

TITLE: Fathers and Sons

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RATING: T

WARNINGS: Adult language

DISCLAIMER: Characters belong to their corporate parents. I'm just playing with them and I have no money worth going to court over, though the zine collection might be worth something.

SUMMARY: No guns, no air battles, no dangerous missions, just a mystery wrapped around an old man and his son. All in all, Hawke thought, it was just enough to alleviate the boredom without being dangerous, except for the unknown quantity....

Chapter One

“He’s here again,” Dominic said around a mouthful of meatball submarine sandwich. Hot, thick red sauce oozed between his fingers. Fumbling for a napkin, he finally grabbed at the previous day’s worksheet, licked his fingers clean and then wiped them on the worksheet.

“Dominic,” Caitlin protested, swinging her feet off the desk and hooking the roll of paper towels expertly with one clean finger. She tossed the paper towels in the direction of the two men and Hawke snared them before they fell to the floor.

Hawke shook his head. It hardly mattered; yesterday’s worksheet was about as full as today’s, meaning it listed one or two preventative maintenance jobs, no charters, no classes, and no paying work. They’d completed all of the critical maintenance work the previous week, and had worked steadily through the necessary but non-urgent work. Two days prior, they’d completed the non-urgent work and had moved onto the optional and ‘maybe it would be a good idea’ type of jobs.

Santini Air had hit slumps before – Dominic took great pleasure in announcing that it was an ‘up and down’ business, usually to groans – but Hawke was hard pressed to remember the last bout of doldrums that had lasted this long.

It was bad enough that he’d even consider giving a flight lesson if necessary, definitely not his forte, but he’d have to fight Caitlin and Dominic for the opportunity.

He’d mentioned – just the once – the idea of soliciting Archangel for some work. The Firm had deep pockets and Briggs’s budget alone was measured in the tens of millions; it might have been hard to justify hiring a charter helicopter with the extensive fleet of Bells at Archangel’s disposal there, but Briggs would have come up with something.

The look on Dominic's face had reminded Hawke of a bull pawing the ground just before charging and goring this particular matador. Hawke had tuned out after the first ten reasons why Santini Air was not for sale to white-clad, paranoid, manipulative so-and-so's.

It hadn't even been Hawke's idea. It had been Caitlin's, but they both thought Dominic would take it better if it came from Hawke.

Hawke glanced lazily out the window, following the direction of Dom's waving arm. Yup, the old vagrant was back. The man looked too clean to be living on the streets but his presence at the Airfield day after day broadcast his lack of purpose or lack of facilities. At least the weather was temperate and the people at the Airfield generally kind. A few of the business owners had complained, Van Nuys Security had run the man off a handful of times, but the man had soon learned which business owners were a soft touch for a World War II veteran with no place to go, and he spent his days moving among those hangars.

Hawke turned his attention back to Dominic. Santini might put up a gruff exterior but his was one of the softest hearts Hawke had ever known, not that most of the people he'd known in his life had demonstrated they had a heart, tender or otherwise. Hawke gave it five, maybe ten minutes before Santini invited the old man in for coffee and a chat. Normally the chatter would have been distracting, in a bad way. Right now, Hawke was all in favor of some distraction.

"He got a name?"

Santini shrugged, finished his sandwich. "Yenya, Yevga, something Russian along those lines. He was in the Red Army! Imagine, him and me fighting in the same war, thousands of miles apart and now us both ending up here."

Hawke's lip quirked upward in a fond smile. He resisted the impulse to remind Dominic of how many millions of men and women had served in World War II, of the chances of someone near Dominic's age not serving in or affected by the war being far less than those who'd been in it.

He imagined, for a second, Dominic as a young man, flying for the U.S. Army Air Corps, being told that one day, forty years on, he would meet a Russian soldier at his business in California and could well understand Santini's amazement. Somewhere inside, Dominic was still that young pilot.

Hawke met Caitlin's eyes, saw a reflection of his affection for Santini and an equal willingness for something, anything, to break the monotony of waiting for a client.

The old man approached the open doorway of the hangar, looked in with a tentative smile that broadened widely as Dominic waved him on. Clad in a dark suit, charcoal probably thought Hawke couldn't quite tell with the man back lighted in the doorway, and a clean white shirt, he looked like any of the hundreds of immigrant grandfathers he'd seen in California's port cities.

"Yenya," Dominic called happily. "Come on in and meet one of the finest pilots in the world. Why if we'd had String flying for us in the War, we'd have made mincemeat of old Adolf in weeks instead of taking four years."

Hawke rolled his eyes at Caitlin, who stifled a laugh and began cleaning up the paper wrappings that remained from their lunch. She balled the wrappings and tossed it towards the wastepaper basket as Hawke leaned sideways his chair to block the shot.

"She shoots and she scores!" she said with satisfaction amidst Hawke's grudging shrug.

"Two points," he acknowledged. "Double or nothing?"

"Don't mind them, Yenya, come sit down."

Santini pushed past and cleared a space on his desk. He pulled a chair from the other side of the filing cabinet where it had been serving as a convenient spot to leave files, before the dearth of work caught them up on filing.

The old man smiled, somewhat shyly at Caitlin, gave her a quick bow of his head, and then another shy smile for Hawke.

"Yevgeniy Dzhangerchinov," he said, extending his hand to Hawke. "Please call me Zhenya."

That name was a mouthful in any language and even though it sounded beautiful in the man's native Russian, Hawke wouldn't have dared to try to pronounce it. His attempt at the name would be embarrassing when contrasted to the old man's more than adequate use of English.

"Hawke," he answered, standing up, grasping the old man's hand and giving it a firm shake.

For a man who appeared to have a dozen or more years on Dominic, the man's grip was steady and not at all weak. Hawke met a clear blue-eyed gaze with one of his own, felt his face relax in a smile at the good humor he saw in the other man's face.

"Your English is pretty good," Hawke said, sitting back down and watching Santini fuss over the Russian, offering coffee, cream and sugar.

Zhenya raised his shoulders in a shrug, smiled. "I have, as you say, become acclimated, Americanized, I think." He accepted a cup of coffee from Santini. "Thank you, but no. Just as it is. No milk or sugar." He sipped at the coffee.

Hawke shifted, put his legs up on a box of parts that had come in earlier that morning that they hadn't yet put away. "How long you been in the States?" he asked, trying to quell his innate tendency to be suspicious of anyone new, anyone who showed interest around Santini Air. The suit had proved to be more of a faded black than charcoal on closer inspection and while clothes didn't always make the man, it was generally a clue to what he valued or what he could afford. Most of the spies Hawke had met during his life were underpaid and yet still dressed better than this white-haired old man.

"Oh, Zhenya's been here, what," Santini turned to look at the Russian, "five, ten years now?"

Zhenya nodded. "I came to America to look for my son." He shrugged. "It's a big country."

Hawke felt his suspicions ease for the moment, experienced instead a stirring of sympathy. He knew what it was like to look unsuccessfully for a family member, though Zhenya's son hadn't been left, hadn't been lost, in a war zone.

Hawke gave him a frank stare, curious. "You ever find him?" He regretted it instantly as the man's body shrunk into itself, his face closing off and his eyes seeing something other than the inside of the hangar. The body language alone announced that the search had ended unhappily.

"He died," Zhenya said, succinctly, and with a shudder, shook off the gloom that had pervaded him. "But that was years ago and I prefer to dwell on what is now."

"Sorry," Hawke said, meaning it.

Zhenya frowned, nodded. "Spasiba." He smiled. "Thank you."

Hawke suddenly realized that Caitlin hadn't been introduced to the Russian and he turned to look for her, frowning when he didn't see her.

"Excuse me," he said. "Nice meeting you, Zhenya."

Not waiting for a response, Hawke left the office as Santini began recollecting about events of May 1943. He strolled around the hangars, looking in the cockpits of the helicopters, under the fuselage and on top, near the rotors, without success.

“Caitlin?” he called tentatively, curious and puzzled.

“Out here.”

Hawke followed the sounds of her voice through the main hangar doors. Turning to the left, he smiled at the sight of her sitting on the hood of her car, feet on the front bumper, head upturned to the sun, eyes partially closed; in jeans and a faded tee shirt, Caitlin looked the very picture of indolence.

“You’re catching rays with that Irish skin?” he asked, doubt evident, wondering where her normal good sense had fled.

“Tell me this doesn’t feel good,” she challenged, without opening her eyes. “Come up here, sit down, and tell me that the sun on your face doesn’t work its way down into your very bones.” She sighed deeply. “I could never live in Alaska.”

Hawke blinked at the non sequitur, but climbed on the hood the car nonetheless. He stretched his arms out, with a slight theatrical shake, and then lay back on the hood. Shoving his sunglasses into position, he inhaled deeply. “You know, I have lived in California all my life, Cait.”

“Not the point,” she argued, calmly. “We take it for granted, one beautiful day after another. Flying here, flying there, never just appreciating.”

Wondering if his normally sane friend had taken a mental vacation, Hawke stayed silent. Caitlin was normally so reasonable, so utterly practical, that if anyone had earned a vacation from reality, it was she. He might even grant that there was a benefit to slow times, if it hadn’t been for his worry about Dominic’s finances. *Breathe*, he ordered himself, *just breathe*.

He tried focusing on his breathing, tried tuning out Caitlin’s steady in-out breaths, heard the laughter of Santini and Zhenya drift out from the hangar, heard the squeal of a sticky wheel on the equipment cart at the hangar down the row, heard the approaching sound of rotors. Robinson R22, he decided – someone was giving flight lessons, just not Santini Air.

“He’s a little sad, isn’t he?” Caitlin asked quietly.

Relieved at a break from forced idleness, Hawke sat up. “Yeah,” he said, hard put to find the words to describe Zhenya. The old man had seemed fairly well balanced, not consumed with sadness for his son. On the other hand, he did seem a bit aimless, as if learning that his son had died had left him without a goal. “That why you left?”

Caitlin continued with a deep breath in through her nose, a slow exhale out through her mouth. "I suppose. There's just something about him that makes me sad."

Hawke raised an eyebrow. Zhenya sad was one thing; Caitlin sad was a different matter entirely. He waited, wondering what Caitlin wanted him to say, if he was supposed to encourage her to tell him why Zhenya saddened her, not entirely sure he wanted to know why.

"He left his country to come to the United States to find his son. Lord knows how long he looked and then, to find that his son was dead!"

Hawke grimaced now, fairly sure now of the parallel that Caitlin was drawing and not liking where the conversation was heading. He tried to decide whether it was better to confront the issue head on or dodge it, waited a minute too long in deciding.

"What if..."

"Not the same thing as St. John at all," he interrupted, now annoyed, the warm, drowsy feel of sunbathing entirely dispersed.

Caitlin sat up, shielded her eyes from the sun with her hand, and scrunched her nose. "What makes you think I was talking about St. John?"

Hawke shook his head, slid down from the hood of the car. "You think I'm going to be haunting air fields when I'm 70?"

She tilted her head, looked thoughtful. "I wonder if his son was a pilot. You think that's why he hangs around here?"

"Damned if I know," Hawke said, turning away, heading back towards the hangar and suddenly reluctant to go there either. He stopped, stuck between two places, neither of which he wanted to be. A strong desire for the lake, for the wind, the eagle and the peace and quiet of his cabin swept down upon him and he almost staggered from the need.

"You're heading home now, aren't you?" Caitlin asked, her voice cautious and a little forlorn. "I am sorry, I didn't meant to upset you." She slipped up to him as quietly as a whisper. "I wasn't talking about St. John but I can see why you thought I might be. You know, the missing and searching, and kind of not sure of what to do with yourself."

Hawke crooked an eyebrow. For someone who hadn't planned on talking about his missing brother, she was doing a good job of connecting all the dots between his brother and Zhenya's son, or more unsettling, between him and Zhenya. He shook off her tentative hand on his forearm.

"It's dead here. I've got work to do at the cabin. Tell Dom I'll see him tomorrow."

Still scowling, he headed for his helicopter. Preoccupied and thoughts directed darkly inward, he flew home automatically, forgoing his normal enjoyment of the close knit pine trees, the lacks of houses, the absence of any type of mechanized transport save his own, the blessed solitude that he craved as his lungs craved oxygen.

Tet's happy thumps on the landing pad drew a half-hearted smile, gone as quickly as the dog scampered away to allow his master's landing.

In the cabin, he was drawn first to his cello, and then abandoning it, went to his extensive collection of record albums, almost entirely classical. He'd alphabetized the collection more than a few times, but his favorites always ended up grouped together in the section nearest to his stereo equipment. This time, he hunted through the volumes until he reached the latter end of the alphabet: Tchaikovsky Piano Concertos, Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto in D, finally the symphonies. He placed Symphony Number 5 on the turntable, lifted the needle onto it and felt the dark music spill out gradually, haunting, bleak and as dark as his mood.

He'd split wood later.

Chapter Two

Hawke wasn't sure whether he was disappointed or relieved to find no sign of Zhenya the next morning when he landed at the airfield. True, the man never seemed to stay in one place for an extended amount of time, didn't camp out in a particular location, but somehow Hawke had expected to see him that morning.

He tried to remember exactly when Zhenya had began haunting Van Nuys Airport, could place his finger on no particular date when he first saw the man and was equally hard pressed to remember a time when he hadn't been there. Weeks, at least, he decided, maybe months. Dominic would probably know.

He approached the hangar with a slight dread, hoping Caitlin hadn't taken their conversation to heart, wouldn't feel the need to address it, discuss it or beat it to death. She wasn't like many of the women Hawke had known in his life. Caitlin was as pretty as any of them, prettier than a lot of them, but with what Hawke thought of a male brain in her head. She didn't wear much makeup or fancy hairstyles or overly feminine

clothes and usually used her brain to get something accomplished, not her looks or her feminine wiles.

He'd never say so, of course, knowing that what he thought was the ultimate compliment for a female pilot would somehow be interpreted as chauvinistic and boorish. He just thought of Caitlin as pilot first, woman second, and friend, somewhere in between, despite Dominic's not so subtle attempts to awaken Hawke to the fact that Caitlin was a beautiful, available woman, practically custom made to fit Hawke's life. None of which had escaped his notice.

He wondered, idly, if Zhenya was married, thought it probable that the man had been at one point, to have fathered a son. Generations apart though they were, Hawke knew his own father's generation would have married rather than bring a child into the world illegitimately and Zhenya was older than Hawke's father would have been, had he lived.

Frowning at where his thoughts had led him, he pulled open the hangar door. It slid open smoothly with little sound; it had been well oiled sometime over the past few days, the annoying screech banished from the morning routine. Dominic sat at his desk, glowering at a stack of what Hawke assumed were bills. The red lettering he could make out from where he stood was definitely not payments from debtor clients.

"Something will come in," Hawke said, trying to wipe the expression from Santini's face.

Dominic scowled. "Better be soon, or I won't have the fuel to fly when a job comes in."

Hawke resisted the temptation to remind Santini that the Firm might be willing to offer some filler work, just as reluctant as Dominic to turn to that source. Briggs would come up with something, he was sure. He was equally sure that the work and the payment would end up costing them in some other way. There was nothing free in Archangel's world.

"Nothing from the film companies? No location scouting?" he asked.

Location scouting was Hawke's favorite job. The movie stunts and the charters helped Dominic pay the bills, but location scouting allowed for some distance flying, maneuvering the helicopter into tight places and swinging it upward simulating the pull back of a camera. Best of all, the location scouts were entirely interested in the visual and reserved their energy by remaining silent for most of the trips. The work also took advantage of Hawke's knowledge of the area. A description of what the scout wanted – what the director wanted usually translated into geography by the scout – and they were off on a scavenger hunt for the right lighting, the right rock formation, or the right bit of desert. He was willing to take them anywhere in California, with the exception of his property. That he guarded.

“Maybe you could call them?” Dominic suggested, a wild glint in his eye. “Try sweet talking one of the nice pretty location scouts?”

Hawke snorted, his acknowledged lack of people skills declined to near muteness on a telephone.

“Caitlin here?”

Dominic shook his head. “Not yet, though there’s not much point to her coming in. You either,” he said with a glance at Hawke that was still more frustration than desperation.

Hawke wondered how far Santini had tapped into his reserve funds. Whether he’d hit personal saving accounts yet. The man had been bitterly defensive about cutting Hawke and Caitlin’s paychecks last week, too proud to admit that he couldn’t afford two pilots on staff right now, even if both were sometimes mechanics. Hawke hadn’t cashed his check; would bet the entire amount that Caitlin hadn’t either, though she’d have to pay rent sooner or later, something Hawke himself didn’t need worry about.

“You know it’s been a while since the Lady stretched her wings,” he suggested, attempting to distract Santini and cheer him at the same time. “She gets a little sluggish and tetchy if she sits idle too long.”

“And you’re bored and want to fly something,” Santini responded almost sullenly.

Hawke shrugged, went to the office to find or make coffee. If Dominic didn’t want to be cheered up, Hawke was not going to persist.

“Any way, I promised Zhenya, I’d take him up in the Jet Ranger.”

Hawke poured a cup of coffee, watched in dismay as it flowed into his coffee cup, more oily sludge than a swift dark river of liquid caffeine. Dominic must have doubled the grinds, either in distraction or because he perversely liked the coffee twice as strong when he was in a bad mood. Hawke tipped some of the coffee into the utility sink, added some lukewarm water. Maybe he and Caitlin could lure Dominic to a local coffee shop for a decent breakfast.

Hawke sipped some of what now looked like mud, grimaced, and then turned back to Dominic, who looked somewhat cheered by the prospect of taking Zhenya up in the Jet Ranger.

“You teaching him to fly?”

“Naw,” Santini said, waving a large hand. “He’s never been up in anything but fixed wing before. He was infantry in the war,” he said, somewhat dismissively. “And since things are a little quiet here...”

Hawke crooked an eyebrow, kept a smile off his lips through application of will.

“Yeah, I don’t need reminding.”

“Hey, I’m all for you making new friends,” Hawke said, adopting a parental tone that Santini had often used on him. “Broaden your horizons. Maybe he’ll introduce you to some hot Russian babes.” He stopped walking for a minute, halted by a thought. “You know, you might take him down to Queenie’s, take a little vacation.”

Santini scowled, more irritated than intrigued by the idea. “You just like sending me off to hang with the senior citizens. Slowing you down, am I?”

Hawke laughed. “Yeah, keeping me from hitting all the nightclubs.” He pulled a chair up on the other side of Dominic’s desk. “So if Zhenya never flew a chopper, what’s the draw here for him?”

Van Nuys was a full-fledged airfield, but their little corner of it was primarily rotary-wing, not fixed. There were plenty of retired chopper jockeys who looked for reasons to hang out in the working shops and hangars, not too many visitors who weren’t there on business otherwise.

Santini reached for Hawke’s coffee cup and peered inside. “Guess I made it a little strong,” he admitted. “Back when Zhenya was looking for his son, some guy told him that some other guy might know where the kid was. This other guy supposedly came around here sometimes.”

Hawke felt both eyebrows crawling up his forehead. “Some guy told him that some other guy *might* know where the kid was?”

“Pretty thin, I know,” Santini sighed. “Anyway, after he found out that the kid was dead, Zhenya decided it wouldn’t hurt to check it out. Maybe this guy knew what had happened.”

What Santini wasn’t saying, Hawke knew, is that they’d taken off searching for St. John on a reference as thin as, or thinner, than that. After years of looking, facts were hard to find and a reference to a person who might know a fact was about as good as it got.

“How’d his son die?”

Santini shrugged. "I dunno. Just get the feeling that his son got mixed up in something bad, you know."

Hawke nodded, and sat back in his chair, trying to not hear the slow tick of the clock. Any number of something bads that Zhenya's son could have gotten mixed up in: drugs, gangs, organized crime were all good candidates. He wondered how old the kid was, remembered that the old man was probably in his seventies, which made the son probably in his forties or older. Not a kid by any means.

He wondered if Caitlin might be interested in playing private eye with him, trying to dig up the circumstances around Zhenya's son's death. Hawke hauled his bored imagination back to the beginning. They didn't know that Zhenya wanted or needed their help. For all they knew, the old man knew how his son died and just didn't want to talk about it.

"You think Mr. Clean might give us a hand with this?" Santini asked in a tone of voice so deliberately casual that Hawke knew that Dominic had been thinking about it for a while.

"What makes you think Zhenya doesn't already know?" Hawke replied, his stomach already turning over from the black sludge in his coffee cup. He put it down, resolving to dump the entire pot and start from scratch.

"Just a feeling," Santini said, a little defensively. "One father to another."

Hawke winced internally. Dominic had never really dealt with the death of his daughter. It was something that remained in the background, rarely moving onto the radar of Dominic's life but every so often, the memory rose sharply and drew emotional blood.

"I'll call Archangel," Hawke said, more as apology and sympathy to Dominic than any real interest in Zhenya's son, "if we can go out and get some decent coffee and maybe a good breakfast."

Santini's face lit up with a half-smile, pleasure rather than the unbridled joy he unleashed in his broader grins. "You got it, String. I know a place that makes coffee that'll grow hair on your chest."

"Thought that's what this was," Hawke said with a look of disgust at his coffee cup.

Chapter Three

"Yevgeniy Dzhangerchinov," Marella repeated for the third time. "I don't suppose you can spell that?"

Hawke scowled at the phone set. "You're the *Intelligence Agency*, I just fly helicopters. Don't you have some experts who can figure out how to spell the man's name?"

"Can you get him to write it down?"

Could we read it if we did? Hawke wondered. What if Zhenya wrote it in Cyrillic? It wasn't as if anyone learned how to spell their name in a completely different alphabet.

"Michael speaks and reads Russian, maybe he knows how to spell it," Hawke replied, annoyed at the unexpected resistance he was getting, wondering if Marella was playing with him out of amusement or because she was still angry with him. He reminded himself, again, not to get on her bad side, if he ever managed to get off her current one.

"Archangel's in Atlanta," Marella said, a slight edge to her patient, cheerful tone. "And I can't promise you anything. There are hundreds of millions of citizens in the Soviet Union, millions alone in Russia. We don't have access to records on ordinary civilians; we just don't keep tabs on them."

"You have access when you want to," Hawke said in a low growl. "Anyway, he was in the Army. You've probably got records on the Russian Army, don't you?"

She ignored his question, probably realized it was less rhetorical than simple provocation. "And what did you say was his son's name?"

That hadn't been an easy fact to elicit from the old Russian. Dominic had finally, apparently in his cups, resorted to telling Zhenya about his daughter Sally, about how traumatic her loss had been to an estranged father. Even then, the more reserved Russian had only revealed his son's name after much prompting.

"Vasily," Hawke answered. "Want me to spell that?" He kept his smirk to himself. He wasn't being childish. Well maybe he was. Marella just seemed to bring that out in him. "Anyway, both of these guys came through customs. You should have some records there to track down the son."

He heard a muted sigh float through the phone line. "We will look into this, Hawke, but I'm not promising anything. I'll get back to you in a couple of days."

Hawke was left holding the receiver, dial tone spilling out of it.

"Marella still pissed at you?"

Hawke put the receiver in its cradle, turned around to face Caitlin. "What makes you think she's angry with me?"

Caitlin grinned and Hawke didn't really want to know how or what she knew.

"I think you left some things out of the story you told me and Dom about how you got Michael's help when Dominic was grabbed."

Hawke eyed Caitlin, decided that her suspicions didn't mean she knew anything, just that she was astute enough to watch body language and listen to tone of voice. Marella had been a little cooler than usual on the handful of missions they'd run for the Firm since.

"She doesn't like it when you drag her boss into bad situations," Caitlin continued prompting, looking for an answer that she wasn't going to get.

Caitlin was reading his face closely and must have seen something in his eyes because he knew he had kept his expression motionless.

"You're right," Hawke replied blandly.

If Briggs and Marella were keeping their relationship quiet, Hawke was not going to discuss it with anyone, even Caitlin, who was far better at keeping a secret than Dominic. He hadn't quite made up his own mind what he thought about the two of them as a couple, wasn't entirely sure they were a couple; neither had confirmed or denied it and it was possible that Marella had just stayed over at Briggs's house unexpectedly and had had to borrow Michael's robe. Briggs's indirect acknowledgement that he knew Marella loved him was just a statement of fact; something all of them knew but never discussed.

Caitlin sighed. "I really think she should get over the reporting structure and just jump him already. Lord knows he'll never take the first step."

Hawke sputtered, his mind's eye furnishing, incongruously, not Marella but Caitlin grabbing a man and pulling him.... Hawke shook his head. Not going there.

"What?" Caitlin said, mock indignantly, her blue eyes twinkling mischievously. "You think he'll make the first move?"

Hawke let himself smile, a little ruefully. "I think going for a relationship with someone you work with, or work for, is a little more complicated than that, Cait. Especially in their business."

Her eyes softened, merriment tempered with wariness, and Hawke wondered if they were talking about Briggs and Marella or had wandered into personal territory of their own. He hoped not; any relationship he might ever have was dotted with landmines far more threatening than those underlying the complexity of a reporting structure.

She smiled finally, almost hiding her disappointment. "I hope Michael comes to his senses before it's too late. They're both wasting a lot of good years."

Ouch, Hawke thought, and turned away. Caitlin's directness shouldn't have been as unexpected as it was; it was one of the things he most admired about her. He was less surprised at her approach. He hadn't needed Dominic to tell him that Caitlin was both extremely attractive and interested in being more than friends or colleagues. Hawke could say he wasn't ready for a relationship but in truth, couldn't remember ever being truly ready for a relationship; he'd just recognized the potential when it came along and tried to not screw it up if it happened.

If he let it happen. No question that Caitlin had tossed the ball in his court.

Chapter Four

Zhenya showed up near noon for his flight with Dominic. He seemed in good cheer, his black brogans freshly polished, a little starch in the collar of his white shirt. It was hard not to like a man who dressed up for the chance at a ride in a helicopter, Hawke thought and apparently Caitlin agreed because she greeted the old Russian warmly, no indication that he, or his life, had saddened her only the day before.

"Miss Caitlin," Zhenya said, with a gallant bow over her hand that probably had the girls swooning fifty years ago in Russia.

Caitlin smiled, let loose a girlish giggle that had Hawke wondering if she had morphed into a twelve-year old.

"Hawke," Zhenya said, standing rigidly and inclining his head and torso stiffly in Hawke's direction.

A Russian handshake, Dominic had called it earlier. It seemed more formal than that to Hawke, probably part of some elaborate Russian custom adapted to the casual California environment in which Zhenya found himself.

Zhenya's smile was one of boyish delight, a man of seventy years or more trying a new adventure with a new friend. Come to America, get a ride in a helicopter, thought Hawke with amusement.

He watched as Dominic gave Zhenya a tour of the Jet Ranger, explaining, as if to a student pilot, the function of each piece of equipment, arms waving to encompass the scope of the main rotors, passion evident in the tone of his voice even if the words were lost, aimed away from Hawke and toward the helicopter and his companion.

Whether Zhenya enjoyed his first ride in a helicopter or not, Dominic's spirits were lifted by sharing his love of flying with the man Santini now jokingly referred to as "an old Army buddy, sure it was the *Russian Army*, but we were on the same side then!"

Seeing Santini brighten and cast off his business worries brought a smile to Hawke's lips. He felt Caitlin sidle up beside him.

"You know," she said slowly, voice full of speculation, "we do know that reporter. The one who wanted to do a story on your brother?"

Hawke's smile faded immediately. He hadn't thought of Daphne Treadwell in a long time, certainly didn't want to see her any time soon.

"I wonder if she'd be interested in doing a story on Zhenya?"

Hawke frowned. Exposing that nice old man with his private grief to a wily reporter seemed a pretty unfair way to pay him for Dominic's joy.

"I bet it might drum up some business," Caitlin suggested. "People reading about it in the paper may think about taking a flying lesson, maybe just want to hire us for a joy ride like Zhenya had?"

Archangel would be proud of you, though Hawke sourly. It was exactly the type of canny business move that worked well in both intelligence gathering and corporate America.

"You don't think it's a good idea," she said, now sounding doubtful, probably weighing the benefit to Santini Air against exposing Zhenya to the drama of a 'human interest' story.

"No," Hawke said abruptly, frowning deeply. "I don't."

Caitlin sighed, folded her arms. "Okay."

The man lost his son, Hawke thought, a little annoyed with Caitlin. He deserved quiet support, the dignity of private grief, not the circus of media attention. If St. John came home...he corrected himself abruptly, *when* St. John came home, the last thing Hawke would ever do would be expose his brother to the media spotlight, though they'd

pursue the story of a long-term MIA reunited with his family like a Pulitzer-prize winner. Hawke would take St. John up to the cabin and give him the quiet time and space to adapt to family and home, to come back to himself. Give his brother the space to heal and hold him close by.

The sputtering whir as the Jet Ranger's engines caught and its rotors began their powerful sweeps woke Hawke from his reverie. Dominic, in the pilot's seat, helped Zhenya adjust the headset, leaned over to strap Zhenya into the co-pilot's seat. Both men were laughing and Hawke pushed away the bad mood that had threatened.

He heard Caitlin's sigh next to him. "You remember your first time?" she asked wistfully.

Hawke felt a broad grin break over his face. "My first time in a *helicopter*," he asked, "or my first *time* in a helicopter?"

It was worth the almost personal admission to see the flood of red rise from her neck and wash over her freckles.

The Jet Ranger lifted off, Zhenya waving madly at Hawke and Caitlin, who lifted their hands in salute.

Hawke grinned. "Two old fools acting like a couple of schoolboys."

"Jealous?" Caitlin shielded her face with the flat of her hand.

"Yup," Hawke responded, not entirely sure if he was pulling her leg or telling the truth. He wouldn't have minded a joy ride, occasionally envied Santini his ease with new people, and yet Hawke wouldn't want to take the constant risk of extending himself. Hard to be jealous of something you didn't want to be, but somehow he was, which irritated him because the emotion was so entirely illogical.

"C'mon flyboy," Caitlin said, grabbing Hawke's arm. "You close up shop and I'll buy lunch."

"That's a deal," Hawke said, turning to pull the hangar door closed and reaching for the padlock. "Just so you know, I'm not a cheap date."

"Yeah," Caitlin said. "Sandwich *and* a beer. I may have to take a loan."

Chapter Five

The phone was ringing as Hawke unlocked the padlock on the hangar door. “Just a minute,” he muttered, turning the key and yanking on the padlock.

“C’mon, c’mon,” Caitlin said, her sense of urgency more a need for the washroom facilities than a desire to answer the phone. The local taproom served a decent sandwich and better than average beer on draft, but its lavatories were on a level with ‘bad gas stations’ according to Caitlin, Marella, and every other woman who’d ever tried them.

Hawke pulled the door open, wisely stepped back and let Caitlin through first, and then jogged to the phone. Based on Murphy’s Law and personal experience, now was the time that the caller would hang up, exasperated by no response.

“Santini Air,” he said, almost cheerfully, expecting dead air or dial tone in return.

“Hawke?”

It wasn’t a voice he’d expected to hear for a minimum of several days, probably never with the priority she’d assign any favors for him.

“Marella,” Hawke sighed. “I still don’t know how to spell it.”

“So I imagine you’ll be relieved when I tell you that Mr. Dzhamgerchinov spelled it for us,” she answered.

Hawke blinked, sorting his questions as rapidly as possible. The Firm had called Zhenya? Doubtful; in fact highly improbable. Customs? A good possibility.

“In fact,” Marella continued, “he spelled it for us on three different occasions.”

“You gonna tell me or just yank my chain?” Hawke said, reluctant to rise to her bait and yet more than a little puzzled, even worried that the Firm already knew something about their mystery Russian.

“A Mr. Yevgeniy Dzhamgerchinov has called this office on three separate occasions in the last month, attempting to schedule an appointment with Archangel.”

Hawke felt his mouth open, but no words came to mind or emerged. Sorting through all the potential reasons Zhenya would try to call Archangel was getting him nowhere. He focused instead on the smaller details.

“How’d he get the number?”

There was no listing in any business or residential directory for The Firm or its employees. Even if there was a listing for “The Institute of Applied Technology,” the name on the sign outside the Knightsbridge entrances, Hawke was pretty certain it would forward to an answering service in another city, someplace anonymous and misleading. To say that the direct numbers to Archangel’s office were not easily obtained was more than an understatement.

There was silence from the other end of the phone for a good fifteen seconds.

“That is an excellent question,” Marella finally answered.

“Hey, I just met the guy yesterday,” Hawke replied, already defensive, interpreting Marella’s silence and her non-committal response as implied accusation.

“And after just meeting the man, you felt compelled to escalate his situation to our attention?”

Disbelief simply oozed down the phone line and Hawke scowled at the phone set. Marella had an uncanny ability to highlight inconsistencies, gaps in logic, or fundamentally flawed judgments through simple questioning. Hawke hated it.

“Dominic’s been talking to the guy for a couple of weeks,” he admitted, “but no way did he give out the phone number.”

Marella’s “hmmm” announced her doubts about his confidence in Santini and Hawke circled back to his original questions.

“What’s he want with Archangel?”

“According to our message logs, he says that he has information to offer.”

Hawke took that as a positive sign. “And?”

“We tried to hand him off to someone more appropriate...”

Someone less busy and important, interpreted Hawke.

“Someone in the Intelligence Directorate rather than Field Operations,” she clarified, as if in response to Hawke’s less than complimentary thoughts, “but he has refused to meet with anyone but Archangel.”

“The other guy who supposedly came around here sometimes,” Hawke said softly. “Damn.” It had been at least a month, probably two, since Briggs had visited Santini Air in person. All of their meetings with Briggs had been at Knightsbridge, or else Marella or another aide had handled the briefing.

Marella remained silent, apparently waiting out Hawke, letting him work out whatever he meant.

“I don’t know what information he has to offer, but I think he’s hoping Michael can help him find out what happened to his son.”

But why Briggs, and how the hell did someone like Zhenya get in touch with Briggs in the first place? Someone gave him Briggs as a contact. The same someone who told him that Briggs might know something about his son.

“Mr. Dzhamgerchinov may be exactly what he says he is,” Marella continued, her voice cool and a little wary, “but I find his involvement with Santini Air a little troubling.”

“Yeah,” Hawke agreed, more than just troubled. Statistically some things could be put down to coincidence, but a mixture of new friends, Santini Air and the Firm had the hair on the back of his neck standing up. “So how do we play it?”

Caitlin approached, her face quizzical as she caught his tone. He shook his head, held up a finger that promised he’d let her know in a minute.

“Does he know that you asked us to investigate the circumstances of his son’s death?”

Good question, Hawke thought, wondering if Dominic had hinted or confided in Zhenya. “Don’t think so,” he answered, letting a little doubt creep into his voice, enough that Marella could hear.

She exhaled rather loudly. “Damn. Well, don’t say anything else. We’ll check him out.”

“Marella, you think if he was dirty he would be trying to schedule an appointment with Archangel?”

The act struck Hawke as open and somewhat above board. Someone after Airwolf or her crew would do as little as possible to draw the Firm’s attention instead of making repeated efforts to talk to the Firm’s Deputy Director in charge of the Airwolf project.

“I think the pertinent question is why he thinks Archangel knows something about his son?”

“Or who led him to think Michael knows something?” Hawke countered, wondering exactly what Briggs did know. “When is he back in town?”

“Later today. I promise I’ll ask him about the Dzhamgerchinov family, father and son, but I can tell you that we have nothing in our files about either of them.”

And what Archangel knew, he usually documented and shared with his top aide, unless the level of security made it too dangerous for either. Hawke frowned; nothing about Zhenya triggered the type of mental alarms that usually came with the never discussed levels beyond Top Secret.

Marella rang off and Hawke let the receiver dangle from his fingers for a minute or two, trying to summarize the facts and his perceptions of them for Caitlin. He sighed heavily. And after Caitlin, he’d somehow have to tell Dominic.

“You think Zhenya’s dirty?”

Attention returned to the present, Hawke hung up the phone and swiveled the chair around to face Caitlin who’d propped herself up on the desk. Her expression was troubled, blue eyes shadowed with doubt.

“Don’t know either way,” Hawke summarized. “We know that he’s been calling the Firm, trying to set up an appointment with Archangel, and won’t meet with anyone else.”

Caitlin’s mouth opened, and then she shut it and tilted her head sideways, absorbing the information, perusing it for meaning, placing new facts in the existing universe of Zhenya. After a few seconds, she scrunched up her nose.

“Okay, that’s weird. Not necessarily dirty, but definitely weird.”

Hawke smiled briefly and shook his head in amusement. Caitlin had summed up his emotions fairly well in her choice of words. Even faced with facts that just didn’t fit his prior conception of Zhenya, he felt puzzlement, was troubled, but not wholly alarmed, which was enough outside his usually pessimistic view of the world and its individuals that it alone should alarm him.

“We going to ask him why he wants to meet with Michael?”

Hawke shook his head. “Just sit tight and wait to see what Marella digs up.”

“And in the meantime, just act like nothing’s changed,” Caitlin concluded. “Well, I knew something would come along. It’s just been too quiet lately.”

Hawke shrugged. No guns, no air battles, no dangerous missions, just a mystery wrapped around an old man and his son. All in all, it was just enough to alleviate the boredom without being dangerous, except for the unknown quantity who had directed Zhenya to Archangel; that was definitely trouble, possibly dangerous.

Damn, he was not looking forward to telling Dom that his 'old Army buddy' was up to something odd.

Chapter Six

Hawke had had to wait until Santini returned with Zhenya mid-afternoon and then another hour while the two 'comrades' rehashed their flight, their lunch at Rocky V at nearby Whitman Airport, and the different food and drinks available following The Big One in their respective countries.

Hawke was ready to head home and talk to Dominic later when Zhenya finally stood.

"Thank you for a splendid outing, Dominic Antonovich." Zhenya's face was incandescent with pleasure. "I shall remember this day throughout all of my remaining days."

Santini stood, his expression beaming his own pleasure in the day's outing. Hawke wondered exactly what they'd imbibed at lunch.

"Oh, that's nothing. Next time I'll let you try flying her a little."

Zhenya ducked his head, smiled, and headed, a little unsteadily, towards the main hangar doors.

Dominic settled back into his chair, still smiling. "For an infantryman, he took to the air like he'd been born to it. Wasn't scared a bit and he didn't get sick either, even when I tried some..." His voice trailed off and a canny expression crept over his face. "Well, never you mind. Zhenya was born to fly."

Hawke snorted, all too aware of what stunts Dominic might have tried if he felt like showing off, which he obviously had. He tried to dodge the urgent glances Caitlin was shooting his way, wanting to let Dominic bask in his pleasure for a little longer before shaking things up.

"Seems like a nice guy," Hawke said, throwing out a tentative opening.

"No 'seems' about it," Dominic responded. "If more Russians were like Zhenya, we wouldn't be going head-to-head with them on everything."

Hawke frowned, caught Caitlin's eye, and plunged in. "We got a problem, Dom."

Hawke's voice was serious enough that Santini switched mental gears immediately, his eyes narrowing to focus in on Hawke. "With Zhenya?" Santini asked in disbelief.

Hawke nodded. "Remember what you told me about why he was hanging around Van Nuys?"

Santini nodded, face set skeptically against whatever Hawke was going to say.

"Some guy told him that some other guy might know where the kid was, right? And this other guy supposedly came around here sometimes. That's what you said."

"Yeah?" Santini leaned away slightly as if he knew he wasn't going to like what Hawke said next.

"We're pretty sure that other guy is Archangel, Dom."

Hawke waited out the flurry of expressions that raced across Santini's face: surprise, disbelief, suspicion, and finally anger.

"Why, that..." Santini clenched his hands, his body vibrating with emotion. "What did he do to Zhenya's son?"

Hawke, surprised, almost laughed. Briggs and Santini had never been friends but they'd known each other for years. That he'd choose his new Russian buddy over a known relationship, however fractious, was a little surprising. Then again, Dominic had never entirely trusted Archangel, even if he held him in guarded affection.

"Probably nothing. Zhenya's been calling the Firm, trying to see Archangel. They never heard of him before."

That caught Santini off guard. "He's calling them?"

"Says he has some information."

"He's called three times in the last month," Caitlin added. "And won't meet with anyone but Michael."

Santini was rocked and Hawke felt a wave of sorrow and frustration as the older man rubbed a hand over his face, trying to hide his crestfallen expression. Caitlin moved in, put an arm around Santini.

"We don't know what it means yet, Dom, just that Zhenya is trying to contact Archangel. From what he told you, we think it may be about his son."

"And he has information?" Santini wondered aloud, sounding a little lost. "He's trying to trade something he knows for information about his son?"

Hawke nodded, relieved that Dominic was regaining perspective, arranging facts to attempt to find reason.

“We don’t know for sure that Zhenya knows about our connection with the Firm,” Hawke said firmly, relying upon Caitlin and Dominic to understand his implication.

Both nodded. A little color had come back into Dominic’s face as he took that in.

“So, you don’t think he knows about....” He jerked his head, “you know?”

Not unless you said anything, Hawke thought bleakly, wondering how best to approach the subject. Briggs would have said it just like that, putting Dominic on the spot. Hawke let his gaze wonder to Caitlin, telegraphed his dilemma with his eyes.

“And we’re not going to tell him,” she said with bright determination, eliciting a slow nod from Santini.

“You don’t think it’s coincidence?” Santini said, directing his question to Hawke.

Hawke shrugged. “Better assume it’s not until we know better.” He wished he could have assured Dominic, wanted to remove that unhappy expression, but nothing involving Airwolf or the Firm ever seemed to be coincidental. “Michael’s back later today. Marella’s doing some research. Let’s see what they come up with.”

He sought and found agreement in Santini’s eyes, but the agreement was mired in wretchedness and Hawke was the first to look away.

Chapter Seven

“Yevgeniy Dzhangerchinov, age seventy-two. He retired eight years ago from the Soviet Army with the rank of Ordinary Praporshchik,” Marella stumbled over the unfamiliar word and shot a glance at her boss.

“A Master non-commissioned officer,” Briggs clarified, leaning back in his chair, apparently calm and detached but his finger tapping against the head of his cane belied that calm. “Similar to a Master Sergeant in the U.S. Army.”

Reading from the folder in her hands, Marella walked carefully towards Briggs’s desk, stopped when she reached the corner and leaned back against it. “Born 1914 in Vyborg, which is about two hours from Leningrad. Married in 1936. His wife’s name was Anfisa. One daughter, Evgeniya, born 1938.”

She looked up. "His wife died in 1944, his daughter died in 1979. He never remarried and has no other children."

"What about his son?" Santini protested

Marella shrugged. "There is no record of a Vasily Dzhamgerchinov or any other male child, born to a Yevgeniy and Anfisa Dzhamgerchinov."

"Maybe the records were lost during the war," Santini argued, unwilling to yield, one father defending another.

"Or maybe his son isn't named Dzhamgerchinov," Hawke suggested. Zhenya had been a young man when his wife died. Perhaps he hadn't remarried, but had found companionship and fathered a son. Or maybe any records of a second marriage had been lost during the war.

"Or there is no son, or the man's name isn't Yevgeniy Dzhamgerchinov," Marella countered. "INS records show two individuals with that name or anything approximating that name entering the United States in the last ten years. One was a fourteen year old chess player here for a tournament in 1977; he stayed for two months and returned to the Soviet Union. The other one was an immigrant; he died three years ago in Brooklyn, New York." She gave Santini a look of sympathy. "We have no records of your Yevgeniy Dzhamgerchinov entering the country."

"Great," Santini said, his voice ascribing an opposite meaning to the word. "So either he isn't who he says he is or he is, but you don't think he ever had a son, and he entered the country illegally. All that to set up an appointment with you? For what reason?"

Briggs leaned forward, his expression not unsympathetic. "Your Yevgeniy is lying, one way or another. Let's not attempt to ascribe motivation for his lies until we know what the lies are."

"Occam's Razor," Hawke said.

Santini scowled at Briggs and at Hawke. "So you called us down here," he waved an arm encompassing Briggs's spacious office, "to tell us. Now what?"

Good question, thought Hawke, leaning back against one of the leather couches. An early morning invite from Archangel was generally less a request than a demand, but carried the benefits of excellent coffee, bagels flown in from New York, and fresh seasonal fruit, a far better meal than any of them would eat at Santini Air. He didn't think Briggs had requested their presence at his office to feed them though.

“He requested a meeting,” Briggs said. “I admit to sufficient curiosity and concern about his involvement with Santini Air to grant his request. I dispatched a team to find the man and bring him here.”

Hawke scowled. “He requested a meeting, Michael, not the goon squad.”

Briggs smiled a little. “I did request a subtle approach. Contrary to some opinions,” a sidelong glance towards Santini, “I have no desire to intimidate the elderly,” his smile broadened as Santini fumed, “even those who were members of the Soviet Army.”

“And you want us here for this meeting?” Hawke asked.

“No,” Briggs answered quickly. “I simply wanted you to be aware of the situation.”

“And you couldn’t have told us by phone?” Santini fumed.

Briggs crooked an eyebrow. “If I’d told you by phone and Mr. Dzhangerchinov was in the vicinity, what would you have done?”

Way to set off Dominic, Hawke grouched mentally, as Santini’s voice rose and the room rang with words a sailor might hesitate to say. Archangel did have a point and knew Santini well enough to predict that Dominic would feel torn, would want to approach Zhenya himself, would try to resolve the problem. For taking Santini out of the equation, and possibly out of danger, Hawke was grateful and he sent Briggs a smile and a shrug.

“Dominic,” Briggs said calmly, after Santini had questioned Briggs’s parentage, his ethics or lack of, and a few allegations that bordered on the improbable. “There are ladies present.”

That gentle reminder stopped Santini in his tracks, literally. He’d been pacing Briggs’s office as he impugned the man. With a red flush suffusing his face, he turned to Marella, who looked amused, and to Caitlin, who looked amazed.

“I’m sorry, ladies. Those words weren’t meant for your ears.”

“I’ve heard worse,” Marella assured Santini, with a mischievous glance at her boss, who grinned and ducked his head.

“I’m not sure I even knew what half of them were,” Caitlin said, her eyes wide and startled. She held up a hand. “But don’t anyone feel you need to explain them.”

Santini set his jaw and turned back to Briggs. “I want to stay.”

"I don't recall inviting you," Briggs rejoined, his voice superficially pleasant in a way that made Hawke's skin crawl.

"I won't have you bullying him," Santini insisted.

"Dominic," Hawke warned, not liking the look in Briggs's eye or the way Marella was standing at alert, watching her boss for further instructions. Hawke stood, ready to intervene, ready to tug Santini out of Knightbridge.

"Go home, Dominic," Briggs said politely, his gaze level. It wasn't a request.

"C'mon," Hawke said to Santini. "We might just confuse the man if we're here when he arrives."

He saw Briggs nod, could feel in Santini's shift of muscles that he was getting through. Caitlin grabbed her jacket and headed for the door.

The intercom buzzer on Briggs's desk sounded and Briggs frowned, reached for the phone and listened with a carefully neutral expression. Replacing the receiver, he eyed Santini and Hawke for a second, tapping one finger rapidly against his desk.

"You sit there," he instructed, looking towards the couches away from his desk, "and you say nothing."

Damn it, Hawke thought. Zhenya must already be here. Would it be worse to walk out of Briggs's office and pass Zhenya as they left or have him see them already in Briggs's office. And why didn't Michael just have Zhenya moved until they left the vicinity?

Santini, given a reprieve, was already heading for the couches. Hawke shot Briggs a look of pure exasperation; there was no force on earth that could silence Dominic Santini when he wanted to speak.

"This should be interesting," Caitlin said in a low voice as she walked past Hawke, giving him a gentle tug on the arm in the direction Santini had already gone.

Briggs leaned forward and picked up the receiver again. "Show him in," he said, voice neutral. Marella dimmed the lights in the seating area, leaving Hawke and his companions in shadows, and then walked until she stood just to the side behind her boss.

Show of force, Hawke thought as he sat; intimidation tactics. He bet himself that Briggs wouldn't rise to greet his visitor.

The door opened and Zhenya entered. Hawke noticed the difference immediately; the shy diffidence was missing. This version of Yevgeniy Dzhangerchinov appeared more confident, held his head straighter and walked with the stride of a soldier.

Zhenya's eyes were fixed on Briggs and he stopped a few feet from Briggs's desk.

"Yevgeniy Nikolayevich Dzhangerchinov," he announced in a voice both formal and challenging. Standing just as rigidly as he had when offering Hawke his "Russian Handshake," Zhenya inclined his head and torso stiffly in Briggs's direction.

To Hawke's surprise, Briggs stood, adapting the same rigid formality as his guest.

"I am Archangel," he said, inclining his head towards the Russian. "Ochin preeyatna."

"Ochin preeyatna," replied Zhenya, with a look of satisfaction.

"Pozhaluista," Briggs said, gesturing with his hand towards the chairs in front of his desk.

"Spasiba," Zhenya replied, taking a seat.

"Pozhaluista," Briggs said again, resuming his own seat. "We'll do this in English."

Hawke watched, interested despite his reservations. It wasn't often he had the opportunity to watch Archangel in the man's true environment. All too often, Hawke himself was in the middle of things and not in a position to be objective.

Hawke noticed that Briggs kept his hands visible on the arms of his chair. Zhenya did the same. Nothing hidden, no weapons, each announced.

"You might pass as Russian," Zhenya said with a smile and a shrug.

Briggs smiled back, a formal, humorless smile acknowledging what sounded like a grudging compliment, but didn't answer. His smile was answer enough and Zhenya nodded.

"You have been difficult to contact."

Briggs raised an eyebrow, but did not otherwise reply.

"I have information that may be of some interest to you, Mikhail Mikhailevich," Zhenya said, politely as if it mattered not to him whether Briggs wanted the information or not.

Hawke's heart started beating a little faster but Briggs didn't seem at all surprised by Zhenya's form of address, nor that the Russian knew his real name.

“Your father,” Zhenya said, with a steady gaze on Briggs to gauge interest, “*quiescat in pace*, was an acquaintance.”

Hawke’s gaze moved rapidly between Briggs, Marella and Zhenya. Either Briggs had the best poker face he’d ever seem – entirely possible – or Zhenya was not telling Briggs anything he hadn’t heard before. Marella appeared equally unmoved.

“My father has been dead for thirty years,” Briggs said. “Your information is quite belated and of questionable value.”

“You were a schoolboy then, were you not? You are now in a position to act.”

“You cannot be under the impression that you are the first to approach me,” Briggs said calmly, with an expression that verged on boredom.

“You are aware that he is not buried in that casket in Virginia?”

“Car bombs leave little to bury, whether they are composed of TNT or plastique,” Briggs replied, his smile strained.

Hawke revised his original assessment; apparently there was a force on earth that could keep Dominic close-mouthed: consuming curiosity combined with unexpected access into Briggs’s family history and an indication that that Briggs had emulated his father in more than just name.

Zhenya nodded. “Is that how they told you he died?” he inquired politely, with just a small hint of pity.

Briggs shook his head and sighed. “Yevgeniy Nikolayevich, you come to me with thirty-year old news and then you insult me. Do you think I do not have access to my father’s records, all of them?”

Zhenya nodded again, let an eyebrow rise as if challenging Briggs’s information.

“I know he was dead when he was put into the car,” Briggs said, the only emotion audible in his voice was a slight contempt for a messenger thirty years late.

Hawke sensed Dominic shifting next to him on the couch, emotions stirred by the story emerging. Hawke suppressed the urge to hush Dominic, unwilling to make any sound that might break the tableau on the other side of the room even if

“And do you know who killed him?” Zhenya asked, somewhat more confidently.

Briggs smiled coldly and Hawke felt the chill across the room. "And you, Yevgeniy Nikolayevich, how is it that you know who killed my father? An Ordinary Praporshchik?"

Hawke heard the mocking doubt in Briggs's voice. Whatever Archangel knew, or suspected, about Zhenya's true position, he hadn't shared it earlier.

"So very often, an ordinary praporshchik goes unnoticed until he is needed." Zhenya tilted his head. "Would you like to me to provide you with the name of your father's murderer, Mikhail Mikhailevich?"

"What makes you think I don't already know their names?"

The twitch in Zhenya's face was small and happened so quickly that Hawke almost missed it, but he was confident Briggs had seen it, had known to look for it. Plural, he thought: Briggs knows it was more than one person and Zhenya didn't know he knew that.

"Because they are still alive," Zhenya said, shoulders hunched, yielding that point to Briggs.

"Perhaps I don't follow the Code of Hammurabi. You have come a long way, Ded, to tell me what I already know."

Liar, thought Hawke; liar to both. With the exception of himself, he knew no one quicker to extract reparations than Briggs. And if Archangel really knew who'd killed his father, Hawke doubted he would have let the matter lie; he would have gone after them personally.

Zhenya shifted in his chair, adopting a more comfortable position. "Then shall we talk, Mikhail Mikhailevich, as a father without a son to a son without a father?"

Briggs leaned back in his chair, a graceful wave of his hand motioning Zhenya to continue. "Pozhaluista."

Marella shifted her position behind Briggs. Zhenya nodded to her, without introducing himself. Hawke decided that he'd grouped her with Archangel, not as a separate young lady he might charm with a bow.

"You have no children?" Zhenya asked finally after a minute of silence. He waited a moment, but the question was obviously rhetorical. "Children are a comfort to a man in his old age."

"I imagine that depends upon the children in question," Briggs said dryly.

Zhenya inclined his head, as if to say, 'All too true.'

"I had a son, at a time when I'd thought all that behind me," Zhenya said slowly. "He was unexpected but very welcome."

Hawke was surprised by Briggs's continued equanimity. With the Airwolf team and with his own staff, Briggs was demanding, impatient, bottom line oriented. Situational patience, thought Hawke. With us, he doesn't have to wait and he knows he doesn't have to wait.

Zhenya took a deep breath, exhaled slowly. "And like your father, he died under somewhat mysterious circumstances."

"I am sorry for your loss."

"And I, for yours," Zhenya replied. "I had thought to offer information about your father's death in exchange for information about my son's."

Briggs pushed his glasses back into position. "I am not an unsympathetic man, Yevgeniy Nikolayevich," he said, cautiously. "I may yet be able to provide you that information."

Zhenya nodded slightly, his gaze slightly distant. "You knew my son?"

"Not personally," Briggs said.

Hawke's eyes narrowed as he parsed the various meanings of Archangel's response, put a hand on Santini's arm to hold back an outburst. If Briggs knew that he didn't know Zhenya's son personally, then he knew who Zhenya's son was, which he hadn't shared with the Airwolf team. Unless he was hedging. Damn, Briggs *was* hedging, unwilling to admit he didn't even know of Zhenya's son, that his people had been unable to verify the existence of a Vasily Dzhamgerchinov.

"I imagine not," Zhenya mused. "You have not been a field agent for some time."

Damn, damn, damn, thought Hawke, as he realized that the 'something bad' Zhenya's son had been mixed up in was all too familiar. He looked at Briggs to see if he'd caught it. Briggs's gaze was cool; which could be either annoyance at the reminder that he was deskbound – a perpetual irritant despite his level of authority – or assessment of the additional fact given them.

"It is better, perhaps, that we never met." Briggs suggested, his voice gentling. "How did they tell you he died?"

Zhenya's face darkened. "They were generous with aphorisms, sparing with detail. He was shot. It was verified that he was dead. That was all that was said."

"They did not recover his body," Briggs said, not a question.

"Nyet." Zhenya folded his arms.

Briggs leaned back, turned his head in Marella's direction and she immediately walked to the door of the office, exited for a moment and returned, escorting a young woman who carried a large silver coffee service to Briggs's desk. The young woman placed the silver tray and service on the desk and stepped back, exiting as quickly and quietly as she entered.

"You did not bring home a samovar as a memento of your time in my country?" Zhenya asked, his smile a tease, or perhaps gratitude for a change in focus.

Briggs returned the smile easily. "I assure you, the only mementos that I brought out of your country were an entirely different metal altogether." He looked at Marella. "Would you pour?"

And now for the charm and good will part of our agenda, though Hawke, already tiring of the verbal fencing. He had to hand it to Briggs; the timing was exquisite. The coffee had appeared at the moment it seemed the two men had apparently reached an impasse. Briggs had refused to take the bait about his father and was unwilling to admit he knew nothing of Zhenya's son; Zhenya had so far withheld any useful information about his son. The tactic of giving away nothing had led them precisely nowhere. If this were a football game, the serving of coffee would be half-time, a time to regroup and adjust strategy.

As Marella poured the steaming coffee into small china cups, Zhenya leaned forward to admire the coffee service, lifting up the sugar bowl as if examining it for hallmarks.

"This is a very old set," he said, admiringly. "Very beautiful."

"Thank you," Briggs said. "It's a family item, my father's side." He reached for the cup Marella handed him, and sat back in his chair, hands wrapped around the fragile cup as if he were cold.

Zhenya sipped at his coffee tentatively and then added more sugar.

"You do not resemble your father."

"No," Briggs agreed, with equanimity.

“Your father had dark hair,” Zhenya added. “Blue eyes, as you do, but dark hair.”

“Yes, I know,” Briggs said, dryly. “You have an excellent and very specific memory. How is it again that you were acquainted with my father?”

Zhenya blinked away what Hawke would have sworn was a calculating expression.

“I was stationed in German Democratic Republic for several tours following the war. Your father was also assigned there, I believe.” His voice rose on the last word, as if a question, but not really a question. “Not officially, of course.”

“Of course not,” Briggs replied. “My father was an economic advisor with the Marshall Plan, helping to rebuild Europe and bring unprecedented growth and prosperity to all.”

“Ah, yes. The systematic imposition of American values and managerial techniques upon a devastated continent.”

Both men smiled and shrugged at the ridiculousness of maintaining cover stories and party lines more than thirty years after the fact.

“Were you there when he was arrested?” Briggs asked casually, as if the question were mere social banter.

Zhenya’s immediate and momentary downward glance was probably an affirmative, Hawke thought, though he couldn’t read a reaction in Briggs’s face.

“Yes, I was stationed there during that time,” Zhenya answered. “It was near the end of my tour; I returned home in June 1956.”

Hawke was ready to shake the two of them. This verbal pas de deux with each item of information slowly and painfully extracted was as excruciating as it was compelling.

“You must have been relieved to return home,” Briggs said, amiably. “There weren’t many able to endure Podpolkovnik Tchesnov’s methods of conducting business.”

From the shrewd flash in Briggs’s eye, he’d baited the hook. Zhenya’s expression was absolutely still, prey suddenly aware of the predator.

“So I have heard,” Zhenya answered carefully. “Fortunately, I was assigned to a Transport Unit and had no interaction with the Podpolkovnik.”

Briggs watched him without expression or reply.

“I imagine that you already know Tchesnov is dead,” Zhenya ventured

Briggs gave a shark-like smile. "He died of syphilis, which is somehow fitting." His smile faded. "Tchesnov may have given the orders, but he didn't execute them, so to speak. He had assistance."

Zhenya shuddered and Hawke remembered that they were dealing with an elderly man, war veteran or not. He should have been someone's grandfather rather than on pilgrimage to a foreign intelligence agency to learn how and why his son had died.

"And yet, you have not, as you said, followed the Code of Hammurabi. What is it that you are waiting for, Mikhail Mikhailevich?"

Briggs rubbed his upper lip, smiled at something he kept to himself, and looked at Zhenya over the top of his glasses.

"Sometimes," he said slowly, "very infrequently, mind you, equilibrium is restored without any conscious effort exerted whatsoever."

Hawke thoroughly hated Archangel's enigmatic moments; Briggs's delight in the English language was only surpassed by his glee in using it to obfuscate.

Zhenya looked skeptical. "I cannot imagine in your business that such sentiment is the norm."

Briggs nodded agreement. "It is often easier to act than to wait for a situation to unfold." He leaned forward and placed his coffee cup on his desk. "Tell me about your son."

Zhenya drew back, surprised. "Young, foolish, patriotic, strong-willed. Were you any different when you started your career?"

"Some would say only my age has changed."

Hawke almost smiled; he admired Marella's ability to maintain a wholly neutral expression in the face of such temptation.

"It must be very difficult for a father to see his son choose this life," Briggs said with a sympathetic sigh.

Don't overcast with this fish, Hawke thought.

Zhenya was wary; he gazed steadily at Briggs under lowered brows. "We never spoke of his work," he said, guardedly.

“Of course, he could not talk of his assignments with you,” Briggs said, “Not even if he wanted to do so, for which you should be grateful. You think your imagination must be worse than reality, but it isn’t.”

“Why are you telling me this?” Zhenya growled, his expression an odd combination of puzzlement and hurt.

“You wanted to know about your son’s death,” Briggs answered, not unkindly. “I am telling you about his life. The two are inseparable.”

“I know how Kolya lived and how he died. I want to know *why* he died,” Zhenya said, frustration twisting his features into something bordering on anger.

“*Izvineetye*, Yevgeniy Nikolayevich. That was insensitive of me.”

Kolya, thought Hawke; was that some kind of nickname for Vasily? Maybe Zhenya’s son was never named Vasily at all. It had taken Briggs more time than Hawke had expected but the man had finally ferreted out a name.

“We were talking of your son,” Briggs prompted. “Young, foolish, patriotic, strong-willed?”

“You said that you would tell me why he died?” Zhenya asked, suspicion clouding his face.

“I can help you learn that, yes,” Briggs said.

Zhenya’s expression changed, suspicion giving way to enlightenment. “You do not know why he died, do you?”

“He got in the way of an exchange, found out something that we could not have him know, would not come quietly. Much like my father, I imagine.” Briggs leaned his head back against his chair, quietly evaluating the other man.

Hawke, unsettled, could not decide if Briggs was telling the actual truth or offering a probable cause of death. And if he, who knew Briggs, could not tell the difference, he imagined Zhenya was confronted with an even greater irresolution.

The old man took a deep breath, clenched his fists and regained his composure. “An exchange then, as I first proposed. The name of my son’s killer for the name of your father’s.”

“Nyet.” Briggs’s smile was full of regret.

Zhenya's eyes narrowed and his face flushed. "You choose to let your father's killers walk free, so be it. I cannot allow my son to die un-avenged."

Briggs shook his head. "Tchesnov's tactics were known. The car bomb was truly unnecessary, you know. It fooled no one."

Hawke blinked, not entirely sure if he understood Archangel's meaning, hoping that he had not interpreted it correctly. He heard Caitlin catch her breath.

Zhenya's face was bright red. The older man's body shook; the tremble could have been rage or something else entirely as he climbed to his feet.

"Give me a name," he ground out between clenched teeth. "Or I will take my revenge regardless."

Briggs stood slowly and shook his head. "I've given you all the information you'll get, Yevgeniy Nikolayevich. Go home."

Briggs might have ignored the implied threat but Hawke saw Marella reach behind her; he knew she would have a weapon concealed either on her person or near the window, behind Briggs, within reach.

Santini tugged at Hawke's arm, giving him a questioning look. Hawke shook his head, shot a look at Briggs and then back to Santini, hopefully communicating that they were still following Briggs's lead. Santini's immediate scowl told him that the message had been received loud and clear.

He wondered if Zhenya was really unaware that they were sitting not thirty feet from him. They were shadowed, and Zhenya was seventy-two; perhaps his peripheral vision was impaired. Or maybe he was just following Archangel's lead, as Briggs had been studiously ignoring them.

It hardly mattered though as both men's eyes were fixed on each other in a contest of wills. Unequal, Hawke thought. Zhenya may have had honest grief and two eyes against Briggs's one, but Briggs had an unbending will and the home advantage, plus almost thirty years on the older man.

Zhenya swayed, one arm reaching back for the chair, grabbing it and sitting without grace as he collapsed into the armchair.

Briggs retook his own seat. "It may be difficult for you to return home, you know. This building is watched."

Zhenya nodded. His eyes were distant and his face was filled an empty look of sorrow. "You arranged for me to be brought here by force," he reminded Briggs, his voice numb.

"Yes, that will work in your favor." Briggs leaned down, tapped the intercom button on his desk phone. "I won't bother asking how you got into the country. I will, however, arrange for your return."

"What if he doesn't want to go back?" Santini cried, his voice held still too long.

Hawke sighed and shook his head; shot Briggs a shrug. What could he do? The look Briggs returned held equal measures irritation and exhaustion. Perhaps Archangel was not as unmoved as he appeared.

A smile reappeared on Zhenya's face, one as tired as the look Briggs had just given Hawke.

"That is my home, Dominic Antonovich. It is where my wife and my children are buried," he said, voice tinged with bitterness.

Antigone, Hawke thought. The man just wanted to bury his son properly. Lacking a body, he'd needed a reason for the son's death. Archangel wouldn't allow Zhenya to take his revenge, but perhaps knowing the reason for his son's death would be enough.

Zhenya stood, somewhat unsteadily, to take Santini's outstretched hand as the door opened and two men entered, both attired in off-white suits.

Archangel's goons, Hawke thought, watching the two new entrants look first to Briggs for confirmation and then to the two white-haired men exchanging goodbyes.

"I am grateful for the experience of flying in your helicopter," Zhenya said, voice warming as he wrapped both hands around Santini's one. "Udachi i khoroshego nastroeniya!" He smiled. "Good luck and keep well."

Hawke thought Briggs might have a stroke right there and then at his desk. The man's one eye was large and accusing as Hawke took pity and shook his head abruptly. "The Jet Ranger," he mouthed, watching in amusement at the relief that washed over Briggs.

Zhenya shook Santini's hand, and then turned to Hawke.

"I do hope that your search for your brother ends more successfully than mine for my son, Mr. Hawke."

Hawke gave Santini a look expressing his annoyance before returning his gaze to Zhenya. "Yeah. Me, too."

“Miss Caitlin,” Zhenya said, repeating his bow. Caitlin’s smile was sad, no sign of the giggling twelve-year old that the bow had previously elicited.

Zhenya nodded to the two silent guards and turned back to Briggs.

“Mikhail Mikhailevich,” he said. “Do novyh vstrech.”

“Not in this lifetime,” Briggs replied curtly.

Zhenya shrugged and turned to leave.

“Dos va-danya,” Santini called after him, shoulders drooping, face dejected.

“Do svidanja,” Zhenya replied, and then walked through the door without looking back.

Chapter Eight

The door closed and in the silence that followed, Hawke felt a level of emotional exhaustion he hadn’t encountered in... He stopped his thoughts from going in that direction. His sympathies were torn between Zhenya, Dominic and Briggs. He felt all too closely a tie between his own life and Zhenya’s – all of his family was either dead or missing, with the exception of Dominic who was surrogate family.

The silence was brief.

“I can’t believe you’re kicking him out of the country!” Santini said, his voice filled with outrage.

“I can’t believe you let him walk out that door,” Marella said, almost simultaneously.

Briggs winced, and held up a hand against the verbal assault as he took his seat again. Learning his head against the back of the chair, he closed his eye and sighed, sounding as tired as Hawke had ever heard him.

“Your people killed his son and you kick him out of the country?” Santini demanded, as if he hadn’t heard Marella’s interruption.

Not unexpectedly, Briggs opened his eye and swiveled his chair to reply to Marella’s outrage first.

“What could I possibly do that would exceed the loss of his son?” he asked, voice quietly persuasive, asking her to understand.

“He could have told you the rest of the names,” Marella said, her voice frustrated even if her expression was full of concern and sympathy for her boss. “You’ve been looking...” her voice trailed off in response to the guarded expression on his face.

“You think he really knows who killed your father?” Hawke asked, sticking to the facts on the table even as he wondered how best to approach the whole question of dealing with the breadth of knowledge that they’d been handled. It was impossible not to see Briggs slightly differently now, not to draw comparisons between Briggs’s loss of his father while still in his teens and Hawke’s loss of his parents at a young age.

“Knows?” Marella asked, exasperated. “Your new buddy,” she said, with an angry wave in Santini’s general direction, “participated directly in the death of Michael’s father!”

“Now, wait a minute,” Santini said, outrage transferring from Briggs to Marella. “There’s no proof that Zhenya was involved in anything...”

“There was no Transport Unit at the location where Michael’s father was taken after his arrest,” she said. “Nor any nearby. Tchesnov’s people ran that place. Your Zhenya was there, he admitted it, and he was involved.”

“That doesn’t mean he was involved,” Santini argued, sticking to his guns even if his mobile and expressive face was beginning to give away his own uncertainty.

“How else would he know Michael’s father?” Marella said conclusively, crossing her arms. “You really think they were social acquaintances? In East Germany in the fifties?”

Hawke had suspected that from Briggs’s earlier comments, as he thought, had Caitlin, but he was unhappy to have his suspicions confirmed. He wondered how long Briggs had been looking and was both surprised and not surprised at the amount that Marella knew. She loves Michael, he reminded himself. Even if Briggs hadn’t told her everything, she might have investigated it anyway.

Briggs had been resting his forehead in his right palm; he now held up that hand to Marella as a signal to stop. She took a deep breath and returned to silence.

“You really think he was involved?” Hawke asked, walking over and leaning on Briggs’s desk.

Briggs's shrug admitted nothing of what he was thinking or feeling, his face gave away only that he was drained. Marella looked keenly unhappy and shifted uneasily as if restraining herself from doing or saying as she wished.

"Was his son really killed the way you said?" Caitlin asked, skillfully turning the conversation away from the death of Briggs's father, as far as it could be turned considering the improbable linkage between the two families.

"He killed your father?" Santini said, voice full of disbelief and shock. He sat heavily in the seat Zhenya had only recently vacated. "And you sat there and talked to him?"

Caitlin looked exasperated at Dominic's redirection of what she had just steered in a different direction. Hawke marveled at Santini's swinging loyalties, wondered if his old friend had ever truly taken Zhenya's side against Archangel or if it was simply more verbal bombast on Dominic's part.

"I have no idea," Briggs said to Caitlin, with a tired smile, "but as it's an accurate description of the majority of agent deaths..." He waved a hand.

"We'll be looking into it," Marella promised. "It's possible that Ivan Dzhamgerchinov was killed by one of our agents, but equally possible that he was killed by the Company or the agencies of another government completely."

"Vasily," Santini corrected, a furrow between his eyes.

"He said Vanya," Briggs countered. "That's the diminutive for Ivan, not Vasily."

"He lied about his son's name?" Santini asked, in disbelief. "And he killed Michael's father? He was such a nice old guy, I don't get it."

"How many people have we had to shoot?" Hawke replied, sympathetic to Dominic but slightly perturbed with Santini's unexpected attachment to Zhenya and his feelings of loss, when what he'd really lost was an unrealistic image of a person he'd never known very well. "You think Zhenya didn't kill people in the War, too?"

"Well, that was different," Santini sputtered, thought about it and then came to an unhappy stop.

"You're not defending the man," Marella said to Hawke in disbelief. It was clear she wouldn't allow it.

"No, I'm not defending the man," Hawke answered, unable to resist responding even if he knew better than to go down this path. "Michael wants me to go take him out, I'll do it. Right now." And he would. His loyalty, strange as it sometimes seemed to him, was

to the people in this room, all of them, including Briggs and Marella. "How's that make me different than Zhenya?"

Briggs almost smiled, but instead shook his head at Hawke's offer. "It might be more merciful if you did kill him, Hawke."

Hawke nodded. He understood now the enigmatic statement Michael had made earlier.

"Drawing that correlation for the old man may be one of the crueler things you've ever done," he said to Briggs. Cruelly effective and possibly the closest either would get to justice. He wondered if it would be any comfort to Briggs; knew that it would eat away at Zhenya, as Briggs had intended.

He watched Dominic and Caitlin work it out on their own, saw in their expressions when they came to the realization, the strange and bittersweet mixture of pity and grudging admiration.

Hawke frowned, folded his arms. "Michael," he said, to draw the man's attention back to him. "That time in East Germany?"

He let Briggs fill in the rest, watched a parade of emotions cross Briggs's face, and Marella's too.

"Not the same place," Briggs replied, a quick dart of his tongue across his bottom lip the only indication of the emotion Hawke had stirred. "Though it did occur to me at the time that it would be the one thing my mother would never forgive me."

Christ, Hawke thought, unable to imagine how Briggs's mother had survived the loss of her husband, knowing he'd died under interrogation. It would ask the impossible of anyone to lose her son that way as well. And how the hell Briggs had joined the Firm knowing how his father had died was beyond Hawke's comprehension.

"Your mother must be a pretty resilient woman," was what Hawke said.

Briggs raised his eyebrows and then smiled, while Marella rolled her eyes.

Hawke decided he would be willing to pay to see a meeting between the two primary women in Briggs's life.

"Any other probing questions into my family history?" Briggs demanded. "If not," he said, standing and not waiting for a reply. "Some of us have work to do."

"You invited us," Hawke felt obligated to remind him. "But I get it, we're going."

Briggs gave him a grudging smile. "Always a pleasure, Hawke. Caitlin," he nodded, his smile brightening. "Dominic," he said, more coolly.

Marella had the door open and they were through it before any of them had a chance to form a coherent reply. Then they were on the opposite side of it and Marella had slipped back inside.

"Bet she never has houseguests that overstay their welcome either," Dominic said, with an injured look at the door.

Hawke smiled and patted Santini on the back. "She'd have to leave work to have houseguests," he said, pretty sure houseguests were low on Marella's list of priorities.

The three of them remained silent as they retraced their steps through the maze of Knightsbridge: elevator down to the concourse level, walk across to the next set of elevators and eventually winding their way to landing pad where it seemed they had left a Santini Air copter weeks earlier instead of a hour or so.

As they buckled in and donned headsets, Santini finally spoke, still subdued.

"You think that has any merit, String? That whole Karma thing?"

Hawke, busy with pre-flight, scowled a little at the distraction. Dominic knew better than to bother him during pre-flight. No pilot worth his salt would give it anything less than his, or her, full-fledged attention.

"You mean, the idea that Zhenya's son was killed for the same reasons that Michael's father had been killed, years earlier?" Caitlin asked, her eyes flickering from Hawke to Dominic, gracefully stepping in and letting Hawke keep his focus where he wanted it to be.

He smiled at her gratefully, returned his attention to his instrument panel.

"That's part of it," Dominic said, slowly. "But the idea that Zhenya's son was killed because Zhenya was involved..." He trailed off, frustrated and still visibly uncomfortable with the idea that Zhenya had anything to do with the death of Briggs's father.

"Did Vanya die because Zhenya participated somehow in killing Michael's father?" said Hawke, unable to stay focused on pre-flight despite Caitlin's aid.

"Yeah," Santini said, cautiously. "That correlation thing you said."

“Correlation isn’t cause and effect,” Hawke rebutted, flipping a few switches, irritated that he was losing track of his normal routine. “Even if Michael wants Zhenya to think they are.”

Dominic cleared his throat and Hawke sighed.

“I don’t think Karma has anything to do with it, Dom,” he said, abandoning pre-flight in frustration. “I think they both died because they chose to work in a dangerous field of work and they got caught.”

He wasn’t sure that had reassured Santini but Caitlin was mulling it over.

“Good thing we just fly helicopters,” Hawke said, “Anyone who goes into the spy business should get his head examined.”

The ground crew could still hear them laughing as the helicopter ascended.

Ochin preeyatna = [Russian] It means 'very pleasant', and is the simplest way of saying
'pleased to meet you' in Russian
Pozhaluista = [Russian] Please, Not At All (which is why it follows Spasiba)
Spasiba = [Russian] Thank you
quiescat in pace = [Latin] Rest in peace
Ded = [Russian] grandfather
Podpolkovnik = [Russian] Lt. Colonel in the Soviet Army
Izvineetye = [Russian] Excuse Me, I'm Sorry
Udachi i khoroshego nastroeniya! = [Russian] good luck and keep well
Do novyh vstrech = [Russian] Till we meet again
Do svidanja = [Russian] Good bye