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Wolves Eat Dogs

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Moscow swam in color. Hazy floodlights of Red Square mixed with the neon of casinos in Revolution Square. Light wormed its way from the underground mall in the Manezh. Spotlights crowned new towers of glass and polished stone, each tower capped by a spire. Gilded domes still floated around the Garden Ring, but all night earthmovers tore at the old city and dug widening pools of light to raise a modern, vertical Moscow more like Houston or Dubai. It was a Moscow that Pasha Ivanov had helped to create, a shifting landscape of tectonic plates and lava flows and fatal missteps.

Senior Investigator Arkady Renko leaned out a window the better to see Ivanov on the pavement ten floors below. Ivanov was dead but not particularly bloody, arms and legs at odd angles. Two black Mercedeses were at the curb, Ivanov's car and an SUV for his bodyguards. It sometimes seemed to Arkady that every successful businessman and Mafia hood in Moscow had been issued two Nazi-black Mercedeses.

Ivanov had arrived at 9:28 P.M., gone directly up to the safest apartment in Moscow and at 9:48 P.M. plunged to

the sidewalk. Arkady had measured Ivanov's distance from the building. Homicides generally hit close, having expended their energy in trying not to fall. Suicides were single-minded and landed farther out. Ivanov had almost reached the street.

Behind Arkady, Prosecutor Zurin had brought drinks from the wet bar to a NoviRus senior vice president named Timofeyev and a young blonde in the living room. Zurin was as fussy as a maître d'; he had survived six Kremlin regimes by recognizing his best customers and smoothing out their problems. Timofeyev had the shakes and the girl was drunk. Arkady thought the gathering was a little like a party where the host had suddenly and inexplicably dived through the window. After the shock the guests carried on.

The odd man out was Bobby Hoffman, Ivanov's American assistant. Although he was worth millions of dollars, his loafers were split, his fingers were smudged with ink and his suede jacket was worn to a shine. Arkady wondered how much more time Hoffman had at NoviRus. An assistant to a dead man? That didn't sound promising.

Hoffman joined Arkady at the window. "Why are there plastic bags around Pasha's hands?"

"I was looking for signs of resistance, maybe cuts on the fingers."

"Resistance? Like a fight?"

Prosecutor Zurin rocked forward on the sofa. "There is no investigation. We do not investigate suicides. There

are no signs of violence in the apartment. Ivanov came up alone. He left alone. That, my friends, is a suicide in spades."

The girl lifted a dazed expression. Arkady had learned from the file he had on Pasha Ivanov that Rina Shevchenko was his personal interior designer, a twenty-year-old in a red leather pantsuit and high-heeled boots.

Timofeyev was known as a robust sportsman, but he could have been his father, he had shrunk so much within his suit. "Suicides are a personal tragedy. It's enough to suffer the death of a friend. Colonel Ozhogin—the head of NoviRus Security—is already flying back." He added to Arkady, "Ozhogin wants nothing done until he arrives."

Arkady said, "We don't leave a body on the sidewalk like a rug, even for the colonel."

"Pay no attention to Investigator Renko," Zurin said. "He's the office fanatic. He's like a narcotics dog; he sniffs every bag."

There won't be much left to sniff here, Arkady thought. Just out of curiosity, he wondered if he could protect the bloody prints on the windowsill.

Timofeyev pressed a handkerchief against his nose. Arkady saw spots of red.

"Nosebleed?" asked Zurin.

"Summer cold," said Timofeyev.

Opposite Ivanov's apartment was a dark office building. A man walked out of the lobby, waved to Arkady and gave a thumbs-down.

"One of your men?" Hoffman asked.

"A detective, in case someone over there was working late and might have witnessed something."

"But you're not investigating."

"I do whatever the prosecutor says."

"So you think it was suicide."

"We prefer suicides. Suicides don't demand work or drive up the crime rate." It also occurred to Arkady that suicides didn't expose the incompetence of investigators and militia who were better at sorting out dead drunks from the living than solving murders committed with any amount of forethought.

Zurin said, "You will excuse Renko, he thinks all of Moscow is a crime scene. The problem is that the press will sensationalize the death of someone as eminent as Pasha Ivanov."

In which case, better the suicide of an unbalanced financier than assassination, Arkady thought. Timofeyev might lament the suicide of his friend, but a murder investigation could place the entire NoviRus company under a cloud, especially from the perspective of foreign partners and investors who already felt that doing business in Russia was a dip in murky water. Since Zurin had ordered Arkady's financial investigation of Ivanov, this U-turn had to be executed with dispatch. So, not a maître d', Arkady thought, but more a skillful sailor who knew when to tack.

"Who had access to this apartment?" Arkady asked.

"Pasha was the only one allowed on this level. The security was the best in the world," Zurin said.

"Best in the world," Timofeyev agreed.

Zurin said, "The entire building is covered by surveillance cameras, inside and out, with monitors that are watched not only at the reception desk here but, as a safeguard, also by technicians at the headquarters of NoviRus Security. The other apartments have keys. Ivanov had a keypad with a code known only to him. He also had a lockout button by the elevator, to keep out the world when he was in. He had all the security a man could wish for."

Arkady had been in the lobby and seen the monitors tucked into a round rosewood desk. Each small screen was split in four. The receptionist also had a white phone with two outside lines and a red phone with a line direct to NoviRus.

"The building staff doesn't have Ivanov's code?" Arkady asked.

"No. Only the central office at NoviRus."

"Who had access to the code there?"

"No one. It was sealed, until tonight."

According to the prosecutor, Ivanov had ordered that no one enter the apartment but him—not staff, not a housecleaner, not a plumber. Anyone who tried would appear on monitors and on tape, and the staff had seen nothing. Ivanov did his own cleaning. Gave the elevator man the trash, laundry, dry cleaning, lists for food or whatever, which would be waiting in the lobby when Ivanov returned. Zurin made it sound like many talents.

"Eccentric," Arkady said.

"He could afford to be eccentric. Churchill wandered around his castle naked."

"Pasha wasn't crazy," Rina said.

"What was he?" Arkady rephrased the question. "How would you describe him?"

"He had lost weight. He said he had an infection. Maybe he had a bad reaction to medication."

Timofeyev said, "I wish Ozhogin were here."

Arkady had seen a glossy magazine cover with a confident Lev Timofeyev sailing a yacht in the Black Sea, carving through the waves. Where was *that* Timofeyev? Arkady wondered.

An ambulance rolled discreetly to the curb. The detective crossed the street with a camera and shot flash pictures of Ivanov being rolled into the body bag and of the stain on the pavement. Something had been concealed under Ivanov's body. From Arkady's distance it looked like a drinking glass. The detective took a picture of that, too.

Hoffman watched Arkady as much as the scene below.

"Is it true, you treat Moscow like a crime scene?"

"Force of habit."

The living room would have been a forensic technician's dream: white leather sofa and chairs, limestone floor and linen walls, glass ashtray and coffee table, all excellent backgrounds for hair, lipstick, fingerprints, the scuff marks of life. It would have been easy to dust and search before Zurin genially invited in a crowd and tainted the goods. Because with a jumper, there were two questions: was he alone, and was he pushed?

Timofeyev said to no one in particular, "Pasha and I go far back. We studied and did research together at the institute when the country suffered its economic collapse. Imagine, the greatest physics laboratory in Moscow, and we worked without pay. The director, Academician Gerasimov, turned off the heat in the buildings to save money, and of course, it was winter and the pipes froze. We had a thousand liters of radioactive water to discharge, so we sent it into the river in the center of the city." He drained his glass. "The director was a brilliant man, but you would sometimes find him inside a bottle. On those occasions he relied on Pasha and me. Anyway, we dumped radioactive water in the middle of Moscow, and no one knew."

Arkady was taken aback. He certainly hadn't known.

Rina took Timofeyev's glass to the bar, where she paused by a gallery of photographs in which Pasha Ivanov was not dead. Ivanov was not a handsome individual, but a big man full of grand gestures. In different pictures he rappelled off cliffs, trekked the Urals, kayaked through white water. He embraced Yeltsin and Clinton and the senior Bush. He beamed at Putin, who, as usual, seemed to suck on a sour tooth. He cradled a miniature dachshund like a baby. Ivanov partied with opera tenors and rock stars, and even when he bowed to the Orthodox patriarch, a brash confidence shone through. Other New Russians fell by the wayside: shot, bankrupted or exiled by the state. Pasha not only flourished, he was known as a public-spirited man, and when construction funds for the

Church of the Redeemer ran low, Ivanov provided the gold foil for the dome. When Arkady first opened a file on Ivanov, he was told that if Ivanov was charged with breaking the law, he could call the senate on his mobile phone and have the law rewritten. Trying to indict Ivanov was like trying to hold on to a snake that kept shedding skin after skin and grew legs in the meantime. In other words, Pasha Ivanov was both a man of his time and a stage in evolution.

Arkady noticed a barely perceptible glitter on the windowsill, scattered grains of crystals so familiar he could not resist pressing his forefinger to pick them up and taste them. Salt.

"I'm going to look around," he said.

"But you're not investigating," Hoffman said.

"Absolutely not."

"A word alone," Zurin said. He led Arkady into the hall. "Renko, we had an investigation into Ivanov and NoviRus, but a case against a suicide doesn't smell good in anybody's nostrils."

"You initiated the investigation."

"And I'm ending it. The last thing I want is for people to get the idea that we hounded Pasha Ivanov to death, and still went after him even when he was in the grave. It makes us look vindictive, like fanatics, which we aren't." The prosecutor searched Arkady's eyes. "When you've had your little look around here, go to your office and collect all the Ivanov and NoviRus files and leave them by my office. Do it tonight. And stop using the phrase 'New

Russian' when you refer to crime. We're all New Russians, aren't we?"

"I'm trying."

Ivanov's apartment took up the entire tenth floor. There weren't many rooms, but they were spacious and commanded a wraparound view of the city that gave the illusion of walking on air. Arkady began at a bedroom upholstered in linen wall panels, laid with a Persian rug. The photographs here were more personal: Ivanov skiing with Rina, sailing with Rina, in scuba-diving gear with Rina. She had huge eyes and a Slavic shelf of cheekbones. In each picture a breeze lifted her golden hair; she was the kind who could summon a breeze. Considering their difference in age, for Ivanov their relationship must have been a bit like making a mistress of a leggy girl, a Lolita. That was who she reminded Arkady of—Lolita was a Russian creation, after all! There was a nearly paternal humor in Pasha's expression and a candy-sweet flavor to Rina's smile.

A rosy nude, a Modigliani, hung on the wall. On the night table were an ashtray of Lalique glass and a Hermès alarm clock; in the drawer was a 9mm pistol, a Viking with a fat clip of seventeen rounds, but not a whiff of ever having been fired. An attaché case on the bed held a single Bally shoe sack and a mobile-phone charger cord. On the bookshelf was a decorator's selection of worn leather-bound collections of Pushkin, Rilke and Chekhov, and a box that held a trio of Patek, Cartier and Rolex watches and gently agitated them to keep them running,

a definite necessity for the dead. The only off note was dirty laundry piled in a corner.

He moved into a bathroom with a limestone floor, gold-plated fixtures on a step-in spa, heated bars for robes large enough for polar bears and the convenience of a toilet phone. A shaving mirror magnified the lines of Arkady's face. A medicine cabinet held—besides the usual toiletries—bottles of Viagra, sleeping pills, Prozac. Arkady noted a Dr. Novotny's name on each prescription. He didn't see any antibiotics for infection.

The kitchen looked both new and forgotten, with gleaming steel appliances, enameled pots without a single smudge and burners with not one spot of crusted sauce. A silvery rack held dusty, expensive wines, no doubt selected by an expert. Yet the dishwasher was stacked with unwashed dishes, just as the bed had been loosely made and the bathroom towels hung awry, the signs of a man caring for himself. A restaurant-size refrigerator was a cold vault, empty except for bottles of mineral water, odds and ends of cheese, crackers and half a loaf of sliced bread. Vodka sat in the freezer. Pasha was a busy man, off to business dinners every day. He was, until recently, a famously sociable man, not a wealthy recluse with long hair and fingernails. He would have wanted to show his friends a shining up-to-date kitchen and offer them a decent Bordeaux or a chilled shot of vodka. Yet he hadn't shown anyone anything, not for months. In the dining room Arkady laid his cheek on the rosewood table and looked down its length. Dusty, but not a scratch.

At the twist of a rheostat, the next room turned into a home theater with a flat screen a good two meters wide, speakers in matte black and eight swivel chairs in red velvet with individual gooseneck lamps. All New Russians had home theaters, as if they were auteurs on the side. Arkady flipped through a video library ranging from Eisenstein to Jackie Chan. There was no tape in the tape player, and nothing in the mini-fridge but splits of Moët.

An exercise room had floor-to-ceiling windows, a padded floor, free weights and an exercise machine that looked like a catapult. A television hung over a stationary bike.

The prize was Ivanov's apartment office, a futuristic cockpit of glass and stainless steel. Everything was close at hand, a monitor and printer on the desk, and a computer stack with a CD tray open beneath, next to an empty wastebasket. On a table lay copies of the *Wall Street Journal* and the *Financial Times*, folded as neatly as pressed sheets. CNN was on the monitor screen, market quotes streaming under a man who muttered half a world away. Arkady suspected the subdued sound was the sign of a lonely man, the need for another voice in the apartment, even while he banned his lover and nearest associates. It also struck Arkady that this was the closest anyone in the prosecutor's office had ever come to penetrating NoviRus. It was a shame that the man to do so was him. Arkady's life had come to this: his highest skill lay in ferreting out which man had bludgeoned another. The subtleties of corporate theft were new to him, and he stood in front

of the screen like an ape encountering fire. Virtually within reach might be the answers he had been searching for: the names of silent partners in the ministries who promoted and protected Ivanov and their account numbers in offshore banks. He wouldn't find car trunks stuffed with dollar bills. It didn't work that way anymore. There was no paper. Money flew through the air and was gone.

Victor, the detective from the street, finally made it up. He was a sleep-deprived man in a sweater that reeked of cigarettes. He held up a sandwich bag containing a saltshaker. "This was on the pavement under Ivanov. Maybe it was there already. Why would anyone jump out a window with a saltshaker?"

Bobby Hoffman squeezed by Victor. "Renko, the best hackers in the world are Russian. I've encrypted and programmed Pasha's hard drive to self-destruct at the first sign of a breach. In other words, don't touch a fucking thing."

"You were Pasha's computer wizard as well as a business adviser?" Arkady said.

"I did what Pasha asked."

Arkady tapped the CD tray. It slid open, revealing a silvery disk. Hoffman tapped the tray and it slid shut.

He said, "I should also tell you that the computer and any disks are NoviRus property. You are a millimeter from trespassing. You ought to know the laws here."

"Mr. Hoffman, don't tell me about Russian law. You were a thief in New York, and you're a thief here."

"No, I'm a consultant. I'm the guy who told Pasha not

to worry about you. You have an advanced degree in business?"

"No."

"Law?"

"No."

"Accounting?"

"No."

"Then lots of luck. The Americans came after me with a staff of eager-beaver lawyers right out of Harvard. I can see Pasha had a lot to be afraid of." This was more the hostile attitude that Arkady had expected, but Hoffman ran out of steam. "Why don't you think it's suicide? What's wrong?"

"I didn't say that anything was."

"Something bothers you."

Arkady considered. "Recently your friend wasn't the Pasha Ivanov of old, was he?"

"That could have been depression."

"He moved twice in the last three months. Depressed people don't have the energy to move; they sit still." Depression happened to be a subject that Arkady knew something about. "It sounds like fear to me."

"Fear of what?"

"You were close to him, you'd know better than I. Does anything here seem out of place?"

"I wouldn't know. Pasha wouldn't let us in here. Rina and I haven't been inside this apartment for a month. If you were investigating, what would you be looking for?"

"I have no idea."

Victor felt at the sleeve of Hoffman's jacket. "Nice suede. Must have cost a fortune."

"It was Pasha's. I admired it once when he was wearing it, and he forced it on me. It wasn't as if he didn't have plenty more, but he was generous."

"How many more jackets?" Arkady asked.

"Twenty, at least."

"And suits and shoes and tennis whites?"

"Of course."

"I saw clothes in the corner of the bedroom. I didn't see a closet."

"I'll show you," Rina said. How long she had been standing behind Victor, Arkady didn't know. "I designed this apartment, you know."

"It's a very nice apartment," Arkady said.

Rina studied him for signs of condescension, before she turned and, unsteadily, hand against the wall, led the way to Ivanov's bedroom. Arkady saw nothing different until Rina pushed a wall panel that clicked and swung open to a walk-in closet bathed in lights. Suits hung on the left, pants and jackets on the right, some new and still in store bags with elaborate Italian names. Ties hung on a brass carousel. Built-in bureaus held shirts, underclothes and racks for shoes. The clothes ranged from plush cashmere to casual linen, and everything in the closet was immaculate, except a tall dressing mirror that was cracked but intact, and a bed of sparkling crystals that covered the floor.

Prosecutor Zurin arrived. "What is it now?"

Arkady licked a finger to pick up a grain and put it to his tongue. "Salt. Table salt." At least fifty kilos' worth of salt had been poured on the floor. The bed was softly rounded, dimpled with two faint impressions.

"A sign of derangement," Zurin announced. "There's no sane explanation for this. It's the work of a man in suicidal despair. Anything else, Renko?"

"There was salt on the windowsill."

"More salt? Poor man. God knows what was going through his mind."

"What do you think?" Hoffman asked Arkady.

"Suicide," Timofeyev said from the hall, his voice muffled by his handkerchief.

Victor spoke up. "As long as Ivanov is dead. My mother put all her money in one of his funds. He promised a hundred percent profit in a hundred days. She lost everything, and he was voted New Russian of the Year. If he was here now and alive, I would strangle him with his own steaming guts."

That would settle the issue, Arkady thought.

By the time Arkady had delivered a hand truck of NoviRus files to the prosecutor's office and driven home, it was two in the morning.

His apartment was not a glass tower shimmering on the skyline but a pile of rocks off the Garden Ring. Various Soviet architects seemed to have worked with blinders on to design a building with flying buttresses, Roman

columns and Moorish windows. Sections of the facade had fallen off, and parts had been colonized by grasses and saplings sowed by the wind, but inside, the apartments offered high ceilings and casement windows. Arkady's view was not of sleek Mercedeses gliding by but of a backyard row of metal garages, each secured by a padlock covered by the cutoff bottom of a plastic soda bottle.

No matter the hour, Mr. and Mrs. Rajapakse, his neighbors from across the hall, came over with biscuits, hard-boiled eggs and tea. They were university professors from Sri Lanka, a small, dark pair with delicate manners.

"It is no bother," Rajapakse said. "You are our best friend in Moscow. You know what Gandhi said when he was asked about Western civilization? He said he thought it would be a good idea. You are the one civilized Russian we know. Because we know you do not take care of yourself, we must do it for you."

Mrs. Rajapakse wore a sari. She flew around the apartment like a butterfly to catch a fly and put it out the window.

"She harms nothing," her husband said. "The violence here in Moscow is very bad. She worries about you all the time. She is like a little mother to you."

After Arkady chased them home, he had half a glass of vodka and toasted. To a New Russian.

He was trying.