

*A*  
*SHADOW*  
*IN*  
*MOSCOW*

A COLD WAR NOVEL

KATHERINE REAY



HARPER MUSE

*A Shadow in Moscow*

Copyright © 2023 Katherine Reay

All rights reserved. No portion of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, scanning or other—except for brief quotations in critical reviews or articles, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

Published by Harper Muse, an imprint of HarperCollins Focus LLC.

This book is a work of fiction. The characters, incidents, and dialogue are drawn from the author's imagination and are not to be construed as real. Any resemblance to actual events or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

Any internet addresses (websites, blogs, etc.) in this book are offered as a resource. They are not intended in any way to be or imply an endorsement by HarperCollins Focus LLC, nor does HarperCollins Focus LLC vouch for the content of these sites for the life of this book.

ISBN 978-1-4002-4303-7 (softcover)

ISBN 978-1-4002-4304-4 (epub)

ISBN 978-1-4002-4305-1 (audio download)

**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

[CIP TO COME]

*Printed in the United States of America*

23 24 25 26 27 LSC 5 4 3 2 1

*To my Tuesday Morning Friends.  
I am so thankful to be counted among  
you and love you all dearly.*



HARPER  
MUSE

*I have been meditating on the very great pleasure which a pair of fine eyes in the face of a pretty woman can bestow.*

—MR. DARCY PONDERING MISS ELIZABETH BENNET

JANE AUSTEN, *PRIDE AND PREJUDICE*

*But Levin was in love, and so it seemed to him that Kitty was so perfect in every respect that she was a creature far above everything earthly; and that he was a creature so low and so earthly that it could not even be conceived that other people and she herself could regard him as worthy of her.*

—KONSTANTIN LEVIN CONSIDERING PRINCESS KITTY

SHCHERBATSKY

LEO TOLSTOY, *ANNA KARENINA*

## PROLOGUE

### Anya

MOSCOW, RUSSIA

*January 17, 1984*

AGAIN I ASK MYSELF . . . DOES THE END DRAW EVERYONE BACK to the beginning?

The golden glow of memory fades. My parents, my friends Dmitri, Scott, Sonya, Tracy . . . Their faces float past along with my musings on Lizzy Bennet and Kitty Shcherbatsky. Friends can't help me now. Books can't help me now.

I'm at an end of my own making.

There is so much I need to do—and fast. Should I go see my parents? Try to offer an oblique goodbye? Will that put them in danger? Or are they already in danger? What about all those things I said to Sonya . . . When I die, they'll question her again and she'll be more frightened. How much more will she say, and will that implicate her too?

What a fool I've been. Olivers warned me day one that there can be no cracks in the facade, no truth among my lies. He told me to play a part and to be careful to make sure no one questioned my loyalty, dedication, and commitment to the Soviet State.

My breath shudders within me. I stop walking. Somewhere in the past hour, the biting ice and wind have stopped. It's quiet

KATHERINE REAY

now, almost beautiful. The temperature has dropped and I can no longer feel my fingers, my face, or my feet.

I'm not brave and I have not been careful.

These truths come as a soft whisper. They settle within my soul like softly falling snowflakes. I don't shake them off. I let them melt into me. Standing in middle of an empty sidewalk, I let myself mourn everyone and everything I love. At the most basic level, the best stories are love stories. And despite my myriad mistakes, mine has been one too—a love story I only recognize now in its final pages.

I pray Peter gets me the cyanide pill. He must. If anyone knows the truth about me, he does. He knows I am not brave. He also knows everyone breaks and everyone talks.

The best scenario in this love story for me—for all of us—is that when the KGB comes, I'm already dead.



HARPER  
MUSE

## ONE

### Anya

WASHINGTON, DC

*March 14, 1980*

NOOOOOO.” I REPEAT MY ANSWER. THIS TIME I DRAW OUT THE one-syllable word for several beats so that every note gets recorded. “I have not been contacted by nor been in conversation with any agent or representative of the US government.”

“Anya.” Sasha clicks off the machine. “You can drop your truculence. This isn’t a game.”

I almost laugh—Sasha’s been reading the English dictionary again—but I don’t because it’ll anger him. I can’t risk teasing him about his English because today this *is* a game and I’ve already mismanaged too many moves. I walked into the Soviet embassy with such confidence an hour ago, and nothing has turned out like I thought.

I tap the table in a two-fingered fast syncopation. Sasha’s eyes drop to my fingers. Only then do I realize how nervous this strumming sounds. I slide my hand back into my lap.

My focus flickers to the recorder centered between us. I switch from English to Russian. “You’ve asked that same question every month for almost two years. Why are you asking it twice today? Have I caused a problem? Led you to distrust me? Have I ever even been late for a meeting? I brought you bourbon.”

I hold my breath and wait.

Sasha smiles. “I did like the bourbon.”

“See?” I sit on my hands to stop their flailing. “Can I go now? I’ve got midterms this week.”

I stare at Sasha. He glares back. I can’t hold his gaze. I’m pushing too hard, but I can’t help myself. I had over a week to prepare for this moment and I still wasn’t ready.

Comrade Lieutenant Aleksandr Stanovich Galdin has been my “case officer” for the past two years. Only a few years older than me—maybe twenty-four?—he’s sturdy, with short black hair, close-set eyes, and an intensity that shatters in rare bouts of deep chuckles. And we’ve had a few of those together. I like him. Much better than my previous case officer.

That one, an indomitable fellow named Igor, viewed me and everything American as ugly, soft, tainted, and corrupt. Sasha, on the other hand, is as enthralled with some aspects of American culture as I’ve become—and with the bourbon even more so. I think we come “up to par” on baseball, hot dogs, and music. I have an affinity for colored mascara and leggings he’ll never understand.

Our monthly meetings are usually short, light, and end with us swapping our latest and greatest discovery within our host country—all in English as Sasha is trying to improve his skills and secure that next KGB promotion.

Not today.

Upon my arrival, he walked me straight past his desk in the open office area, where we usually sit, pulled me into a windowless conference room, and set a tape recorder on the table between us.

“What’s this about, Sasha?” I airily waved a hand at the four walls, which seemed to close tighter with each step.

“That was quite a ‘senior spring break’ trip, Comrade

Kadinova.” He toggled his fingers in air quotes to make sure I understood he didn’t approve of the American spring break construct. Waiting for me to digest his comment, he sat back and frowned. He also clicked the big red button on his device.

“It’s what college students do here.” I watched the cassette whirl in the machine for a few beats before continuing. “And that’s my job. To be a normal college student here and learn all I can.”

“Your job is to represent the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.”

“And I do that by being exemplary in every way. Besides, I told you I was going. I gave you the hotel address—Wait! What?”

Sasha had the decency to look sheepish. That’s one reason I like him. Igor never would have seen any lines, much less recognized when he’d crossed one. And to be fair, back home such lines don’t exist. Nothing is out of bounds for the KGB. But in my four years studying at Georgetown, those lines and the freedoms they represent have become very real to me.

“You were spying on me and my friends? I told you where we were going so you wouldn’t have to. They’re Americans, Sasha. They have constitutional rights against that kind of stuff.”

“You don’t have those rights. And we weren’t watching them. We were watching you. They happened to be with you.”

“That was your excuse last summer.” I kept darting my gaze to the recorder as I worked to keep my voice calm and level. But it wasn’t fear rising within me; it was anger. “I didn’t balk then and I apologized for not keeping you informed.”

I leaned forward and rested both hands on the table, palms up. “What more could I have done? And what was I going to do from Fort Lauderdale anyway? Swim to Cuba?”

“Not funny, Anya.”

“Nor is spying on me and my friends when I’ve been a model citizen.”

“A model comrade?” Sasha chastised.

That’s when I closed my eyes. I needed to be more careful. Sasha acts like a friend, and perhaps to some degree he is one, but he is first and foremost a KGB officer. One who is hand-over-hand climbing the service’s promotional ladder, and one who is recording my every breath.

“Yes . . . Comrade,” I said, correcting myself.

After a few more questions and a few more of the same answers, I push my chair back and start to rise, only to drop again. “I was accepted into the Foreign Studies Initiative because my scores were exceptional, and because I am loyal. I’ve never made you or anyone else question me.”

I throw the test score comment at him as a reminder that it’s a great honor to be chosen for the Foreign Studies Initiative, maybe one higher than being chosen for the KGB. But it doesn’t matter. I may hold the honor, but Sasha holds the power.

He shuffles his stack of papers. “You’re right. You haven’t. But I follow orders.” He pauses and lifts his head. “We are moving our monthly meetings to weekly. Mondays at 4:00 p.m. It’s standard procedure for your final term. You have three months, Anya—remember that.”

My mouth drops open as arguments rise within me, not about my time left at Georgetown but about the meetings. I press my lips tight before any escape. Not quickly enough. He sees and his eyes narrow in challenge.

I don’t dare. As he made clear, I have no rights here. Instead I rise and stand still for a minute. It’s something I learned from my father. When making a point, he stretches to his full height, which is about six-foot-four, and stands until he gains the complete attention of the person he’s addressing before he

speaks. The effect of slowing a moment down rather than speeding it up is remarkable.

I'm about five-eight. It's not overly tall, but I find it still makes an impact. I stare at Sasha, dark eyes to dark eyes—also a gift from my father, eyes so dark you can't find my pupils—and wait until he focuses on me.

*“очень хорошо, товарищ.”* *Very well, Comrade.* I say it in clear Muscovite Russian. I then switch back to English as I know, ever striving for that promotion, Sasha prefers it. “I will be here on time and I'll see you next Monday.”

It's a weak power play on my part—my Russian carries those elite notes Sasha dreams of commanding and my English is light-years better than his. Sasha's eyes widen the tiniest amount and, with that, I reach for the door, open it, and cross the open office area toward the elevator.

The Soviet Union's *rezidentura*—the KGB's main Washington, DC, office—is on our embassy's fifth floor, and it has the slowest elevator I've ever ridden. I tap the button a few times, all the while feeling Sasha's gaze boring into my back.

Unable to contain myself any longer, I push open the door to the stairwell and take out my nerves regarding Sasha, the interview, and midterms by racing down five flights of stairs, skipping two at a time as I descend the bottom three floors.

Outside the doors and the gate's security checkpoint, a spectacular spring afternoon hits me. The cherry blossoms have just started to bud and every shade of pink bursts all around me. I stop on the sidewalk to take it in and to let Sasha go. It's my favorite time of year in DC. Bright green grass, blue skies, sunshine-dappled parks, pink flowers, and a sense of irrepressible hope. I want this spring—my last one here—to be perfect. I refuse to let Sasha or anything else tarnish a moment of these fleeting idyllic days. I'll need their warmth come winter.

I race across Wisconsin Avenue, round the corner, and find Scott still waiting at the bus stop bench on Davis Street. He's one of the idyllic memories I hope to hold as well, always making me feel brighter, sunnier, and more hopeful than I believed possible.

He stands, grabs me tight, and kisses me hard. "That took longer than usual. I was beginning to worry."

I slip my hand within his and reach up on my toes to kiss him one more time. Lowering to my heels, I lie. "Same as usual."

Hand in hand we head back toward campus.

Within a block Scott tugs at me. "What's wrong?"

I shake my head as if it's too insignificant to matter. And it is. After all, unless Sasha catches something on his tape, I played the game well enough. I'm not in danger. As for the rest—these last three months he mentioned—it's only my heart at risk. I'm the only one caught in the abyss between what I want and what will be.

"Anya." Scott stops. "Talk to me."

I reach for my nearest thought. "They spied on me—on all of us—in Fort Lauderdale."

His eyes flicker, and I sense he's retracing our week. Six of Scott's friends and five of mine crammed into two hotel rooms at the Sea Beach Plaza in Fort Lauderdale and had the time of our lives. Typical seniors, sunburned and still hungover, we just returned last night, to midterms beginning today.

"When?" he asks.

"I have no idea. Maybe the 3:00 a.m. snack at The Floridian?" I try to laugh away my discomfort. It's embarrassing to have someone spying on him because they have to keep tabs on me.

"Or maybe the beach?" Scott lifts a brow. He's not laughing, but he's not furious either. I take it as a good sign as a movie reel of us goofing around and kissing in the waves plays before me. Heat spreads up my neck.

“It’s not right, Anya.” Scott resumes walking. “We should report this. You’re in America, not the USSR.”

I pull at his arm. “Don’t, please. They weren’t tracking you, only me, and I’m sorry your privacy was invaded, but if you report this, it becomes an Incident. A capital *I* incident involving the KGB on US soil.”

“That’s my point. Maybe it should be one.”

“They’ll ship me home. No questions asked. No degree. No last months with you . . . And I’ll be ruined.” Panic rises within me, for myself and for my parents. “And if the embarrassment is great enough, they’ll ruin my parents too. You know that.”

Scott stares down at me. Blue eyes to dark eyes, we stand at a stalemate until his eyes round and soften. I’ve shared enough over the years that he understands the truth in what I’m saying.

I lift on my toes to kiss him. “Thank you.”

“Only because I don’t want to make things worse for you, but it’s not right, Anya. You deserve better as a human. You—” He stops with a wry grin. “Do you think they tasked that girl from Ole Miss? I’d like to believe she just found me cute.”

I kiss him again in thanks for shifting the tone and we continue our walk, laughing at all the absurd things the KGB’s “spy” might have seen. Some boring? Definitely. We spent most of our time asleep on the beach. Some shocking? Perhaps. There was one episode of bar-top dancing we collectively bemoaned the next day. Some illegal? Not at all.

“Why’d Sasha care about spring break?” Scott pulls at my hand again.

“We Foreign Studies kids are the elite of the elite, and all our information is submitted to the US before we arrive. So as much as Sasha watches me, so does the CIA. If one of us embarrasses them or gets lost, there’s hell to pay back home.”

“The CIA watches you?”

“Maybe not them. Maybe it’s the FBI? I don’t know. I just know we’re watched all the time. In many ways I think it’s an excuse for both sides to keep track of each other over our heads . . . Sasha asks me at every meeting if I’ve been ‘contacted by or am in conversation with an agent or representative of the US government.’”

I mimic Igor’s stern recitation perfectly, right down to his heavy Lithuanian accent. Sasha’s worked too hard to scrub his outer-Muscovite tones to make imitating him funny.

“Lost?” Scott stops so quickly I stumble into him. “How do people like you get ‘lost?’”

“They defect.” I offer the word. It’s one I seldom allow into my thoughts, much less out of my mouth. “It’s rare for Foreign Studies kids to attempt it as we’re pretty prized assets back home, being goodwill diplomats and all, but a few have tried . . . There’s a lot to love about America.” I lift on my toes again and kiss his cheek.

Scott resumes our walk in silence. It drags on long, and just as I’m about to break it, he beats me to it. “What about you? . . . Would you try? Do you want to stay?”

## TWO

# Ingrid

VIENNA, AUSTRIA

*May 16, 1944*

*WHEN DID THIS HAPPEN?* INGRID MUSED AS SHE WALKED DOWN the steps of Austria's Parliament Building, not breaking eye contact with the man across the street. She watched as a smile spread across Adam's face, and almost involuntarily, he leaned forward before his foot moved in a step toward her.

For two years she'd longed for such a smile and for him to feel that electric pull she discovered the first day they'd met. Sure it was never to be hers, two weeks ago she discovered it was suddenly there. Adam lingered one evening at their home after meeting with her father. The next afternoon he passed by the Rathausplatz as she exited work, and last week he asked to walk her home. He hadn't held her hand or kissed her yet, but Ingrid was sure both would happen soon.

Adam captured her hand as she reached the street's curb, still not breaking eye contact. He threaded his long fingers through hers and squeezed gently. She glowed as he turned them in the direction of her home.

"You're back!" He'd been out of town for three days, and while she knew he would not tell her where he'd been or what he'd been doing, it was a favorite game to hazard guesses. "Let's

see . . . You've been putting oranges in Nazi car tailpipes from Berlin to Bangkok, haven't you?" She felt so light she thought she might float away.

"Bangkok?" He grinned down at her, replying in German. "That's a little far-flung. Besides, if I found an orange, I'd eat it, Ingrid. Not waste it on some Nazi car."

"Bananas then?"

"Bananas in Berlin and Bangkok. Someone should write a song about that." Adam winked, his brown eyes warming to cinnamon.

"You've been blowing up munitions trains."

Adam's lips curled and he tossed her a sideways glance. This time, he did not reply. He simply squeezed her hand and walked on.

The fact that she might have gotten close, or near to close, felt like victory, and the rest of their walk flew by with light laughter and irrepressible grins. Adam was truly the best part of her day, and she hoped she was becoming his.

Once home, they'd fall into the routine they did most nights when Adam came for dinner. Ingrid would help Mutti with the meal as she always did, while Adam—when not abroad doing who knows what—would sit in her father's study and talk lesson plans and books for the classes Adam taught at the University. At least that's what Papa claimed they discussed.

But she'd known from the moment her father ushered Adam Weber into the von Alton home two years ago—a young professor placed within the University by the Third Reich to "teach the next generation"—that this handsome man, with his German lineage and lifelong heart condition, was more than he appeared.

The effervescence filling Ingrid stilled as they rounded the final corner from Liebiggasse onto Grillparzerstrasse. She felt tension crackle the air even before she noted the crowd filling

her usually quiet street. Nazi soldiers stood on her parents' front steps. They weren't relaxed and congenial as they usually were when coming to dinner, and they weren't officers.

They were young soldiers, barely out of schoolroom shorts or off their fathers' farms. Their brown uniforms stood in stark contrast to the white-painted brick and stone building; their strident tones and clipped accents ricocheted like bullets off the hard surfaces. The whole tableau felt angry, discordant, and—Ingrid absorbed the jeering faces—terrifying. She followed the crowd's focus and found her father lying at the street's curb. He lay bleeding as if he'd tumbled or been struck.

Ingrid rushed forward as yelling and a commotion drew her attention, along with everyone else's, back to her building's open doorway. Two stocky soldiers hauled Mutti onto the stoop.

"Stop . . . Stop pulling her," Ingrid's father yelled. "She's not resisting."

Still at a distance, Ingrid watched in horror as her father pushed up from the ground only to be shoved down by a jackboot centered on his back. His wooden leg broke off beneath him. He had lost the limb below the knee in the Great War. It was why the Nazis let him continue teaching at the University rather than conscript him into their army.

*"I am flawed, weak, not an ideal specimen, according to the Reich. But it seems I'm good enough to teach their ideology and their literature."* Ever the true Austrian, he'd sounded cynical, defeated, yet oddly determined the day he'd announced his assignment to his wife and daughter.

"Papa." Ingrid pushed through the crowd. "Pa—"

Nothing more escaped as she felt strong arms bind her from behind. An unseen hand clamped over her mouth as she met her father's gaze through the parted crowd. His pale eyes widened in recognition before his focus drifted above and beyond her. His

expression softened with an odd note of acquiescence. Ingrid's brow furrowed in confusion.

Then, with a mighty roar, Christoph von Alton grabbed the full attention of everyone around them. He thrust up and, standing on his one good leg, seized the soldier above him by the collar. His fist flew and a ghost of a smile lit his face as his blow swept across the soldier's jaw. The force sent them both tumbling into the street.

That was all Ingrid saw as the hands lifted and carried her away.

The hands, of course, were Adam's.

A block away, tucked within the safety of a deep door well, Adam spun her to face him. Fear and fury warred like living beasts inside her and she clawed at him, punched him, then tried to push past him. "Let me go! We have to help!"

Adam stood still, a wall of granite and flesh, holding her tight as she raged. Then, after what felt like an eternity, she quieted and he pulled her close. He held her tighter yet as she sobbed into his shirt.

Ingrid remembered little after that, only shadows and shapes until this morning, when the bright light pouring through Adam's apartment windows jarred her awake from turbulent dreams.

"You need to get up and go to work."

Those were the first words she heard, and they felt as harsh and glaring as the sunlight hitting her face. Pulling her hand from across her eyes, she found that, as upsetting and offensive as they were, the words were matched by the equally unwelcome sight of both Adam and his friend Martin Thomas standing cross-armed over her bed.

"Leave me alone." Ingrid wished for quiet, for darkness. To roll over and never wake again.

“Not on your life and that’s what this comes down to. Your life.” Adam laid a heavy hand on her shoulder. “Get up and meet us in the kitchen. Martin saved a little real coffee for you.”

In the end she obeyed. Not for the coffee, but for the promise of a noon meeting. If she went to work, Adam said he’d be waiting on her favorite bench in the Rathauspark at noon—with answers. Only that pledge kept her moving and sane. In fact, her mind was so fixated on that moment all morning, she misdictated memos, misfiled papers, and tripped twice weaving her way through the desks at the Third Reich’s Economic and Administrative Office.

“What’s with you today?” a coworker asked. At Ingrid’s simple reply that she hadn’t slept well, her friend shook her head. “Shape up. Obergruppenführer Pohl is here and on a warpath. You’ll get written up if he notices you stumbling around making mistakes.”

Ingrid nodded, sat at her desk, pretended to work, and watched the clock.

At noon she raced down the steps and across the Rathausplatz to the park beyond. As promised, Adam sat waiting. “What did you learn?”

After a fleeting glance, he shifted his focus back across the green expanse of the park. “I don’t want to tell you.”

“You have to, please, and don’t lie. Papa and Mutti always lied to me. They were so sure I wasn’t big enough, strong enough, to handle anything. I’m petite,” Ingrid protested. “But not weak like you all think.”

Dubbed “my little poppet” by her English mother, Ingrid had been sheltered by her parents for every one of her twenty-one years like a porcelain figurine. A classic Dresden with her blonde hair, blue eyes, and pale skin. Too precious to let venture far. Too delicate to pull close. And when the Nazis absorbed Austria in 1938, their protective tendencies only grew. Ingrid knew her

parents worked against the Germans, but she didn't know how—for while they kept her at a distance, they held their secrets tight.

“After your father struck that soldier, your mother was shoved down the stairs. Her head hit the steps . . . She didn't survive.”

Ingrid pressed both palms against her eyes. Red sparks shot behind her lids. She spoke through the darkness. “And Papa?”

“Mauthausen. He was put on a train this morning.”

Ingrid lowered her hands. The red sparks shot gold in the sunlight, blinding her. She blinked and tears filled her eyes. “They laugh about him at work. Franz Ziereis. The Commandant. He's the cruelest there is. Papa won't survive that camp.”

Adam nodded. “I know.”

She nodded too, appreciating his honesty. The last thing she wanted was the lie of false hope.

“I'm sorry . . .” He turned to face her. “Ingrid, we need to get you out. They will connect you to your parents as soon as the paperwork goes through. You won't be safe here. If anyone is anymore.”

“I am.” Ingrid reached into her pocket and pulled out her identification papers. She handed them to Adam. “Papa didn't even leave me that.”

“They're . . . They're fake?” Adam studied them. “Who is Ingrid Bauer?”

“I am.” Ingrid pressed her lips shut. Humiliation seeped into her sorrow. “They had no faith in me.” She raised a hand to stay Adam's huff of denial. “They hid families in our attic. I heard them, but when I asked, they denied it. Mice, they said. But I know. I lived there. And Papa worked all hours of the night. What professor of literature needs to grade papers all night? Every week? And Mutti . . . All those parties, walks, secrets . . . They lied. Every day. To me, their own daughter. Then that.” She

pointed to her identification card. “Papa destroyed my papers and handed me those. Bauer is a Russian last name, you know. He chose it because it has ‘pre-Volga origins,’ he said, to explain my German accent.”

Adam studied the papers for a long, silent moment. “Why Russian?”

Ingrid slumped against the bench. “Stalin and Hitler were allies when Papa made those. He thought if it came to it, Stalin was the stronger and he’d subdue Hitler. Then Papa sent me to work here, to cower in plain sight.”

Ingrid lifted her eyes to the impressive building towering to their right. The Austrian Parliament Building was now draped in the red-and-black flags of the Third Reich and had been for six interminable years.

“You can’t blame him, either of them, for wanting to keep you safe.” Adam handed her papers back to her. “Those are perfect, by the way. Your father was good. Really good. He was the best forger we had and he saved thousands of lives.”

“Forger?” Ingrid straightened. “That’s what he did? It makes sense. He was brilliant with art, languages, even science . . . Who exactly is *we*?” At Adam’s closed expression, she shifted to face him. “No more hiding. You tell me right now.”

“Your father was a loyal Austrian trying to save his country. What he believed could still be his country . . .” Adam stalled. Ingrid forced herself to remain upright and not tip forward in anticipation. “Great Britain. We both do, did, sorry . . . I work for British Foreign Services.”

“Both of you? How?”

“For me it started in school.” Adam shrugged. “I was in school outside London while my dad taught maths at Oxford. Friends reached out after I returned to Germany and recruited me. Like your father’s leg, my heart was deemed unfit for the

Reich's army and they let me teach . . . And your father? Well, that was your mother. While she's lived here since she married your father, she was still well connected back in London. She was my initial contact after I got assigned to the University. She helped me create my first network."

Ingrid closed her eyes. How little she knew her parents. Outside that vital role they played as parents, did she know them at all? "She said she met Papa right after World War One. Her family was vacationing on Lake Neusiedl and he was there with friends for the weekend. Was that true?"

"Don't, Ingrid. Don't question everything. I'm sure it was. And they loved you. That was true too. More than anything." He chuffed a sad, derisive sound. "They weren't pleased with me lately, I'll tell you that."

"Why?"

"You." Adam regarded her with such openness and vulnerability, for an instant, she felt she could see into the very heart of him. His every emotion mirrored her own—loss, pain, fear, and love. She blinked at the last, unsure if it was real or her imagination. She tipped forward and noted the second Adam's brain told his body to do the same.

He pulled her close as his lips covered hers. Their first kiss wasn't hasty, forceful, or demanding. It felt like sorrow touching springtime, a slow unfolding toward hope. It teased all her senses and she felt herself falling into it and into him. It was gentle. It was full of yearning and love. It was—

It was over.

The sudden loss of Adam's counterweight surprised Ingrid, and she caught herself with one hand on the iron back of the bench. Studying his shuttered expression, she realized that whatever she'd seen in the heartbeat before their kiss had vanished and that whatever he'd felt for her in the past weeks of heightened

glances, fleeting touches, meeting her after work, and walking her home was over. Her world tipped from that glimpse of spring and all its inherent promises back to the last days of fall with an endless winter ahead.

“I shouldn’t have done that.” Adam scrubbed his hand over his face. “When your father looked to you yesterday, he looked to me as well. Like it or not, Ingrid, you are my responsibility now.”

There it was. She wasn’t to be loved; she was to be protected. She was once again to be managed at a distance in order to keep her safe. She closed her eyes. “Why does no one think I can take care of myself?”

“Oh, Ingrid . . .” Adam sighed. “This isn’t about that. It’s about a promise . . . You’re the strongest woman I know. Let me get you to England.”

*“Nein.”*

“Do you want to stay?” He widened his eyes as if he couldn’t imagine such a thing. “Why would you try? This isn’t your home anymore.”

Ingrid gazed out into the Rathauspark. Despite the destruction around her, this one corner of the park remained lush and green. Focusing only on that, she could almost believe the world might right itself and all would turn out well. “Then call it my battleground.”

“You don’t understand what you’re saying.” Adam twisted to face her. “Your father wouldn’t want this for you. Your mother would be furious.”

Ingrid glared at him. His expression appeared tired and worn. He’d aged in a day. They both had. He had also seen more than she had in that last devastating moment, and she’d seen enough. “He lost that right yesterday, didn’t he? He lost his life, threw it away. Mutti did too. And for what? A few papers, a few whispered secrets? No, they lost the right to tell me what to do

because they aren't here. And you don't get to step into their shoes, Adam."

He shifted away rather than toward her. The silence grew long and uncomfortable, but Ingrid refused to break it.

"It was far more than a few papers and a few secrets, Ingrid. And you need to know that what your parents did, what I do, requires you to play a game with no end in sight. It's exhausting and it divides your soul. They were spies. True spies." Adam sighed with a long, deflated breath.

He paused, as if giving her time to absorb his statement, before he continued. "I'm still working as one and it's hard. Harder than you can possibly imagine. You saw what these years did to them. They didn't want that for you. But if you insist on staying, if you won't be reasonable and go, then you must understand what's coming."

Ingrid had seen, perhaps, more than Adam understood. Because alongside the weary expressions and greying hair, the thinning features and worn slumped shoulders, she sensed a strength and purpose within her parents—a peace, solidity, and focus—she had never witnessed before. It came out in whispers, gestures, inflections, and glimmers of light in the dark that were so fleeting she almost thought she'd imagined them. But deep down, she knew she hadn't. Her parents had grown stronger in the crucible of war. They had glowed—but had never trusted her enough to share their purpose, even their joy, with her.

"I'm staying," Ingrid stated again, and contrary to everything Adam said was to come, a calm rather than a tumult settled within her. "Tell me what I'm to do."

Adam studied her and whatever he saw seemed to please him. The corner of his mouth lifted the tiniest bit before he banked it. "Pretend it's a game so the reality of life doesn't terrify you every

moment of every day. Then learn to play and live within that game better than anyone around you.”

“How?”

Adam’s lips flattened into a straight line. “I’ll show you.”



HARPER  
MUSE

## THREE

### Anya

WASHINGTON, DC

*April 21, 1980*

WOULD I STAY, IF I COULD?

I never answered Scott's questions last month, and he had the grace not to ask them again. We both know there are no good answers. Besides, the sentence that preceded them still has me reeling.

*"... There's a lot to love about America."*

I said that. I said that out loud. Do I think that?

In moments, yes, maybe, fleetingly. But deep down, is that how I really feel? All month that question has danced in the back of my mind. Teasing me. Plaguing me.

I can't say "yes." I can't say I love America or I'd ever try to stay. It's too painful to admit—or worse, to secretly desire—something that can never be. And I don't. That would be foolish. I mean, I think I don't. I've worked hard to keep one corner of my heart safely tucked in my immutable reality, trusting it's enough to keep me from shattering when my four years here end, and I've done it. I'll be fine.

But I also can't lie and say "no."

I dream about it—a job, a life, a marriage, even kids. I thought these years would be like summer camp. I'd take the classes,

learn all the right words to say and things to do so as not to get beat up, and I'd be done. But it's been different. I've expanded; I've grown. And from the day we met, Scott saw more in me than I ever thought existed. I've stretched above and beyond myself. Not unlike that silly fern Tracy placed in our windowsill. A little warmth and sunshine and that darn thing is about to take over our dorm room.

I should've lied to Scott right then and there and said "no." It would have at least saved me this month of torment. But I couldn't. I already lied once that day, and I didn't think I had another in me.

The truth is, the day before our spring break adventure, I had in fact "been contacted by and been in conversation with an agent or representative of the US government."

Scott doesn't know. Sasha can never find out.

It all started with a summons to Professor Jamison's office. While unexpected, as we meet to discuss my senior thesis on Thursdays and had just met the day before, I was delighted to drop by.

Jamison's cramped and stuffy book-lined office is my favorite spot on campus. Something about its dusty ink and paper smell takes me right back to my bedroom and my all-night read-a-thons—because at home you get the best books in secret and only for one night.

As usual Jamison was dressed in a rumpled plaid button-down shirt with his readers perched upon his head. He looked as disheveled as his office, with the remains of a tuna sandwich near his elbow.

"Shut the door, why don't you?" He absently patted his desk. I gestured to his head. He reached up and rolled his eyes. "Oh, yes, there they are. Thank you."

I turned to catch the door and froze. Another man stood

in the room, not one meter—three feet, my mind converted—from me.

“I’m sorry.” I faced the professor. “I thought you wanted to discuss my paper. I can come back later.”

“It’s in fine shape.” Jamison waved long fingers to the man next to me, who calmly returned a book to the shelf before he stepped toward me, hand outstretched.

I estimated he topped me by at least six inches, making him just shy of my father’s height. But the similarities stopped there. I could tell this man was wired for action rather than stillness. I found that far less disconcerting. He was younger too, maybe early to mid-forties. Light brown hair cut short. Grey-blue eyes. Cool and impassive.

Jamison continued. “I want you to meet someone. Please. Go ahead and shut the door.”

I slid the door shut with one hand and reached out to shake hands with the other.

His hand was as cool as his eyes. He still had not spoken. Perhaps because Professor Jamison, in his normal scattered way, was still talking.

“Anna, this is Trent Olivers. Trent, Anna. The best and brightest of the year. He was once that, Anna, longer ago than either of us will admit. Bright as you, but he never pushed his thinking deep enough. Now he’s something different altogether. Now . . .”

The man’s eyes widened minutely at the mispronunciation of my name. I didn’t react. It’s never bothered me that, either on purpose or by accident, Jamison—after teaching me in two classes and mentoring my honors thesis—still hasn’t gotten it right. I take it as a testament to my ability to fit in.

Jamison, still chattering, lifted his head to capture us both

within the lenses of his readers. “He’s the man behind that test you and the others took last month.”

*The test.*

In February Jamison called ten of us in to take a newly designed test, structured to assess the “evolving twentieth-century sociopolitical paradigm,” whatever that meant.

In form, the two-hour examination was a mix of multiple choice, short answer, and essay, covering an eclectic array of topics such as math, ethics, problem-solving, science, literature, history, philosophy, ideology, sociology, and religious attitudes. Our reward was unlimited pizza and beer at The Tombs afterward. He never said anything about follow-up meetings or results. In fact, as I cast my memory back to that day, we hadn’t signed our names to the forms.

“It wasn’t graded, was it? Did I fail?” I sank into Jamison’s only visitor’s chair. It was scratched, worn, and the leather slippery enough to make me slide deep. A grade hadn’t seemed likely and failure never occurred to me. I thought we were simply and anonymously putting a new test through its paces.

Coming from a school system in which you only advance depending on how well you master each step, I’ve always been terrified by failure. I’ve always been terrified of scrutiny. There are real consequences at home for poor marks and missteps.

I forced myself upright and addressed both Jamison and Mr. Olivers. “Do I need to retake it or something?”

My professor laughed and returned to grading papers.

Mr. Olivers did not laugh. Instead he perched in front of me on the edge of Jamison’s desk. “Nothing like that. In fact, you did remarkably well.”

He stared at me, then continued—in pitch-perfect Muscovite Russian. “Anya Kadinova, I read your entrance file when you arrived here. Very impressive. I had not expected to find your

answers on the test, especially your long answers, so . . . original.” He let the last word float between us.

Jamison’s head popped up like a whack-a-mole and I knew his mispronunciations were a mistake. “Anna, do you speak—?” He cut himself off. “My TA told me you moved to Illinois from West Germany in middle school.”

“Yes, sir, I did tell him that.”

It was a lie I made up within my first days on campus. I’ve always been good—exceptionally good—at languages, accents, and imitations. So good I got written up in Class Six for mimicking my teacher’s German. I got written up—she disappeared from school. In my defense I hadn’t known she hadn’t reported she knew German. That whole incident still bothers me . . .

Anyway, my first roommate at Georgetown, a silly, spoiled girl named Sandy, refused to bunk with a “Pinko.” When Tracy took her place, I came up with my story about being from the German Federation Republic—what Americans call West Germany. Tracy didn’t question it. No one did—Americans are generally horrible about accents and languages, by the way.

For the most part it was a good choice. It gave me the chance to become someone new and different in America and feel what freedom of choice, thought, expression, and intention meant in every aspect of my life. I wouldn’t have been allowed to do that if people truly understood I hail from Moscow rather than Bonn. Sure, there have been a few crass comments about Germans and Nazism, but nothing compared to what I’ve heard dished out regarding Soviets and Communism.

It’s been exhausting, though. It’s an odd form of schizophrenia, knowing myself to be one thing while actively pursuing another identity every waking moment. I’ve only “come clean” with Tracy and Scott. With everyone else, I’m perpetually playing a game, maneuvering my pieces—actions, reactions, inflections,

opinions, and ideas—around a board. It's shredding, and without that hard stop at graduation, I'm not sure I could keep it up.

I considered all this, and my options, as silence hung heavy in Jamison's office. Both men watched me. Neither spoke. I vacillated between pretending I didn't understand Mr. Olivers, as I hadn't answered Jamison's question yet, and diving in to see where Mr. Olivers was headed.

I shifted my focus to Mr. Olivers alone. "You seem to know a lot about me. Why did you have me take the test if you knew I wasn't a real American? Or even a real German?" I replied in Russian. "Why did you not simply talk to me? Trick me into this office like you did today?" I asked in German. "And what were you trying to learn anyway with that test? What were you after?" I finished in French.

Mr. Olivers's mouth twisted into the smooth-lipped grin of the smug and knowing. Jamison's eyes were so wide behind his readers he resembled a tarsier, that little squirrel-like animal from the rain forest I saw on a *National Geographic* special last summer.

Rather than answer my questions, Mr. Olivers—unaware Jamison was now riveted by our conversation—asked a couple of his own. "Why did you double major in engineering and literature? You've taken several philosophy courses too. What are *you* after?" He returned to English and his tone was no longer overtly challenging but curious with an edge.

Part of me wondered if Sasha sent him. Sasha doesn't have Olivers's cool confidence, but I've seen it in seasoned KGB officers. Either Olivers was one of them, or something terribly close. I had to be careful.

"Knowledge. Understanding . . . Because I could. I asked for permission and it was granted." I caught the defensive uplift of my voice and corrected my tone. "Engineering was required. I'll

work in that sector once I return home. In fact, I was on my way to MIFI, the Moscow Engineering and Physics Institute, before I was offered a spot in the Foreign Studies Initiative. But when I got here and discovered I could take classes outside my major, I did.”

“Engineering?” Mr. Olivers lifted one brow high. “You weren’t headed for the Moscow State Institute of International Relations?”

*MGIMO.*

I tried not to let my jaw drop. He was really asking very different and dangerous questions. Was I going to be groomed for the Committee for State Security, the KGB? Had I been groomed?

But questions that if he was KGB, he’d know the answers to. Foreign Studies Initiative students are *never* groomed for the KGB. We’re too high profile. We’re the Soviet poster kids: diplomatic fodder. We are commanded to excel at all our classes, behave as model comrades, and uphold the ideals of the State. At all times we are to demonstrate the superiority of our homeland—and if US Intelligent Services tie themselves up keeping track of us every minute of every day, all the better. That just means the real KGB “assets” have an easier go on American soil.

Still unsure if it was a trap, I tried to form a bland but truthful answer. “Before I accepted the Foreign Studies assignment, MGIMO was offered alongside MIFI. I was lucky. My scores allowed me a choice. That is rare but appreciated.”

“I expect a member of the Party’s *nomenklatura*, specifically one in the Office of the Counsel to the Presidium and General Secretary Brezhnev, would be afforded some say in his daughter’s placement.”

That’s when my jaw did drop. This man seemed to know more about my father than I did. The best description I can give for my father’s job is “high-level Party bureaucrat,” and it’s

accurate—it's the job description most of my friends give for their parents as well.

With that statement I knew Mr. Olivers was definitely not KGB. It wasn't in what he said but in how he said it. There is something unique about the way each country's people express themselves, and it can be revealed in something as tiny as a gesture or an inflection—the way we walk, talk, carry ourselves, or even tilt our heads. Things only an outsider could notice.

But if he wasn't KGB, who was he?



Mr. Olivers grimaced.

I got the sense he felt he'd misstepped and made us adversaries instead of comrades.

“Tell me more about your love of ideas.”

He was trying to put me at ease, but his approach missed by a mile. Four years here and I'm still shocked at how easily everyone shares their thoughts. Back home, that's sacred ground. I wanted to run out of the room, but Jamison's encouraging smile compelled me to stay.

“It's what my friends and I did—do. We read and we argue at home—in private, of course. Most of our opinions are crap, but . . .” I took a deep breath, only then realizing I'd been holding it.

I glanced around the office again, allowing the books, the smells of paper, ink, and dust to settle within me.

“Every culture tells a story through its literature and philosophy. I've grown up on a Marxist-Leninist worldview and stories of Russia and the Slavic countries. The Soviet Union isn't a hundred years old, but our history—our people's history—goes back centuries. Books about our past aren't too hard to get, at

least some of them. You register on a list and get them after a few months or so, or you can collect recycling. That's what we did. Paper and metal for books, and there were some really great ones."

I thought back to how, sometimes tucked within those books, we found gems. That's where I met all the best Russian storytellers and my favorite science fiction authors from around the world. Asimov, Bradbury, Orwell, Huxley, Clarke, and Le Guin . . . Their stories prepared me for Georgetown by introducing me to worlds so bizarre and experiences so alien I simply had to hold on until I figured out the rules and the culture.

"But the best," I continued, "were the secret books. The one-nighters that got you reported and kicked out of the Komsomol if you got caught reading them. Those books took you to whole new galaxies."

"Pushkin, Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy?"

"Those you could get. Pasternak, Solzhenitsyn, Zamyatin, Pilnyak were tougher. Those were the stories tucked in the recycling pamphlets. But Tolkien. Steinbeck. Salinger. Faulkner. Lee. Those were the one-nighters."

I surveyed Professor Jamison's bookshelves. "Here they're lined up, free for anyone to grab and read. Most of the books I've read while in America will never come my way again."

"What's your favorite?"

"That was a secret book, actually. *To Kill a Mockingbird*. I got a copy for a night when I was sixteen. Scout was the first character I met that I could relate to. She was young, but she had humanity, goodness, and spirit, despite the evil around her. I wanted to be Scout."

"And who is your favorite philosopher?"

I stared blankly.

"I pose no danger to you."

I decided to answer, because that's part of what I learned from my favorite philosopher—that I'd never have big courage if I didn't practice small acts along the way.

"Thomas More. He's not one of the biggest guns in the Western canon, but he was relatable and he taught me something I needed to know. My end point."

"What's that?"

"He showed me there's a line my conscience won't allow me to cross. It's out there, even if I'm not sure what it is yet." I swallowed, noting small acts of courage aren't easy.

"He wasn't what I thought," I continued. "More seems super closed and rigid, but he was a very urbane and brilliant politician. Until he reached his end point. The line in the sand that would separate him from his very soul if he crossed it. I'd never thought about that line before."

"I doubt many have."

"At home, it's a collective line rather than an individual one. It's determined by the State for all society. The idea of such individuality was brand new for me."

I surprised Mr. Olivers. I silenced him. I could tell because his face softened. He was curious. He pulled over a footstool and sat next to me. His knees hit his chest.

"What are your plans after graduation, Anya?"

"I'll fly home the night of graduation and work in a laboratory, serving as a liaison between scientists and the government."

"Reporting to Minister of Defense Nikolai Ivanovich Petrov? That's a very high-profile job."

I licked my lips. I could not answer that question, yet unbidden I gave a single small nod.

Mr. Olivers did not react; he merely asked his next question. "Are you pleased with that path?"

I took a steadying breath. This past year, I've listened as

my Georgetown friends pondered what jobs to accept and what might make them happy. Their ability to choose sifts through my hands like sand, lingering only long enough to tease me with the hope it can be mine.

It can't.

At home I, as an individual, exist to serve the State. Anything and everything else is subservient to that primary relationship. And I have been assigned my job.

"A lot is expected from the Foreign Studies Initiative students. I'm pleased to be given such an opportunity."

Mr. Olivers shifted closer. "Would you like a different opportunity?"

"I don't understand."

He turned his head to catch Jamison's eye before answering me. "I work in a business that strives to change reality. We protect American national security and interests abroad, and we also work to promote democracy and freedom. You're right, I could have approached you directly, but that test gave me insights you might hide. Your answers and reading interests reveal you believe in voice, in certain amounts of individual autonomy, and you crave internal freedom. You can't like Thomas More otherwise."

Without studying Jane Austen last year, I'm not sure I could have parsed through his speech. But "it is a truth universally acknowledged" that people often try to make a point while saying nothing at all. It's also a universal truth that we instinctively understand each other. Meaning conveys when words cannot—I knew exactly what he was talking about and what he was about to propose.

"The exam you took was created for the US Intelligence Services, and if working for us, with us, is of interest to you, I am here to discuss that possibility. But I must warn you, it's a double life, a division of soul perhaps, and after More, that will either

resonate with you or not appeal at all. It depends on what drives your soul.”

I thought about the energy required to play that game and the energy I’d already expended simply pretending to be a West German. “No one can live like that. Not indefinitely.”

“You’d be surprised.” Mr. Olivers tilted his head as if savoring a delicious secret only he knew. “The best can and do . . . You could be that.”

I sat for a moment chewing and digesting his offer. I was flattered and it was tantalizing. How could it not be? Yes, I’ve fallen in love with Western literature and philosophy, but I’ve gotten pretty hooked on Hollywood too. The movies here are amazing. *The Day of the Jackal*, *The Eagle Has Landed* . . . I’ve seen every James Bond movie put out on Betamax. That last one in the theaters, *Moonraker*, had me on the edge of my seat. To be a spy . . . Wasn’t that what every kid dreamed about?

My best friend Dmitri and I sure did. We played KGB all the time, with our wooden swords and tin can walkie-talkies. Of course, he was always the KGB agent and I was any other service he assigned to me—and I always lost. After all, if you’re going to be the best, you work within the most powerful and elite squad in history. The KGB.

At least that’s what I’ve always been taught. But here everything’s different. So different I can’t even say what’s right, what’s wrong, what’s true, and what’s illusion. I’ve loved every moment and yet I miss my home. I crave all the freedoms here, but I feel safe within the strictures there. I’m enamored by all the colors and yet I miss grey. How this can all be true I have no idea. It simply is.

I couldn’t tell Mr. Olivers any of this. It hardly made sense to me. But I didn’t need to. As he sat watching me, his expression changed. Whatever he saw bothered him and a furrow wrinkled

his brow right above his nose. All the lines on his forehead moved horizontally, formed over time by surprise or skepticism. This was a new vertical line, a deep trench created by me.

“Don’t answer.” He held out a hand. “Perhaps we can talk about this another time. You head home, work, and we might reconnect in the future.”

“Why?” A surprising sense of desperation washed over me.

Mr. Olivers sighed, as if I’d missed something and he felt disappointed at having to explain it to me.

“That’s just it,” he finally answered. “The why. It matters most in my business. Everything stands on that foundation. I’ll turn away a top scorer, the most perfect-on-paper candidate imaginable, if the *why*, their intangible motivation and driving force, doesn’t settle well in my gut. With you I’m intrigued. Your answers reveal far more than I think you realize. But your *why* isn’t defined. Your emotions haven’t caught up with your intellect . . . You’re homesick.”

“Of course I miss my family.”

He pushed to stand and extended his hand to shake our goodbye. “It’s not about your family. You cling to the belief that you can find what you need in the Soviet Union. I want to talk when you finally realize you can’t.”