

Chapter 3

The Game Begins; Spies Afoot

Back in North Carolina, the long weekend was over and Jason was on base, in his office, looking over some new paperwork, when Tex and Morales came in.

“Good morning, sir,” Tex said, as they both saluted their leader. “We wanted to give you an update on the recruit training.”

“Good morning. Grab a seat, gentlemen,” Jason replied, as Tex handed him a large folder.

“The training has been going well,” Tex said.

“We have some promising men out there, sir,” Morales added, “but we also have our share of candidates who have either quit on us or need to be let go.”

“I see,” Jason replied, looking over the files. “I trust you guys to do the right thing.” As Colonel Hogerbee had said: “It’s tough for a reason. The standards are what make us who we are.”

Jason signed off on their recommendations and handed the folder back to Morales.

“Oh, one more thing, sir,” Tex said, as he handed Jason a few papers: “we got a Corporal Wagston, sir; he’s a West Point graduate but he’s not cutting the physical stuff. I talked with an advisor at the school; it seems

Wagston has a brilliant mind – top of his class, sir.”

“Hmm, so what are you thinking, my friend?” Jason asked.

“I think he would be a great fit over at Logistics,” Tex replied. “I heard they are looking for some new blood over there.”

“Good idea; let’s give the man a chance,” Jason replied. “I like it; I see you are learning how to think outside the window. Let me make a call; I have an old friend over there.”

“Thank you, sir,” Tex replied, then the two left for another meeting with Delta Team.

Later that day, Jason finished his call home to Emma, and was glad to hear that all was quiet on the home front. He went outside with his coffee and walked over to an old wooden bench, as he did most every day. He enjoyed his time out of the office, getting a look at the troops and the busy airfield. Jason noticed that Delta Team was forming up out on the tarmac.

It was good to hear that Specialists Blair Crouse and Thomas Blacknal were fitting in with the team nicely. Blacknal, an African American from Philadelphia, reminded him of a young Derek, and Blair – a tall, lean fellow from Florida – was an airborne soldier with combat experience; he seemed a natural fit for Special Forces.

Jason stood watching as Delta moved out toward the firing range. He

missed it dearly, being part of the team. *But now, my friend, you are part of every team on base*, he told himself.

Jason heard that his old friend Colonel Hogerbee was back for the weekend. It was hard for him to believe that Hogerbee was now Secretary of State, but Jason was glad that he kept his condo in town. *Once Army, always Army*, he thought to himself. He reminded himself to give Hogerbee a call, to meet at the officers' club for some dinner.

In Maryland, Victor Mikal, a Russian foreign-intelligence spy, an SRV operative, sat out on the balcony of his newly-leased condo and took in the view. With him was his friend Niki Ivanov. Both of these high-tech SRV spies had been living in America and spying for years, under a false identity. Mr. and Mrs. Alexander Smith, a married couple, were now new residents of Maryland.

SRV Deputy Director Sergey Nashkin had received word of increased activity at Devcom, and called in his spies for a closer look at their lead scientist. At his request, the Smiths took a nice place, one floor above and directly across the small courtyard from Andropov's brand-new condo.

Victor Mikal was going over his files and the information he had received from their newly-planted mole. Gregory Wallis was a simple but time-proven and trusted SRV spy, with all the right paperwork.

Gregory came into the U.S. over ten years ago, and had been the ideal citizen, working hard and paying taxes.

Just a few days ago, Gregory had told Victor about all the activity and excitement going on at the Devcom facility, and especially from one of the science labs. He had found a crunched-up piece of paper in one of the garbage cans, with the words “*Magnatron*”, “*Androvski*” and “*testing*” scribbled on it.

Victor’s phone rang and Niki answered. “It’s the boss,” she said, as she handed it to him.

It was Deputy Director Nashkin. “Hello, my friend. I have received your latest report. How is the new place going for you?”

“All is very well, sir,” Victor replied, “and the view is just what Niki and I wanted.”

“That is good news, Victor,” Nashkin replied. “By tomorrow noon you will receive a special delivery. Read it carefully; it is of the utmost importance.” He hesitated for a moment. “I have talked with Director Malov; there is a lot of interest and concern about the things in the note our friend Gregory found. Call me if you have any questions about your further instructions.”

With that, Nashkin hung up and the two spies got busy, setting up a high-tech camera system. Victor had two cameras: one for the balcony and a remote device for the parking lot. They needed to monitor Androvski’s movements, to learn his routine and his habits.

Back in the Fayetteville area, Jason's dad had just finished washing up, and sat thinking about what happened to him during the hunting trip. He remembered that he was moving toward the downed bird, then the next thing he knew, he was sprawled out in the corn nubs.

Musta passed out. Maybe too much excitement. Besides, been feeling fine, he told himself. He decided that he would wait to see his doctor; he had his yearly physical due next month.

The following morning, Jason was in his office early when his phone rang. To his surprise, it was Commander Ryan on the line.

“Hello, my friend. How are things going for you?” Ryan asked.

“We're good, thanks, sir,” Jason replied.

“I got another one for Delta Team,” Ryan added. “Seems that we got some cartel trouble, down by the border again. I will get the information to you within the hour.”

“Okay, sir,” Jason replied, “I will brief Delta. They've been wanting another round; not much action since Black Water.”

The two friends talked for a while about family and friends, then Jason hung up, grabbed his coffee cup and decided to take a walk, to stop by and talk with Delta. Once outside, Jason buttoned up his jacket. The

early-November air had a bite to it, but it felt good to be outdoors.

He made his way over to the barracks area and found Tex sitting in his jeep, smoking one of his Marlboros.

“Good morning, soldier,” Jason said, as he moved closer.

“Good to see you, sir,” Tex replied with a smile. “It’s a little cold out, but a good day for a hike with the men.”

“Yes, crispy it is. Good idea; we need to keep the troops in shape.” Jason hesitated for a moment. “We got us another one coming; Commander Ryan called this morning. I expect the details shortly. Tell the men we have a meeting in two hours.”

“Roger on that, sir,” Tex said, as Jason left for his walk back.

Tex found his team having breakfast, filled his plate and joined them. “We have a meeting coming up. The boss has another one for us,” he said, as he settled in at the table.

“Good, it has been too quiet,” Morales said.

“Sounds like fun,” Blair added. “You might want to sharpen that big blade of yours, boss.”

Everyone was excited, got a laugh in and teased Tex about his big blade, but Tex didn’t mind. He always sharpened his deadly knife before a mission. He prayed, in silence, that he would not have to use it again.

Back in Maryland, a few days went by. Victor and his friend Niki were

looking over the camera recordings of Androvski's movements. It looked like he left the condo around seven every morning and returned to the condo by six p.m. He also went out on his balcony, on and off, to have a cup of coffee and a smoke, or talk on his cell phone.

The two spies went through their latest instructions from Deputy Director Sergey Nashkin. They were to get information from their mole at Devcom, and security measures needed to possibly sneak into Androvski's office. Nashkin demanded that everything be done very carefully; the need to be undetected by the Americans was of the utmost importance. Also, he added, when it was decided to happen, there could be a need to get into Androvski's residence.

Back at Devcom, the big day came for Androvski and Darius Patil. They were finishing the last touches on the Magnatron, and getting things ready for testing at the Maryland, Aberdeen proving grounds. They had a specially designed, 600-volt generator set up, connected to their device, and had hooked up several connectors to a sensor-filled test dummy, which was sitting in front of a large concrete-and-steel wall. The dummy looked like a man dressed in Army formals, holding a rifle. There was also a series of cameras set up, to film the entire demonstration. Out in the distance was big brass, including Special Forces Commander Ryan and Chief of Staff General Stanis.

Androvski was excited as he did a final check on everything, then looked at his trusted friend Darious Patel.

“Okay,” Androvski said, “let’s begin the charging sequence.”

The generator started and, after a few minutes, the main switch was thrown.

At first, nothing happened. Then, a light-blue, luminescent arc began rotating around the dummy, slowly intensifying. Androvski disconnected the power and the generator was shut down. Then, the science team quickly moved back away to the Army group.

About 100 yards away, a Special Forces soldier was set up, with an M-60 machine gun at the ready. Commander Ryan watched the blue circle as the M-60 gunner opened fire. There was a series of flashes and sparks, as the loud report of the gun filled the air.

To Androvski’s surprise, the Magnatron shield seemed to be intensifying as the gun laid down a blistering attack on the figure. The soldier fired until he ran out of ammo.

“Everyone, please wait here a moment,” Androvski said, as both he and Darious ran across the smoke-filled field.

“Look, it is intact!” Darious yelled out, as they got close.

“Yes, yes!” Androvski said, jumping with joy. “Okay, okay, let’s shut it down,” he told Darious, as pulled out his remote device and punched in the code. After a few seconds, the blue arcs of light faded away. The Army group, including the gunner, moved across the smoky field for a

look.

General Stanis could not believe it, as he looked at the fully intact replica. *Oh, my god! This has to go right to the president*, he thought to himself. Everyone else looked at the dummy in disbelief.

Ryan and Stanis moved over to Androvski. “Congratulations! This discovery... it’s amazing!” Stanis said. “You need to be with us when we take this one to the Oval Office.”

“Yes, sir; whatever you need, you got it,” Androvski replied, as handshakes and cheers went around.

“Gentlemen, gentlemen, I don’t have to tell all of you how important this is!” Commander Ryan yelled out. “No one saw anything today. Remember, as tight a drum on this.” Everyone nodded in agreement. It would be a career-ending move to even think about breaching security on the Magnanotron discovery.

As the officers and scientists dispersed, Ryan and Stanis walked over to a nearby bench and sat down.

Ryan looked at his friend. “I don’t know about you, but what we just witnessed was surreal to me. To take that much heavy machine gun, at max velocity... and the shield withstood the firepower – no damage!”

“I know. It’s hard to believe,” Stanis replied. “What we have, my friend, is a shielding device; an electronic forcefield the likes of which this world has never seen before. We have to keep this discovery secure; our enemies would love to get their hands on it.”

“You know my thinking?” Ryan added. “We need to get our friend Rob Tanner from the CIA to head up the security on Magnanotron. He did a great job with Black Water. I will make the call.”

“Good, you do that,” General Stanis replied, “and I will make the arrangements for a meeting with the president. I figure the Secretaries of Defense and State need to be included in the meeting.”

“Okay, General,” Ryan added. “As you know, we have another mission coming up on the border, but I will be available, so keep me in the loop.”

“Thanks for reminding me: the border mission,” General Stanis added. “I hope we can get that behind us. After the mission, I may call on you, if needed, to get this Magnanotron thing settled down.”

“The men are ready for the mission; they’ve been itching for it, sir,” Ryan replied. “But I understand, General. As always, we’ll be ready for the call.”

The two leaders left Aberdeen with wonder and excitement about Androvski’s Magnanotron.

Commander Ryan had to get in touch with Tanner, and the sooner the better. As he drove, he thought: *This could be a game-changing breakthrough.* He figured it wouldn’t be long before he sat down to tell the president about Magnanotron.