

## Sacrifice

They had been chasing him for a long time now. It felt like hours because he was out of breath, but in the back of his mind, he knew it was merely minutes. His legs ached, commanding him to stop and take a breath but his brain told him to continue on fighting. They were good at what they did, no doubt. He ran through the busy street square where merchants were selling their goods. People stared as he ran by, looking back to see what exactly he was running from. One particular shop owner looked up, When he saw the ominous black jackets, the man quickly averted his eyes, and pretended that sweeping the pathway outside the shop door was the most interesting job he'd ever been assigned. He had learned a long time ago that people valued nothing as much as they did their lives. No one wanted to die a terrible death.

He had been approached when he was just 18 years old, at the peak of his youth, working at a munitions factory. Not even fully a man, he had no idea what he'd wanted in life. How could he? His school friends were off at university. Yet he had never been good at school, and had promised to leave as soon as he completed his secondary education. He didn't see the point in learning for years to come if he would end up making the same amount of money as them anyways. Thinking that he would be content working at the factory he realized he wasn't, and he wanted something more in life. So he'd accepted their offer. Live abroad in Britain for a year. Work out of the Soviet Embassy doing the usual Embassy stuff; issuing passports, dealing with paperwork and any other issues that may come up. But his real job would be to spy on British politicians. No problem, he said. He saw no harm in "observing" the actions of others, and then reporting them.

And then one day out of nowhere, the KGB had asked him to shoot a man. Kill an innocent. They'd wanted to make sure he still had "it". Whatever "it" was. He thought long and hard about it, longer than he should have. Overnight he came to the conclusion that he was a spy but he was no murderer. So he'd done the only thing he knew how to do, he ran from his problems. He escaped to the one place he'd swore he'd never go back. Russia.

However, in the back of his mind he knew they would never let him escape. His time on this Earth was limited. He could tell something was amiss when the scratching started. He was talking to Michael, friend from university on the phone when he heard a strange tapping sound. It didn't take long for him to figure out that the sound was in fact a bug. They had wiretapped his phone and were listening in on everything he was saying.

As he ran, up ahead of him he saw another two agents closing in. Left or right. He decided to take a right onto an industrial road. He took another right and saw ahead of him a large fence. He had not scaled a fence in years but as there was no choice, they were closing in. The fence was about 8 feet tall and very slippery. What lay on the other side of the fence, he had no idea.

After climbing over the fence he landed on an area of grass. He seemed to have stumbled onto a deserted apartment block. Crumbling houses stood with boards covering their windows. A chair long ago abandoned stood in the middle of the block. He was just deciding which door to go through when he heard the bang. It was so loud that he thought the world would end. Then came the pain. So immense he thought of nothing but how to stop it.

As he fell to the ground, he realized he had made his biggest mistake. This whole time he thought he had been calling the shots, but it had been them. When it came between choosing which way to go, they had cornered him. They knew each of his strengths and weaknesses. He thought he had chosen this patch of grass but they had chosen it for him.

And as he lay there dying, he thought back on his life. He had not wanted it to end, not this way, not this soon. It registered in his mind that life would continue on for everyone. The sun would shine and it might even rain tomorrow. No one would mourn his death, his few relatives alive had not heard from him in years. Yet as he lay there dying, he did not regret leaving the KGB. He looked down onto his chest, saw the amount of blood pooling out, and realized he didn't have much time left. Struggling against the pain, he tried to smile. But he still couldn't decide if his sacrifice had been worth it; giving up his own life for the life of someone he didn't even know.