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Act of Defiance

Andrews & Wilson
G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS

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PROLOGUE

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Nevsky Prospek

Leningrad, USSR

2231 Local Time

Dimitri Gorov resisted the compulsion to shove his hands into his overcoat pockets.

It wasn't just the bitter cold making him tremble.

Fear was the true culprit.

Tonight's clandestine, face-to-face meeting with his American CIA contact had been months in the planning. They had a simple brokered arrangement: information in exchange for freedom. In Dimitri's coat breast pocket, he carried a microfilm roll containing the schematics and engineering details of the *Red October*—the Soviet Union's most advanced and stealthy Typhoon class ballistic missile submarine. With its revolutionary "caterpillar drive," the *Red October* would be able to slip undetected past the American's undersea hydrophone arrays, past their SH-60 Seahawk helicopters with dipping sonar, and past their Los Angeles class fast attack submarines patrolling the Atlantic like sea wolves. This new submarine had cost the Kremlin tens of billions of rubles and was the product of a decade of research and design collaboration between the country's greatest scientific minds. He took great pride in his contribution to the project, but pride didn't change his station in life. Pride didn't put quality food on the dinner table, buy his wife a fur coat, or give his son a chance to find greatness as a man.

Nyet...pride is a poor man's compensation for following the rules.

Dimitri had grown weary of following the rules.

A blast of arctic air buffeted him as he trudged west toward the city center. The metaphor was not lost on him. Even at this late hour, the *Rodina* bullied him, trying to turn him back. Jaw set, he undid the fur lined earflaps on the top of his wool *ushanka* and knotted the ties under his chin. As if in response to his obstinance, a streetlight flickered and went dark as he made his way along Nevsky Prospekt. Leningrad's main promenade, and quite possibly the most famous of all streets in the Motherland, was utterly abandoned. Only the desperate or deranged would be out at this hour and in this weather, and the thought brought a fatalistic smile to his face.

Which one am I? Probably both...

He'd lived in Russia his entire life, but this was his first visit to the city formerly known as St. Petersburg. Originally named after Saint Peter, not Peter the Great which was a common misconception, the city was the most western and cosmopolitan of all Russian cities. It was often compared to Venice, due to the city's many rivers and canals, but Dimitri had never traveled outside of the Iron Curtain, so who was he to validate this claim? Regardless, Leningrad was beautiful, even blanketed in snow. He'd arrived earlier in the day by train with his wife and son at Moskovsky Station—named as such, he presumed, because in Russia all roads lead to Moscow. They'd taken a walk along Nevsky Prospekt while the sun had been up and the city had been bustling. The architecture bespoke a bygone age—an era of Tsars and prosperity—when hotels, opera houses, and even apartment buildings were designed to compete with palaces.

A lifetime of conditioning under the tenets of communism at first made him scoff and resent such waste, but the beauty and possibility advertised by such design quickly crept into and excited his bitter heart. This bygone city, eclipsed and barely persevering in the shadow of communism, represented but a fraction of the wealth and opportunity he would find in the West. In America, the land of prosperity and dreams, he and his family would eat meat every night.

They would buy Levi's blue jeans, wear comfortable shoes, and Alina could go to a salon to have her hair done every week. But the thing he looked forward to the most was living in a house with central heat.

In America, we will finally be warm...

Squinting into the wind, he spied the landmark he was looking for ahead—grand equestrian statues flanking the eastern entrance to the Anichkov Bridge. As he approached, the Horse Tamers came into focus-- four sculptures, depicting men in the various stages of breaking a stallion, had been commissioned by Emperor Nicolas I and sculpted by Pyotr Karlovich Klodt. On Dimitri's side of the street, a bare-chested, kneeling horse master pulled against the reigns of a rearing stallion. Despite not being an actual sculptor himself, Dimitri did consider himself an artist. Where Klodt was a sculpture of bronze, Dimitri was a sculpture of iron and titanium. Where Klodt depicted man overcoming nature, Dimitri's art *literally* empowered his fellow man to tame the sea. At this very moment, Marko Ramius and his crew were traversing the depths of the cold and unforgiving North Atlantic. Inside the *Red October*, they were warm, provisioned, and immune to both wave and weather. But take away the metal and the machine, and they wouldn't last a day.

"I would have liked to have gone to sea on my creation," he murmured, as he approached and stared up into the wild eyes of the rearing stallion, "if only for a day, it would have been enough."

He'd met the Captain at the *Red October's* christening ceremony. Handsome and self-assured, imposing in his black and gold parade naval officer's uniform, Ramius had almost been too intimidating to approach. But Dimitri had mustered his courage and introduced himself to the man. Ramius's handshake had been firm as iron, but it was the submarine captain's dark and

penetrating eyes that had unnerved Dimitri—eyes that seemed to peer beneath the flesh and into the inner workings of Dimitri’s soul. In that moment, he’d felt judged and stripped naked, as if Ramius had extracted his secret plan to betray the homeland with merely a look. Then, something unexpected had happened. Ramius had thanked him, acknowledging the engineer’s attention to detail, his ingenuity, and the thousands of hours Dimitri had spent working tirelessly on the design of the *Red October*.

“It is the finest warship in the Soviet fleet,” Ramius had said with a stoic nod.

“Thank you, sir,” Dimitri had said, with a stoic nod of his own.

“Exceptionally quiet, plenty of power, and armed to the teeth.” But then, with a wry smile, the sub driver had added, “my only complaint is that she is so bloated she changes depth like a crippled whale. Maybe you can fix this flaw in the successor class, da?”

“That is good to know...I will make a note of this,” Dimitri had said, and that had been the last time they’d spoken.

I almost feel bad for him, Dimitri thought, imagining the intrepid sub captain patrolling the ocean depth with false confidence, believing his ship and crew to be immune to detection. *Once I give these data to the Americans, they will know how to find you, Marko.*

A dribble of snot from his nose ran onto his top lip—pulling him back from his romantic ruminations, to the new journey he had planned for himself— and he wiped it away with a finger of his glove. He pulled back the cuff of his coat sleeve to check the time on his wristwatch, which read 11:42 pm. The time for daydreaming about the future and reminiscing about the past was over. In three minutes, his contact would meet him under the southernmost arch of the bridge, where they could talk in shadow. Dimitri was no spy and no student of tradecraft. Nor was he a managed asset of the CIA, indentured to a life of espionage where he would be

expected to supply a steady stream of information to the Americans. He'd refused that offer outright from the beginning. His betrayal would be a one-time event. Reilly could either take it or leave it.

The CIA man had taken it, without a moment's hesitation.

Dimitri resisted the urge to look behind him. He'd not seen anyone following him, but that meant nothing. The KGB was an omnipresent threat. They could be watching him right now, from behind curtains in apartment buildings or through the windows of darkened parked cars. He'd had taken great risks bringing his family with him to Leningrad. If he was caught, the price he and his loved ones would pay was too horrific to contemplate. Alina and Konstantin would be tortured and executed, but not Dimitri. Not right away. His penance would be to watch. Only after they'd murdered his heart, would the KGB sadists go to work on the rest of him. He shuddered and pushed the grim thoughts from his mind. He was in the end game now, which meant he had no choice but to bring them with him. After handing over the schematics, the CIA would orchestrate their defection. Dimitri didn't know how they planned to get him and his family out of Leningrad, but Markus Reilly had assured him that they had done it safely many times before.

He wiped his nose again.

Now that it had started running, it wouldn't stop until he got indoors and warmed up.

Annoyed, he turned south, crossed Nevsky Prospekt, and walked down Fontanka River Embankment road. After a hundred meters, he reached a set of stone steps leading down to the riverbank and boat dock. The Fontanka was completely frozen and the icy crust was covered in several centimeters of snow, marred by numerous tracks and footsteps going every which way. Apparently, walking the frozen river was a winter novelty enjoyed by both young and old,

because Dimitri saw footsteps both small and large. The calculating engineer in him hesitated before putting a foot on the ice, questioning if it would bear his weight, but then he chided himself. The empirical evidence was right before him. Hundreds of people had taken a stroll on the frozen waterway and walked away dry and safe.

This is the least dangerous thing you'll do today, you fool, his inner voice said, laughing at him.

With a sniff, he stepped onto the frozen river and turned back to the north. The Anichkov Bridge had three shallow arches, each spanning an equal third of the river. He walked along the bank toward the easternmost arch where Reilly would be waiting bathed in absolute shadow. Heart pounding, he shuffled his numb, booted feet over the ice. Not until he'd stepped under the arch and into the darkness could he make out the crouching figure in the center of the hollow with his back to the sloping wall of the bridge.

"I'm hungry and cold. Can you spare a ruble or two?" the figure said, turning his head to look at Dimitri.

This was the challenge-response phraseology that Dimitri had expected to hear. His own answer would dictate how the meeting went. In the event he suspected being compromised or failed to recover the plans, he was supposed to say, *Nyet, I have none to spare, comrade*, and keep on walking. However, that was not the case tonight, so he used the other option.

"Life is difficult, comrade, but tonight I am feeling generous."

The figure stood.

Dimitri walked over to greet him, but his heart sank the instant Reilly's features came into focus. Something was wrong.

“Do you have the item?” the CIA man asked in Russian. Dimitri’s English was terrible, so all communication was conducted in his native tongue.

“Da,” he said but made no move to retrieve the cannister from where it was hidden in a false pocket inside his coat. “Have you made all the necessary arrangements?”

The American hesitated a moment before delivering the most crushing news of Dimitri’s life. “Go home,” Reilly said, his weight betraying his own disappointment. “The deal is off.”

The words hit Dimitri like a punch to the solar plexus, and he suddenly felt ill.

“What? I...I don’t understand?” he stammered.

“I know and I’m sorry, but it’s out of my hands. This came down from the highest level.”

“Why? This information changes everything for your country.”

“We don’t need the schematics anymore.”

“But of course, you do. You will never find the *Red October* without these data...and without me.”

“I probably shouldn’t be telling you this, Dimitri, but with your clearance level I’m sure you’re going to find out soon enough. Ramius defected. He’s provided us with everything we need to know about the *Red October*,” Reilly said and from the look in the CIA man’s eyes, Dimitri knew it was true.

His American dream shattered, the Russian engineer stood unmoving, as if his feet had become absorbed by the ice. “But I brought my family...”

“I know.”

“I risked everything for you.”

Reilly nodded solemnly. “For what it’s worth, I want you to know that I lobbied for you, and so did the station chief, but we got overruled. The risk reward calculus has changed, and the

higher ups don't want to risk our defection chain or you and your family's lives for information we already have. If we part ways now, you go back to your life and your job and everything will be fine. As far as we can tell, you're not compromised."

"American bastard," Dimitri said, his voice more growl than speech. "Fuck you and your lies and false promises. I should have known. I'm so stupid."

Reilly pressed his lips into a hard line.

What was that expression? Defeat? Shame?

Dimitri could see that the man's eyes had gone wet, but American pity meant nothing to him. If he'd had a pistol, he would have shot the man. He turned and walked back the way he'd come without another word or a backward glance. Just like before, his hands trembled, but this time instead of fear, anger was the driver. His son, Konstantin didn't know the real reason they'd traveled to Leningrad, but his wife did. How could he face her like this?

Rage blind, he trudged backed to the hotel where they were staying.

With each step his fury grew.

This is Ramius's fault. How could such a man defect? He is a naval captain!

He stopped abruptly in his tracks.

The *Red October* was on patrol. It had left Polyarynyy on December 3rd and was not due to return for months. How could the captain defect at sea? How was such a thing possible?

"Unless...Ramius surrendered the *Red October*," he murmured, stunned instantly at even the possibility of such an act. "I offer them the plans, and he gives them the ship—this is the only thing that would make the Americans back out of our deal. How could he do such a thing to me? He's cheated me, and my wife, and my son of our future. And the Americans...they made me a promise!"

What happened next unfolded in a blur—his normally analytical engineer’s mind a tempest of rage, denial, and shattered hope. He arrived at the hotel and told Alina everything, oscillating between shouting and sobbing as he did. He was vaguely aware that his ten-year-old son Konstantin was listening, vaguely aware that he should not be saying such things in front of the boy who idolized him, but Dimitri was not himself. Nor was he himself when he drank a half a bottle of vodka, stormed out of the hotel room, and wandered the streets of Leningrad in the middle of the night mumbling about the injustice of life and God and country. And when he decided that he would find the American CIA man and broker a new deal, he mistakenly wandered out onto the Neva river...confusing it for the much smaller Fantanka.

When the ice cracked and gave way beneath his feet, Dimitri sobered instantly in surprise and dread.

The current took him, dragging him unseen and unforgivingly beneath the crust toward the Gulf of Kronstadt. As the cold, black nothing took him, Dimitri breathlessly cursed Marko Ramius, the American CIA, and his own rash stupidity.

PART I

“By the grace of God, America won the Cold War.”

—President George H.W. Bush

Chapter 1

The Ryan home

Chesapeake Bay, Maryland

1815 Local Time

Sunday, April 7th

Present Day

Jack Ryan shrugged on his most comfortable cardigan in the master bedroom while looking out the window at the Chesapeake. Despite being several weeks into spring, the temperature had stubbornly refused to crack forty degrees this weekend. The kids and Cathy would tease him mercilessly for wearing this *particular* sweater, but that was the point, wasn't it? Traditions, inside jokes, and making memories were the bedrock of a happy family, and the Ryans were a happy family. That was the reason he loved this house so much. He and Cathy had built a lifetime of memories here—some harrowing, but most precious and warm.

A savory *mélange* of odors wafted up from the kitchen below as the family prepared to celebrate their daughter Katie's selection for Lieutenant Commander, a step up in rank she would pin on in the coming months. He took the time to breathe in the moment—the warmth of this home, the sound of the wind on the bay, and the commotion downstairs.

For a moment, he was no longer President Ryan, leader of the free world.

For a moment, he was just Jack—husband, father, and a guy who loved his country.

His mind's eye watched a parade of memories march by: celebrating Christmas with their kids Sally and Jack, Jr in the early years before twins Katie and Kyle had even been born. Holding hands with Cathy on the porch, staring out at the bay, Sally and Jack older now pushing

each other on the tire swing while toddler twins scampered at their feet. Then an unwanted memory intruded—the horrific night when ULA terrorist Sean Miller had come for them, shattering the illusion of safety the house provided. But all the good and wonderful things the Ryans had lived and experienced in this house overpowered the terror of that night. Graduations, new jobs and careers, a wedding, Christmases and Thanksgivings—always with so much to be grateful for—celebrated right here, inside these walls, the Chesapeake Bay smiling up from below as if celebrating right along with them...

From downstairs, Cathy called, “Jack...are you coming? They’ll be here any minute.”

Ryan hurried out of the bedroom and descended the stairs, excited in anticipation for the family dinner ahead. Upon entering the kitchen, he saw his wife prepping dinner furiously at the island while their staff chef, Agatha, stood off to the side with her arms crossed, unable to hide her exasperation with the First Lady.

“She won’t let me help her,” Agatha said to Jack with a helpless, beseeching look.

“You’re preaching to the choir,” he said with a grin.

“I know it might not look like it, but I’m actually enjoying myself,” Cathy Ryan said with a genuine smile. “Besides, I’ve been cooking for my kids for years. I know what they like and how they like it.”

“Yes, ma’am,” Agatha said, trying not to sound put out. “Just know I’m here if you need me.”

But that was the point, wasn’t it? Here, in the Ryan family home, the Ryans wanted to do the meal prep, the cooking, and even the dishes. It wasn’t theater, it was real, because the doing *made* it real. This wasn’t the White House, it was their family home and in a family home, the family does the work.

“You’re making the poached salmon?” he asked, but the aroma of the kitchen gave him the answer.

“It’s Katie’s favorite.”

He wrapped his arms around his bride from behind and kissed her on the cheek. “Is there anything *I* can do to help?”

Cathy let out a sigh, then turned, threw her arms around his neck, and gave him a proper kiss.

“You can check on the bread in the oven and put the salad on the table,” she said, turning back to her work. “And then feel free to take off that ratty, old sweater.”

“Ratty? This is hand woven Scottish wool, thank you very much. You couldn’t buy quality like this today if you tried.”

“Mm-hmm,” she said, but she was grinning, and this was the game they played.

Agatha made a move for the oven, but Ryan waved her off. “I’ve got it.”

“Well, perhaps I can at least let a bottle of wine begin to breathe,” Agatha said, grabbing a corkscrew and trying her damndest to be helpful.

“That would be lovely, Agatha, thank you so much,” Cathy said as Ryan pulled a flat pan with two loaves of bread from the lower oven and put the pan on a hot plate. The smell of butter and garlic made his stomach growl.

“Do you want me to slice it?” he asked, but the doorbell chimed, and he raised his eyebrows to ask the question.

“Go,” she said. “I’ve got this.”

It wasn’t just his schedule that had kept him from seeing his youngest daughter for months, even though she worked just a short drive from where he sat most days in the Oval

Office. After graduating from the Academy and completing her training at the intelligence school at Dam Neck in Virginia Beach, Katie had served a fleet tour in Norfolk, the three hours as distant as a continent with everyone's schedule. Now, Katie had tackled her job as intelligence analyst with ONI the same way she did everything in life—with quiet focus and one hundred and ten percent effort. Like her older sister, Sally, who loved her work as a pediatric surgeon, but not as much as the work in the lab where she searched for new knowledge at the cellular level to make her care for her patients even better, Katie was all about the details. It was no surprise that today they were celebrating her promotion to Senior Analyst for Russian threats, with a promotion to Lieutenant Commander soon to follow. She'd been at ONI for only a year and a half, after finishing an operational tour aboard the *Truman*, so her advancement to Senior Analyst was way ahead of the norm. Captain Russ Ferguson, who ran ONI, had told her she was a prodigy.

Not that he was checking up on her...

"Daddy!" his all grown up little girl hollered when he entered the foyer, and he wrapped her up in a big hug. In that moment, he wasn't the President and she wasn't a naval officer—they were just daddy and daughter. "I missed you so much, Dad."

"You too, kid," he said when she broke the embrace. "We've both been busy. I hear you're tearing it up over at ONI."

"Keeping tabs on me, eh?"

"Only a little," he said with a laugh.

"Isn't that abuse of power or something?"

"Only if I tip the scales for you, which I don't," he protested. "And from what I hear you don't need it."

“What can I say, I love my work,” she said then, eyeing his sweater, added. “Really, dad, I can’t believe mom hasn’t thrown that thing out.”

“Believe me, she’s tried.”

They both laughed at this, and he pulled her in for another hug.

Mission accomplished.

The doorbell chimed. They turned together to watch Secret Service open the door and Katy’s big sis Sally come through, hand in hand with her husband and fellow surgeon Davi Kartal.

“Hi, sweetheart,” Ryan said, giving Sally a hug and peck on the cheek.

“Missed you,” Sally said, beaming at him. “Nice *dad* sweater, by the way.”

He grinned and turned to Sally’s husband. “Come on in, Davi.”

“How are you, sir?” Dr. Davi Partal said, extending his hand.

Ryan shook the firm grip. He liked Davi, a lot in fact. “When we’re home with family, Davi, I’m Jack or Dad, okay?”

“Right,” Davi said, properly chided. “Sorry. It’s still so weird.”

“Yeah, for me too, sometimes,” Ryan said. “Cathy’s in the kitchen. How about we help her out?”

“Is Jack coming?” Katie asked, referring to her older brother Jack Junior.

“Not sure if he’s going to make it,” Ryan said as they passed through the dining room for the kitchen. “He was busy at work but was hoping to come by. Haven’t heard from him yet.”

“Mom!” Katie said, and ran to Cathy who was still working at the kitchen island.

Ryan watched with affection as his two daughters hugged and greeted their mother. An upswell of pride tickled his throat at seeing how accomplished and confident his girls had grown up to be.

And every bit as beautiful as their mother.

After the requisite hugs and small talk were complete, Cathy announced, “Dinner is ready. We should probably get to the table before everything goes cold.”

“Let me help you,” Katie said, but Kathy shook her head.

“This is your dinner, Katie. No help from you.”

“I gotcha, sis,” Sally said, grabbing the salad bowl.

Minutes later they were around the large table, the bay window behind Ryan, who sat at the head, reflecting the sunlight from the bay into the room where it danced color on the walls. He was about to lead the prayer when the door chimed again.

“I can’t believe you almost started without me,” Jack Junior called from the foyer. He strode into the dining room, set a coyote colored backpack on the floor, and slipped into the empty seat between Katie and his mom.

“I can’t believe you made it,” Katie said with a big grin. “If only Kyle was here it would be perfect.”

“I barely made it from the Beltway. Kyle’s in Bahrain,” Jack said, dropping a napkin into his lap. “Besides after four years at the Academy together, surely you guys need a break.”

“Yeah, but that was years ago. This is the longest we’ve been apart. I miss him,” Katie said.

“Use your twin powers. If you channel his thoughts—it’ll be like he’s here,” Sally said, and everyone laughed.

“A little bird told me you’re putting on O-4 ahead of him,” Jack Jr. said with a grin as Agatha slid a plate of poached salmon on a bed of saffron rice in front of him.

“Really? Congrat’s sis, that’s fantastic,” Sally said. Then, with an impish grin added, “Kyle was always the more competitive twin. Can’t wait to see the look on his face when *he* has to salute *you*.”

“Yeah,” Jack Jr. said with a chuckle. “That oughtta cool the twin connection.”

“Hey now, let’s not pick on the only Ryan who isn’t here,” Ryan said, familiar intimacy of this table of people, their easy, comfortable connection, filling him with warmth and making his eyes wet. “Let’s say a blessing, and we can pray for your brother who wasn’t able to join us for this special day and the important work he’s doing with Task Force 59.”

The table quieted, and Ryan led them all in prayer.

“Bless us O Lord and these thy gifts, which we are about to receive...”

Cathy squeezed his hand.

Life was good.