do I want your number?'  
 'To wing you back.....gosh what a super idea, thanks  
 awfully.'  
 'Do I want to do what?'  
 'White it down?'  
 'Gosh, what a super idea, yes, hang on I'll get a pencil.'  
 'Ok, fire away old chap.'  
 'Yes, got that, ....223... 6778.'  
 'And that's a Wallyma number?'  
 'On the border with Wussia?'  
 'Yes, got that old chap, and there are two men?'  
 'Yes and they're Bwitish?'  
 'Yes, got all that old chap and I won't forget to what?'  
 'Wing you back. Gosh, no.'  
 'As soon as possible?'  
 'White oh old chap. I'll do it white away.'  
 'Gosh OK, lovely speaking to you old chap.'  
 Carruthers missed the mumbling in Finnish as he hung up.  
 This is what he had joined the Foreign Office for. Excitement!  
 At last he could get out of the mundane office procedures of  
 visa applications, Department of Trade multilateral and bilateral

treaties and conferences; fostering people's diplomacy through services to British citizens abroad and by increasing respect and goodwill for Britain among the peoples of the world drawing on the assets of the British Council and the BBC World Service etc etc, bla bla, bla.

Now he could actually do something on his own and rescue fellow citizens from those nasty Russians. Now, where were those boring Station Routine Orders telling him how to rescue people from those nasty Russians?

Ah, there they are in that bookcase.

Carruthers started humming the "Land of Hope and Glory" as he got up from his desk and walked over to the bookcase leaving behind his rather full In Tray, which he had hardly looked at for the past week. He hadn't noticed the fax from the Russian Embassy with the list of wanted personnel.

The list with Creighky and Dense on that was hovering only half an inch down from the top of his In Tray. He sat down with a large tome in front of him and began to read.

It was no use. He had stared at all this voluminous amount of print and couldn't make head or tail out of it all. What he needed was someone to give him an order. Now he was good at following orders. But unfortunately there was nobody there to give him an order. That bugged that little plan up.

Christ, he was going to have to fall back on initiative. Oh, shit.

Oh well, never mind, he'd done it before, so better get on with it then. He strode out of the office into the main reception and into the small telephone reception room where Grunhilda the local telephonist was working.

He slowly got up enough courage to tap lightly on the glass window and she turned round to look at him and got up to open the door.

'Gwunhilda, can you help me out please? We seem to have a spot of bother up at the border with Wussia.....'

'Oh Christ, what's he done this time,' thought Grunhilda. 'Yes how can I help you Mr Carruthers?'

'There appear to be a couple of chaps up there who are having pwoblems with their passports.....'

'Oh, is that all?' she thanked God. 'Who exactly are these people?'

'I think there ours,' confirmed Carruthers

'You mean British citizens?'

'Ya, that's it in one old girl, yes their Bwedish chaps OK.'

'And where exactly are they?' she continued disinterestedly.

'Oh, some place called,.....Wally.....something or other.'

'Vaalimaa,' she confirmed, cringing at his pronunciation.

'That's it old girl, yes, Wallima.'

'So what's the problem?'

'I think they are having passport problems sort of.'

'So they will need temporary passports?'

'Gosh, yes that'd do splendidly I should think.'

'The forms are in the admin office, in the pigeon hole marked "Temporary application forms".'

'Gosh, super, thanks awfully old girl.' Carruthers said as he turned to dash off into the Admin office.

'If he calls me "old girl" again, I'll swing for that English prat,' muttered Grunhilda under her breath. Ten minutes passed as Carruthers eventually figured his way around the Admin office and found the forms and returned to Grunhilda with them in his hands.

A bit out of breath, he tapped lightly on the glass door panel again.

'I've got the forms, old girl, now what do I do?'

Grunhilda gritted her teeth. She needed the job. She slowly opened the door slightly.

'Ok, so you have the forms, so all you have to do is get these people to fill them in.'

'Ok, but they're over at wassisname, you know Wally some thing...'

'Ok, Mr Carruthers,' she gritted her teeth once more, 'I'll get the duty driver out and we'll go and collect them. Please leave everything to me, OK? Oh, and you'd better ring them up and tell them someone will be with them in about an hour.'

'Thanks awfully, Gwunhilda, old girl.'

Grunhilda winced.

'Don't forget to fill in your log, Mr Carruthers,' she screamed after him as he walked away.

Carruthers felt proud of himself for all the initiative he had used. This could even mean promotion when his boss got to find out about it in the morning.

No chance.

\* \* \*

'Kwikey! It's Kweighky!'

'Kwuthers, you old shagbag!'

Carruthers and Creighky greeted each other like long lost friends in the reception area of the embassy. Dense stood and watched the proceedings as the backslapping and hand shaking came to an end.

'If it isn't the Kowean donkey hero himself!'

'What the bloody hell are you doing here Kwuthers old chap?'

'I work here old boy. Working for the old Foweign Office don't you know?'

'Well, sweet Mary, mother of Jeysus, am I glad to see you. You're a sight for sore eyes I can tell you.'

'Gosh Kweighky, it's been a long time since we saw each other. What a jolly pwank we had out in Kowea, eh, old boy?'

All of a sudden Creighky could see a small chink in the undoing of his street cred and the future status of his standing in Muddelcombe was now at risk.

'Yes, well, we don't want to dwell on the past do we old chap?' he said modestly.

Dense was suddenly awoken from the warm reverie of Dolliana's chestal areas with something he thought he'd never hear Crieghky say in his life. Dense shook himself in disbelief and took a lot more interest in the conversation.

'Gosh Kweighky, I've been telling that story about Kowea for years. What a night! Did we get dwunk or did we get dwunk?'

'Yes, well, the old Army days are over and forgotten now old chap. No point in dwelling on the past as I said.'

Dense couldn't believe his ears for the second time.

Confucius, he say, when in hole, stop digging, and Creighky felt it time to get rid of the shovel and change the subject a bit smartish.

'Kwuthers old chap, I've been awfully rude. Let me introduce me old mate here, Dense Dimmock. One of our more respected village citizens.'

Dense couldn't believe his ears for the third time. Creighky was showing him some respect. Carruthers offered Dense his hand and said, 'Gosh, Mr Dimmock, any fwiend of Kweighky's is a fwiend of mine.'

The "Mr Dimmock" threw Dense briefly as he shook the wet kipper offered by Carruthers and Creighky continued.

'Kwuthers (the nickname had stuck with Carruthers throughout his career) old boy, me pal here and I are in a spot of bother with the old paperwork thingy don't you know. The old passports have done a runner and we've seem to have mislaid them somewhere along the line.'

'Gosh Kweighky, you've come to the right place I can tell you. Let's go through to the office shall we?' With that Carruthers guided them through to the administration office from the reception area and offered them a seat.

'Take a seat chaps and we'll see about your passports, OK?' Carruthers started to leave the room. He didn't quite know what he was going to do after he had left the room but it felt the right official thing to do until he could come up with some more initiative and a plan of action. His indecision was decided by a request from Creighky.

'Kwuthers , old chap, could you see your way clear to getting us a bite to eat and a wee drink. Me pal here and myself have been on the road all day and I'm as dry as the Devil's toasting fork, so I am.'

'Gosh, what a good idea chaps. I'll get something organised stwaight away.' Phew, that was close; he'd nearly had to use some of his initiative.

He could now go to Grunhilda and get something sorted out in that department. He visibly brightened as he stepped out of the office fully in charge of the situation.

By the time he had organised something, Creighky and Dense had fallen asleep in their chairs. He felt it best to leave them there and he could then get on with his paperwork until the morning shift came on duty.

It was about then that things went pear shaped for him as he found the fax in his In Tray and was in a cold sweat all night until his colleague came on duty. They then both went into a cold sweat until the Consul arrived and passed the buck on to him.

\* \* \*

'Thank you Carruthers. You can go now, leave this with me.'

With that, Carruthers left the Consul's office with Creighky and Dense standing in front of a large Mahogany desk with the picture of the Queen on the wall behind it.

'It's Captain O'Reilly and Mr Dimmock isn't it?' The Consul started the questioning having already been briefed by Carruthers on the fax from Russia.

'That's it in a nutshell. Glad to make your acquaintance your honour.' Creighky was doing the talking for them both.

'Gentlemen, please take a seat won't you? Now what appears to be the problem? What brings you to my quiet little neck of the woods?' The Consul's life had been relatively quiet so far with his posting to Helsinki. Only a few more years left before he retired on a nice pension and he could go somewhere a bloody sight warmer than this boring dump.

However he felt a little apprehensive with the sight of this fax in his papers tray. He was fully aware of the potential problem but felt it only proper to hear out the other side of the story before he acted.

The murder of a high-ranking Federal Services Bureau official was going to be a bit of a buggler of paperwork-wise to say the least. And he was looking at the Warrant for the arrest of the two people sitting in front of him as well. This was going to be a diplomatic incident "Level One" jobby, and that's no mistake.

'Well, we've sort of got a problem with the old paperwork, don't you know,' Creighky started off again.

"Christ you don't have to tell me buster," thought the Consul.

'We've sort of *mislaid* the passports,' continued Creighky.

'I see,' said the Consul, 'and where exactly did you lose the passports?'

'Well, we didn't exactly lose the passports, more your actual stolen.'

'So you had your passports stolen?'

'Well, not exactly stolen, in as much as someone running off with them, more your actual officialdom depriving us of them and us having to get out of the clutches of the officials unofficially, if you see what I mean your Honour.' Creighky felt a little creeping wouldn't go amiss here if it meant speeding up the process of getting them home to a decent pint in the "Snort".

The Consul felt a bout of confusion coming on.

'Er, could you run that past me again Captain O'Reilly?'

'Well, there was these nasty Russian chaps with all sorts of interrogation and torture in mind, and, well, the opportunity presented itself for us to get the hell out of their clutches and off we bloody well went, but we had to say goodbye to the old passports.'

'Interrogation and torture you say?'

'Aye, that's the rub of it. My old mate here will back me up on that won't you Dense me old pal?'

Dense awoke from the chestal areas of Dollianna briefly.

'Do what?'

'I was just telling your man here that we was interrogated with all them electrodes all over the place and them questions and that.' Creighky looked to Dense for confirmation.

'Is that what all them funny things they stuck on me was all about?' Dense was trying to be helpful.

'Are you telling me they attached electrodes to you as part of interrogation procedures as well?'

'That's the truth, so it is.' Creighky said.

'Why were they doing all this to you?'

'Sweet Jesus that's the sixty four thousand dollar question, I had no idea what they was after. Do you Dense?' That was a fruitless question.

'Do what?' Dense was being interrupted again.

'I was just telling your man here that they was asking some damn fool questions and we don't know to this day what the bloody hell they was on about?'

'Who was that then?' Dense was lost on this point.

'Them Russian chaps, do you not remember?'



'Oh, them ones from Peckham with Michael Caine?' Dense had remembered that bit.

The Consul felt a bit more confusion coming on. He hadn't seen anything yet. 'I seem to be missing something here?' The Consul looked to both Creighky and Dense for help.

'No, what my friend is getting his nuts in a knot over is the "Ipress File" that we were discussing, with Michael Caine and them people who tried to fool him into thinking he was in Russia when all the time he was really in London.'

'I'm sorry chaps, I seem to have lost the plot here completely,' the Consul said looking for a small crumb of continuity. He continued. 'What does this have to do with the lost passports?'

'Ah, well, that's the rub, that's when we lost the passports. Like I was saying, we didn't feel like going back to these fellas and saying "Oh, would you be so kind as to finish the interrogation so as we can have our passports and go home?" now would we?'

'Yes, I see your point there,' said the Consul but realising that he had still lost the thread of the conversation.

'And where was all this going on, you say somewhere in Russia?'

'Ah, well, now that's where all the problems started you see. We were supposed to be in London.'

'And we thought we were in Peckham like Michael Caine.' Dense was well up to speed with the conversation now.

'I'm sorry?' Unfortunately the Consul wasn't.

'What my friend here is saying is that I thought we were being brainwashed into thinking we were in London and all the time we were in Russia, don't you see?'

'Ah, yes, I see now,' said the Consul still in a confused state, but at least quite clear now as to why he was confused.

'And where about in Russia were you?'

'That'll be, er, Moscow, wasn't that it Dense?'

'Moscow, that's what our friend in the car reckoned,' confirmed Dense well pleased with himself on that point.

'Oh, good, that narrows it down a bit. Er, I don't suppose you know where about in Moscow do you?' the Consul asked in vain.

'The airport, the one where as you come outside there's a taxi rank in front of you,' Creighky sat back and relaxed having cleared up that point.

The Consul felt it best not to ask *which* airport with the taxi rank outside, but felt he should be grateful for the information gleaned so far and proceed with the original tack of questioning.

'Good, OK, so can I ask you now if you have ever been to Kiev?'

'Oh yes, we was trying to get home from Kiev, and they must have put us on the wrong plane.'

'And may I ask as to why were you in Kiev?' the Consul asked innocently not realising the consequences of this question, and how this was going to considerably prolong his day and reduce his sanity level.

'We was helping old Boris out.' Said Creighky.

'My mate Boris had this problem with his pension book and we went to Kiev to pick it up,' Dense felt it best to clarify things so that they could get on.

'Don't know why they couldn't just pop it in the post. But anyway old Boris pays for us to have a wee bit of a holiday for the weekend and the next thing we knows is that we end up in bleeding Russia with electrodes all over us.' Creighky felt a little bitter here.

'And this chap Boris, where does he fit into all this?'

'The Canaries.' Dense was as quick as lightning on that point.

'I'm sorry?' said the Consul getting back to confused in one go.

'A Russian canary.' Dense was *quite* positive on these points.

Creighky could see the confusion getting back in and felt it only right and decent to help this poor Consul chappy out on these minor details.

'What my friend is trying to say is that Boris is a pal of ours from Muddelcombe who has this wee problem over this pension book and his brother was having this wee problem of not being able to get out of the country so we went in. Now Boris was working in the Canaries for this Russian company and gets sent to Primrose Cottage and he comes over to the "Snort" for a couple of pints and well, here we are. Or as the case may be, here we aren't 'cause we should, rightly speaking, be somewhere else but we're not, if get the drift of my meaning.'

Creighky's Irish upbringing had brought out his eloquence and clarity of oration. He continued. 'By the way, can someone please tell me where the hell we are? I know where we should be but I'm bugged if I rightly know where we are?'

A fair question.

'Er, ...Helsinki.' The Consul was still trying to pick up the deep meaningful last bit about Boris when he was interrupted with this question. He really should get back to asking the questions although at this time he felt it would only introduce more confusion.

Only three more years to retirement.

'Er, yes, now where were we, Oh yes,' the Consul pulled out the fax from his tray and started the questioning again.

'Gentlemen, could I ask you if, whilst you were in Kiev, did you come across a certain Colonel Kiffinski?'

Creighky looked at Dense, then Dense looked at Creighky and the Consul could pick up the vibes of genuine ignorance here. Which wasn't difficult.

'Can't say as I remember talking to any of them Red Army wallahs, can you Dense?'

'Red Army?' Dense asked blankly.

'You know, them Ruski Army types with the jackboots and all that choir singing malarkey?'

Dense was passing on this one.

'Actually, this Colonel was in the Kiev Federal Services Bureau. Did you come across anyone in the Secret Service in Kiev?'

Again Creighky and Dense looked blankly at each other. Creighky took up the conversation. 'I'm sorry, me old fella, you have us at a disadvantage there. I can't say as we came across any of them Secret Service chaps either. I'm sorry, we don't seem to be helping you much on this one my friend.'

'This Colonel was a female of the Bureau.'

'Now, we was out with a couple of cracking tarts for one night. Now that was a night to remember eh, Dense you dirty dog?' With that he gave dense a wink and a nudge.

'You say you were out with some ladies?' the Consul visibly brightened.

'A couple of right shagbags I can tell you,.....'

'Can you describe these, er, ladies to me please?'

'Now I had the tall dark one, she was something special, I can tell you, sophisticated, now what was her name?... Swetty or something, and my friend here had the young blonde one with the big,.....' Creighky cupped his hands in front of him.

'Er, yes, quite,' interrupted the Consul.

'Could we dwell on the description of your, er, partner please Captain O'Reilly, could her name have been Svetlana?'

'That's it, got it in one. Black eyes, deep as the ocean, wild as a mustang from Tipperary, went like a rattlesnake.....'

The Consul visibly winced and then looked down to his papers with the warrant for the arrest for the murder of Colonel Svetlana Koffinski. This chap is a cool customer he thought, either that or stupid. He thought he would call his bluff on this one. In his years of working with people this usually worked and got some sort of reaction that could indicate guilt.

'Captain O'Reilly,' the Consul placed the warrant and fax in front of him, 'this lady you talk of is none other than Colonel Svetlana Koffinski of the Kiev Federal Services Bureau.' He showed Creighky her picture.

'Get away, you don't say, is that not the same woman eh, Dense?' he showed the picture to Dense who nodded briefly without much interest. He was more interested in any pictures of Dollianna.

'Do you have a picture of the other one?' he asked.

My God these are a couple of real cool customers, no probably not, stupid is the other alternative the Consul was betting on.

'No, I'm sorry Mr Dimmock. Now, Captain O'Reilly, may I ask as to how you left this lady, this Svetlana?'

'Well, we has to rush off to the airport in the morning to catch the plane to London, which we didn't as you know. Anyway, I leaves this sleeping beauty and dashes off to get me old mate here whose still in the arms of his beloved lying there as proud as can be like Nelson's Column in Trafalgar Square, now that was a sight for sore eyes, I can tell you, with all them wires and things all over the place and both of them sleeping like two babies, naked as the day they was born.....'

'Captain O'Reilly, I think we can dispense with Mr Dimmock's demeanor, can we return to the state of Colonel Koffinski please?'

'Oh, right you are. Now she was sleeping like baby as well when I left. Sleeping like the innocents. Out like a light she was. We'd had a pretty hectic session that night I can tell you.' Creighky lowered his voice as an aside to the Consul to get the meaning through of the personal nature of the session.

'Yes, quite,' the Consul gave a little cough. 'Captain O'Riley, the small problem we have here, is that I have,' he showed Creighky the warrant, 'a warrant for the arrest of the murder of Colonel Koffinski.'

Creighky looked briefly at the paper and after a stunned silence managed to blurt out, 'did you just say murder?'

'I'm afraid so.'

'That'll mean she's dead! Sweet Mary, mother of Jeysus. Are you telling I murdered the sweet child? What did I do, shag her to death?'

The Consul managed another embarrassing cough.

'Yes, well. So what you're telling me Captain O'Reilly is that when you left her she was alive?'

'She was sleeping, like a .....holy shit. Now you come to mention it, she was sleeping awful quiet, I remember she was awful cold as well, and still and that dark lipstick,.....oh,.....sweet Mother Magdalene, sweet Jeysus, what have I done? God strike me down, she couldn't possibly have been, could she?'

The Consul could detect genuine distress and fear in the face of Creighky.

'So what you are telling me Captain O'Reilly is that as far as you're concerned this was some sort of accident?'

Creighky was beside himself with grief.

'As God is my witness, your Honour,' the respect came back with a vengeance. 'As God is my witness, I never laid a finger on the poor girl. Well not a finger as such, you understand?' Creighky was starting to dig another hole. 'Sweet Jeysus, what I'm trying to say is that I never meant the poor girl any harm.'

The Consul was now convinced that nobody could be that cool so they must be stupid. He must now bring into action his full diplomatic administration procedural authority.

'I think I have a fairly accurate picture of events, gentlemen, and what we have here is what is called a diplomatic incident.'

'A bleeding cock up! Oh, I'm sorry your Honour!' Creighky took his foot out of his mouth.

'As I was saying, before I was so rudely interrupted,' Creighky looked suitable sheepish. 'What I was saying is that we have a small problem. A balls up as my friend here would say.' He looked at Creighky trying to introduce a bit of diplomatic humour into the proceedings. 'We need to take stock of the situation and see how best to resolve it. Now gentlemen, you say you have lost your passports. These will still be with Russian Immigration. How did you get over the border from Russia into Finland?'

Creighky took up the thread to the story. 'Well your Honour, we gets a lift from this Finnish salesman in a big estate and he drops us off at the border. Me pal here, finds this envelope full of dollars that Boris gave him and we gives it to this chap who goes over to the Russian chaps and all I know is we gets the nod to go through and ends up in the Finnish border in their office and he phones someone up and here we are and old Carruthers pops us into his office and that's that so to speak.'

'Right,' the Consul puffed out his chest and put on his full air of diplomatic authority. He felt in control now. He had got the main point under control anyway. He was still a little confused on all the other minor points but they didn't really matter anyway.

'Let's recap on the situation, shall we?' He quite obviously had both Creighky and Dense's full attention by now. Well, Dense's eyes were open, whether they were focusing on the Consul was another matter.

'So, as I see it, according to Captain O'Reilly's interpretation of the affair we have an ongoing Manslaughter problem here, not so much a murder.'

He looked around for confirmation, which was forthcoming from Creighky with a nod, but not a lot else from Dense. He decided to continue.

'So, you are here and it appears that the only people who know you are here are the Finnish border control and us here at the Embassy.' Again he looked for confirmation but still decided to go ahead.

'The Russians have your passports and obviously think you're still somewhere in Russia?' He ploughed on.

'So, with a bit of luck the Russians and the Kiev Federal Service Bureau don't know that you're here, OK so far?'

Creighky nodded, Dense just looked.

'Now the problem is that the Finnish are one of the world's great fence sitters. Ever since the Second World War when the Russians agreed not to invade them, they have always given the Russians the benefit of the doubt, so to speak, but at the same time they have tried to keep up with Western democratic Marketing Forces and all that. So we have a sort of East West Norman's-land here. We're stuck in the middle, we mustn't upset the Russians but we must be nice to the Finns as well.'

He looked to the two men opposite again. That was a waste of time. He continued.

'So we must summarise on the facts that you are not here as far as the Russians are concerned. You are here as far as the British are concerned, and we haven't got fucking clue how we stand with the Finns?'

'I think that's a bloody good summarisation, my friend,' Creighky was trying desperately to understand where all this was leading to. 'But can someone please tell me where that leaves me and me old bucko here?' He turned to Dense who was still staring into space.

'Yes, I thought you might ask that.' The Consul lowered his head and stared into the paper. 'Yes, that's a good question which I feel I must give my earnest consideration to.'

A pregnant pause then ensued.

A bloody big pregnant pause.

'I feel the only solution is to contact London on this one.' The Consul had decided and that was that. Nobody was any the wiser.

'I would like to give the little woman a telephone call to tell her where I am, if that's ok with you, your Honour?' Creighky asked timidly.

'Well, I think, under the circumstances, with all things being equal, we should really take into consideration the problem at hand and adjust our lines of communication accordingly in order that the diplomatic status quo doesn't go off half cocked with egg all over our face, so to speak. And we must minimise the contact count to only the necessary and those in the need to know radii. This will safeguard any security leaks and hopefully allow us some

breathing space for further diplomatic decision making to come to a proper solution.'

'That's a no then?' Creighky said after a brief interval trying to make out what the bloody hell the Consul was on about.

'I'm sorry old chap, but I'm afraid we must keep your visit here a secret until I get orders from London. But meanwhile please feel free to have the run of the house, so to speak.'

'You're too kind' Creighky said dismally.

'What you're also saying is we can't go outside either?' Dense had picked this up all on his own.

'I'm afraid so gentlemen, you are my guests until we can work something out that will satisfy both the Finns and the Russians, and that could take some time.'

'Kinnell!' muttered both Creighky and Dense under their breath.

## Chapter 18 Mildred hears the bad news

The traffic was now getting busy as Brewster steered off the motorway on to the road back to Muddlecombe.

'I think the best bet is to tell Mildred straight away if she hasn't already figured out that there is something up with no loving husband there to welcome her home.' Brewster was talking to Dr Rammy now in the front of the car with Boris sound asleep in the back.

'Yeah, but what the bloody hell do we tell her?'

'A good point. This is going to be a bit tricky.' Brewster's mind was going into overdrive here but not a lot was coming out. There was silence for while as Dr Rammy was also trying to think.

'Why don't we just tell her the truth?'

'She'd never believe that, now would she? And we'd have to take Boris round there as well. God, that would put the shit's up her to start with.'

'You have a point,' agreed Dr Rammy.

'I wonder what has actually happened to them. It's a bit queer isn't it?'

'Search me, sounds like they probably got stuck in the duty free shop or something as simple as that?'

'That's a good enough story isn't it? Asked Brewster.

'Wouldn't they have rung home or something?'

'They may have done that already.'

'If we tell her that and then leave it a few more hours just to see if anything crops up, how about that?'

'Yes, I think that may be a good course of action. It may have already have been resolved when we get back anyway, eh?'

Dr Rammy and Brewster looked at each other in forlorn hope.

'I think I'll talk to Fiona first as soon as we get back and find out if anything has happened.'

Dr Rammy and Brewster stayed silent until they reached Muddlecombe when they pulled up in front of Primrose Cottage. Waking Boris was a task in itself, but then getting him out of the car in a semi comatose state was even harder. But they got him there eventually. He was still clutching his tubes of toothpaste wrapped in his handkerchief. They pushed him into the cottage



and sat him down on the sofa and feeling they could do no more for him left him there with the full effect of Dr Rammy's tranquillisers now coming into effect.

Brewster dropped Dr Rammy off and then drove back to the "Snort". Up in the bedroom Fiona was sound asleep and he felt it best not to wake her so he went down stairs and sat on the sofa thinking things out until he too fell asleep.

\* \* \*

Both Brewster and Dense were fairly close to each other, in 'Astral Plane' terms that is. Brewster was woken by a vision of two globes wobbling in front of him only to find Blossom bending over trying to wake him up.

'Do you want to get this pub up and running Brewster?'

'Er, er, .....?' Brewster tried to get his bearings after only three hours sleep and in a sofa as well, not a nice comfy bed.

'Er, yes, I think we'd best, er, get the pub open, don't you?'

'That's a good idea, why didn't I think of it?' replied Blossom sarcastically.

'Where the hell have you been, you look like death on a bad day?' she continued.

'Had to pop down to Gatwick,' said Brewster trying to stifle a yawn.

'I thought Fiona came back into Luton?' quizzed Blossom.

'No, this was Creighky and Dense.'

'Oh, that's a pity. They didn't get lost over in Russia then?' said Blossom optimistically.

'Well, actually...er,....they..er.....' Brewster was at a loss for words here, as he didn't quite know what they had done either.

Blossom looked at him curiously as he slowly continued.

'They, er, sort of, er,.....didn't come back,' he said sheepishly.

Blossom burst into laughter.

'It couldn't have happened to a nicer chap, Creighky that is!'

'No, honestly, we don't quite know where they are. Their luggage got back but they didn't.'

'It's usually the other way round isn't. Trust those dozy buggers.' Blossom was quite clearly full of sympathy.

'It's no laughing matter. I've got to go and tell Mildred now. I don't know how she'll take it I'm sure.'

'Probably throw her hat in the air, knowing Mildred.'

'Yes, well, it's not quite as simple as missing the plane,' Brewster was immediately regretting his words as soon as they were out of his mouth.

'How do you mean Brewster?' Blossom picked up on this as well.

'Well, let's just say, it's a bit more complicated than you or I realise. Can we leave it at that please?' begged Brewster.

'The plot thickens,' Blossom obviously wasn't going to leave it at that, but for the time being it would have to do.

'Is Fiona up yet?' asked Brewster quickly trying to change the subject.

'No, although I do believe there is some noise coming from upstairs now.'

They both listened as the toilet flushed and Brewster rushed upstairs.

\* \* \*

'Hallo there, old thick lips honeychile,' said Brewster looking at the sun burnt vision of Fiona.' Give us a look at yer white bits darlin?'' Brewster lusted at Fiona with his two hands held low in a grabbing action indicating he quite clearly wanted to grope something.

Fiona held out two outstretched arm buffers indicating her non-availability for groping.

'Whoa, cowboy. Remember the old ticker.'

'I wasn't thinking about my ticker gorgeous,' replied Brewster looking Fiona in the eyes and slowly trying to encircle her.

'Just behave yourself or I'll have to give you a good smacking.'

'Oooohhhh, I love it when you talk dirty,' Brewster was obviously still in a one-track mind mode. And it was a pretty dirty track.

'Don't you want to ask me about my holiday?'

'Oh, all right then. How was your holiday?' There wasn't a lot of conviction in his voice.

'Let's get some breakfast first and I'll tell you all the gossip.'

'Oh, before I forget Fiona, have you spoken to Mildred recently?'

'I've been speaking to her all bloody week.'

'No, what I meant was, since she's been back?'

'Well, we dropped her off at her house. That's the last time I spoke to her. Why do you ask?'

Brewster was slow in his response desperately trying to think of something to say.

'We've sort of, er, lost Creighky.'

'You've sort of lost Creighky?' there was an echo in the room.

'Oh, and Dense as well.'

'You've lost Creighky and Dense?' another similar echo.

'Er, yes, in Russia.'

'You've lost Creighky *and* Dense in *Russia*?' an intelligent echo.

'Er, yes.' There wasn't a lot more to be said really, not at this juncture.

'*You've* lost Creighky and Dense in Russia?'

'Well, not me personally.'

Fiona shook her head in amazement and disbelief.

'What the hell has been going on while I've been away. Jesus Christ I thought *we'd* had some strange happenings on *our* holiday, but obviously not as strange as what's been going on round here.'

'You say *you've* had some strange things happen then?'

'Yeh, well, it's a long story.'

'So is ours.'

Brewster and Fiona sat down together, looked each other and started.

'No, you go first, you'll never believe this little lot,' they both started to speak to each other at the same time.

'Can I have a kiss first?'

This is where things started to get a bit messy.

\* \* \*

Fiona let Brewster sleep through the lunch session at the pub. Blossom could handle the six regulars quite well enough on her own and by the evening they were both refreshed and ready for the onslaught of the next session.

Boris must have had the constitution of an Ice Age Mammoth getting back on his feet so early after all the drugs Dr Rammy had poured into him. But his quest for the British Pint of Bitter knew no bounds and so he made it for the evening session.

He was still not a happy bunny and even Fiona who had been introduced as part of the counselling team had difficulty trying to make him feel better.

Dr Rammy was a close second into the pub, immediately asking Brewster the outcome of his talk with Fiona.

'No joy, I'm afraid Rammy me old mucker. Fiona hasn't talked to her yet since they got back from holiday.'

'So, we still don't know if she has heard from him yet then?'

'No.'

That was the end of that conversation. The three of them stared around the bar trying to think of something to say.

'I think it's probably best if I go and see her.' Fiona had come up with the best solution.

The *only* solution that anyone could think of.

'Do you want us to come up with you?' questioned Brewster. This was quite clearly a rhetorical question that definitely did *not* want any answer to it in anyway, form or shape.

'But what do I say to her if she asks me if I know anything about Creighky's whereabouts?'

'Deny any knowledge of anything.' Brewster had the answer ready for that.

'But what if she asks me why I'm asking about Creighky.'

Whoops! That was a good one.

That shut them up for some time.

'Yes, er, well, that's a good one,' confirmed Brewster for the want of anything else better to say and as a habit from being a landlord and always having something to say to keep the momentum and bar sales going.

This had the effect of doing neither.

Pregnant pause time again.

'Look, I think we'll just have to come up with you,' said Dr Rammy.

This was not what they wanted to hear, but unfortunately it was the only solution.

'Me, I come also.' This was a statement from Boris to which there was no arguing.

'Er, yes I suppose so Boris, but I think it best you don't say too much at this stage, do you Dr Rammy?'

'I don't think we need to introduce Boris into the equation until it's really necessary?'

Dr Rammy looked around for confirmation, which was forthcoming, even from Boris.

'Blossom, be a darling and.....,' Brewster was cut short in his prime.

'Look after the bar while you're away, yes I know, off you go then.'

'You're a brick Blossom,' said Brewster as he kissed her on the forehead.

'I would hardly describe her as a brick Brew old pal,' chirped in Dr Rammy.

'Thank you Dr Rammy,' Blossom quickly intervened before Dr Rammy was given time to get in more details.

'Off you lot go and sort out Mildred.' Blossom made a sort of shooing gesture to get rid of the assembled do-gooding committee.

A sort of Social Services Posse.

\* \* \*

Fiona was pushed to the front of the queue as they got to the top of the front garden path to Mildred's cottage. She knocked

on the door and after a few moments Mildred answered and looked amazed at the long line of people that appeared to be queuing up on her front path.

She didn't recognise the big one at the back at all. It all looked a bit sinister.

'Hallo Fiona,' said Mildred quickly first and then in a whisper said. 'Who's the big bugger at the back?' A bit too loudly.

'Oh, shit,' the murmur went down the line to everyone except Boris at the back.

'Oh, er, him, that's, er, Boris, Mildred,' Fiona had let the cat out of the bag.

The cringe passed down the line as well, except that is to Boris.

'Listen Mildred, can I ask you something please?'

'Fire away,' said Mildred looking down the line of people who were assembled on her path on this lovely summer's evening, but still wondering not only what the hell they were doing there but why they had bought along man mountain as well.

'Have you heard from Creighky at all recently?' Fiona let out a heavy breath after getting out the question of the century on every body's mind at this precise moment of time.

'Creighky?' Mildred looked puzzled.

'Yes, you know, Creighky?' Fiona and the assembled posse looked twice as puzzled.

'Creighky,' this wasn't a question any more from Mildred, more a repetition of something she knew she must have prior knowledge of.

'Oh, Creighky?' Mildred suddenly realised there *had* been something missing in the house that she couldn't just quite put her finger on.

'Yes, Creighky.....' Fiona felt it best to pursue the investigation to some sort of conclusion. The whole queue of people, except Boris, was now on their toes now and awaiting this momentous reply.

'Ah, er, yes,.....,' Mildred was quickly cut short by Fiona.

'So have you heard from him?' This was greeted with a sigh of relief going down the line, except for Boris, who wasn't quite sure what the hell was going on anyway and being so far down the end of the queue he couldn't quite make out what was being said either.

'Er, well, not, er, not now that you mention it. No, not since I've come back from holiday actually. Why do you ask?'

This was not going according to plan.

It was going horribly pear shaped.

'Er, Mildred?' Dr Rammy promoted himself up the queue to speak. 'Do you think we could come in please? I must say you're looking extremely well. Did you enjoy your holiday?'

Dr Rammy saved the day with his bedside manner.

Unfortunately this introduced more problems for Mildred who was still trying to figure out why they had bought along a professional bouncer to her house. What had she done wrong? What were they trying to hide?

Now more questions.

Had she heard from Creighky? Had she had a good holiday? Could they come in?

It was all getting a bit much for her

Fortunately Dr Rammy could see the distress building up inside her and led her into the house beckoning the others to follow.

'Mildred, can I introduce Boris to you. I'll explain where he fit's in later.' Dr Rammy sat Mildred down and continued as they all squeezed into the lounge.

'Mildred, can we ask you again please if you have heard from Creighky in the last twenty four hours please?'

'Well, no, but I've only just got back from holiday and I've only just sorted the house out and the laundry and....'

'Mildred, has he rung you at all today, or left any messages at all?' Fiona was sitting beside her now holding her hand.

'Well, I don't think so, why has something happened to him?'

'Mildred, we don't quite know what has happened to him, we thought he might have tried to contact you?' Dr Rammy was back in the question master's chair.

'Well, er, no, unless he rung while I was asleep.'

'Mildred,' Brewster felt it time to sort things out. 'Mildred, Creighky and Dense went over to Russia to help out our friend here Boris, and, well, they're a bit late coming back, so to speak. We wondered if they had rung you to tell you that they had missed their plane or something?'

'Russia?' Mildred wasn't playing fair here.

That was a fair question to ask if they'd missed their plane but now she was introducing all sorts of awkward questions that could lead to things getting extremely messy again.

'Mildred, it's a long story, but basically we think that they have missed their plane and wondered if they had rung you to let you know where they were?'

Dr Rammy could see the only way out was to keep it simple.

'And what's this Boris got to do with it?'

'Please Mrs O'Riley, I very sorry, I very sorry for Creighky and Dense.....' Boris was nearly in tears having to introduce himself at such a bad time but was quickly interrupted by Brewster.

'Mildred, don't worry about Boris, it's just a case of missing the plane, or something silly like getting lost or...'

'Stuck in a bloody pub somewhere,' blurted out Mildred.

'As you say Mildred, something simple like that, we just wondered if you'd heard from him at all?'

'I'm sure there's nothing to worry about now Mildred. Look, I've bought some pills along with me that will help you relax a bit until he comes back. I'm sure he'll be ringing you soon.' Dr Rammy gave her a small package as he watched Mildred bite her lips and began to recognise the first symptoms of distress.

There's not a lot of difference between distress and hysteria. Mildred didn't know whether to laugh or cry. But she felt she'd best pursue the crying bit to convince her audience.

'If I understand what you are really trying to tell me is that something terrible has happened to Creighky?'

'Oh, no, nothing of the sort,' quickly interrupted Brewster.

That's a bugger thought Mildred but continued with the other tack.

'It's no use trying to be kind to me, if something *has* happened to Creighky please tell me now?'

'Mildred, we don't know what has happened to him, that's the problem.' Fiona was now holding Mildred around the shoulders.

'They just popped over to Russia for a weekend and have probably missed the flight back. That's all.'

Brewster looked at Dr Rammy and they looked at the holdall he was holding and they both shook their heads and slowly pushed the holdall round to the back of them.

'Mildred, I expect Creighky is probably trying to get his money exchanged into something he can use to make a phone call and trying to figure out how to use these stupid foreign telephones and will be in touch with you in a few hours.'

Fiona could see no further advantage in staying here and felt the best avenue was to get the hell out of there soonest to minimise Mildred's grief.

'You've got my number Mildred; give me a call as soon as you hear anything Ok?'

With that Fiona got up and ushered everyone out of the house.

\* \* \*

After they had all left, Mildred leapt off the sofa and punched the air with her right fist and let out an ear piercing scream of 'Yiiiiipppppippeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee!!!!!!!'

Now where was Chekov's address?

\* \* \*

They had walked down the road only a few yards when they thought they heard a scream coming from the cottage.

'I don't think she's taking this very well do you? Do you think I should go back and see how she'd getting on?' asked Dr Rammy.

'I think she'll be alright,' said Fiona confidently.



## Chapter 19. The Reunion

Several days had gone since Mildred was told of her missing husband, several days with beautiful summer evenings in Muddelcombe. They were so quiet and peaceful, apart from the odd screams coming from Mildred's cottage that most people took for grief. Mildred's Committee had met to get an update on the situation and were basically on a war footing with excitement.

They'd never had anyone lost or killed or kidnapped before or whatever had happened to Creighky and Dense.

Speculation was rife but Brewster, Dr Rammy and Boris felt if necessary to keep the truth away from the prying eyes and gossipmongers.

One of the main reasons being that they didn't have a clue what was happening either.

Boris had asked them round to Primrose Cottage to help him out with his "teknology" but they either couldn't get it working or couldn't get in touch with Ivan in Kiev.

Boris wondered whether he should try Manuel back at Tenerife but felt it a bit risky at present.

Brewster had made a few discreet inquiries about diamonds with some of his old contacts and things were progressing slowly on that field. Preliminary rough costings from a sample he gave to a friend revealed that Boris had roughly one hundred one carat uncut diamonds in each tube of toothpaste, worth about £1,000 a carat.

Boris was one rich Slobovitch, that is if he could find someone to buy them. No one wanted to know about them in London but Brewster's contacts were keeping an eye on things for him and would be in touch. He had opened a special bank account for Boris with the wad of Pesetas he had given him and popped into town with Boris to sort all that out. Boris was in a right old state and wanted to give something to the village as a monument to his missing pals. It was taking all the efforts of both Brewster and Dr Rammy to keep Boris calm and sedated and also to stop him rushing out and putting up a bloody great cenotaph to those fallen in the battle of the pension book in Kiev.

Dr Rammy felt that he owed it to himself to call on Mildred and had totally misunderstood her hysterical unconfined ecstasy

for grief and had dished her out several more tranquillisers, which seemed to be having the desired effect. It was not surprising, considering the amount of wine she was taking with them. She had written to Chekov telling him about the missing husband syndrome and was to be found most afternoons and evenings, in the back garden sun bathing in the gentle English summer sun.

She wasn't actually sun bathing, more your actual comatose with the mixture of drugs and alcohol. But all this kept the status quo of Muddlecombe-cum-Snoring stable, that is until a stranger walked into the "Snort" one afternoon.

Most of the locals were sitting outside in what was loosely described as the beer garden with their shandies, when this extremely attractive woman walked across the village green in a very short revealing low cut dress that showed off both her twin top advantages and also her beautiful long legs. This caused the pints to be poured down the wrong orifices and a general coughing and spluttering as she entered the pub front door.

'Where the bloody hell did she come from?' was the quick retort from Thor after a general wiping of faces.

'Harry, Did you see them legs, they went right up to her, er,.... thingies!'

'Did you see her thingies?' Hercules was in awe, it took him back to his days of Greek orgies.

\* \* \*

Inside the "Snort" Brewster was caught short as well but managed a well trained 'Good afternoon madam, can I get you something to drink. It's not often we get a, er, it's not often we see a new face round here.'

The stranger stopped and looked around before replying.

'So this is where it all happens?'

'I beg you pardon?' Brewster was caught short once again.

'I often wondered what it was like in here, not much to write home about, but I'll have a brandy sour while I'm here please barman?'

Brewster stopped and looked in amazement as he slowly figured out who it was.

'Betty! I don't believe it. Holy shit, er, whoops! Er,... I'm sorry. Well what I mean is, er.....'

'Holy shit is no doubt what you really meant Brewster,' confirmed Betty.

'Er, .....er, .....yes, precisely, I think you've summed it up quite nicely there Betty.'

'And am I going to get a drink then?'

'Oh, yes, er, right, er, what was that again, a,er,. a brandy who .....?'

'A brandy sour please Brewster,' said Betty smiling all over, and the body language was smiling all over as well. She had enjoyed that moment and was relishing her newfound status.

'Christ Betty, you had me going there,' said Brewster, just then Fiona came down the stairs into the back of the bar and joined Brewster.

'Hi, Betty, how's it going then?'

Brewster looked round to Fiona and pointed to Betty.

'You know Betty then?' said the astonished Brewster immediately realising what he had just said.

'Of course I know Betty, Brewster, what's got into you? I've known Betty for several years now.....'

'Yes, but, have you seen Betty?' Realising that he was now talking complete and utter rubbish.

'Yes, I do believe I have seen her. Didn't we go on holiday together or something Betty?'

'Christ you're winding me up, the *pair* of you. What are you *on* Betty? You look fantastic.' Brewster managed to get in.

'Oh, I see, better looking than me is she?' Fiona put her oar in to wind things up a bit more.

'Oh, er, well, no, not as beautiful as you darling, obviously, but you must admit she has changed a wee bit. Must have been the sea air or something?'

'Or something!' Fiona winked at Betty.

'Am I going to get a drink or something round here then?'

'Oh, shit, er, I mean, sorry Betty, right, coming up straight away.' Brewster rushed around behind the bar to summon up a special for Betty and also to hide his embarrassment.

Dr Rammy and Boris caught all this from the other side of the lounge bar and Dr Rammy lifted himself out of his seat to get a piece of the action. He had noticed the change in Betty as well. He hadn't remembered seeing her at his breast clinic.

One of the locals strolled back outside again with fresh drinks and sat down.

'Bugger me if that ain't Betty,' Thor said to Hercules and some genuine locals in a hushed tone.

'In that case you'd best bend over me old mucker.....' Hercules quipped trying to keep up a good imitation of a county yokel.

'I'm telling you that's *Betty!*'

'Betty Boring from the post office?'

'The very same.'

'The church warden?'

'That's the one.'

'You're joking.'

'All right, you want a bet on it then? Wait 'til she comes back outside again and I'll *prove* it to you.'

'You've got to be joking.'

'No I ain't.'

'Well, I think I just got a bit of religion come on all of a sudden, don't you? See you in church Sunday then?'

'I hope the weather stays hot.'

\* \* \*

Then it happened again!

More bloody strangers.

The locals sitting outside the 'Snort' were dumbfounded with all this activity. They'd never seen so much activity since VE day or was it VJ day, hard to remember really.

A big black car drew up outside the "Snort" and out got a tall, gaunt, distinguished looking stranger. It wasn't difficult to look distinguished in Muddelcombe, that's if you owned a suit. He had on a navy blue Italian lightweight suit with cream Italian leather shoes and this made him look all together far too distinguished for someone from Muddelcombe.

His dark complexion, dark hair with grey streaks added to the air of 'stranger' even more.

He took his jacket off and threw it into the back of the car and pulled out a map. After wiping his brow he started looking at the map and then looking around as if for something else. He scratched his head a few times, looked at the map again and went into the pub.

'He's a stranger,' confirmed one of the more intellectual locals who were watching all this from the side beer garden.

'I think you could be right there me old mucker?' that was the final qualification needed to confirm the status of the newcomer, a sort of invisible border come immigration control stamp.

'What is this then, some sort of invasion?'

'Ah, yes, well now, there have been a lot of them about recently, there's that Russian chappie, .....

'Boris, er five bellies, or something?'

'Weren't it six bellies?'

'I thought it were seven bellies.....?'

'Anyway that Russian chap.....'

'Ah, right, that were only a couple of weeks ago weren't it?'

'Right, and then it were Brewster and his wife,.....'

'That were only a long time ago now, .....

'Jesus, that's three in three years and now there's another two today.'

'No, that first one were Betty.'

'Ah, right you are, .....

'You still haven't proved that yet,.....'

'Well, you'll see anyway. But that's still a lot of bloody strangers though ain't it?'

'He's got a point.'

'Ere, what's that ain't that another bloody car?'

'Bugger me; is there a bloody war on or something?'

'It's gone over to that Primrose Cottage.'

'Not much point going there if he want's that Russian fella.'

'No, 'e'll be in the Snort. Must own the bloody place by now with the amount of booze 'e puts away.'

Just then another large black car drove into the village and drew up outside Primrose Cottage. A small man in a large camel hair coat got out and held the back door open for two ladies in summer frocks to get out. They all stretched their legs and the man went over to the Cottage, opened the gate, walked up to the door, banged on it and after a few minutes gave up and started to walk across the green with his two attractive ladies towards the pub.

'Ah, he's seen the light and 'es coming over 'ere now.'

The ladies were similarly dressed to the first stranger or Betty, or whoever it was, and about the same age but probably not quite as sophisticated as Betty. This was preferable to the locals as it meant they were showing more chest and legs.

'Bugger me; do you see what I see?'

'I reckon it's a bloody mirage. I ain't seen that many thingies since, er, since.....'

'Who the fuck cares when you last saw a thingy, just look at the bleeders now, all over the bloody shop!'

'please God, for Christ's sake don't make me blind, not just yet anyways!'

'Where's all these people coming from?'

'Who the fuck cares as long as they keep 'em coming, with them long legs and thingies.....'

'And they keep 'em coming with nothing much on as well.'

'Why's 'e wearing an overcoat, must be sweltering in that thing?'

'I hadn't got round to him just yet.'

'The lucky bleeder, fancy having two birds like that.'

'That's probably why 'e's so small, probably worn away.'

The locals sniggered at each other until the new strangers went inside into the pub and left them wondering what to do next.

'Must be my round, I'll just pop in to get the drinks.'

'Reckon you'll need a hand with the drinks me old mucker,'

'Ah, reckon, I'll give you a hand as well,.....'

The entourage followed the new strangers into the dark interior of the pub.

'Dr Rammy, can I introduce you to Betty?' Brewster was trying to get his own back now and everybody was enjoying the joke.

'Hallo, Betty, how nice to meet you. You from round here then?' smirked Dr Rammy.

'Boys will be boys,' Fiona said and turning to Betty she continued. 'Ignore them Betty, they're just having their little bit of childish humour.'

Just then Boris got up and walked out to the toilets. Betty watched him curiously and asked.

'Who's the big boy, I presume that must be Boris?'

'That's out tame Russian bear, our own Boris seven bellies,' confirmed Brewster.

By this time Betty was getting through her brandy sours quite quickly and watching Boris leave, inquired as to the whereabouts of the 'Ladies' and duly followed Boris in the direction of the toilets.

'I can't believe the difference in Betty can you Rammy?' asked Brewster.

'Certainly can't,' Dr Rammy was still awestruck.

'What happened on holiday then Fiona?'

'That's another story Brewster, I'll tell you about it sometime. Do you want some lunch honey? I think I'll just pop into the kitchen and knock us up something.'

'Just a sandwich for me Fi,' called out Brewster to the back of Fiona.

'She's a different woman,' continued Dr Rammy. 'I bet Bill must have reckoned he'd died and gone to heaven when Betty came back from the holiday, don't you?'

'Lucky bastard,' Brewster was a wee bit jealous.

Just then the sunlight from the open front door was compromised with the shadow of a tall stranger who walked up to the bar, put a map down and asked Brewster in a strong middle European accent.

'Good afternoon to you, could I have a lemonade please, and perhaps you can help me, I appear to be lost. I'm looking for Muddlecombe-cum-Snoring?'

Brewster bent down for the lemonade bottle and then poured it in to a glass.

'Yes, that's the problem; there are only two ways to get to Muddlecombe. One is to get lost and the other is to get sent to Primrose Cottage.'

'Pardon?'

'Sorry, an 'in' joke. What I'm saying is that you've *found* Muddlecombe.'

'Oh, thank goodness for that,' he went over to sit down in a cool corner of the pub and started to drink the lemonade.

The room was darkened once again as three other people went up to the other end of the bar.

'Good God, it's getting busy round here.' Brewster looked up from the bar and moved round to where they were standing. 'Oh, it's Mr Sidney Sidenose as I live and breathe, what dragged you out of your London office to come and see us then?' The usual friendly welcome.

'The usual friendly welcome Mr Kegworth? It's nice to see you again as well. I don't believe you've had the pleasure of meeting my two friends here, Sharon and Tracey?'

'Hallo ladies, nice to meet you, pity about the company you're with. What can we do to help you this time Sidney?'

Sharon was digging Tracey in the ribs and pulling her aside, she whispered, 'Kinnell!' Which roughly translated meant, 'I don't believe it, ain't that old wassiname what we met in Tenerife, Cockoff or something over there? What's he doing here, I'm confused?'

'Chekov, you dizzy cow,' whispered Tracey back. 'Don't let on we know him. I don't quite know how we stand yet with slimy Sid here.'

Chekov looked up from his drink in amazement to the ladies just before they went and sat down out of sight.

'БВАПУ ЪФТ!' he spluttered, which roughly translated meant, "what the Kinnell are these two slappers doing here. I'm confused."

Just then Boris walked back into the bar from the toilets. When Boris walked into any room he displaced a considerable amount of air so you always knew when he'd arrived. This was the effect with the tall stranger who now turned round to stop and stare at Boris in disbelief.

'БВАПУ ЪФТ!' repeated Chekov, which roughly translated meant, "what the Kinnell is Boris doing here. I'm even *more* confused."

'БВАПУ ЪФТ!' said Boris, which roughly translated meant, "what the Kinnell is Chekov doing here. I'm in deep terminal shit." Boris was transfixed to the spot.

Chekov stood up and walking towards Boris, opened his arms wide to welcome his long lost friend.

'Boris, my old fiend!' he said as he eventually managed to get his arms partially around Boris and gave him a big hug and a kiss on either cheek.

'БВАПУ ЪФТ!' repeated Boris, as stiff as a rod, which roughly translated meant, "What the Kinnell is going on round here. I'm even more confused than *him*."

\* \* \*

Everybody suddenly stopped as a peel of thunder ripped across the sun filled cloudless sky above Muddlecombe. Even the weather was confused.

\* \* \*

After much hugging and kissing, all a bit one sided as Boris was in a state of complete shock and stiffer than a mortician's dummy, Chekov put Boris down and walked him away from the bar to sit down and the two of them started to rattle on in Russian

'Boris, my friend, what are you doing here?'

'Er, sort of holiday, boss.'

'But I've been looking all over for you.'

'Er, have you really boss?' said Boris in a very feint imitation of somebody who was only vaguely surprised by this statement.

'Serge and I came out to Tenerife to try and find you.'

'Er, did you really boss?' another poor imitation of feigned surprise.

'Yes, Serge had some stupid idea that there was something wrong with the books.'

'Er, get away.' A really lousy feigned surprise.

'Yes, you know these boring old accountants.'

'Er, ha ha,' a stifled giggle. Boris managed a smile, as does a man in a condemned cell when the electrician tells him the joke about the fuse blowing.

'And as usual he got it wrong.'

'Er, he did boss?'

'Yes, he eventually traced your books to the bank.....'

'Er,' gulp. 'The bank?'

'Yes, he had a word with the local branch manager.....'

'Er,' gulp. 'The local branch manager?'

'Yes, you know, the one in Playa. You don't have to be so secretive with me now Boris, you sly old bear.'

'Er, I don't?'

'No,' Chekov slapped Boris on the back and laughing continued. 'He told us all about your little escapade.'

'Er, he did?' "Kinnell" thought Boris, "when are the big boys going to come in and shoot me," he thought. He had been thinking this ever since Chekov had walked into the "Snort" but he was *really* focused on it now.

'Boris, you devil. Do you know the bank's profit's quadrupled thanks to you?' Chekov once again slapped Boris on the back and gave him a proud smile. 'You're a quiet one, and that's no mistake. Never thinking about yourself. Always putting the company first.'

'Er, always putting the company first?'



'Yes. And Serge was worried about a few percent drop in your local accounts.' Chekov shook his head. 'Just goes to show you that these bookkeepers have no grasp of the strategic things in life, eh Boris? The big picture. They can't see the Big Picture.' Chekov continued shaking his head and looked down.

'Er, the big picture?'

'Anyway my old comrade, I don't know about you but I have a terrible thirst. Would you like a drink my friend?'

'Er, drink boss?'

'Hey, come on now Boris. Don't you remember the last time we were in England? When we were in London working for that nice Naval Attaché and that nice English Defence Minister and those two lovely ladies? I seem to remember you rather liked the English Beer then?'

'Er, yes boss.' Boris was still wondering why the hell he was still alive and his favourite pastime had long been forgotten.

'A drink, Boris. Would you like a bloody drink man?'

'Er, yes boss. Yes please.'

Chekov looked over to Brewster behind the bar and after catching his attention asked, 'does this man ever drink?'

'Does Boris drink? Is the Pope Catholic? He'll no doubt have a pint of the house special brew, and one for yourself sir?'

'Yes please kind landlord.' Turning back to Boris he continued. 'Boris, I'm glad you've taken a holiday. I think you have been working too hard these days. I should have thought more about you my old comrade. Unfortunately I've been rather busy these days myself, but it's time I took some more time off as well. We're not getting any younger either of us are we?'

'Er yes boss, er I mean, er, no boss,' Boris was still in limbo, that is until the drinks arrived.

'Here you are my old friend,' Chekov handed Boris his pint of beer and after a long drink from his and a large sigh carried on. 'Boris I don't suppose you have even given any thought to a pension for your retirement have you?'

'Er, no boss.' Boris nearly blew a whole mouthful of beer out. What a waste.

\* \* \*

Just then there was another large crack of thunder, which was quickly followed by a flash of lightning.

'MISSED AGAIN!' the locals sitting outside over heard someone or something saying in a loud voice.

\* \* \*

'Good old English summers,' said Chekov sipping from his drink pensively. 'Takes you back eh Boris?'

Boris had finished his drink in record time and it had the desired effect. The brain cells had realised they had been alive for far too long in accordance with the rule book for somebody who should have been killed several minutes ago and started up the "back to normal" routine. Only very slowly.

'Er, boss?' Boris started tentatively.

'Yes, my friend.'

'Er, why have you come to Muddlecombe?'

'Well now Boris, that's a very good question,' Chekov had another sip. 'Affairs of the heart my friend.'

'Affairs of the heart?' Boris was back to confused again, but a little less terrified this time.

'Yes, affairs of the heart. I bet you never thought you'd hear me say that did you?'

There was a pregnant pause here, as Boris didn't know what to say as he'd always looked upon his boss as a heartless bastard anyway but he was looking at him in entirely different eyes now. His old boss was a different man. He was dressed differently, looking very smart in what appeared to be some very expensive clothing. A far cry from his issue overcoat and fur hat. He hadn't been shot yet, he was smiling and joking and now he was on about his heart. Most disconcerting.

This all gave time for Chekov to have another drink and carry on explaining his predicament to Boris. 'Boris my friend,' Chekov continued looking up into a void. 'Boris my old friend, I think I am in love.'

Boris had a coughing fit again. Brewster was passing and stopped to clap him on the back as Chekov was still staring into space.

'Looks like you need another drink gents,' a statement of fact from Brewster.

'Oh, yes please,' said Chekov coming down from the clouds. 'Another pint my friend?'

Boris nodded, as his vocal chords were still restricted with the coughing spasm.

'Yes, hard to imagine isn't it? A beautiful English Rose I met over in Tenerife and this lovely lady lives here somewhere in Muddlecombe.'

Boris started up his coughing fit again. As Brewster was rubbing his back Fiona appeared in the bar. She stopped in her tracks and stared at Chekov.

He in return suddenly stood up and looking toward her, 'Fiona isn't it?'

'Omar.....Mr Yub.....Yeb.....it's Mr Chekov. Good God, I don't believe it. What brings you to our humble abode? I mean, how nice to see you.' Fiona had joined in the confused stakes.

Poor Boris, who had stopped spluttering, looked from Chekov to Fiona and back again and started spluttering again.

Brewster, who was just serving the drinks, joined in the confused club now. 'Fiona, do you know this man?'

'Brewster honey, this is that nice Mr Yeb.....'

'Yeboleksi. Chekov Yeboleksi at your service.' Chekov said, shaking hands with Fiona.

'He's the one I was telling you about that, er..., that "you know who" we met in Tenerife.' Fiona nodded her head in a backward direction to indicate where Mildred lived. 'He owns the hotel where we stayed in Tenerife.'

'Pleased to meet you Chekov,' Brewster took up the hand shaking now. 'I've heard a lot about you.' He suddenly realised that not only had he heard about him from Fiona but also from Boris and was shaking hands with a member of the KGB. He couldn't remember which KGB, but they were all pretty sinister if he remembered correctly. This man however was far from sinister, more your actual smart pipe and slippers man.

'You must be Brewster, Fiona's husband? I know all about you and the famous pub.'

'Boris, it's that nice Mr Chekov,' Brewster said with a very nervous smile and looked down to where Boris was sitting. Boris nodded and returned the nervous smile and started to splutter again.

'I think this calls for another drink don't you?' Brewster said as a nervous reaction and went back to the bar closely followed by Fiona.

'Well Boris you seem to be amongst friends here. What a lovely little village and what nice people.'

'Er, yes boss.'

'Oh Boris, I hate to bring up work, but while you are here there is a small favour you could do me for which I would be eternally grateful.'

'Er, no problem boss,' Boris was beginning to relax a little and the word "work" automatically focussed him back to normality.

'Boris, don't look now but there is a small gentleman over the other side of the room with two ladies.....'

Boris immediately looked round. 'That's Mr Sidenose!' He said rather loudly to Chekov's immediate embarrassment.

'Ssshhh, Boris, yes, that's as maybe. I'm not interested in him. It's the two ladies I have a problem with....'

'The usual boss!' Boris was a lot happier now. Back in his element, killing people.

'For Christ's sake Boris, keep you voice down. No, not the usual. I just want them discouraged from staying too long here in Muddlecombe whilst I carry on with my affairs.'

'You don't want them, ....doing?' Boris was seeing a totally different man here now.

'Yes, Boris. I want them,.....doing,' whispered Chekov in a very subdued tone. 'But I want them doing discreetly.'

'Oh, er, alright boss, just sort of frightening then?' said Boris with a frown not really understanding this new concept. This was not in his old employment manual at all; he would need some retraining here.

'Just sort of making sure they go away, but not permanently. OK?'

'You want them to come back then boss?'

'No, Boris I don't want them to come back to Muddlecombe. They are welcome to go back somewhere else though.'

'Oh, er OK, I think boss.' Boris was deep in thought.

'God, Boris, you're as bad as your mate Dimitri, Dimitri the Dumbo.'

'Dimitri?' Boris said blankly.

'Yes, Dimitri, your counterpart out in Tenerife, did the north side of the island.'

'Oh, Dimitri,' that was a long time ago thought Boris.

'Yes. That silly bastard only went and kidnapped that bunch of ladies on holiday from here and got them drugged up in one of our "houses", the stupid oaf.'

'Not Miss Whiplash's house of correction?' Boris was amazed.

'Yes. Something like that. Can you imagine these ladies from here in somewhere like *that*? God, it doesn't bear thinking about.'

Just then Brewster arrived with some more drinks. 'Here you are gents; these are on the house as it's a sort of reunion. Oh and by the way can I introduce our local GP, Dr Rammy and someone I understand you have already made the acquaintance of, Mrs Boring.'

Chekov stood up again as the two newcomers joined their company.

'Nice to meet your Doctor.' They shook hands. 'Betty isn't it? How lovely to see you again. May I say how lovely you look after your holiday? In fact I was telling my colleague, Boris here, all about our little misunderstanding with one of my members of staff.'

'Chekov, what a lovely surprise. Yes, we did have a bit of a cock up, didn't we, but what fun we had, eh?' With that she gave Chekov a little wink after he had finished kissing her hand.

'I can only apologise again,' said Chekov sheepishly.

'Don't apologise, just make sure you ask us out there again. Now, what brings *you* to our little village, don't tell me.....'

Chekov quickly interrupted Betty. 'Er, yes, well, it's sort of a very delicate matter and I wanted to keep it a secret.'

'Don't worry, your secret is safe here in Muddlecombe,' Betty gave Chekov another wink which was picked up by everyone in the company, even by Boris who was now getting back to confused again.

'I understand that a certain Captain O'Riley has met with an unfortunate accident, I am here to offer my condolences to.....'

Boris who had started drinking again interrupted Chekov in mid spasm, but not before he had sprayed most of the company with the top half of his beer. Dr Rammy quickly started slapping Boris on the back until he had calmed down a bit and had resumed normal breathing control.

Just then Fiona came over under the guise of collecting glasses and stopped at the table next to Betty.

'And what do you suppose brings our Mr Chekov to Muddlecombe,' she said with a wink to Betty which wasn't missed by Chekov. 'Would it be a certain Mrs....' The voice was hushed to a whisper by now.

'Mildred,' came the whispered reply from Chekov. 'I'm having a bit of difficulty trying to find her.'

'Yes it is a bit strange for newcomers, but we'll see you alright, won't we,' Fiona looked over to Betty. 'But,' Fiona continued. 'Where are you going to stay? I have some empty rooms here but they haven't been used for some time and will need a bit of airing. Why don't you stay with Boris over at Primrose Cottage for tonight while I sort out some accommodation here?'

'You are very kind,' Chekov looked over to Boris who had stopped spluttering by now but wasn't quite ready for full sentences just yet.

'Er,....yes boss.....'

'Boris my friend I knew I could rely on you. Perhaps you could take my bags for me while I go and make my condolences to Mrs O'Riley.'

Fiona and Betty took Chekov aside and gave him instructions to get to Mildred's house.

\* \* \*

Boris pulled Dr Rammy aside.

'Dr Rammy,' Boris started the whispering bit. 'I need help please.'

'You know me Boris any time my friend. Now what's the problem?'

'Problem is ladies.'

'Oh, tell me about it Boris, isn't it always.'

'Yes but my boss wants ladies to leave village. Very quick.'

'Which ladies Boris?'

'Those two over there, talking to Mr Sidenose.' Boris nodded over to the general direction of Sidney and his two ladies sitting at the other end of the bar.

'Isn't that the slime ball that looks after Primrose Cottage? I remember him at the enquiry of that chap John's death. Anyway what's the problem with the two ladies Boris?'

'My boss say they must go.....'

'Now look here Boris you're in England now, not Russia. You can't go bumping off people will-nilly here you know old boy.' Dr Rammy put a bit of concern into his voice. What a waste of two lovely looking bits of stuff.

'No, not kill, just must go from village. I need some pills from you please Dr Rammy, like ones you gave to me remember.'

'Boris my friend lets try another way shall we?' If he used the same dose he gave Boris he would definitely kill them. 'I have another plan. Why don't you take me over and introduce me old chap.'

With that he grabbed Boris' elbow and guided him over to where Sidney and the two ladies were sitting out of sight of the rest of the pub.

'Boris my old friend,' Sidney turned to greet his long lost charge. 'How are you, settled in nicely here in Muddlecombe have you?'

'Hallo Mr Sidenose, yes, I very comfortable. Lovely English beer, nice friends here look after me.'

'Can I introduce myself Mr Sidenose? I think we met briefly at the enquiry into Primrose Cottage some years ago. I'm Dr Rammittin Chutnabuttee. Everyone calls me Dr Rammy, and these two lovely ladies are....?'

'Dr Rammy, yes I seem to remember that last meeting, oh and can I introduce Sharon and Tracey who have come all the way from Essex on a little drive with me to see this lovely little village.....'

Sharon and Tracey went into the usual routine of winding themselves around their newly found friends like anorexic pythons looking for their first meal. 'Hallo boys.'

Tracey was having difficulty getting all the way round Boris. 'And what's your name big boy?'

Boris was not used to having good looking young ladies with summer clothing nearly on wrap themselves around him. 'Da da, yes, yes, me .....er, yes. ....er ....'

'This is my friend Boris, all the way from Russia.....'

'Did you say Boris?' Tracey looked quickly at Sharon. 'What a lovely name, isn't it Sharon and such a big boy too.' Tracey winked at Sharon and they both nodded in unison having at last, like the Mounties, got their man. They wrapped their arms around Dr Rammy and Boris and started to walk out of the pub.

'Come on Sidney, why don't you show us round this lovely little village and these two boys can help us out on the nitty gritty local details can't you lads?'

'I take bags to cottage first.' Boris interrupted.

'Come on, we'll give you a hand Boris.' With that they all walked out into the sunshine.

\* \* \*

The locals sitting outside nearly broke their necks as the fivesome stepped out into the sunlight on a lovely English summer afternoon and started walking towards the green.

'I see Dr Rammy hasn't wasted any time then, the dirty little lucky bugger.'

'And 'ole Boris has pulled then?'

'It looks like she's doing the pulling from here.'

'She could pull me anytime.....'

'Ahhhh, you wouldn't know what to do if she threw herself at you, you silly old sod.....'

'Christ, I'd have a bloody good try. I've read about it in them mucky books old Nosey has in 'is garden shed.'

'Ere, where they headed to, all off to Primrose Cottage I'll be bound.'

'Bloody clever thinking there, Boris does *live* there, you silly old sod.'

'Oh,ahhh, but I reckon they're all off for a gang bang don't you....?'

'Oh, ahhh, but what about that other bugger in the big black car then? Walking off up the lane to where Mrs O'Riley lives then. What do you make of that then you silly old sod? And where the bloody hell are Creighky and Dense then? Eh? Answer me that then?'

'Oh, ahhh, it's all very mysterious ain't it. Bugged if I know what's going on. And Old Mrs Dimmock don't seem too perturbed about losing young Dense though, do she?'

'Oh, ahhh, an' it looks like Mrs O'Riley don't seem too perturbed either, do it?'

'What, for losing Dense?'

'No you silly old sod. For losing Captain Creighky.'

'Oh, ahhh, well *nobody* seems too upset about that then do they?'

They all had a jolly good laugh and got on with the drinking.



## Chapter 20. Another Committee Meeting

'Jeysus Christ, You're a damn good looking shagbag, so you are,' muttered Creighky to himself looking over to Grunhilda after a particularly good session in the top floor bedroom of the British Embassy in Helsinki.

'What is shagbag, Creighky darling?' asked the doe eyed Embassy receptionist looking up at Creighky from her pillow.

Creighky had forgotten that his whispers were as good as the Town Crier on Prozac.

'That's Gaelic for a woman who was made by the fairies. Someone too beautiful to be seen by mere mortal mankind.'

He suddenly had this feeling of *déjà vu*. His mind went back to the bedroom in the hotel in Kiev where only a few weeks ago he had used the same charm offensive on a lovely sophisticated lady who turned out to be a colonel in the Russian Federal Services Bureau. The only reason he was now imprisoned in this Embassy was that he was wanted for her murder.

Shagged to death.

'What a way to go. Wait till I tell the lads back at the "Snort" about this,' he thought to himself.

'Wait till I get out of this place,' was his next thought followed by.....

'How am I going to get out of this place?'

This was the thought that bought him back to reality with a bump.

Captain Creighky O'Riley MC, late of the Irish Guards with a distinguished war record was now a wanted criminal on the run.

Dense was having similar thoughts, not about getting home; he was still in "globeland" dreaming of being in the arms of Dollianna back in Kiev. He had been in this state for some weeks now, which was a blessing in disguise as there was nothing to do stuck in the British Embassy in Helsinki waiting for some diplomat or politician to figure out how to get both him and Creighky back to England. If they acknowledged Dense's situation, that of being a stateless person with his passport still in the hands of the Russians, then Creighky's position would also be revealed.

Whilst the diplomats and politicians were deliberating, another committee was looking at this problem as well.

'Mrs Dimmock, thank you for coming over here. I know you don't normally frequent these sorts of places.' Gerantinium III, or Gerry as he was currently known in the beer garden of the "Snort", had called another extraordinary meeting.

'No problem Gerry me old mucker,' Mrs Dimmock had lapsed naturally into the localeese.

It was still hot in the late Saturday afternoon and the local pub had never seen such trade. The conversation was buzzing outside the pub as the locals discussed the "toeing" and "frowing" of all these strangers. Or locals who were dressed up as strangers, i.e. Betty.

The conversation was buzzing inside the pub as well. Brewster was running around like a demented dervish trying to keep up with all the various factions and serving them as well.

Even Nostrodamus had been pried out of his workshop in the back of his garden to attend this meeting.

'Nosy, me old mucker have you seen that Betty Boring, you wouldn't recognise her I tell you,' Hercules and Iggy were still in debate as to whether she was Betty or a stranger.

'Gentlemen, I mean me old muckers, I think we ought to concentrate on the situation at hand,' Gerry tried to get the meeting on course. They were sitting apart from the other locals but still had to be careful not to reveal their true identity. The Interplanetary Ethics and Standards committee.

'I think we have a constitutional crisis looming here my friends,' was the opening gambit from Gerry with a strategic view of the day's happenings.

'How do you mean Gerry?' Nosy was a bit out of things at present.

'Well, I think Mrs Dimmock should bring us up to speed with the current situation. Mrs Dimmock, you started this lark with that Russian chappie perhaps you can enlighten us as to where we stand at the moment.'

'Thank you Gerry. Yes well, things are moving at a pace and I may be a little out of phase here but as I see things this is the overview.'

'Can't wait to hear this,' Hercules said flippantly.

'Harry, please, Mrs Dimmock is doing her best.' Gerry reprimanded Hercules. 'Please continue Mrs Dimmock.'

'Yes, well, one of the problems is that Creighky and my lad Dense, although we now know that they are safe, are stuck over in Helsinki awaiting a diplomatic solution. I would like to come back to that if I may.'

'You must be relieved about young Denis then Mrs D?' Gerry said sympathetically.

'Yes, that is a weight off my mind. But anyway, the situation here is a bit more complex.'

'You can say that,' interrupted Iggy impatiently once again.

'There are both local and strategic implications here which makes it all very complicated, but the situation basically looks something like this.' Mrs Dimmock took a deep breath and continued. 'You will be acquainted with our Russian guest by now who is currently staying at Primrose Cottage....'

'Boris seven bellies, a good old boy is our Boris,' Hercules confirmed.

'Yes, Boris. Well anyway, he has just returned from Tenerife after things were getting a bit hot out there for him and our Sidney has installed him in the Cottage for his own safety. He was involved in this bullion robbery as a money launderer and made considerable profits as a result of this.'

'Must have pissed most of it up against the wall by now....'

'Harry!' Gerry said as a point of order.

'Well anyway,' Mrs Dimmock continued. 'One of the problems was that his wealth had been sent illegally back to his brother in Kiev and he couldn't get access to it so he sent Creighky and our Denis over there to sort it out. Unfortunately he forgot to tell them about those minor details and they got involved in the local Federal Services Bureau which is why they are where they are.'

'But didn't Boris get his money back into the country?' Iggy asked. 'I know Brewster has banked a load for him and is making enquiries about exchange rates for commodities.'

'Oh, he got his so called pension fund alright, a load of industrial diamonds; unfortunately Creighky and Denis didn't come back with their luggage due to a cock up at the airport. Hence their journey to Moscow by mistake and then Creighky thinking he was Michael Caine and doing a runner.'

'You've lost me there Mrs D,' Iggy was scratching his head.

'I'll come back to that. Meanwhile Mildred, Lucinda, Fiona and Betty....'

'Coor.....'

'Yes, thank you Harry,' Gerry quickly intervened.

'The girls go off to Tenerife and who does Mildred bump into but Boris's boss, this Chekov, and Betty with some chap called Brian.' Mrs Dimmock stopped and looked to Hercules. 'You've noticed the difference then Harry?'

'There you are Iggy, I told you it was Betty!'

'Yes. Alright.' Iggy said dejectedly.

'Who's going to do the choir now? It don't look like she'll be doing any singing tomorrow at church, not when I last saw her

inside throwing back Brandy Sours like there was no tomorrow.' Hercules digged Nostrodamus and continued. 'You want to go and have a look at the new Betty; you'd soon get out a bit more I tell you!'

'Yes, quite. Mrs Dimmock where do you see the problem?'

'Gentlemen, we now have some very powerful and rich people in the village. Boris is worth at least half a million if he could transpose his diamonds into jewellery and is desperate to give something to the village because of the disappearance of Creighky and now this Chekov has arrived and is gagging to get at Mildred. He must be worth several millions, albeit illegal, but still stinking bloody rich.'

'So what you're saying is that we get rid of the boring prat Creighky and replace him with somebody worthwhile?'

'Harry, how can you say that!' Gerry spluttered at Hercules. 'There's a small matter of poor Mrs Dimmock's lad Denis.'

'Ah, yes, forgot all about our Dense, er Denis, that is. Sorry Mrs D.'

'Don't worry about our lad, he's OK.'

'I'm pleased to hear it,' a concerned Gerry intervened. 'So what exactly are you saying Mrs Dimmock?'

'Well, I think Harry has overstated the situation a little bit, but it's not a bad idea if you put the priority of the village first. There's the drains, street lighting, a village hall, a new church roof.....'

'And I could murder an inside bloody toilet.....'

'Yes, thank you Iggy,' Gerry retorted quickly.

Mrs Dimmock continued. 'It all depends on how we stand on our Codes of Ethics and Practice doesn't it?'

'Good God.....ooopss, sorry Gerry.'

Everybody ducked and Gerantinium straightened himself out eventually and continued. 'It's unthinkable.'

'I think it's high time we started looking inwards for the sake of the village, and nobody's saying get rid of Creighky, just sort of let him have an extended holiday,' Mrs Dimmock took up the thread. 'Unfortunately there's a nigger in the woodpile.'

'Creighky's coming back tomorrow?' Iggy asked in trepidation. 'Oh shit, he'll be unbearable with all his new adventure stories. The pub will never be the same on Saturday night.'

'No, he's fairly safe for the time being. The problem is young Sidney.'

'Sidney Sidenose?' queried Gerry.

'Not actually Sidney, it's the company he's keeping.'

'Lucky bugger. You seen those two tarts he's got in tow?' Harry confirmed.

'Those two tarts as you call them are the filth, er sorry, the police. The CID to be precise.'

'What's wrong with that Mrs Dimmock?' Said a very stern Gerry looking dismissively at Mrs Dimmock.

'Well, they could ruin all our plans, so to speak. Poor Sidney doesn't know that they're the police yet either. They have been following a lead on this bullion robbery from Tenerife and trying to find Boris, when he's only the fence. The real crooks are still in Tenerife, and they are the owners of Primrose Cottage to boot,' Mrs Dimmock looked around the startled company.

'Good G.....' Iggy left the sentence unfinished realising the consequences.

'This all goes back to the question of our priorities. Do we want to concern ourselves with the moral ethics of the wellbeing of our villagers and their surroundings? Or do we want to look more to the judicial ethics of the legality of local laws, which could be to the detriment of our village?'

'I think we need a committee meeting for this,' said Gerry in deep thought.

'We *are* a bloody committee meeting you pillock!' confirmed a frustrated Iggy.

'Allo lads, you ready for another drink?' Brewster arrived with a tray and started picking up the empty glasses. 'Oh, hallo Mrs Dimmock, nice to see you here on this lovely day. Can I get you anything?'

'Triple brandies all round I think,' said a subdued Gerry.

'Sorry to hear about your lad Mrs Dimmock. Still not heard from him yet then?' Brewster enquired.

'Oh, don't `ee worry your silly little head over our Dense there, Mr Kegworth. Ee be OK, don't `ee worry. Teee hee.....'

## Chapter 21. Promotions and postings

'Captain O'Riley,' the Consul looked up as Creighky walked into the room. 'Thank you for coming to see me.'

'Well, I wasn't going anywhere anyway,' said Creighky sarcastically.

'Please sit down,' he pointed to a chair in front of his large mahogany desk. 'Yes, anyway, I have some good news for you and some bad news as well. I think we may have resolved this issue.'

'I can't wait. Does that mean I can go home now? I could murder a decent pint.'

'Well, that's the bad bit I'm afraid.' The consul started to shuffle some papers about and pulled out a file in a brown cover.

'Captain O'Riley, I have here your military file and it makes fine reading if I may say so.' His training as a diplomat had its uses. However he shifted a little to the left in his chair just in case of any stray thunderbolts.

Creighky visibly straightened. 'That's very kind of you your honour,' A bit of creeping crept back in again, but he was a bit worried about the bad bit.

'Captain O'Riley, we here in the diplomatic service pride ourselves on the high standard of personnel we recruit and as we have you as our guest so to speak, it has not gone unnoticed that you have had such a fine career in the past in the army.'

Creighky sat up a bit straighter with pride not quite knowing were all this was leading to. The Consul continued.

'The situation here vis-à-vis you and the dead lady is as follows. It would appear that the Russians are not aware that you are here. Exhaustive discussions with our other European colleagues in the various diplomatic offices have revealed that the Russians are still looking for you around Moscow. And it also appears that they have carried out an autopsy on your lady friend and have realised that your cock and bull story holds water so to speak. It's a bit embarrassing for them so they have gone all quiet for the time being.'

'Does that mean we can go home?' Creighky said elated.

'Well, not exactly.'

'Oh.' Creighky's head dropped.

'We are however in a position to move you but only under the following terms.'

'Move?' Creighky said puzzled.

'After much deliberation with the Foreign Office and the Diplomatic Corps we would like to offer you an honorary position with us and this would also mean an honorary promotion as well and a larger pension to boot. This means that you will have diplomatic immunity and we can then move you about a bit more safely.'

'A promotion eh?' Creighky's ego was rampant.

'Yes, but this is all dependant upon you accepting the offer. And of course we can't get you into Blighty just yet until this whole episode has cooled off.'

'Sound's good to me,' Creighky rushed in.

'But you don't know what the offer is yet?'

'Oh, OK, well perhaps we can go through that now then,' Creighky said a little sheepishly.

'Good. Well, firstly we would ask you to sign on with the Foreign Office as a Military Attaché in the Diplomatic Corps, then once you have been through the usual administration, security screening etc, and your honorary promotion has been approved, we have an immediate posting for you in Gaborone...'

'Gabo..who ..?' queried Creighky.

'Gaborone, it's the capital of Botswana,.....'

'Botsw....wwhhoooo?' Creighky's geographical grasp was none too wide.

'Botswana, it's a lovely little state in South Africa, you'll love it out there, a beautiful country. Lots of scenery and lovely sunshine.' The Consul tried the tourist promotion bit but he knew full well what would motivate Creighky most. 'And, then of course there's the promotion and a lovely uniform with a lovely white ceremonial helmet and all that and of course you can wear your medals.' The Consul then lowered his voice. 'I wouldn't be surprised if you got another one as well for this little escapade.'

'Will I be able to make full general?'

'No, I'm afraid it will only be Major and of course it is only temporary....'

'Do you not think you could make it Colonel then?' Creighky was pushing his luck here a bit.

'Oh I doubt it, but I'll see about Lieutenant Colonel.' Creighky's luck was working.

'How long is all this going to take?'

'Well, if everything is OK by you, and with all the paperwork done we probably could see our way clear.....' the Consul held his chin in his hand and looked up knowing full well the answer. 'We could probably get you out of here by about midnight tonight and from there over the border to Sweden to save face with the Finns

here. A flight from Stockholm to Jo'burg and you should be tucked up safe and sound within 48 hours, if that's OK with you Captain O'Riley, er sorry, I mean Lieutenant Colonel O'Riley?'

\* \* \*

'Mr Dimmock, how are you? We don't see much of you. You seem to be enjoying our local TV quite a lot?' the Consul asked a still traumatised Dense who only sat in front of the TV for the want of something to do. He didn't actually watch it, per se. His mind was still back in the hotel bedroom in Kiev with the lovely Dollianna.

'Oh, er no. You don't do you,' confirmed Dense.

The Consul was going to have to get used to talking to Dense sooner or later and realise he could only answer one question at a time in the correct order.

'Er, yes. Quite so. Well, anyway, you'll be pleased to hear that we have found a way round of getting you home,' the Consul said awaiting the rapturous appreciation.

'Er, beg your pardon?' Dense said after some hesitation.

'Yes that's right. We're getting you home at last you'll be pleased to hear,' he repeated hoping for a thank you if nothing else.

'Er, oh, alright, er, good, so I'm going home then?'

'Yes....,' still no appreciation. The Consul continued. 'There has been a development in this situation and as your colleague Mr O'Riley may have told you, he will be leaving us soon and we now have the necessary diplomatic plans in place to move you as well. I have been in touch with the Foreign Office and it appears that they need you back in London.'

'London?' Dense looked puzzled. He'd tried London once and ended up in Moscow. He continued slowly. 'Will that be the *Gatwick* London,' another pregnant pause. 'Or the *Moscow* London?'

'I beg you're pardon?' the Consul was the puzzled one now. A normal state of affairs when talking to Dense. He then suddenly realised the implications of the statement.

'Oh, yes. I see. Yes, very funny. Well, in actual fact it will be the *Heathrow* London.'

Dense thought for a long while about this and said. 'Is that the *real* London that will get me back home properly?'

The Consul had to think about this for some time as well. 'Er, yes, I think so. I mean, yes, you will be back in England.' He didn't sound too convincing.

'The Muddlecombe England?' Dense perceptibly brightened.



The Consul once more had to think about this but eventually resorted to a question to get him out of this mess. 'Muddlecombe. That's where you live is it?'

'Yer, Muddlecombe-cum-Snoring,' he confirmed.

'Er, yes, well no doubt you be home fairly soon I'm sure.' He thought this would satisfy him. 'Now, where was I. Oh, yes? As I was saying, London has requested your presence.....'

'That's the *Muddlecombe* London?' Dense quickly interrupted.

'Er, yes, well sort of.' The Consul was finding this very hard going. 'As I was saying. There has been a development in London.' The Consul interrupted himself here quickly before there were any more interruptions. 'Yes, that's *your* London.' He waited for two milliseconds for a reply and continued. 'And there appears to be a young lady being held in immigration who is applying for political asylum who claims to know you. She is from Kiev and also claims to be in the FSB to boot.....'

'Dollianna!' Dense nearly cleared the ceiling with joy.

'Er, yes, her name is unpronounceable but I think there is an initial D in there somewhere. Anyway, that's as may be. I don't have any details yet, but if she really *is* who she *claims* to be and *is* in the FSB that would be a real feather in our cap, diplomatically speaking.'

Dense was too overjoyed to speak. He just sat there with his brain in overdrive, or oversexed or something. Anyway his brain had seized up which allowed the Consul to continue uninterrupted.

'So, London have devised this method of getting you back and to get you to help in their debriefing.....'

Something in Dense's brain made an immediate connection and started into oral mode.

'Er, I beg your pardon?'

'London want you to help them in their interrogation...'

'No, you said something else, something about briefs?'

'Oh, yes that, debriefing...you could debrief her for us.'

'You want me to debrief her?' Now Dense's brain memory cache had been completely overridden in the past few weeks with only one vision and that vision was still amazingly clear. He was quite clear in his mind as to the happenings with Dollianna and he was quite clear as to the fact that it didn't take any effort on his part to help her off with those lovely frilly pink garments. Call them what you wanted, knickers, pants, briefs.....

'You want *me* to debrief *her*....?'

'Well, yes. Do you have a problem with that?'

'Me? Oh no, I don't foresee any problem there at all. Is that all I have to do?'

'Well sort of. Of course it will have to be done in our London Office with the usual AV back up....'

'I beg your pardon?' Dense was getting back to puzzled again. 'You want me to do it in an office? And what's AV back up?'

'Oh, you know the usual audiovisual stuff. For our archives you understand.'

'I beg your pardon?' Dense was beginning to think there was something very suspicious going on here.

'We must have the evidence of course, but once all that's been taken care of you will be officially recognised...'

Dense's brain was back in overdrive here now. 'I will be officially recognised?' He was stunned with this one. What were they going to do? Stick bloody great pictures of him and Dollianna up all over London.

'Of course we will have to initially recruit you into the service, which will give you the diplomatic status to move you around and it will be at a decent grade of course. We were thinking of Intelligence Officer, Grade 2 to start with.....'

'Grade 2?' Dense had completely lost it here.

'Oh, OK, we'll settle for grade 3 then shall we. It'll give you another increment, but of course once she's been fully debriefed we will probably have to terminate the contract, but you will of course be getting the usual gong and a nice bit of severance pay which should see you nicely off and a pension to boot. Not a bad days work eh old man?'

Dense stood there gobsmacked again. This was out of his league completely. He didn't realise that he was in with such a lot of perverts. So some of Creighky's stories were true then after all.

'Anyway, all in the aid of a good cause for Queen and Country, eh?' The Consul started picking up bits of paper and laid them out in front of Dense. 'Now we must make a move old chap. You'll be off with Mr O'Riley at midnight tonight and from Stockholm we'll get you back to Heathrow with a courier and then reunite you with your lady friend and after that it's all down to you Mr Dimmock. Sort of get you back on the job so to speak, what?' The consul stopped to see if his joke had been spotted, shook his head and carried on. 'Now, if you'll just sign on the dotted line here please and then you're one of us so to speak.'

"Not if I have anything to do with it," thought Dense, "But I'll play their silly game if it means getting home."

## Chapter 22. Mildred gets her man

After the phone call from Fiona at the "Snort", Mildred was in a right old state. Back to the damp underwear syndrome by the looks of things. But she had managed to regain some control and was putting some makeup on and tidying herself up to her best endeavor when the door bell went.

She jumped up, had one last look in the mirror and ran down stairs. Standing in front of the door she steadied herself, which took considerable self-control, and slowly opened the door.

'Mrs O'R.....'

'Mildred,' she finished the sentence for Chekov as he stood in the frame of her front door.

Mr Yeb.....'

'Chekov,' he finished the sentence for Mildred.

Bang!

Thud!

Squelch!

Gurgle!

Mildred slammed the front door after dragging Chekov into the hallway.

She pulled him to her with a thud and embraced him before he had time to react.

Then she fastened her lips onto his like the last limpet in the universe.

Then, the tongue went *straight* in.

She had read about this often enough and she wasn't in any mood to waste any more time. "I'm not going to make another cock up this time," she thought to herself. "Well, what I mean is I *am* going to ....."

\* \* \*

An hour later they lay in each other's arms in Mildred's bed, naked and totally satiated but completely fulfilled. The frustration of all that wasted time in Tenerife had been fully recouped and they had realised the desperate need that they had for each other and made up for all that lost time. They had done the courtship bit for far too long and now had been the time for the real thing.

Mildred had found her Omar Shariff. She had fulfilled all those fantasies she had read about in her romantic library, and a few more. As far as she was concerned this was a Bedouin desert tent with the white stallion waiting outside after the rescue from the slave traders and Muddlecombe was another world away.

She jumped as the telephone rang.

"Shit!" she thought. "Back to reality."

As she rolled over to pick up the phone, Chekov automatically followed the roll keeping her in his embrace.

'Hallo?'

'Hallo, can you speak up please, you're a bit faint.'

'Who?'

'Who's me?'

'Who?'

'Crikey.'

"Crikey?" she thought to herself.

"Holy Shit, Creighky!" the penny dropped at last as she sat up.

'You mean Creighky?'

She held the phone away from her and cupped it at the same time as looking to Chekov in stunned alarm. 'It's Creighky,' she whispered to Chekov who by now had figured this out and sat bolt upright pulling the sheet up to cover his embarrassment.

Mildred continued on the phone.

'Er,.....Creighky is it?'

'Er,.....where are you?'

'Where?'

'Where's that?'

'Scandinavia?'

'And you going off to where?'

'Where?'

'Er,.....where's that?'

'Africa?'

'When will you be coming home?'

'Did you say months?'

'At least six months?'

The shock on her face was slowly turning to a grin.

'And you're getting what?'

'Promoted?'

'But you're not in the Army any more.'

'You have been what?'

'Seconded?'

'To the what?'

'The who core?'

'The Diplomatic Core?'

'Oh.'

'You're a what now?'

'A who?'  
 'A left what?'  
 'A Lieutenant Colonel?'  
 'Is that good?'  
 'Yes, well that's all very well but I really must dash.....'  
 'You want me to what?'  
 'Do what?'  
 'Come out there?'  
 'Why?'  
 'I've got the village fête next month.....'  
 'And then there's the "Bring and Buy" sale....'  
 'And the garden really needs a lot of work at the moment....'  
 'And I must help Betty in the Church....'  
 'And of course there's the evening classes....'  
 'No, I really can't see my way clear at all...'  
 'Yes, anyway must dash....'  
 'Drop me a line .....

'Yes.'

'Yes.'

'Bye.'

'Oh, by the way, what happened to that nice Denis lad or whatever he's called? Isn't he there with you?'

'He's coming back?'

'Via London?'

'Should be back home in a few weeks?'

'Good.'

'Bye.'

Mildred put the telephone hand set back on the instrument and turned round to Chekov. She smiled beautifully at him and without any words they slid back down into bed and pulled the Bedouin tent covers back over themselves.

\* \* \*

It was early evening when Mildred and Chekov eventually managed to surface and get back into social intercourse rather than the other type. After a cup of tea and a sandwich they decided to take the balmy evening air and walked off down the lane towards the village green and Primrose Cottage.

Mildred was in a skipping mode. She was so happy but little did she realise that Chekov was in a similar mode. Fortunately no full skipping materialised as they held each other's hand.

Chekov turned to Mildred.

'Mildred my darling, you can't begin to understand how happy I am being with you. I have never been in love before and it is the most beautiful sensation I have ever had. It is the first time

I have ever had any emotions for any other person and I feel as if I am in another world that I never knew existed before. '

'Chekov, you big beautiful beast, you're so romantic as well. I don't know what I will do when you go.'

'Evening Missus Ohhryelee. Evening Colonel Yeboleksi.'

The evening romantic air was interrupted by Mrs Dimmock as she passed the lovers in the lane and Mildred's reverie was broken as she suddenly came back to the real world.

Oh.....er..Mrs...er.....Dimmock. Mrs Dimmock isn't it?' Mildred made a tentative stab coming straight out of dreamland into reality.

'That's right me dear.' Mrs Dimmock stopped and looked at Mildred.

'Oh, Mrs Dimmock, I just had a phone call from Captain O'Riley.....'

'How is the Captain? Is 'ee alright me dear?' Mrs Dimmock quickly interrupted.

'Oh, yes,' Mildred spluttered and getting back to point. 'Oh yes he's OK. But he said that your lad, er, Dense, I mean Denis.....'

'My lad. You heard from my lad then?'

'Well not exactly Mrs Dimmock,' Mildred tried to finish the sentence. 'Captain O'Riley just told me that he was OK and would be coming back to London in the next few days.'

'Oh, that's luvlee. I knew 'eed be OK. My lad can look after himself. I knew 'eed be alright, but thank ee Mrs Ohhryelee for your trouble anyway me dear.'

'No trouble Mrs Dimmock.' Mildred finished off.

Mrs Dimmock bowed and touched her forelock in a subservient gesture and walked off up the lane.

The two lovers slowly regained their composure and started back down the lane.

'Who was that?' Chekov enquired rather puzzled.

'Oh that was Mrs Dimmock. She's the sort of village,... er sort of village..., well I don't quite know what she is but she always seems to know what's going on around here.' Mildred answered just as puzzled. 'Her lad is the one that went over to Russia with Creighky and got lost. As you can tell they're not a very bright family. That's why he gets called "Dense" instead of Denis.'

'But how does she know my name?' Chekov enquired again. 'She even knew my rank in the .....' Chekov stopped realising even Mildred didn't know what he was before they met. It had never come up, as Mildred only knew him as the hotel owner in Tenerife.

'Where you in the Army then Chekov?'

'Yes. That's right. A long time ago,' said Chekov with his thoughts several million miles away. 'It's very strange. Very strange indeed.'

'Oh don't worry about Mrs Dimmock she's a queer one and that's a fact.' Mildred confirmed.

They walked slowly on down the lane in silence, Chekov shaking his head now and then. Eventually Mildred squeezed his hand and looked up into his eyes and he forgot all his worries and smiled back at her. He squeezed her hand in return and started swinging his arm as they increased their pace down towards the green and they very nearly broke into a skip.

They came to the end of Mildred's lane as it widened and opened up into the village green and the little pond came into view. Chekov stooped and still holding Mildred's hand looked over the sleepy village scene with wonderment.

Mildred turned after their brief interlude and pointed out the various points of interest to Chekov.

'There's the Church over there with Primrose Cottage tucked away in the corner.' Mildred was desperately trying to make it sound interesting. Rather like pushing treacle up a hill. But she carried on regardless. 'It is very old. Built by the Normans during William the Conqueror's reign. It's in the Domesday Book.'

'In the what?'

'It's a sort of list. A sort of itinerary of all the property in England in 1066. It was done to get the taxes. A sort of Inland Revenue.'

'Oh yes, I hear about the Inland Revenue. Same as our KGB.' Chekov gave a little chuckle.

Mildred missed that one and continued.

'And on the other side of the church is the Post Office. That's where Bill and Betty work. You remember Betty? The one that got kidnapped by your bodyguard?'

'Please don't remind me Mildred. It was very embarrassing. It seems like a bad dream now.'

'And then there is the pub.' She looked up at Chekov. 'You've been there. Run by Brewster and Fiona. Another lady you've kidnapped.' She gave him a little dig with a wicked grin on her face.

'Yes, yes OK. I get the point.' Chekov joined in the fun.

'And of course the last lady you kidnapped lives over there in Muddelcombe Hall. That'll be Lucinda. Reginald and Lucinda D'Arcy-Landacre live there and his family have done since 1066.'

'ББАПУ ЪФТ!' muttered Chekov under his breath. This roughly translated meant, "Kinnell. I really fucked up there!"

'And then there's the school over there.' Mildred looked to her right.

'Don't tell me I kidnapped the headmistress as well,' chuckled Chekov.

'No, you missed out on her. Although you are having an affair with one of the School Governors.'

'I did?' He said startled. 'I mean I am? I mean .....Oh, of course. *You* must be one of the Governors then?'

'Well done big boy.' Mildred was getting very precocious with her man. 'Got it one.'

'What do you do as a Governor?'

'Well, actually it was my mother who founded the school. It looks after the local children and we also have evening classes for the older ones amongst us.'

'What do you do in the evening?'

'We have lots of fun. Self Defence for the ladies and Macramé and Lapidary and we even muck about with old cars just for fun.'

'What is macc.....and lap,.....?' Chekov stuttered with the words.

'Oh, we make little lace things for the house and muck about with gems making jewellery and things like that. My Grandfather left a lot of old machinery lying about that we have found useful and we sell them at the fête and the money goes towards helping the locals with our problems such as the drains and the church roof and .....'

'Who the hell comes to this, er, fate?' queried Chekov. 'To pay for all these beautiful things you make?'

'Well, that's the problem. We don't get many people coming into the village and that's probably why we still don't have any drains or a new church roof.' Mildred continued. 'But we still have a lot of fun in the evening.'

'What a terrible shame that such a lovely place can't get any help from anywhere.'

They both stood and looked around the peace and tranquility that surrounded them. There was no answer to that question and none needed. You have to pay for paradise sometimes.

'Mildred darling?' Chekov mused as he turned and looked deeply into Mildred's eyes.

'Yes my handsome Russian prince,' Mildred replied slowly in utter awe and admiration of her tall dignified consort beside her.

'Mildred,' he continued now looking back to the idyllic scene. 'Mildred, do you know this could be heaven. I can't remember seeing such a peaceful or more.....beautiful.....pshaw,.....poooo,..... What's that smell?'

The moment was lost as he twitched his nose in disgust.



'Oh, that.' Mildred said sadly. The moment was lost for her as well. 'That's the drains I was telling you about.'

'Phew. It's a bit overpowering isn't it? Can't anything be done about it?'

'I'm afraid not. We've been trying for years for somebody at the local council to do something about it but we have a communication problem with any officials with anything to do with spending money.'

'A communication problem?' Chekov enquired slowly still looking for the origin of the disgusting pong. 'That is very bad local government. What is the problem?'

'Well, they always say they don't have any records and when someone comes to see us they always get lost.'

'Yes, I can believe that. It not exactly well signposted is it? But, surely something must be done about this. It's a very bad smell indeed.' Chekov wrinkled up his face again as a gesture of defence against the smell.

'It's ok after a good rain session.' Mildred grabbed Chekov's hand and tried to bypass the smell and get them back into the romantic mood again. She started walking around the pond and on to the green towards Primrose Cottage.

The smell passed and the romantic mood returned and Chekov stopped again, holding Mildred's hand as he looked around the vista of the sleepy little village.

'This is absolute heaven, it really is Mildred. It is so tranquil and restful. I can't remember feeling so relaxed. . It must be something to do with the company as well.'

"And a damn good shag," thought Mildred irreverently.

She immediately gave herself a good talking to, metaphorically speaking.

'Oh, Chekov, you do say the most beautiful things.' They were now facing each other and holding hands.

Chekov looked away, around the village green surveying all the scenery and closing his eyes, smelling the atmosphere.

'Mildred darling, I would like to stay here for some time. I have only been here a few hours but I already feel so at home here. I have never really had a place I could call my home. I was in the Russian Army and then I started up in business traveling the world. As you know I have the hotel in Tenerife, but I have many such interests but I have nowhere where I can call "Home".'

He emphasised the last word and then stood silently as Mildred gave him a reassuring hug and felt it best not to say anything in case she broke the spell of this wonderful moment.

They stood silently for a few minutes just looking round the green

He slowly turned his head to her and said with a little seriousness.

'I also can see some very good commercial opportunities here as well.' He smiled at her and gave a little laugh.

'Commercial opportunities? Here, in Muddlecombe?'

'Oh, yes, right here in Muddlecombe. There are a lot of people who love peace and quiet and solitude.'

'Monks?' Mildred said, thinking out loud that there couldn't be much profit from a gang of Monks living here.

'No, not monks. Quite the opposite.' Chekov was looking into space.

'The opposite?' Mildred was puzzled.

'Yes, there are a lot of people who would welcome being out of the limelight, so to speak.'

'Oh, you mean criminals and the like.' Mildred was straight to the point as usual.

'Well, they may not necessarily be criminals .....

'We used to have a lot of them stay in Primrose Cottage. All sorts of comings and goings in the middle of the night.' Mildred interrupted Chekov's train of thought.

'Primrose Cottage?'

'Where I'm staying?'

'Oh yes. There has been a lot of funny goings on at Primrose Cottage recently. We've had all sorts of strange people staying there. And nobody really seems to know what's going on in there at all, or who owns it .....

Mildred didn't finish the sentence but looked blankly towards Primrose Cottage.

'Well, my dear, this is where I can probably help, as I'm staying there. I shall ask my friend Boris. I'm staying with him and he should know what's been going on.'

'Boris. Is that that enormous man, foreign chappie.....?' Mildred bit her tongue realising that Chekov was one of them as well.

'Boris? Oh Boris and I go back a long time.' Chekov said ignoring Mildred's faux pas. 'Actually now that I come to think about it, it *is* all very strange. Very strange indeed. How he has come to be here as well.....?' Chekov did the same as Mildred and looked over towards Primrose Cottage with a puzzled look on his face.

'And there are a couple of other things that don't quite fit in now that I think about it.....' Chekov continued but still ended up looking puzzled. His mind was on the two ladies who had mysteriously turned up in the pub after their initial meeting in Tenerife.

He suddenly jolted back into reality.

Muddlecombe had this effect on people.

A sort of time warp effect of being able to switch from one world to another so to speak.

Chekov suddenly realised his last instructions he had given to Boris was to "get rid " of the two ladies and he now realised the complications this might have with the people of Muddlecombe and even his own relationship with Mildred.

This could jeopardise his whole future.

Mildred had finished looking towards Primrose Cottage in puzzlement and was looking towards Chekov in puzzlement now. He had not said anything for sometime and was still looking in puzzlement at Primrose Cottage.

'Mildred,' Chekov was first to escape the puzzlement vortex. 'Mildred, I think I need to go and have a word with my colleague on my own, and very fast, otherwise things are going to get very nasty here. I know this doesn't make sense but I hope I can explain all this to you later.' He turned to face her.

'Mildred, would you think it awfully rude of me if I took my leave of you now as I think I need to do some fast-talking. When can I see you again? It is all right to see you tomorrow morning?'

There was some sort of desperation in his voice, which Mildred picked up. She realised she must let him go.

'Of course you can silly, you know where I live, but don't leave it too long will you?'

'Mildred, you know I can't last another day without you. I will see you tomorrow morning, I promise you.' With that he bent down and kissed her and turned and walked briskly off into the direction of Primrose Cottage.

## Chapter 23. Confusion in the Cottage

Having just paid £75,000 for a complete refurbishment on his Mk LF Vb Spitfire, the pilot, on his way back from another air show, was cursing the navigation system. He was banging on the glass desperately trying to get some response from his brand new RCVR 3A (R-2332/AR) GPS Satellite navigation system.

'The bastards haven't implemented the bloody enhanced anti-spoofing function!' he muttered under his breath. What he didn't realise was that no matter how many bloody anti-spoofing functions these bastards had implemented it still wouldn't have made any difference.

He had just flown over Muddlecombe-cum-Snoring.

In between Muddlecombe Magna and Muddlecombe Parva, Muddlecombe-cum-Snoring nestled in a valley surrounded by gentle rolling hills somewhere in middle England. The problem was that the gentle rolling hills had by some fluke of nature been eroded into a sinusoidal wave form that was the exact resonant harmonic of the Air Traffic Control and GPS satellite Navigation's frequencies.

This caused not so much a Black Hole as a sort of *Grayish* Hole. Not only that but what he also didn't know was that there was a considerably deep deposit of iron ore underneath Muddlecombe that caused other magnetic problems and made compasses as much use as a knitted light bulb.

It was the reason that there were no clouds during the day but at night when the ionosphere dropped the clouds crept in and did their business. So you had the North Pole, the South Pole and the MMM Pole: the Middle Muddlecombe Magnetic Pole. Another reason why it was so difficult to find Muddlecombe.

The Spitfire pilot desperately looked down over the myriad of patchwork fields and little cottages below to try and get some sort of bearing or geographical fix.

A few young eager Air Traffic Control apprentices had noticed this in their studies and when bringing it to the attention of their instructors had been told that it was just one of those things as the instructors didn't want to appear stupid either. *They* had noticed it as well when they were in training but couldn't explain it then.

The villagers of Muddlecombe were never bothered with noisy jets flying overhead because all the noisy jets used the set air traffic corridors, which for some reason all seemed to bypass them.

Most things bypassed Muddlecombe.

Muddlecombe was one of those places where you would expect to see Spitfires flying over head as it always seemed to be summer there. The children playing in the fields full of hay bales as they were being harvested and the local villagers sitting outside the local pub enjoying a peaceful, lazy balmy evening.

'Ere, is that one of ours?'

'Arr, that's one of them Spitfires with one of them new Mervin engines in it. They don't 'arf sound sweet, nearly as sweet as my tractor.'

'He's a bit late ain't he?'

'Arr, now you come to mention it he is a bit on the late side. Didn't we beat them bleedin' Germans then?'

'Arr, that's what I thought, arr, now I come to think of it didn't we have a go at them little yellow bleeders as well after we'd done for the Krauts?'

'Arr, you mean them Japs?'

'Arr, and then didn't we have a go at them other little yellow bleeders after we did them Japs in?'

'Oh arr, you mean them, what's-is-names other little yellow bleeders.....'

'Arr, them ones Captain O'Riley did in when he got that medal, them.....'

'Arr, them, err, err, Cory's or summat like it.'

'Weren't they a singing group, I don't think Creighky did in no folk singers.'

'No, it were them, you know, them,.....Crimeans, that's it.'

'No, it weren't them, they was done in along before the Japs or the bleedin' Krauts.'

'Weren't that all about the Light Brigade lot what wore them bleedin' cardigans?'

'Arr, that's it. But who was that lot old Creighky did in then?'

'They was in China or somewhere weren't they?'

'Arr, 'cause old Creighky reckoned they was a load of slant eyed bastards didn't he?'

'It were them Koreans, that's it, Koreans!'

'Arr, that's right, old Creighky got his medal in Korea!'

'Blossom reckons it were a bit of a cock up. He only got his medal given to him to shut him up so she reckons.'

'Well old Creighky does go on a bit I must say, but they don't go dishing out gongs just for cock ups surely, and it were a big gong as well?'

'Arr, it were the Military gong weren't it?'

'Arr, stands to reason it were a military bleedin' thing as he were *in* the bleedin' military at the time weren't he?'

'Arr, and you can't go to war without being military, now then can you?'

'No, but didn't he get a *special* military medal?'

'Arr, and it were a big one as well, and it were important, I knows that.'

'Ere, I ain't seen Creighky for a good week or so, it ain't like him not to get down to the "Snort". What's up with 'im. .Is 'e ill or summat?'

'Arr, you're right I ain't seen him neither, not since he put his hand down Blossom's bum.....'

'Arr, that were a good night, I ain't laughed so much for long time, nearly pissed myself.....'

'Arr, well old Creighky did. 'e shit himself as well did'nt he?'

'Arr, is that what that smell were. What a bleedin' pong?'

'Arr, 'cause old Blossom give 'im what for. One in the chops and then a cracking knee job right in 'is goolies.'

'Arr, I remember 'is face now. It sort of went all red and 'is eyes popped out .....

'Arr, and then he slowly doubles up and 'as to walk to the shit house like a bleedin' crab.....'

'Oh, I remember that. And then this bleedin' great Russian bloke comes in, old Boris and .....

'Arr, and 'im and Dense gets talking. Christ that were a bleedin' laugh. Him and Dense all gibbering away to each other and none of them knowing what the other's talking about.....'

'Arr, and we all gets free drinks that night thanks to Boris, and I don't remember much after that.....'

'Arr , well you got well and truly pissed then, that's if I remember rightly.....'

'Now then, didn't someone say as like Crieghky and Dense 'as gone off somewhere for old Boris. Doin' 'im a favour or summat?'

'Arr, now you comes to mention it, I do remember someone saying summat like that.....'

'It were Dense' Mum., Mrs Dimmock. if I remembers right.....?'

'Arr, it's sort of coming back to me now. Weren't it Russia or somewhere like that?'

'Arr. 'Ere, they been gone along time now ain't they?'

'Arr it's all, very strange ain't it?'

'Arr, 'ere, ain't you getting thirsty and ain't it your round?'  
 'Arr, it's getting a bit cool out here now ain't it?'  
 'Arr, lets go inside and see what's happening. I ain't seen Betty come out yet.....'

'Arr, I think we'd best pop in then, eh, and see how Betty's getting on. Eh?'  
 'Coorr, you're right there. Now Betty's changed for the better I reckon don't you?'  
 'Coorr, you can say that again. She's looking a different woman since she's come back from that holiday abroad.'

'Coorr, you're right there. She looks something special with that suntan and them long legs hanging out like that.....'

'Coorr, and them other thingies hanging out as well.....'

'Coorr, I wouldn't mind seeing her little white bits would you eh?'  
 'Ere, I hope you don't think like that when you goes to church?'  
 'But I ain't been to church in bloody years.'

'Arr, but I reckon we'll be going to church *now* with Betty in the choir up the front there.....'

'Coor, she's up front there alright, come on I'm dying of thirst.'

'Ere, who's that over here then. Ain't that Mildred?'  
 'I reckon it must be and who's that with her, it ain't Creighky, that's for sure.'

'Course it ain't, less 'e's just come back from wherever 'e's just been.'

'Ere, it's that tall foreign chap what were in the pub at lunchtime.'

'With all them strangers.....?'

'Weren't 'e a pal of old Boris. Someone overheard them talking together in the pub.'

'Arrr, reckon so. An' who was them two lovely bits of crackling what popped in as well with old what's-is-name, you know that Jewish chap.....,

'Oh, 'im. Ain't 'e summat to do with the Cottage?'

'Arr, 'e must be. Keeps poppin' up 'ere every now and then and he's in the pub now with them two little crackers.'

'No, 'e went over to Primrose Cottage with Boris and them two.'

'Oh arr, and that new Dr Rammy....'

'Ere .....what d'you reckons going on over there then?'  
 'Arr, it's all very strange, and that' no mistake.'

'Ere, you don't reckon they're having a gang bang do you?'  
 'What's a bleedin' gang bang then? I thought that were when you went out pheasant shooting with a load of other people?'

'No you dozey bugger. It's when women get beaten up by a load of jobs.'

'Oh.....Why would anyone want to beat them two tarts up then?'

'Search me. Just a thought.....'

'Reckon it's time to go for another beer, you comin?'

'And about time. Just watching young Mildred and that bloke. They seem awful pleased to see each other.....'

'Reckon they been seeing each other all bloody afternoon, 'cause he walked up 'er lane several hours ago,.....'

'Dirty little bugger.....'

'Dirty lucky little bugger.....'

'She's getting her own back then on old Casanova Creighky, eh?'

'Serves 'im bloody right. 'Ee wan'ts to keep 'is pecker in 'is pants. I don't hold with all this hanky panky stuff.....'

'Only cause you ain't been offered any hanky panky...er,er,er,' he gave a little laugh as they watched Mildred and Chekov part.

The villagers got up from the old wooden benches and tables outside the "Snort" and walked inside to get their drinks.

\* \* \*

Lillian Scrubbs and Sally Fuzzelli went to the same school in Essex, were in the same form, had their first cigarettes and various other substances behind the bike sheds together, experimented with the same boys together, lost their virginity together, found their 'G' spots together, and had the same tastes in music and fashion. So you could say they were fairly close. They had learnt fairly early on in life the ways and means of using their natural assets to obtain those little extra things in life. That was of course items within the budget range of their male companions. Sometimes they did stretch the range if something special was on offer.

So by the time they were in the sixth form, Lil and Sal had life pretty much under control. They were a little amoral but at least they were amoral together.

Even in their previous lives in Pharaoh's Egypt, they had both been suspended from the Nefertiti Technical College, Luxor, only three weeks into their Vestal Virgin apprenticeship. Some of the temple Eunuchs had learnt a thing or two as well.

The school careers counsellor put them through the same psychometric tests together and concluded that they were best suited to work in either a brothel or a nunnery. The girls were fairly bright and well educated in the ways of the world and could see through most of the multi-choice questions fairly easily.



So they compromised and joined the Police.

It soon became evident that Lil and Sal (or Tracey and Sharon as they were code named, coming from Essex, names which stuck with them in their undercover operations) were a valuable asset to the police in getting information out of the male criminally challenged species. They introduced a new slant on the 'good cop', 'bad cop' routine with the 'good brunette' and 'even better blonde' routine.

They worked with some considerable zeal finding out that much the same things they did at school with the little boys were getting similar results with big boys, and they got some considerable pleasure out of it as well.

They kept hard at it and the more they practiced the better they got. Just as a certain American golfing gentleman who was also good with balls said: 'the more I practice the luckier I get'.

And they got paid for all this as well, and got first choice in testing some of the substances they had acquired for evidence. Shit, what a life!

Many of the Metropolitan Police's outstanding cases were getting solved at an above average rate and the girls progressed quickly into the CID at Scotland Yard with glowing references.

The word was that you didn't want to get grabbed by the 'Fuzz' and 'Screwed'. References to Sally's Italian surname and Lil's connection to employees of a certain 'Scrubs prison in North London.

They had been assigned to the London Gold Bullion robbery case and had been sent to the Canary Islands where they had to endure the hardships of the Tenerife climate and the rugged life in a luxury hotel. It was there that they had come across Chekov and Serge.

Sharon and Tracey's Chief contacted them as a result of their investigations and had asked them to chase up certain large money transactions in the ledger relating to the Tenerife branch of the Kiev General Bank. Certain transactions there looked very similar to some of the Gold Bullion amounts and movements.

With further investigation of the ledger, they had found a contact name and address of a person called Boris. They got a lead to Boris' favourite watering hole, The "Beefeaters Bar" in Playa where they came into contact with a bunch of East Enders and went into their Essex girl routine in order to obtain more information.

Their hard work eventually led them to a contact in London, a certain Sidney Sidenose. They continued their investigations with zest, albeit a little jet lagged having to dash back from Tenerife in a hurry at their boss' orders. Their expense bills were getting a little out of hand.

They felt that they were getting very close to their main objective but couldn't seem to get any substantial evidence on their East End lads, so they returned to England and made contact with this solicitor from Shoreditch.

After several weeks in Tenerife, the sun-tanned ladies walked into his office like someone switching on an arc lamp. The dark office and Mr Sidenose's face both lit up when the Essex chapter of "Tarts 'R' Us" entered the room and from then on he was putty in their hands. Sidney Sidenose had never really had what you could call a life, but he was just about to get one.

The terrible twosome gave him the old "just back from holiday and we met your mate John out there" routine.

\* \* \*

Sidney Sidenose was a good Jewish boy who had worked hard through school in the East End of London and then through university and into his father's solicitor's practice. His father had built up a relationship with a certain "John" who owned Primrose Cottage. John died and passed it on to his son "John" and Sidney's dad died and passed the business connection onto him.

Because of the quiet location, Primrose Cottage was a very useful place to put somebody up who wanted a brief holiday away from society and out of the prying eyes of the public, especially those nasty authorities as well.

So the tenants of Primrose Cottage were a pretty transient lot and mostly kept themselves to themselves. And when it wasn't being used by the "transients", he let the locals use it although they couldn't for the life of them understand why he never asked for any rent.

He always dealt with that nice little old lady, Mrs Dimmock.

She did give him some lovely home-made cakes and always looked after the cottage for him with the help of her son. That was another strange thing. He had to pay him for his work which he didn't understand as he was letting them have the cottage rent free. Never mind, he was occasionally rewarded handsomely for some special work carried out above and beyond the call of duty so to speak.

That's how Brewster Kegworth, a city stockbroker, made the connection after doing some investment work for some of Sidney's clientele. He didn't know a great deal about the work other than it was all done in cash delivered by Sidney and the commission was a tad higher than normal.

But laundering money through a respectable broker was very profitable, especially when the original investment was purely in terms of labour only. Plus a bit of fast transport, logistics and

employee recruitment consultants for headhunting specialists who could release assets quietly without the knowledge of the owners.

Brewster's efforts were rewarded by Sidney when he lent him the cottage for convalescing after a heart attack. Brewster and his wife Fiona loved the village so much they bought the local pub the "Snort and Truffle" and stayed on in Muddlecombe.

The next tenant of the cottage was a one Boris Slobovich who had been gratefully installed by Sidney after picking him up on the South coast from a fast motor cruiser. The boat had missed the local port authorities by some mischance after a long cruise from the Canaries and got the times mixed up as well, landing on a deserted beach in the dark of night instead of broad daylight.

Sidney had been given explicit instructions from John to look after Boris, as he was a valuable asset to John and his mates out in Tenerife. Sidney had driven Boris up to Muddlecombe, moved him into the Cottage, explained all the apparatus to him and left him to his own devices.

He had since had another message from John to contact Boris and get him to help them out on another little project. So Sidney was planning a visit to Muddlecombe when he had the good fortune (or bad, whichever way you look at it) to bump into Sharon and Tracey.

He suggested they all go for a nice drive out in the country, which they jumped at, little knowing their luck at meeting not only Boris but also Chekov into the bargain. They were a bit puzzled as to why he was there as well and felt it best not to get too involved until they saw the lay of the land.

So Sidney had introduced them to Boris and then a nice young Asian doctor who was "to die for" as Sharon would say. This was in reference to some of the less good-looking potential suspects they had had to "interrogate". So it was off to work for the girls as they all left the pub and went for a walk across the green to the lovely little Primrose Cottage. Neither Sharon nor Tracey fancied interrogating Boris but they played it by ear and were soon relaxing in the company of their new friend Sidney, their suspect Boris and the nice young Dr Rammy.

After a few drinks they both felt very relaxed, in fact they felt a bit too relaxed as the pills Dr Rammy gave them eventually started to take effect.

\* \* \*

Chekov walked slowly towards the cottage with a lot on his mind. He was under a spell from not only Mildred and her charms but also Muddlecombe. This was utopia to him and he could see a life of peace and tranquility ahead of him which he had secretly

yearned for after all the years of working for the KGB and now with the stress and strain of running the Mafia.

Muddlecombe was the perfect "get out".

There was one small problem. He had just asked his faithful retainer Boris, to get rid of two women, which could have disastrous results for his peaceful retirement. He didn't know who these women were but his instincts shouted at him that they were trouble. It was no coincidence that he and Serge had met them in Tenerife and now in Muddlecombe.

What was he going to see when he got to Primrose Cottage?

Blood and guts everywhere?

Boris was usually a neat and tidy assassin. But how was he going to get rid of the bodies?

He had never actually seen any of Boris' handiwork. He had never gone through the job appraisal and evaluation routine of body dissemination with Boris before. Human Resource Management had not been introduced into his work ethic just yet.

Did he strangle them?

Garrote them?

Did he shoot them? He hadn't heard any loud noises. Mind you his mind and body parts had been elsewhere for the last few hours.

Chop them up into little pieces?

Put them in an acid bath?

Chekov shuddered at the idea. He was beginning to feel the strain of work flood back to him.

The locals would surely realise that there was something strange going on.

How far was the nearest Police Station? How much time did he have to get rid of the evidence? And how the hell did Mrs Dimmock know his name and especially his rank in the KGB?

And was Mildred good a shag or was she a good shag?

He arrived at the front of the Cottage and slowly opened the gate and walked very slowly down the path towards the front door. He ducked down and crept round under a window and listened.

All he could hear was a gentle coughing or spluttering and someone one quietly speaking. It wasn't Boris.

He slowly raised his head and looked through the leaded window pane into the cottage.

Boris was sitting in a chair holding his head in his hands and he appeared to be .....

.....crying!

Boris was crying!

Chekov was a little taken aback by this to say the least and all he could see was a sallow skinned person holding Boris' shoulders and softly talking to him. He looked round for any evidence of the grizzly deed but could see no sign of any blood or guts anywhere.

He couldn't see anyone else anywhere either.

He plucked up courage and stood up and walked back to the front door and knocked.

After a few moments the door was slowly opened and he saw the sallow skinned gentleman slowly peer round the edge of the door.

'Oh, you must be Chekov. Please come in.'

Chekov slowly walked into the entrance hall and was showed into the lounge where he saw Boris quickly wiping his eyes and standing up to greet him.

Chekov looked around the room for any blood and guts but everything looked remarkably serene and tidy.

'Colonel Yeboleksi, I mean Mr Chekov, I am so pleased to see you,' Boris lapsed back into his native Ukraine language in between sobs and sniffles and Chekov felt for his old friend and went over and gave him a friendly hug.

He stood back and looked at Boris and said, 'Boris my friend how are you? You look very distressed. Have I given you such a distasteful task? You look very upset; tell me about it my friend.'

'Oh, Mr Chekov, I *am* very upset. I have lost two very good friends.'

Chekov stopped short and looked at Boris in amazement. He had no idea he had any connections with the two ladies at all.

'Boris my old friend I had no idea,' Chekov was now deeply distressed. To think he might have sent poor Boris on an errand to kill his close friends. He thought Boris must have hated him for sending him on such a terrible mission.

'Boris my old friend how could I have known. I don't know what to say.'

They both stood in silence while Boris tried to collect himself and act like a professional in front of his boss. Boris blew his nose with his handkerchief and straightened up.

'Boris. This may seem like a callous question, but I need to know what you have done with them.'

'Done with them?'

'Yes, you know, the two ladies?'

'Two ladies?'

Chekov was a little bemused by the remark. 'Er, yes, you know, the two ladies you came over here with. I don't see them here so I presume you have,.....err.....' Chekov didn't quite know how to end the sentence.

Boris was the bemused one now. 'The two ladies?' he repeated.

'Er, yes.' Chekov whispered. 'You know, the ones I asked you to , er,.....'

'Oh,' Boris suddenly brightened. 'Oh, those two ladies. Oh, they're up stairs.'

Chekov grimaced. The thought of having to go up stairs and look at the grizzly bits and pieces and all that blood. It didn't bear thinking about.

Boris confirmed. 'They're up stairs with Dr Rammy.'

"Oh my God," thought Chekov. "He always was a bit over zealous. But now he's clobbered some poor innocent and here in Muddlecombe as well. And I need is a little peace and quiet and it looks like it's all gone tit's up." Chekov buried his face in his hands now.

'You OK boss?' said Boris with some concern.

'Why did you have to get the local Doctor involved Boris. Don't you think the locals will miss him?'

'He's popped up there some time ago now. Said he was going to loosen their clothing. Their clothing must have been bloody tight, as he's been gone a hell of long time.' Boris looked towards the stairs with a puzzled look.

Chekov looked at Boris with an even more puzzled look. The Muddlecombe magic was working again.

'He's gone up to loosen their clothing?' Chekov didn't quite see the point of loosening someone's clothing after they'd been brutally chopped up into little pieces. 'You mean he's still alive?'

'Well he's still only twenty something,' Boris said even more puzzled. 'Mind you it *has* been a little quiet up there for some time now. Oh by the way, can I introduce you to my friend Mr Sidenose.'

Chekov was completely distracted and slowly turned to face the other person in a state of confusion.

'Oh, er, how do you do? Er, Mr .....?' Chekov's mind was in turmoil with trying to unravel why Boris was so upset about killing two women and why a doctor was up stairs undressing them and now he had to revert back from his native tongue into English.

'I'm sorry, Mr ..... I didn't catch your name.'

'Mr Sidenose, Sidney Sidenose.'

'How do you do.' Chekov slowly offered his hand but he was still in the state of extreme confusion.

So was Sidney. According to Boris this was the chap who was trying to kill Boris not so long ago and now they were all buddies.

The two states of confusion shook hands.

There was a pregnant pause while both men tried to compose their thoughts.

Boris was nearly as confused as them as well, watching this very slow drama of introduction taking place and felt he should say something.

'Mr Sidenose bring me from Tenerife and give me nice English cottage.' He lapsed back into his broken English.

'Oh, I see,' said Chekov as the two most confused men eyed each other up suspiciously.

There was another pregnant pause.

'Boris my friend, I'm a little confused,' said Chekov. Understatement of the millennium.

'My friends, why don't you sit down and I'll go and make us all a nice cup of tea,' Sidney said basically at a loss for anything else to say. He pointed to two seats for them and got the hell out of the room as fast as he could. All he had to do now was remember how to make a cup of tea.

'Boris my friend, I think we should start from the beginning.'

'Er, yes boss.'

\* \* \*

After ten minutes Chekov had this feeling of *déjà vu* with a similar meeting with Boris' counterpart in Northern Tenerife and realised it was time to summarise.

'So what you're saying is that you've never met these girls before and that Mr Sidenose picked you up after you had been sent here by your friends in Tenerife who gave you lots of money?'

'That's right boss.'

'And that these girls are upstairs with this local doctor chappie?'

'That's right boss.'

'And that they are all alive and well?'

'Well, probably alive, but not very well.'

'Something the doctor gave them?'

'That's right boss.'

'So now tell me Boris, why are you so upset about these women?'

'Beg pardon boss?'

'You said you were upset about your two friends?'

'Er, yes boss, my friends from the village, Captain Creighky and my friend Dense.....'

Boris was quickly interrupted by Chekov. 'Captain O'Riley?'

'That's right boss.'

'Mrs O'Riley's *husband*?'

'That's right boss.' Boris was back to puzzled again.

'Boris my friend, Captain O'Riley is on his way to Africa and Mr Dense is in London,' Chekov smiled broadly at Boris being able to give his friend this first hand information.

'Africa, London?' Boris was back to doubled puzzled now.

'Yes, my friend.....' Chekov was quickly interrupted.

'But they're alive?' Boris quickly realised his priorities for his friends.

'Yes, my friend.....'

Boris suddenly jumped up and did his little rendition of the Cossack dance routine, albeit a bit slower and more cumbersome than the original. However it was brought to a sudden halt as he turned to Chekov and, back into puzzled mode again, asked, 'Africa and London?'

Boris sat down again, a little out of breath as Chekov continued.

'If I remember rightly I think Captain O'Riley has joined the diplomatic corps and been posted to somewhere in Africa and Mr Dense has .....' he stopped there.

'But they're both alive?' Boris was a happy man now and relaxed in his seat.

Chekov by contrast was now back to puzzled again.

'You know these people?'

'Yes boss, they went to Kiev for me to see my brother.....' Boris stopped there as he suddenly realised why they had gone to see his brother and that the man sitting opposite him had something to do with not letting him out of the country.

'Your brother?' Chekov frowned but suddenly brightened up. 'I remember now. We had this problem with the bank in Tenerife and we connected it to him via you. But it has all been cleared up now because we saw the bank manager out there and he told us how you helped him out of a hole with your assistance and some very clever trading. Boris you old dog, you never told me you were into share-trading and the gold market?'

Puzzled jumped back to Boris. 'I didn't?' He corrected himself. 'No, I didn't did I boss.' He felt it best to leave it there.

'Boris you are a hero at the bank in Tenerife, you know that don't you?'

Boris gulped.

'They all speak very highly of you out there. Of how unselfish you were.' Chekov cut himself short and continued on another tack.

'That reminds me Boris we must do something about your retirement. I don't suppose you have ever given it any thought have you?' It was a rhetorical question as he continued. 'Boris my friend, I have been a very bad employer, I have never put anything aside for your old age.....' Chekov was frowning now but was meekly interrupted by Boris.



'Er, boss?'

Chekov ignored him and continued. 'Boris we must look into some sort of pension for you. I have made some changes to the strategic plan of our little organisation and I feel it is time for both of us to settle down.....' Chekov was still frowning but once again was meekly interrupted by his faithful employee.

'Er, boss?'

'What is it my friend?'

'Er boss, I have pension.'

'You what Boris?'

'I have pension?'

Chekov was dumbfounded and looked up at Boris in surprise. 'Boris you have what?'

'Please wait?' Boris got up and walked over to a drawer in a nearby cupboard and got out a large brown envelope. He walked back to Chekov and pulling over a small table, carefully poured the contents of the envelope onto the table. His conscience had got the better of him and he felt he should show some sort of support to his boss as there was quite obviously some mistake into the interpretations of his actions at the bank in Tenerife. He also felt this would bypass the need to go into the explanation of why his friends had gone over to Kiev.

There was another pregnant pause.

'ББАПІУ ЪФТ!' muttered Chekov under his breath. Which roughly translated meant, "Kinnell! There's a few diamonds there."

After some considerable time Boris managed to get his courage up and said. 'I get this with a little help from my English friends in Tenerife, but I'm not sure what to do with them.'

Chekov was silent again as his brain ran amok with the variations of what *he* could do with them. 'Boris my friend, these are worth,.....' He was gobsmacked. He tried again.

'Boris, do you know how much these are worth?' Again, a rhetorical question. Chekov tried another tack.

'Boris, you old dog. Here's me worrying about you and you go and .....' Chekov was stuck for words again until he suddenly heard some noise coming from the kitchen and looked round startled and back to Boris.

'Boris I think we must discuss this at a later date. I think it would be in our interests to put these back somewhere safe until we have resolved our little problem here in the cottage.'

Sidney came into the lounge with three cups on a tray and offered them round. He started the conversation which was not forthcoming from either of the other two sitting drinking their tea.

'Mr Chekov, I am interested in what Boris has told me about these two ladies we have here. Would I be correct in assuming they are related to you in some way?'

'Well not exactly Mr Sidenose. But I did meet them over in Tenerife and it must be no coincidence that they are here now.'

'Very interesting. That *is* a coincidence indeed.' Sidney was frowning now.

'Boris has told me of your connection with his friends in Tenerife, I wonder if they told these ladies to come and see you,' said Chekov.

'Why would they want to come and see me?' Sidney said innocently.

'And why did they want to see you boss?' Boris enquired slowly with another frown.

'That is the \$64,000 question my friend.' Chekov looked at Sidney with a quizzical look.

Their unasked question was answered by both of them simultaneously.

'Police!'

They both stopped and looked at each other.

'Oh, shit!'

They all rushed up stairs.

Chekov slowly pushed the bedroom door open and was greeted with a gentle sound of snoring. He slowly pushed it wider with both Sidney and Boris pressing him from behind.

They stopped in their tracks. Dr Rammy's dark skinned naked body was wedged between the two voluptuous naked creamy white bodies of Sharon and Tracy. Rather like a large hot dog. The bedclothes were in some disarray as were the occupants, but at least they were all very happy with big grins on their sleeping faces.

They slowly closed the door and looked at each other not knowing what to do. They turned and walked back down stairs and sat down in the lounge. Sidney suddenly spotted their handbags on the floor and picked them up. He offered one to Chekov as they both emptied the contents on to the floor.

Apart from the myriad range of cosmetics, handkerchiefs, receipts, pills, lighters, cigarettes, mobile phones, scissors, nail files, small bottles of colourful liquid, diaries, hairpins, rubber bands, pencils, purses, etc etc, there were two items that stood out as identical.

Two plastic identity cards. Police Warrant cards

'ББАПУ ЪФТ!' muttered Chekov under his breath. Which roughly translated meant, "Kinnell! We're in deep shit."

Sidney looked at him and muttered virtually the same only in English.

Boris looked at both of them and suddenly realised the enormity of the problem but then suddenly brightened and looked to Chekov.

'No problem boss. I get rid of them.' He said in the knowledge that this basically was his job and he could now get back to work properly for his employer.

Chekov realised exactly what Boris had just thought. They all sat down without a word being said.

'It is all falling into place now, although I don't quite see where you come into this Mr Sidenose?'

'I was just thinking the very same Mr Chekov. I think we need to put our cards on the table.'

'Yes,' said Chekov but didn't really know where to start.

'I tell Mr Sidney shall I boss?'

'No Boris,' Chekov thought of the horrible confusion that would arise and felt it best to do the talking. 'No my friend, I think Mr Sidenose and I need to get our heads together and come up with a solution.'

'Mr Chekov, your friend Boris has already outlined your operations in his conversation with me when I picked him up from the boat. As I understand it you have a considerable organisation in the Central European role with wide ranging entrepreneurial activities in logistics and chemical related manufacturing.'

Chekov had to think about that statement but it did have a ring of truth about it.

Sidney continued. 'I'm afraid my organisation is very limited but extremely cash rich, which is basically our problem. We need to change our assets into more easily transferable liquid assets. This is where our friend Boris has come in very helpful, and it appears that your organisation has been unwittingly involved in helping us with this transfer. Now my friends in Tenerife have asked me to come and see Boris to see if we can resume our logistical activities.'

Chekov had to think about this, but suddenly the penny dropped. 'The bank in Tenerife, of course. It all fits into place now. The influx of bullion. Good God, if only I had known about this before, we could have come to some arrangement and avoided all this confusion.'

'Precisely my point my friend,' Sidney was warming to Chekov.

Chekov was warming to Sidney.

'So what you are saying is that you have a considerable amount of bullion that needs to be moved without the knowledge of the authorities,.....'

'Exactly.....' Sidney interrupted, but in turn was interrupted by Chekov.

'And I have a bank desperate for gold.'

There was another pregnant pause.

'БВАИУ ЪФТ!' muttered Chekov under his breath. Which roughly translated meant, "Kinnell. Now he tells me!"

There was another pregnant pause.  
'What the hell do we do with these two up stairs?'  
The pregnancy of this pause was mammothian.

## Chapter 24. Police Interrogation

Chekov, Sidney and Boris had been silent for some time sitting in the lounge of Primrose Cottage. They were down stairs while upstairs, Dr Rammy was fast asleep with two naked policewomen.

What to do?

At least Chekov and Sidney had realised that they both had mutual interests, which could prove extremely profitable if not exactly legal. But that was life; you had to earn a crust some way or another. But the crust was about to turn to crumbs unless they came up with a practical solution to the two ladies upstairs. Boris wanted to kill them which was his natural instinct being a professional assassin and Chekov being his employer should let him achieve job satisfaction but unfortunately this didn't quite fit into Chekov's new strategic thinking.

He was in love and he could see peace and tranquillity in this beautiful little village and murder was the last thing on his mind right now. He suddenly brightened.

'Boris my friend where did you put my suitcase?'

'Upstairs in the other bedroom, you want me to get it boss?'

'Yes please Boris. No, actually just open it and there's a camera inside, a small Nikon. Bring it down to me please.'

'Ok Boss,' and with that he left the lounge to go upstairs.

'You obviously have a plan?' Sidney asked his new-found friend and business colleague.

'Yes, I think we cannot afford anything too messy at this stage with our friends upstairs but perhaps we could persuade them to see things our way?'

'Get the filth to think like us? I think you will need a lot of persuasion my friend.'

'Oh, I'm good at that. It's a sort of hobby of mine. But I hope we don't have to go that far. Let's try something else first eh?'

'What exactly my friend?'

'Oh, let's just fallback to good old fashioned blackmail shall we?'

'Now you're talking.'

'I'm just a little bit worried about our friend the local doctor. This may well affect his reputation.'

'If what the locals have told me is true I would think this will *enhance* his reputation.'

'Oh?' Chekov enquired.

'If you were a good looking young doctor fresh out of medical college why would you want to come to a place like Muddlecombe?'

Chekov was silent for a minute. Sidney carried on.

'Why does *anybody* want come to Muddlecombe?'

Chekov pondered this and suddenly replied. 'Yes, I understand what you are saying my friend. Good, then he won't mind being involved will he?'

Just then Boris returned with a camera in his hand.

'Ah, Boris, good man. Now let's get this operation underway. I'm going to need all your help. Firstly, Boris, have we got any rope or tape or something to tie people up with?'

'I'll go and have a look boss,' Boris said as he walked away into the kitchen.

They all assembled several minutes later at the doorway to the bedroom upstairs where the unsuspecting love triangle lay enmeshed. Chekov slowly opened the door and they peered round to the same view they saw half an hour ago. Chekov took some photographs and then they slowly tried to untangle the knotted mess of humanity with much groaning coming from all sides. Dr Rammy eventually started some kind of conscious movement but was dissuaded to proceed by Boris' hand over his mouth. Dr Rammy's eyes shot open in horror but the "shushing" noises and fingers in front of mouths gesticulating reduced this to incredulation as he was slowly unentwined from the writhing bodies.

Boris lifted Dr Rammy from the bed like a baby and still gagging him, led him outside as he tried desperately to cover his embarrassment. Chekov and Sidney slowly bound and gagged the two sleeping beauties. Completing their tasks they left the room and joined Dr Rammy and Boris outside on the landing. Chekov slowly closed the bedroom door and went down stairs with the others.

'Haven't we got something for the poor Doctor to wear?' Chekov said sympathetically as Boris let him go slowly while Dr Rammy stood knocked kneed holding his hands down in front of him.

'I go get clothes,' said Boris as he rushed up stairs and came back with some of the poor doctor's clothing.

'I'm sorry to cause you so much embarrassment my friend,' said Chekov to Dr Rammy while he got dressed. 'But we have a bit of a problem here. I think the first thing we need to know is how

long will those two ladies be sleeping. I understand you have given them a little something?’

‘Well, I think they should be out for a good few more hours yet. I used my normal dose for Boris but that should suffice for a bit longer on normal humans though.’

‘I’m sorry to involve you in this my friend but as you are now in this up to your .....’ Chekov was a bit embarrassed with the next words. ‘.....er,.....what I’m trying to say is ,...’

‘You’re *right* in it, pal!’ Sidney put it succinctly.

‘Thank you Sidney,’ Chekov said a little embarrassed with his lack of knowledge of the English language. He continued. ‘As you are now so involved I think we must explain our situation to you.’

They all sat down and Chekov and Sidney talked through the scenario. Dr Rammy was partially aware of this anyway with his involvement with Boris, so it came as no surprise to him and he was able to take an active part in the discussion. Part of this was how to move the ladies and how much more “medicine” could be administered.

At midnight they realised that there was not a lot more that they could do and went to bed to review the situation in the morning.

\* \* \*

Both Chekov and Boris were awake early the next morning with the grunting and groaning noises coming from the guest’s bedroom. They dressed and on Chekov’s instructions slowly opened the door to be greeted by even more muffled screams. The two naked policewomen lay writhing on the bed in some discomfort and embarrassment. Both men stood and stared for a few seconds, which did nothing to the demeanour of the two ladies at all. But it gave the men their jollies and also time to think what to do.

They picked up the clothing that lay around the bed and looked at each other wondering how to get them back on to the two spitting cats on the bed. They daren’t undo their bonds but how were they going to get them downstairs?

‘Boris, I think we must get these ladies some blankets to cover their shame and then ask them if they would like to join us down stairs for a little discussion.’ Chekov and Boris started picking up the dishevelled blankets and tried to drape them around their captors who were squirming and kicking like mustangs.

This obviously wasn’t going to work so Chekov stood and thought for a while.

‘I think we need to bring Dr Rammy into this to administer some more medicine.’

Suddenly the two ladies stopped wriggling and with massive hangovers from Dr Rammy's last medicine and realised the best thing to do was to give in and come quietly. It was a fair cop,..... and a brunette cop as well!

'Ah, good, ladies, I see we have resorted to reason at last.'

Both Chekov and Boris covered the ladies and helped them hop down stairs to the lounge. This turmoil had woken both Sidney and Dr Rammy who joined them. Sidney made a pot of tea and the ladies were persuaded to have their gags removed on the condition of no screaming. There weren't an awful lot of options open to them anyway as screaming in Muddlecombe would not get them very far, especially tucked away in the cottage.

'Good morning Detective Constables Fuzzelli and Scrubbs,' said Chekov reading from their warrant cards. The ladies remained silent. 'We meet once again, only this time it is *you* who has the hangover so to speak.'

The ladies glared at him.

'I'm sorry for my young doctor's inexperience but he was in a rush to take advantage of you and being a shy lad he felt the best way to do this was without your permission. An old medical college trick used during his student days no doubt.' Chekov looked over to Dr Rammy who was clearly embarrassed by all this. 'Fortunately it has given us some very interesting photographs that could damage your promotion prospects no doubt.'

'What are you going to do with us?' Sharon was the first of the two ladies to speak.

'My friend Boris wants to kill you.....' said Chekov but was quickly interrupted.

'Oh yes please boss. It's been a long time now, I get rusty. Just this time boss, just one more go before I retire boss, please?' Boris said rubbing his hands.

Sharon and Tracey could recognise the sincerity of Boris' pleading and they could also recognise that it could be a wee problem for them. Their devious minds went straight into action.

'And what are you going to do with all those diamonds Boris?' Tracey followed on quickly.

This startled the men and Chekov looked at Boris. 'What do they know about your diamonds my friend?'

'I'm sorry boss. I left a few lying about and they sort of asked me about them.'

'Oh no Boris,' Chekov groaned.

'We can help you there Chekov.' Sharon jumped in quickly. There was a lot at stake here, vis-à-vis their lives to start with and she had realised this was a way out of the death bit.

'How do you mean?' Chekov was interested.

'Well, how are you going to get them cut and sold? If you haven't got an audit trail for them you're in deep shit. You won't



make any sort of decent market price for them at all.' Tracey was quick to follow on.

'If you can get them made into some sort of jewellery we know a few people who will give you a decent mark up for your goods.' Sharon continued on the nervous route to "staying alive" routine.

'With no questions asked, if you see my meaning boys.' Tracey confirmed the benefit's of the operation.

There was another of those bloody pregnant pauses again.

Sidney was the first to speak. 'How can we trust you girls?'

'We're policewomen.'

That bought the house down which a great deal of hilarity. It even bought a smile to the girls.

'You can't, but you've got the photographs, that's if anything did happen in the bedroom.'

They all looked to Dr Rammy who was deeply blushing now. That spoke volumes. The two ladies looked at each other and inwardly groaned.

'So what you are saying is that we need to firstly cut the diamonds and then get them put into some sort of jewellery?' Chekov enquired.

'Stands to reason don't it. You'll double your mark up and profit's doing it that way.' Sharon added the magic words "profit's" and "double" in the same sentence, which was music to both Chekov and Sidney's ears.

They both looked at each other and in that instance a commercial enterprise was set up. No hand shakes, no contracts, but there was one small problem, the diamonds belonged to Boris and he would have to have a major share in this venture. Just the job for his pension Chekov thought. The problem was how to get his hands on more diamonds.

'Ladies, I think for the time being we will let you live. My friend Boris will be unemployed but we may have other tasks for him. Please excuse us while we talk business. Dr Rammy, can I ask you to look after these young ladies please? But try to keep your clothes on this time.'

Chekov, Boris and Sidney left the room and closing the door looked around for a better place to continue their conversation.

'Why don't we go in here?' said Sidney. 'This is the committee room for Mrs Dimmock and her pals and it doubles up as the dining room.'

They gathered around the large dining table. Chekov picked up a strange feeling with the mention of Mrs Dimmock. He shook his head and carried on.

'Sidney my friend, you'll have to tell me more about Mrs Dimmock. She's a very strange old lady indeed and you said she has a committee?'

'I'll go into that later Chekov. I think our priorities are in the business and disposal arenas at the moment.'

'Quite right my friend, so what do we do about these ladies?'

'Can't I just kill them boss. Just like the good old days?' Boris was back to his enthusiastic best.

'Boris my friend I'm afraid we must keep up with the times and move on. Killing is not the solution it used to be. We have to look at the strategic implications. The whole picture Boris, we must look at the whole picture. Then there is the environmental issue.'

This shut up Boris completely as there were a few words in there he'd never heard before.

'Boris, my friend, first of all can you tell us how you got these diamonds?'

'Er yes boss. I buy from Indian gentleman who is friend of John in Tenerife.'

'That's my client, John who owns this cottage Chekov. We will need to talk to him on the matter of logistics for the bullion as well.'

'Yes, he obviously is a key man in this whole operation.'

'Why don't I take ladies back to Tenerife and let Miss Whiplash look after them. She make them into good girls.' What Boris really meant was *bad* girls.

'Ah, that's the place your friend Dimitri uses isn't it Boris?'

'Er, yes boss. We have meetings with bosses there and look after them for you and make them happy and.....'

Chekov interrupted Boris there quickly, as he didn't want to go through the sordid details again as he had with Dimitri and his disciplinary room.

'Yes, thank you Boris. We get your drift.' Chekov stopped and looked down in a pensive mood.

'I can provide the necessary transport Chekov. Discreet as usual.' Sidney offered.

Chekov suddenly looked up.

'What a good idea. But instead of taking them both why don't we just take one as ransom in case anything goes wrong back here?'

'Brilliant!' Sidney brightened up immediately. 'What a cracking idea.' He was definitely warming to this man. 'And I can go with Boris and see John about further supplies of diamonds.' Sidney felt it was time to visit his clients especially somewhere warmer.

Chekov was back in pensive mode again. Boris was in a depression, remembering the three-day ordeal in the power boat

coming back from Tenerife. 'And perhaps you can look after Mr Sidenose here and let him gain the benefit's of Miss Whiplash's establishment at the same time Boris?'

'Oh, yes. OK boss.' Boris turned to Sidney. 'Don't worry Mr Sidenose, I look after you. You like Miss Whiplash.' That was an order more than an invitation.

Sidney wasn't quite sure how to take this and vaguely nodded his head in mute acceptance.

'Boris my old friend, we have not consulted you on the matter of your diamonds. These are *your* diamonds, but you do realise we can make you a very rich man don't you? This is your pension fund.'

'You very kind boss, but I make friends here and I like to give money to village. My friends have done a lot for me.' Boris didn't feel he needed to go into details too much at this point.

'Boris, I think that's a splendid idea and it fit's in with my thinking also. But I think we have a lot of work to do and we need to look into safeguarding our supplies and then there is the small matter of how we cut the diamonds and how we introduce the jewellery bit as well.'

'Er, boss, you remember we have agent in Amsterdam who help us before. Maybe he still there?'

'Boris, you old dog. Yes, you're right, now what's his name.....'

'If I remember rightly don't they have some sort of jewellery thing here in the village?' Sidney pointed out. 'In the local school or community college or whatever they call it?'

'God God, of course. Mildred's classes. This place is heaven sent.' Chekov looked up to the ceiling. He was actually looking a bit beyond that but he could only focus so far.

'Makes you wonder doesn't it?' Sidney muttered.

## Chapter 25. MI6

The large grey Transit van made it's way up Vauxhall Bridge Road after it had left the imposing building at Vauxhall Cross, headquarters of SIS, the Secret Intelligent Service or MI6 as most people know it. It turned into Eaton Square Road and then a right into Belgrave Place and pulled up outside a row of impressive terraced properties with large white fronted Georgian facades with large front doors covered in glass and brass.

You could smell the money as two men got out of their van, one going into the back while the other walked nonchalantly up the stairs to the front entrance. He went through the plate glass doors, nodded briefly to the commissionaire and went across to the lift entrance. At the top floor he got out of the elevator, slowly looked around and walked down the corridor until he stopped outside a door. He again looked round and softly tapped the door. He put his ear against it and tapped a bit harder this time. No reply. He looked round again and taking out a key slowly opened the door and went in closing it quietly behind him.

The imposing interior matched the smell of money outside. The large chunky furniture looked lost inside the richly decorated apartment. He slowly walked around the fittings talking to them as if they were some long lost friends. Going over to table lamps, pictures on the walls, underneath the large bureau, they all needed his personal attention.

'Testing, one two three,' was the only thing he seemed to have to say to the furniture, which one felt wasn't very deserving of such rich surroundings. Hey, whatever, each to their own.

His manner changed as he entered the master bedroom and started rubbing his hands. He now felt such regal fittings warranted a few jumps up and down and the bed springs obviously needed testing as well. The odd wave to the ceiling wouldn't go amiss either he felt. A knowing wink and a smile here and there was added to the invisible audience together with the one armed salute bent upwards while holding the bicep as the final flourish.

Whistling quietly to himself he wandered around the room as a farewell gesture taking in all the richness of the room which would quite obviously never be coming his way unless he got the correct six numbers on the lottery. With a final sigh he slowly

opened the door and looking outside to make sure there was nobody there closed the door and walked swiftly to the lift.

Once outside he approached the back of the transit van and gave a little knock, which was the password to let him in to join his colleague.

'Everything OK then Kev?'

'Yeah, no probs there mate.'

Kev made some technical adjustments to the vast array of equipment inside the van and having finished his task turned back to his mate in anticipation. Two of the cream of Britain's finest intelligence agents settled down for a quiet evening of intellectual discussion on the strategic implications of the security services rôle in the new world order.

'The missus alright then?'

'No improvement there I'm afraid.'

'Yeah, me neither.'

'You on late shift all week then?'

'Yeah,'

'See the match on Saturday?'

'Yeah, what a load of wankers. I could piss further than they could pass and a damn sight more accurate as well.'

'Yeah, and that bleedin' wop with the long hair, what a bleedin' ponce he is, eh? What a bleedin' waste of 5 million quid?'

'You said it.'

'Ere, what's on for tonight then, you got the file?'

'Er, yeah, somewhere, 'ang on,' he looked round the cramped seating arrangement until he found a brown manila file marked "Top Secret" and passed it over to his friend.

'Let's see if we got anything juicy on for tonight then?' It was a rhetorical question as he opened the file and started to look through the brief details inside. The Shakespearean conversation was briefly interrupted as he digested the information.

'Who's this then? A Mister Denis Dimmock? And some Dollianna something-or-other?'

'Yeah, the boss briefed me quickly on 'im. 'Es on secondment, 'es a civvy, got this red hot agent over from Ukraine who's busting a gut to open up in return for political asylum, and he's the only one she'll talk to. He must be some big wig or something she met while he was over there. Some sort of trade delegate I reckon.'

'I bet she's the usual bleeding Rusky type. All ugly and muscles.'

'Yeah, oh well least we still got our jobs.'

'Yeah, 'ole matey got the chop.....'

'And old what's 'is name as well.....?'

'And, Eh, what about thingy and that girl.....?'

'Yeah, since they knocked that bleedin' Berlin Wall down nobody's safe any more.'

'They ain't made you an offer yet then?'

'No. I don't think they know about us, eh?'

'I think you're probably right, best just keep our bleedin' heads down and get on with it eh?'

\* \* \*

Darkness fell upon the quiet Belgrave suburb and the two occupants of the van had gone through their sandwiches and flasks of tea when all of a sudden one of them gave the other a quick dig in the ribs.

'Ere Kev, I think we're in business me old mate.'

The alert training and experience of all the years in MI6 came flooding into action.

'Bugger, I was just getting into the juicy bits of this book. I suppose we'd best do something then, eh?'

His friend started to yawn. Another fat old bugger fumbling about with some Eastern European ugly or some boring politicians slagging their mates off or hours of waiting for some contact to come in and deliver a brown envelope, or a night just listening to telephone conversations. Hey ho. All in the line of duty for Queen and.....

'Holy shit, come and have a look at this Kev?'

The two men at last reacted with the speed of light and focused in on the screen monitors showing various aspects and views of the two people now on centre stage.

'Get that focus right Kev, for fucks sake!?' There was some urgency in the request.

Kev pressed some buttons and the two of them were stunned into silence.

'Holy shit!' The two of them said together in hushed tones of amazement.

They started to rub their hands as the two players entered the apartment and made themselves comfortable.

'I think we're going to have to work all night tonight me old mate?' That wasn't so much a rhetorical question, more a statement of fact or even a begging request.

'Ooh, Kev, I think we're in for a cracking evening 'ere. I can feel it in me water.'

'Now she is something else. You sure she's from the Eastern bloc?'

'Who the fuck cares? Look at those.....?' Two hands came out in front of him in a grabbing movement.

'Arthritic hands.' The confirmation came slowly with the senses prioritising the visual organs rather than the audio bits.

They continued in silence with their work, now committed to total job satisfaction.

After half an hour they started to get impatient.

'Come on you dozy bugger, she's gagging for it.' Another begging request for further action. The monitor screens had been wiped clean several times by now and the inside of the van was getting decidedly hot and steamy.

'Ere, he must 'av 'eard you Kev. You sure you ain't got the audio on back to front?'

Kev gave his partner a disdainful look but not for too long as the action was hotting up inside the apartment and he had to make several adjustments to the electronic surveillance equipment as the players slowly made their way into the master bedroom.

'Oooh, Kev, I can't believe me bleedin' luck. Please God, don't make me blind?' Another begging note supported by two praying hand motions and the eyes looking upwards for confirmation.

Kev was too busy keeping everything in focus.

'Ooh, Kev, I think we're in luck tonight?'

Kev was still too busy, this time trying to focus his *own* eyes.

'Ooh, Kev. You have got a back up video tape running haven't you me old mate?'

'Do what?' Kev was distracted.

'A back up video tape?'

'A what? Oh, shit, I forgot all about that. There's one over their mate, get it out of the DAT tape rack and pop it into the server will you.'

'Oooh, Kev, I ain't going to miss anything am I?'

'No mate, but just make sure it's a four hour one.'

His mate pulled the small DAT tape out of it's plastic folder and slipped it into the PC front tape drive flap.

'That'll be worth a bob or two round the office, eh Kev?'

'Do what?'

They both concentrated in anticipation on the scene about to unfold in the master bedroom.

'What's she got there Kev?'

'Some sort of brief case, what's she going to do with that? Take down dictation. Oh Jesus Christ, don't tell me she's some dedicated bleedin' PA doing the minutes of the last bleedin' committee meeting. That's all we need.' Kev was not a happy man. How could life be so cruel as to lead him up to all this expectation then let him down so rudely?

'Allo, allo, ain't that one of them old Elector Mark three's?'

'Bleedin' hell, so it is Kev. What's she going to do with that? Didn't know the Rusky's was still using them old lie detectors.'

'Ere, 'ang on a mo? Whos'e interrogating who here? Get that file out will you?'

The manila file was passed over, opened and quickly scanned.

'The stupid bastard! *He's* the one supposed to be doing the interrogating not her. I thought there was something wrong here.'

'Well 'es probably new at it. Who the fuck cares anyway, as long as she gets 'er kit off.'

'Well don't hold your breath pal. Look at the silly sod. 'Es just lying back and letting her take his shirt off and letting her put the bleedin' electrodes on. It's like taking a lamb to slaughter.'

'E ain't putting up much of a struggle is 'e?'

'The silly sod, 'e's just lying there. Don't you think we should do something?'

'What the fuck can we bleedin' well do? Pop up there. Knock on the door and say "Oh please excuse me sir, but *you're* supposed to get *her* kit off and put them little sticky pads on *her*, you stupid plonker! Oh, and by the way, can you smile on camera three please?'"

There was a pregnant pause as the impracticality of any such action was contemplated. Their minds where quickly diverted back to the matter in hand.

'Holy shit. What's she doing now?'

'I don't know which bleedin' manual 'e was trained on but I somehow don't think we're going to get a lot out of her?'

'Who the fuck cares, as long as she.....'

He was quickly interrupted with a sharp response.

'Yes, I think I've got your drift pal. You seem to have lost the plot though. We are supposed to be information gatherers from the other side. I don't think anybody in HM Government will be too ecstatic over information about our *own* intelligence, now will they?'

'Yeah, I see what you mean. Any road up, it ain't as if 'e's said anything yet as 'e? 'Ere what's happening now?'

'The dirty dog!'

'E's playing wigwams!'

'Jesus Christ!'

'She's started to wind I'm up, she's getting *her* kit off now!'

'At bleedin' last.'

'E'll be singing like a bird any moment now. You mark my word.'

'Wouldn't you?'

'Too bleedin' true. I can put up with so much torture but that takes the bleedin' biscuit. No man can survive what she's throwing at 'im.'

'Holy shit look at them.....'

'I ain't seen a pair like that in many a long time.'



'The things you see when you ain't got your gun with you.'

'Well, you can see e's packing a pistol.'

'Come on the dozy bugger, you don't undo a bleedin' bra like that!'

'It's alright, she's doing it now.'

There then followed a complete period of silence you normally only hear in Trapist Monasteries as the occupants of then van had all their audio organs totally overridden by the energy needed to take in the full enormity of the visual vista being offered to them. This also led to total lack of control of the facial muscles and subsequent saliva leakage from the oral orifices.

They managed to control the dribbling eventually and offered some form of verbal communication, albeit in hushed tones.

'Kinnell!' Which roughly translated meant, "fucking hell!"

Dribble.

'Holy shit!'

Dribble.

'Jesus H Christ!'

Dribble.

'Bloody Nora!'

Dribble.

'Oh, no, I don't believe it. She's.....'

Dribble.

'Holy shit!'

Dribble.

'E's just lying there taking it.....'

Dribble.

'Oh, my God!'

Dribble.

'Holy Moses!'

Dribble.

'Oh, holy shit, he's doing the windscreen wipers bit, I can't watch any more of this.....'

'Keep that focus Kev for Christ's sake if you want to stay alive.'

'Me bleedin' hands is shakin' I can't help it.....'

'He'll need more than two hands to keep them in control.'

'She's undoing his.....'

'Whatch that zip you silly cow.....'

'OOOOH!'

'I don't believe it. Have you ever seen anything like .....

'Holy shit!'

Dribble.

'Jesus H Christ!'

Dribble.

'Bloody Nora!'

Dribble.

'The lucky bastard.'

Dribble.

'I ain't seen anything like.....'

Dribble.

'I just said that.'

Dribble.

'Did you?'

Dribble.

'Holy shit, she's getting the rest of the kit off now.'

Dribble.

'I don't believe it.....?'

Dribble.

'You already said that.'

Dribble.

'Did I?'

'Oh shit she's getting on top of him now.....'

The saliva glands had completely dried up by now.

'She'll never manage to get all that.....'

'She's going to give it a try. *That'll* bring tears to 'er eyes.'

'It's bringing tears to *my* bleedin' eyes.....'

'Oooh, that must've hurt.'

'Bleedin' hell, she's done it'

'Oh my God she's grinding her hips.....'

'She's moaning like a fish wife.....'

'Oh my God, the rotten filthy lucky bastard, look at her go.....'

The Trapist Monastery silence descended upon the van interior again until it was broken with the words, 'Ere Kev, you got the audio switched on?'

'Course I 'av, why you asking?'

'Well I ain't heard much noise going on.....'

'I'd best check. 'Ang on a mo'. Ah the bloody volumes down. There, try that.'

'Christ, she's really in the mood now. She's making a meal out of this. She's really enjoying herself.'

'What's that she's gibbering on about?'

'Christ knows. Who the fuck cares anyway, as long as.....'

'No 'ang on a mo, I'll just pop the volume up a bit more.....'

'It ain't bleedin' English, whatever it is....'

'Cor, she can't 'arf rabbit on, can't she?'

'Wonder what's she's saying?'

'It's probably Russian for "I'm having an orgasm".'

'Or I'm having *several* bleedin' orgasms.'

'Ere, that dozey bugger's dropped off.'

'No, 'e can't have, he's still packing 'is pistol though.'

'Is howitzer you mean?'

'Well, 'is eyes is closed.'

'Well, wouldn't yours be if you was in ecstasy?'

'Not with a view like that in front of me. Not with them beauties jumping up and down. I'd sellotape me bleedin' eyelids up.'

\* \* \*

Two extremely exhausted, red faced and red eyed men finished their shift and returned to base handing over the audio tape to their boss at Vauxhall Cross. The video tape went to the IT lab for private consumption with the audio tape going to their section leader. They had a few hours sleep and managed to get back in time to hand in their overtime expenses claim together with their report on the night's action. It was kept to a minimum with just the basic details as per the audio tape. 'Well done lads,' was the greeting they received upon bumping into their section leader.

'It was a cracker, that one, weren't it boss?' A lot of nudging and winking then ensued.

'It certainly was. We've put it through the Interpreters section and we've got some pretty juicy stuff from that young lady I can tell you, and all the low down on that bitch, Colonel Svetlana Koffinsky,' he said tapping the side of his nose.

'Oh, yes. You've done a good job there lads and that Mr Dimmock has shown us a whole new meaning of the word "Interrogation". How did he actually do it?'

'He'd sort of got his own tools so to speak boss,' said Kev, tongue in cheek.

'It weren't 'arf a big one,' confirmed his colleague who suddenly felt a sharp pain on his toe.

'Strange that?' said the boss. 'We didn't pick up any hint of intimidation or threatening behavior from the tape.'

'No, he sort of got inside her so to speak boss.....' his other toe felt pain.

'I see,' said the boss. 'Psychological stuff eh? Anyway, that tape is hot stuff, I can tell you. We've got the full SP on the Ukrainian Federal Services Bureau and then a bit more. There will be some red faces in Parliament I can tell you. You'd best get yourselves some smart clothes lads. There's going to be some gongs flying about for the team after this little lot hit's the ceiling.'

'Yeah, and all we'll get is the bleedin' stuff falling off the ceiling on to our heads.'

The two prospective gong bearers turned and walked away.

'Ere, the IT labs just gave me a bell. They've burnt the video tapes on to CD ROMS and had a sneak preview and the bastards want a 20 percent cut.'

'They want what?' He turned quickly to his friend in anger.

'They've upped the anti. The words out about the video. Reckon they've got orders of over 50 copies already, and that's just "B" Section. They ain't tried the "A" or Admin sections yet.'

'Sounds ok by me. We'll just put the bleedin' price up by 10 per cent to cover our costs, Eh? I think we're on a nice little earner there Eh?'

'Yeah, right on Kev.'

## Chapter 26. Amsterdam

'Mildred darling, I think I have a solution for your drains.'

'Oooohhhh, I love it when you talk dirty!' Mildred snuggled even closer into him. They lay naked in Mildred's bedroom after another steamy session making up for lost time in the connubial stakes. Not that they were legally or morally "connubed" so to speak, but they bloody well deserved to be.

They were missing another balmy summer evening outside again in Muddlecombe, but that was their choice.

'I'm sorry Mildred, my mind is elsewhere. Not only am I in love with you but also with your beautiful village. It's so enchanting and so peaceful. I have never felt so relaxed and even after only two days, I feel as if I belong here.....'

'You won't feel so relaxed when Captain Thingy O'what's-it gets home.' Mildred was that relaxed she couldn't remember the name of her husband.

'Don't break the spell please,,,,,,,,,'

'I'm sorry, only teasing. Now let's get back to the drains,' Mildred hugged him tighter to show a deep interest in the drains problem. She waited with baited breath as she looked up to him with her big eyelashes flashing in anticipation.

'No seriously Mildred, I think I, I mean we, that is my partner,,,,,'

'Partner?' Mildred thought she was his partner.

'Boris,' Chekov turned to confirm with a frown.

'Oh, your man in the village, the grizzly bear?'

'Yes, anyway, my business colleague and I have a little commercial venture that we think could benefit the whole village.'

'Gosh,' Mildred gave another enthusiastic hug to promote further exciting events.

'And,' Chekov continued, 'we may need your help.'

'Ooohh,' this was getting exciting thought Mildred and gave him another hug.

'I need to talk to you about your school.....'

'My school?' Mildred was getting really interested now.

'Yes, you mentioned something to do with jewellery.'

\* \* \*

The newly renovated Avenue Hotel was a popular modern three-star hotel ideally situated in the heart of Amsterdam. Well-known attractions like the Anne Frank house, the bustling Dam Square and Holland's most famous shopping mall "Magna Plaza" were within walking distance.

The girls settled into their rooms, changed and met downstairs in the hotel foyer. Mildred had been left to her own devices, as Chekov had to go off for a "business" meeting and was behind schedule already. After a brief conversation with the reception they chose to take the directions to the bustling Dam Square and its famous shopping mall "Magna Plaza". They would do Anne Frank's house later. The word "shopping" was far more magnetic than "history".

\* \* \*

The fresh air of Amsterdam invigorated them after their travel and the pretty canal sidewalks invited their curiosity as they walked off in search of the shops. After a few minutes they came across what looked like a small "tea room" and decided to pop in for a cuppa.

There was a sweet smell about the place as they walked in and found a table. Glancing around it looked for all like a typical tea room but the clientele where of a younger disposition than your normal tweed and twin set brigade. The priority for a cuppa overrode their curiosity and their patience was eventually rewarded with the appearance of a young waitress.

'Do you speak English?' came the curt demand from Lucinda.

'Oh, yesh I speak a little. Kin I help you ladiesh?' came the lilting reply. The waitress had had a fairly quiet day so far but she could see things were going to get a bit more interesting. She was a bit tired of the young tourists pinching her behind all day long, and it was refreshing to see some mature faces especially, as was about to become abundantly clear, your actual "innocents abroad". The afternoon was looking up. A bit of excitement could accrue here.

They had quite clearly missed the "Self Service" notice, anyway Lucinda didn't do "Self Service", she was brought up to be waited upon.

'We want a pot of tea for four and .....' Lucinda looked around the restaurant in lieu of a menu, 'and some of those cakes. Do you do a selection?'

'Oh yesh, we can do that for you. Is thish your firsh time in Amshterdam?' the singing voice enquired.

'Yes, it is actually,' Lucinda coughed and demurely agreed; a little put off that she hadn't immediately been recognised as a member of the International Jet Set.

\* \* \*

They all felt decidedly more relaxed after the first pot of tea and ordered some more. They didn't quite understand the various blends of tea on offer such as: "white widow"; "orange bud" and "double zero", but felt "as in Rome" and settled down to enjoy their cuppa.

The cakes proved a great hit as well and they relaxed even more. Betty was feeling that relaxed she felt a hymn coming on and was about to burst into "Jerusalem" when she flung her arms wide to start the first verse only to knock the person on the next table off his chair.

There was some considerable commotion in trying to rectify the situation.

Betty feeling considerably light headed promptly slid down from her chair and joined the young man she had already displaced on the floor. He was fumbling around looking for his glasses.

This prompted a giggle from Betty and the rest of them joined in the chorus.

The poor young man she had knocked off the seat had by this time regained his senses and felt that he wasn't going to get anywhere just sitting on the floor next to his assailant and decided to get himself off the floor on his own.

He eventually found his glasses, looked at his adversary only to find she was the one in need of assistance as she was now sitting on the floor snorting and giggling like someone who had had too much to drink or someone on drugs. "These bloody foreigners" he thought to himself, but corrected this upon further observation to "but nice tits".

He stood up and offered her his hand, which only bought on more guffawing and little or no assistance from her friends who found this just as funny. She was quite clearly incapable of getting herself up so he moved round the back of her and tried to lift her up. She was a dead weight, completely limp and unable to stop laughing, apart from the odd hiccup now and then. Her legs were now straight out in front of her and didn't look like sustaining much weight.

The waitress looked on with a wry smile on her face leaning against the wall thinking much the same as the poor young man, "these bloody stupid foreigners". This was the first time she had achieved any real sort of job satisfaction.

There was only one thing for it, he would have to lift her up from the back using her considerable cleavage, which was by now shaking with laughter, as a point of leverage. He managed to bend down and with both hands now around her wobbling frontal area, lifted her like a rag doll back on to her seat.

Betty managed to stop giggling for a few seconds, rearranged her clothing and looked up to her saviour and slurred a few words.

'Thank you young man,' she said, having considerable difficulty with her speech as the brain was lagging in getting messages to the mouth so she eventually mouthed the correct syllables and managed to get a full sentence out. She couldn't manage any more words, as it was time to go back to the giggling stage.

The young man brushed himself down swearing never to wash his hands again and inquired, 'Where do yow cum frum. Yow frum England?'

'I beg your pardon?' Betty interrupted the giggling to strain to understand the young man's question.

'Yow frum England?'

'England oh, yes, we come from England.'

'I think she's chatting up one of the natives.' Lucinda muttered as an aside.

'Yam frum Duddelleye meesen.'

'I beg your pardon?' Betty was having difficulty with the local accent as well as getting the words out of her mouth in some sort of understandable language.

'Duddelleye, I cum frum Duddelleye.'

'Oh you're from.....? Betty had got the first bit but was struggling with the "duddle" bit.

'Yow know Duddelleye, it's near Brumijum.'

'Bremijem?' Betty was getting a bit warmer.

'Oh isn't that where they grow the tulips?' Mildred joined in the conversation.

'No, it's where they had that battle.' Fiona joined in now. 'You know, for that bridge in the second world war. You remember, wasn't it Peter Lawford in the Great Escape?'

'That wasn't Peter Lawford. That was Steve McQueen you silly tart.' Lucinda stamped her authority on the proceedings. 'And it was Nijmegen, not ....you know whatever he just said.'

'He was married to a Kennedy,' Mildred absent mindedly added.

This stopped the conversation dead for a few seconds until another blockbuster of a conversation stopper was thrown in. 'We really ought to go and see the tulips while we're here you know.' Fiona said.



'It was a Bridge too Far,.....I remember it now,' Mildred had collected her thoughts and was right back on track. The trouble was which track was she on?

The poor young lad was watching this with total perplexity, having lost the plot a long time ago and his neck was sore from switching from one speaker to the next. He really wanted to concentrate on the lovely lady sitting next to him, but was getting horribly sidetracked.

'It was Sean Connery anyway.' Lucinda tried in vain to get back on to a track as well but it was getting increasingly difficult to see clearly let alone trying to *think* clearly. Her head felt like it wanted to float off somewhere else. 'With Dirk Bogarde,' she finalised with authority.

'No, no, I cum from England.' The young lad tried to explain.

'Make you're bloody mind up sunshine.' Lucinda was getting very frustrated.

'You mean you don't grow tulips?' Mildred was very disappointed.

'No, I don't now whurr yow all got this thing about flowers, I'm from Duddelley, and I'm into doymunds.'

'I beg your pardon?' Betty was quite attracted to this young man and felt he ought to be given a fair chance. Betty was quite attracted to anything in trousers in her current state. She was feeling distinctly warm and fluffy all over and could have floated away with any passing man.

Mildred was feeling much the same but had been alerted to something in her memory that he had said that may have been relevant to this whole trip.

'Excuse me young man,' Mildred tried to speak properly but it came out all posh. She sounded a bit like Lucinda when she was in charge of the Gymkhana.

'Excuse me, but I couldn't help over hearing you and did you mention, er,.....diamonds?'

'Aye, that's rowt, owm over here on apprenticeship loike with wun of them doymund cutting companies.' He was getting some attention now and carried on. 'Yow all know the jewelry centre in Brum, well that's whurr oi work loike.'

'Oh, you mean Birmingham?' Mildred giggled.

Everyone else started giggling as well.

'Betty, I think we need to talk to this young man,' whispered Mildred into Betty's ear.

'I beg your pardon,' mouthed Betty turning round to face Mildred.

'I think he could be of assistance,' Mildred hissed at Betty.

Betty stopped for a few seconds then turning back to the youth, she eventually managed to say, 'I beg your pardon young

man,' she took another deep breath, 'but could you be of assistance?'

'I beg yow pardon?' the youth asked a little bit puzzled.

Betty looked puzzled this time and turned back to Mildred for another prompt.

'It's to do with diamonds,' she whispered into Betty's ear again. 'Chekov's over here looking for some people to do with diamonds. This lad might just be able to help us out.'

'Can you help ush out!' blurted our Betty swinging quickly round to face the youth. She had understood the last bit from Mildred but forgotten the first bits.

'I beg yow pardon?' the youth asked again, a little bit more puzzled.

Betty whipped her head round again to Mildred's side for further instructions. She was getting distinctly dizzy by now.

Mildred looked into the glazed red eyes of Betty and felt it best to bypass her for the time being. She was none to focused either but gave it a stab.

'Young man, did you jush menshun downmunds, I mean diamonds.' She managed to correct herself in time.

'Ow, that's rowt, Oim a downmund cutter by trade loike. Well oi will be when oi finish this bludy training loike. Yow ladies all into downmunds loike?'

'Well were not actually, but I have a friend who ish so to speak. Perhapsh you'd like to come back to our hotel with ush young man?' Mildred heaved a sigh or relief after managing such a long sentence.

'Kinnell, I mean bludy Norah, well what oi mean is that, ....that wud be luvley.' He stuttered the words out in astonishment. It was not often four women asked him back to their hotel. He'd never had a gang bang before and his little eyes lit up behind his glasses.

Lucinda felt she should put her stamp of authority on the proceedings and said. 'Well, that's that settled then, come on young man, you'd best come back with us then.' She stood up but with immediate effect of what appeared to be altitude sickness. She promptly sat down again and tried to regain her composure.

'Are you feeling alright?' slurred Fiona, who definitely wasn't but had kept it to herself.

'I'm feeling perfectly alright; however there appears to be a problem with the pins so to speak.' That sentence took a bit of doing as well and there was obviously a little bit of a problem with more than just the pins.

The young man could see he was going to dip out of his first gang bang and pushed the point home. 'Wurr yow ladies all staying then loike. Which hotel yow in then?'

Lucinda looked up at the young man and said very sternly, 'We're staying in the ,.....where are we staying girls?'

'We're staying in the ,.....in the ,,.....the washisname, you know the, the big tall one in white with the lovely view,' Mildred was quite sure she knew the name of the hotel but she was just having a small problem transposing it into words right now.

'The Belle Vue. Thatsh it, the Belle Vue young man,' said Fiona very correctly.

'That's the one we shtayed in at Tenerife you shilly tart,' snorted Betty collapsing in to laughter.

'Ish the Four Seasons, thash the one,' said Fiona again even more correctly.

'Thash the one Chekov owns you shilly tart.' Mildred echoed Betty's words and the two of them fell into each others arms in hysterics.

The laughter eventually subsided with the poor young man left in a state of complete frustration with his dream of a gang bang fading fast.

Fiona eventually managed the standing up bit and swayed over to the young man. Embracing him quickly before she fell over she managed to instruct him, 'don't you worry young man, I know the way. Jush follow me.'

Turning round to face her sniggering friends she did a reasonable impression of a cavalry officer calling for his men to charge, and pointing in the general direction of the door, she "forward ho'd" outside into the fresh Amsterdam city's evening air.

The young man just stopped her short of the canal in time. All thoughts of a gang bang were totally overcome with the task in hand now of trying to herd cats. Drunken cats.

\* \* \*

Brian had this feeling of déjà vu. A pile of drunken women lying in the foyer of a hotel.

Tenerife!

Betty!

'Kinnell!'

Betty had this feeling of déjà vu the next morning.

Where am I?

Who's that in bed with me?

Brian!

'Kinnell!'

The next morning at the breakfast table Chekov suddenly arose upon seeing Betty and Brian coming towards them.

'It's Brian isn't it? It's a small world, what are you doing here?'

'Well I was about to ask you the same question. Mildred how are you, what a lovely surprise?' He suddenly turned to the third person at the table. 'Young Dudley, what the hell are you doing here?'

'Loike it's a sort of long story loike Mr Evans,' the young man stuttered with a mouthful of croissants.

'You know this man Brian?' Chekov was getting totally confused now. The world was getting that small it looked like ending up as a black hole in the middle of Amsterdam.

Mildred smiled sweetly at every one, well passed the state of confusion by now as was Betty.

'Young Dudley is one of our cutters,' he said to Chekov. Turning to the young man. 'How's the training going Dudley, you will be finished fairly soon won't you?' Brian added the last bit on to say something while his brain tried to unscramble itself.

'One of *your* cutters?' Chekov asked incredulously. 'Brian, why don't you join us for breakfast? Er, waiter can you lay another two settings for us please?' Chekov arranged the table for Brian and Betty to join them and the waiter made another two settings.

'Brian, we need to talk.'

This was the understatement of the millennium.

## Chapter 27 Another Committee Meeting

Six months later, Mildred was just about to break into a skip with Chekov when their reverie in their evening walk around the village was disturbed by the voice of Mrs Dimmock.

'Evening Missus Ohhryelee. Evening Lieutenant Colonel Yeboleksi.'

'Oh, good evening Mrs Dimmock,' chirped Mildred who had grown quite fond of her since their day out together at Buckingham Palace. Chekov still wasn't so sure about Mrs Dimmock though. She seemed to be able to appear out of nowhere, and how the hell did she know his rank in the KGB?

'Er, Missus Ohhryelee, your nice Colonel Yeboleksi has let us use Primrose Cottage tomorrow for our committee meeting and the lads and I was wondering if you could come along like, and join us.' She did a sort of curtsy and then turning to Chekov. 'Begging your pardon sir, if that's alright with you like?'

Mildred was taken aback and speechless for a bit until her mind raced back to the night she saw a light on at the cottage for no apparent reason.

'Oh, that would be lovely Mrs Dimmock.' Her nosiness getting the better of her.

\* \* \*

Mildred knocked at the door of Primrose Cottage with some apprehension. The door eventually opened and Mrs Dimmock welcomed Mildred inside.

'Mildred my dear, how lovely to see you. I am so glad you could make it.' Mrs Dimmock grasped Mildred's hands warmly and ushered her into the kitchen. Poor Mildred was in a state of utter confusion. Gone was the local country bumpkin accent and the slightly hunched old woman. Instead an upright, erudite, radiant sophisticated lady was gently but firmly showing her into the inner sanctum of this dark and mysterious cottage.

Only it wasn't so dark. Modern lighting and kitchen appliances and some clever decorating skills made the place look enormous in comparison from the view from the outside.

Mildred managed a stutter. 'Mrs Dimmock.....,' was a far as she was allowed to speak.

'Mildred, please call me Mary, you are amongst friends here, now let me take your coat.' Although it was still a balmy evening outside (no change there then) Mildred had some sort of premonition that it would be a sort of formal occasion.

'Thank you Mrs D.....Mary. Gosh, isn't it lovely in here. This is the first time I been in the cottage. You've done it out so nicely.'

'Ah, well that's where young Denis comes in. He has his talents you know Mildred. He keeps this place spick and span and I help out with the curtains and furnishings.'

'Oh, it's lovely, really lovely, and you must be so proud of young Dense. Oh, I'm sorry, I meant Denis.'

'Don't you worry about it Mildred, everybody calls him that. And how about Captain O'Riley then. Oops, there I go with a faux pas. Of course it's *Lieutenant Colonel* O'Riley now isn't it, oops Lieutenant Colonel O'Riley MC, *OBE!*'

They both had a little giggle, which made Mildred feel a bit more relaxed and then Mrs Dimmock carried on. 'And what a shame he had to go straight back to his duties in Africa.'

That really bought the house down and they both sniggered like two young schoolgirls.

'Mildred, I am being terribly unkind, we shouldn't laugh at his demise of being taken away from you and being all alone in the middle of the African bush.' More sniggering ensued.

'Well at least he has his uses,' Mildred wiped her eyes from the laughter. 'We saved a bit of VAT on the old diamonds in the diplomatic bag.'

'He's a gem isn't he?' Mrs Dimmock said trying to keep a straight face but failed dismally as they burst out laughing again.

**'Any danger of getting a cup of tea around here!'** A large booming voice shook both the building and the brought the girls back down to earth.

'Oh my God!' Gulpd Mrs Dimmock. 'Come and meet the boys Mildred.'

Mrs Dimmock grasped Mildred and ushered her round the kitchen through the door into a large well-lit dining room. Mildred stopped in amazement trying initially to shield her eyes with the brightness of the room. She eventually made out a large table with about a dozen men sitting around it all in high-backed chairs. The man at the top had his chair even higher.

On the walls were maps with all sorts of diagrams and graphs stuck up with drawing pins or bits of glue. The table was covered in papers, diaries, and lots of rolls of what looked like bits of old papyrus.

'Gentlemen, I'd like you to meet Mildred.' Mrs Dimmock said very sternly to the gathered meeting to get their attention. The noise gently abated as they all looked round to face Mildred and the man at the top stood up and came over to greet Mildred.

'Mildred, this is Gerantinium the third, you probably know him as Gerry.' The tall man with the long beard grasped Mildred's hands warmly and lifting them up to his lips, gently kissed them. Poor Mildred was in a state of total paralysis. There was an air of Godliness and tranquility about not just him but the whole situation.

'Mildred my dear, how can I thank you enough for all you've done. We've asked you here to show our appreciation for all you've done for us and the rest of the villagers and hope you will accept this as a token of our gratitude.' He snapped his fingers and one of the other men came forward with a large bunch of flowers.

Mildred was shown a seat. She sat down and after Mrs Dimmock smiled at her when she was comfortable started the meeting.

'Now, I think is a good time as any to review our strategic plans and achievements with the addition of Mrs O'Riley to our prestigious committee who I know will be more than interested in some of our goals that have been realised.'

Mildred's ears pricked up on this.

Mrs Dimmock looked to Mildred with a large smile and continued.

'The village has for some considerable time now always been in the need for new blood and you will be well aware Mildred that your parents were from outside our little hamlet and were , what we call the first imports.'

Mildred nodded.

'Since then we have been continually on the search for, how can I put it....?'

'A decent stallion!'

'Thank you Gerantinium,' replied Mrs Dimmock giving him one of her piercing glares.

'As I was saying, we need someone to .....

'Spread his oats about?'

Another dark look flashed cross the committee table.

'Increase our population growth.'

'This is obviously where my errant husband came in.'

'Thank you Mildred. I was a little worried about introducing this subject. But, yes, he has certainly proved to be an invaluable asset to our strategic plans.'

'Dirty bugger,' came a murmur from the table which warranted another glare across the now silent committee.

'I am sorry to have to say this in front of Mrs O'Riley, but he has certainly helped but since his arrival we have been

fortunate in the number of new imports into the village including our new young doctor who is certainly contributing considerably to our strategic aims....'

'Dirty lucky bugger.' This brought considerable sniggers which were quickly stamped out by Mrs Dimmock.

'Then of course our new landlord of the Snort and Truffle has arrived with his lovely wife who is helping us out with our financial planning portfolios.'

'Can't understand a word she says.'

'She's Scottish, Gerantinium and probably speaks better English than you and probably doesn't understand a word *you* say.'

Gerantinium muttered something inaudible as Mrs Dimmock continued.

'And now we have our new diamond cutter with us helping in our community project.'

'Can't understand a bloody word he says either.'

There was a muttering around the room in general agreement with this.

'I understand he's from the Black Country but *is* giving us an invaluable service to the future prosperity of our village.....'

'And giving Blossom one as well.' This brought the house down which even Mrs Dimmock couldn't control. The mirth subsided and Mrs Dimmock continued.

'I was just about add that Dudley and Blossom's relationship was, er... blossoming?'

Another round of giggling.

She waited patiently for all the ribald comments to subside and continued.

'And then of course we mustn't forget our Russian friends: young Boris, our diamond company founder and not forgetting that nice Colonel Yebolecki....' Mrs Dimmock looked over to Mildred, who by now was giving a good imitation of a beetroot accompanied by much smiling and giggling coming from the rest of the committee, 'who is financing the production side of Boris' project.' She nodded to Mildred as if to request permission to continue.

'But I have some much more important news and can now confirm that we will be having two new arrivals born in the village in the very near future.'

'Oh do tell us more please Mrs Dimmock.' Mildred blurted out .

'I feel that it is only fair that their privacy is safeguarded but I'm sure we will be informed all in the goodness of time.'

This started a brisk discussion on the possible parentage and after the lively debate had died down Mrs Dimmock took control of the meeting and asked for any more items to be added to the minutes.



Gerantinium quickly grabbed all the remaining homemade cookies and mumbled that he felt Mrs Dimmock had done a grand job. He thanked everybody especially Mildred, and said that she would no doubt be a valuable member of the committee.

Mildred couldn't really remember a lot about what happened after that other than being introduced to the other men in the room, some of whom she vaguely remembered seeing sitting outside the 'Snort'. She tried to mutter some form of thanks as Mrs Dimmock ushered her back to the kitchen only after the tall one with the beard reminded Mrs Dimmock about the tea.

Mildred gathered her senses in the kitchen looking at the lovely flowers. A keen gardener herself, she couldn't recognise some of the flowers at all. They all seemed so exotic and the perfume was quite overcoming.

'Mildred, be a darling and give me a hand with these cups and saucers will you please?' brought Mildred back down to earth as she busied herself around the kitchen and helped Mrs Dimmock serve the tea back in the "Cathedral" as she wanted to call the dining room.

Mildred eventually recovered her senses sharing a cup of tea with Mrs Dimmock back in the kitchen after all the "committee" had been looked after in the tea and biscuit's department.

'Mrs Dim.....Mary, what beautiful flowers. I can't get over them. But I haven't done anything to deserve them. I really don't see why I should be treated so kindly like this. It's all a bit mysterious to say the least. And what are all those men doing in there.....?' Mildred had a thousand questions but Mrs Dimmock stopped her in mid sentence with an up held hand.

'My dear Mildred, now I know where they got the saying. "The meek will inherit the earth."'

'But what have I done, I,,,,I,, er er, I'm just .....and why are they all dressed in white?'

'It's a man's thing, my dear. You know what these committees are like; they get this power thing and the old uniform fetish. You can see that with Creighky can't you?'

'Yes, I suppose you're right, but what *do* they do?'

'Well my dear, they have these sort of Global and Strategic criteria that they worry about. You know the sort of thing: the Crusades; the Balkans; the Middle East; Northern Ireland; Hiroshima, Pearl Harbour, those sort of things.'

Mildred wasn't really in a "trying to understand" mode at the moment but nodded just to keep the conversation going.

'But what they didn't take into consideration was the more topical mundane matters that the likes of you and I understand. You know the drains, the housing situation, all these are just as important to us as their silly little global problems, can you see what I'm getting at? A lot of their Global and Strategic mission

statements have gone tit's up, if you'll pardon the expression, so I popped in a few extra agenda on their minutes. What do they say; charity starts at home, look after your own folk first. Let's see if they could get it right on the local scene first before they started ponsing about with the wider picture. After all they got the weather right here didn't they, they've managed to get something right.'

Mildred's eyes lit up as she suddenly realised she was back in the real world again. She still hadn't got a fucking clue why she was involved in all this but could at least understand the word "drains" and suddenly realised why it only rained at night.

'When was the last time the local council made contact with us? When was the last time any body from the outside world made contact with us?' Said Mrs Dimmock.

Mildred thought. She then suddenly stopped and looked Mrs Dimmock straight in the eye with the sudden realisation of what she was talking about.

'Boris!' Mildred blurted out.

'Bingo!' Mrs Dimmock clapped her hands in delight realising that Mildred was at long last on the right road. 'And.....?'

'Chekov!'

'And.....?'

'Brian!'

'And.....?'

'Those two Essex girls!'

'And.....?'

'Dudley!'

'And.....?'

'Er,.....and,,,,,er.....I still don't understand where I come into all this.'

'What has happened since you met Chekov?'

Mildred suddenly realised the words "Colonel Yeboleksi" were missing and that she was talking to a "Mary" now not Mrs Dimmock. She blushed when she thought of her and Chekov together. She leaned forward and whispered to Mary. 'I don't really think we need to go into those sort of details do we?'

Mrs Dimmock laughed out loud and turning back to Mildred who still hadn't grasped the overall picture said. 'Mildred, at least you are happy aren't you?'

'Oh yes, I can certainly say that.'

'And you've got rid of that swine of a husband, if you don't mind me calling him that?'

'Well for the time being that is.'

'Oh, you won't be seeing him for some time I can assure you of that.'

'Oh?' Mildred queried with a puzzled but happy countenance.

'You were well rid of him, my dear, I can tell you that. But I digress. Now tell me what else has happened?'

'Er, ....' Mildred again was hard put to get her mind into the global thinking of Mrs Dimmock. She was still dwelling on the benefits of having Chekov around.'

'What about the drains?' Mrs Dimmock's statement brought Mildred back to reality once more.

'And all our houses now have central heating. And inside toilets. And, double glazing. Don't you feel that these benefits have helped us out just a little bit?'

'Oh yes, but I didn't have anything to do with those. That was down to Chekov and Boris and their little venture.'

'And who is the Governor of the school that set up the new jewellery department?'

'Oh, yes, but it wasn't my idea. That was Chekov's idea, I just sort of helped him a long a bit and persuaded the other governors.....'

'Who all now have double glazing and inside toilets?' Mrs Dimmock was determined to get through to Mildred.

'Oh, yes, that may be, but I only help out on the production line now and then. I don't know anything about how they get the diamonds or how they sell them or the profits or all that financial and wheeling dealing stuff. And that lad Dudley, I mean, that was an accident, what with us all getting a bit, well you know, well how was I to know we were on drugs, and how was I to know we'd find Dudley just like that. He's getting on very well with the barmaid at the "Snort" isn't he?'

'Oh, yes, she'll be glad to have his company rather than someone else's hands down the back of her knickers. If you know what I mean Mildred.'

'Good riddance, that's what I say.'

'He may be popping back now and then my dear, but we'll keep it to a minimum and let you and Chekov both know. Don't forget his Diplomatic Bag is one of our more cost-effective means of importing the diamonds. But Boris did a good job getting the information out of John's colleague in Tenerife as to the source of the diamonds. And he has got some other sources as well after his discussions with John and we can always resort to those if some thing should happen to our courier, God forbid!'

They both started sniggering again.

'Mary, who is this John? I've heard his name mentioned.'

'Ah, yes, our man John. Bit of a scallywag. But his heart was always in the right place. He actually owns Primrose Cottage. Well, on paper anyway. He lets us use it now and then. He always pays our Denis his wages for looking after the place regularly. But I have it on good authority that Boris has made him an offer he can't refuse for the cottage.'

'Boris?'

'Oh, yes, our Boris. He's a wealthy man with the sale of diamonds now making a handsome profit. All thanks to you Mildred. I've actually taken quite a shine to young Boris.....'

'Mary! You don't mean to say.....'

Mildred's sentence was cut short this time.

'Well, why not. The late Mr Dimmock was nothing to write home about. I know Boris has had a rather chequered career but like all rough diamonds, so to speak, he'll scrub up nicely. And he and my lad Denis get on ever so well.'

'You're a dark horse and that's no lie.'

'You don't know the half of it my dear,' and she gave Mildred a little wink.

'How is Denis,' Mildred chose the words carefully this time.

'How is he getting on in London? Someone said he was working in intelligence?'

'Oh he loves it down there, and his lovely wife, that Russian Lady, whats-er-name, er Dollianna, that's it. They love it down there. This government agency seems to be paying them both lots of money, Lord knows why, he was never the sharpest pencil in the class, but who am I to argue. But this young lady of his definitely *is* the sharpest pencil and they are both doing extremely well.'

The facts of the matter were that Dense had been taken on by the Intelligence Service for the interrogation of female asylum seekers. And it turns out that Dollianna is not a natural blonde either.

She is extremely intelligent.

The morning after the episode in the bedroom under surveillance, she happened to be at a loose end waiting for Dense to awake, started looking round for intelligence bugs out of habit. It wasn't long before she found the audio-visual equipment very amateurishly hidden away.

Dense and her were taken back to the offices of MI6 for debriefing and having obtained her security pass had a little wander around during tea break until she found the Surveillance and Audio Visual departments having had previous experience of working in a similar organization.

She quickly found the offices and walked in to everyone's surprise. You should have seen their faces as she cornered the manger and sat down to do a bit of negotiating.

Ninety nine percent of the world's population had never heard or seen of Dense or Dollianna but a small one percent would be paying a measly five quid to watch the most erotic and sensual video ever made.

It naturally followed on from there that she used all her womanly wiles and blackmail talents to negotiate a share of the

profits. The departments were quite relieved by all this as they were probably earning twice as much as the head of MI6 and would have had the Inland Revenue sniffing round in no time. The majority of the department had already booked their flights to the Caymen Islands for retirement

'Oh yes, Denis and Dollianna have settled down to the "Life of Riley" so to speak in swinging London.' Quipped Mrs Dimock.

Denis put this opulence down to his unique talent of dyslexia and wasn't fazed by it at all. But he certainly fazed the locals on his trips up to Muddlecombe in his new Porsche with Dollianna in tow.

'They've got a lovely little Penthouse overlooking the Thames but he does miss the "Snort". And when him and Boris get together they do enjoy themselves so.'

'And he's got his OBE as well.'

'Oh he's as proud as punch with that.'

'Anyway less about me and my family. Business is booming. Our two little export sales ladies are drumming up quite a nice little turnover, thank you very much.'

'What those two Essex ladies?'

'Oh, yes. They certainly know a few markets we haven't touched, or should I say, don't really need to know about. But, what the hell, oops, don't let Gerantinium hear me say that.'

'Good God!' uttered Mildred in astonishment.

'Don't let him hear you say that either. He's far too big for his boots as it is now.'

Mildred's eyes went even wider open.

'And that nice Brian that Betty is "looking after".' Mrs Dimmock held up two fingers on each hand in the inverted comma salute. 'Oh, yes, Brian's new Industrial Abrasives Company is getting extremely profitable especially with that young Dudley or whatever-his-name-is working for us. I still can't understand him you know.'

'We thought he was Dutch when we, or should I say, Betty first bumped into him. Oh my gosh, that was embarrassing. I don't know what it is about these trips abroad, we always seem to get into trouble,' Mildred put her hand up to her mouth in embarrassment.

'Don't you worry your little head about it my dear. You'll always be in good hands,' she gave Mildred another little wink.

'What about that solicitor chappy, the Jewish bloke?'

'Oh, young Sidney, he keeps us legal so to speak and keeps us up to date on current affairs, mostly with the Middle East. A fat lot of good it does the Committee though. They still can't sort that one out. We have lots of agents all over the place. There's one in Moscow for example with a Volvo estate,' that was lost on Mildred completely.

'Our intelligence is very unstable, but things are looking up with all this new blood coming through. Our "Essex" ladies are fast becoming our leading source of information concerning the underworld. And boosting our diamond sales to boot. I have heard that Sidney has taken a shine to one of them and the other one likes to come back to see that nice young doctor we've got here.'

'Doctor Rammittin?'

'That's the one. Good looking young man eh?' Mrs Dimmock raised an eyelid but to no effect. Mildred was still having difficulty grasping the enormity of what Mrs Dimmock was saying. This constant mention of "our diamonds" was extremely puzzling. It was as if all this had been planned somehow.

'And it's all down to you Mildred. If you hadn't caught Chekov's eye in Tenerife none of this would have happened. Anyway I've prattled on long enough. The real reason we have asked you over here is to invite you to become an honorary member of our Committee.'

'I beg your pardon?' Mildred's astonishment knew no bounds.

'The boys, sorry, the Committee have asked if you could help them out a bit more on the local community affairs side of things, so to speak. It will strengthen the Focus Group we want to set up to concentrate on matters closer to home. If we can get the little things in life right then perhaps we can have a bit more success in the strategic thinking. And I tend to agree with them.'

Mildred sat for a while trying to unscramble her brains. Mrs Dimmock just sat there holding Mildred's hand in hers to give her strength.

'I'm lost for words,' Mildred eventually said. 'Don't think I'm ungrateful but I still don't see where I can fit in?'

'Mildred my dear, you are an absolute hoot, you're priceless you really are. I love you to bits and I can see why your charm has totally captivated the first man you came into contact with. Thank God. Oops, sorry boss. Thank goodness it was Chekov, not some unscrupulous scoundrel. Now let me just give you something to think about for the next committee meeting.'

Mrs Dimmock turned to Mildred face on. 'The next time you're out walking with Chekov, why don't you suggest to him that some nice unobtrusive street lighting might not go amiss? That the church would look a lot nicer with a bit of repainting. And when you have your next bridge evening with the girls.....'

'How did you know about us learning to play bridge?' Mildred was astonished again but was soon reconciled with Mrs Dimmock's twinkle in the eye.

'When you talk to Betty, why not suggest that she widens her range of goods in the shop. For God's sake, oops, I'm not

asking for a Tesco bloody superstore but, perhaps some nice lingerie, some sort of delicatessen, some decent wines, do you hear what I'm saying my dear? Perhaps Brian could help her out on some buying trips abroad? A nice day out in France, say in the Champagne district?

Mildred was way ahead of her; having sampled the delights of shopping abroad she was back in one of the Hypermarkets in Tenerife. And those perfumeries in Amsterdam!

Mildred was still in foreign parts as Mrs Dimmock showed her out of the cottage clutching her bunch of exotic flowers.

**'Mrs Dimmock!'** came the thundering demand from the dining room.

"Kinnell" thought Mrs Dimmock as she rushed around preparing a fresh pot of tea and some cucumber sandwiches. She eventually managed to get everything on the tray and into the dining room.

As she left she stopped and turning round to the committee said, 'Oh by the way boys, you'd better put September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001 in your diaries.'

'Yes, thank you Mrs Dimmock. Now where were we gentlemen,' Gerantinium got the committee back to work

\* \* \*

Mildred slowly released the suction pressure of her lips and gently eased herself from the embrace of Chekov standing in the open doorway in his boxer shorts. She patted him playfully on the groin and skipped deftly out of reach of any retaliation and continued the skipping, waving to him with one hand and holding a bottle of wine in the other, as she went on down the lane to the village common.

She had that strange craving again for a cigarette.

It was Saturday evening again and the whist drive called at Muddlecombe Manor.

She reached the bottom of her lane only to see Mrs Dimmock walking in her direction across the green wearing her old shawl and bonnet, carrying her old fruit basket .

Not the "tee hee hee Mrs Oh Ryelee," this time but 'Mildred dearest, lovely to see you on such a beautiful evening. Off to the girl's night out then at the Manor?

"How does she know about all these things," thought Mildred.

'Oh, yes, it's Saturday night out with the girls,' grinned Mildred.

'I see Betty at last has got some decent wine in . That's a nice Chablis there Mildred and can I say how lovely you're looking this evening. You're positively blossoming. Must be the fresh air.'

Mrs Dimmock gave Mildred a wink which started Mildred off into beetroot country again.

Mildred giggled. 'Must be the fresh air,' she replied with a knowing smirk on her face.

'Now you be off and give my love to the ladies. Young Betty's blossoming as well isn't she?'

Mildred giggled again. 'Must be that fresh air again.'

They both laughed and Mildred blew Mrs Dimmock a kiss and waved as she started off across the green to the Manor.

Mildred broke out into skipping mode until she came to the gates of Muddelcombe Manor. Pushing the gates open she walked up the avenue of poplar trees until the manor came into sight. The girls were already sitting outside in the evening sun with the garden table fully loaded with bottles and glasses and the occasional bowl of canapés. They looked up as Mildred approached and waved vigorously as if something of great importance was imminent.

'Mildred , Mildred come quickly, here's your glass of wine. Now listen to what Betty has to say.'

Poor Mildred was still out of breath from her skipping as she took the wine, quickly sipping a mouthful as she placed her bottle on the table.

'Give me a breather can't you?' Mildred pleaded. 'What's all the rush?'

Lucinda excitedly started the reply, 'Oh Mildred, we have the most wonderful news. Go on Betty, please tell us again.'

Poor Betty was blushing furiously and managed at long last to splutter out, 'I'm pregnant!'

The ladies all screamed with delight, raising their glasses to toast Betty.

'Oh Betty, I'm so happy for you. Bill must be ecstatic?'

There was a deathly hush as Betty's blushing took another turn for the worse getting bright crimson.

The ladies all caught their breath and as one burst into laughter.

Lucinda was the first to come out with the blatant obvious.

'Betty, you little tinker. It's that sea air in Tenerife!'

There was much jumping up and down as Lucinda took control once more.

'Well, that's it. I'm going down to the cellar and fetch that vintage bottle of Veuve Clicquot Extra Brut. This calls for a celebration!'

Lucinda dashed off back into the Manor as the ladies all congratulated Betty and started the interrogation of how the father situation was going to be explained, or not?

Mildred took her glass of wine and slowly took a step sideways and went into pensive mode thinking about what Mrs



Dimmock had said earlier and what she had talked about at the committee meeting.

"Blossoming" was a word she used quite a lot both about the villagers, and Betty, er.....and herself!

Oh my god!

## **Oh my God!**

Lucinda came back to the party and popped the champagne and started pouring it out into the glasses she had brought out with her. She handed out the glasses to everyone except Mildred who was a little distance from them.

'Mildred,' Lucinda called out.

'Mildred?'

They all turned to Mildred who was by this time a far brighter crimson than Betty and trying to cover her face.

'Mildred?' was the unanimous call from the ladies as they stared at her and slowly walked towards her.

'Mildred?' Lucinda was the bravest to continue the interrogation.

There was stunned silence as the varied brain cells around the garden went into hyper drive to come to some sort of conclusion as to Mildred's obvious dilemma.

It didn't take them long.

'Mildred!'

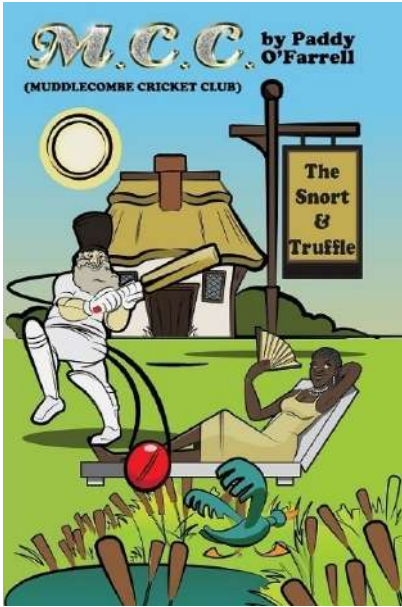
'You're not?'

'You little tinker!'

'Oh my god!'

'I'll get another bottle!'

Other books by Paddy O'Farrell on [Obooko](#)



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, who is 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 who 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 him. 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'Deighty 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!](#)



Why has the head of MI6 sent the village idiot from Muddelcombe-cum-Snoring, Dense Dimmock over to Azerbaijan to rescue an oil boffin held hostage by Terrorists?

Why has his drinking partner in the "Snort and Truffle", Boris "Seven Bellies" Slobovitch gone back to the Ukraine and raised a small Cossack army?

Why has an Azerbaijan warlord moved up to the front row of the choir and why is his "moll" Nickola Elastickova playing wigwams with Dense?

Why has the Prime Minister invited the head of MI6 to appear on page 3 of the Sun?

Why do quantum physicists prefer baked beans to broccoli?

A lot of answers to these questions can be found in [this book](#).