



Dr. Milt Davidson is recruited by the CIA to spy on Russia's bioweapons program using odors and the sense of smell after relocating to Moscow. His cover is a startup biopharma company. He faces intrigue, assassinations, and seductions.

The Scenturion Spy: Book Two - Settling in Moscow
By David M. Goldenberg

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The cover art is a complex digital composition. At the top, a cityscape is visible, featuring the Statue of Liberty on the right and a colorful cathedral with onion domes on the left. A large, glowing blue face with closed eyes is the central focus, appearing to be a digital or AI entity. Numerous blue lines with arrowheads radiate from the top of the face, extending upwards and outwards across the entire cover. In the upper right, a car is shown engulfed in bright orange and yellow flames. The background is a dark blue gradient with faint, glowing digital patterns and light waves. The overall aesthetic is high-tech and futuristic.

THE SCENTURION SPY

BOOK TWO: SETTLING IN MOSCOW

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1.

ALTHOUGH MARIE AND St. Martin were on my mind, I knew I had to first tie up some activities in Moscow before I could travel to the Caribbean to be with her after almost three months apart. I had a tight schedule to get to the European Medical Centre (EMC) to meet with my clinical investigator, Professor Sergeii Koussevitzky, by 1:00 p.m. When I entered his waiting room, Dr. Natasha Petrushkin, deputy minister in the Russian Federation's Duma, who developed a relationship with me after Marie disappeared, was already waiting, reviewing papers that looked like my clinical protocol. She looked very business-like, hair up in a bun, light makeup, and was wearing a gray, woolen, two-piece suit-dress that came down to just below her knees. Dark stockings and low-heeled black shoes completed the outfit. Her tall stature, being probably five feet, ten inches, made her tower over everyone in the room. I greeted her by kissing her cheeks as I sat down next to her.

The receptionist's phone rang after about five minutes, and she then escorted us to Sergeii's office. He was standing beside his desk, waiting to greet us. His pointed mustache caught my attention by now being a deep brown with gray streaks, unlike the full, bushy brown it was when we first met. It matched his partly gray and brown, receding hair. Also standing was a colleague introduced as Dr. Maxim Popov, head of the hospital's sleep clinic. He was also in his sixties, I thought, with thin gray hair and a gray mustache, but not as bushy as Sergeii's. He was about five-feet-seven and on the portly side, and wore a white coat over a pair of gray woolen slacks and black leather shoes.

I introduced Natasha to the others, explaining that she had offered to assist us in the clinical study, especially if we needed resources from outside the EMC, like one of the Russian Academy of

Science's or its Academy of Medicine's affiliated laboratories. Both men nodded politely, but I noted that they were a little apprehensive about a government deputy minister being involved.

We all sat down at Sergei's corner couch area, and he offered us a beverage. "Natasha is a respected science administrator in the Kremlin," I said, "and she can facilitate our activities by introducing us to other scientists or government offices that she can make available."

Sergei expressed his appreciation while Dr. Popov just looked on, evidently assessing Natasha as she spoke to them in Russian.

Dr. Popov, who did not speak English as well as Sergei and Natasha, explained his sleep clinic's activities and research, emphasizing that they had experience with melatonin given orally to patients with sleep disorders. He'd read the protocol I wrote on testing an odor form of melatonin, and said that they have both patients and access to volunteers whom he was sure would participate, especially if they are remunerated.

Dr. Popov invited us to tour his clinic on the third floor, so we all followed him and inspected the examination areas and, through glass enclosures, both private and semi-private hospital rooms with a lot of monitors connected to the patients. I estimated that they could evaluate about twenty patients at any time and had a staff, excluding the M.D.s, of about ten, whom we saw at the nursing station and adjacent offices.

We then sat down in their conference room to discuss the logistics of managing the study, the kind of volunteers preferred, and so on. Dr. Popov seemed to have considerable experience with sleep studies and the evaluation of new drugs. He also knew Katarina Breslau, who had worked with them on other studies, and whom he thought would be a helpful addition to the group. Katarina was a pharmacist at their hospital, but more importantly the sister of Dr.

Joshua Breslau, who led the olfaction research for the GRU in the city of Oryol, south of Moscow in a remote community. We discussed the submission to both the hospital's ethics committee and the local health authorities, but there was the task of translating the protocol into Russian. Natasha said she had the resources within her agency to get that done expeditiously. She could then help guide it through the Moscow health authority.

That saved us a major effort, and we thanked Natasha for offering to get it done. She said she expected the translation to take just a few days unless there were technical language questions, but the review by the health authority would be made a high priority. Sergeii thought that this could go quicker than the hospital's ethics board, which usually required a few weeks.

“With approval from the health authority, the ethics committee would probably expedite the review unless some major problem arose,” he said.

I sat back with some satisfaction that this group showed enthusiasm for my project and that Natasha made a difference. As a deputy minister at the highest level of Russian science within the government, she carried a lot of authority, which I had not appreciated until this meeting.

Evidently, the two other collaborating physicians at the EMC were also impressed, since they volunteered to keep in touch with the ethics committee's chairman after submitting the protocol.

I left in a cheery mood with Natasha.

*

AFTERWARDS, NATASHA DROVE us to her apartment building in her small automobile. The traffic was heavy, and it took about forty minutes. On the way, she explained that she'd had difficulty finding any information on Marie, as I requested of her, in the general

government files. I had explained to her that Marie was my collaborator and companion while getting established in Moscow but disappeared after returning to Paris. I hoped that Natasha had means through the Russian spy agencies to learn Marie's whereabouts. There was, however, a file at the FSB (*Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation*), the successor to the infamous KGB, marked TOP SECRET, she told me, which meant that no one, even someone at Natasha's level, had access to it without a lot of explanations.

"There could be a lot of reasons for that," she said, "so I shouldn't conclude that the information in the file merited a high level of secrecy; it could simply be for business reasons or otherwise." But we both knew that having a file at the highest Russian secret service meant that Marie had some level of importance, either as a known spy for the West or as an FSB or GRU agent or double agent.

Natasha emphasized that she'd found nothing of importance in the visa office files — Marie had been granted entry to Russia on many occasions, but there was nothing out of the ordinary, no red flags, in the file Natasha had seen. She said she could enlist help to locate Marie but thought this would draw more attention to her and, in turn, to me than was desirable. I agreed.

I had not told her that I believed Marie was in St. Martin.

"Is there no way to get an uncensored file on her?" I asked.

"Not without bringing this to the attention of senior FSB officials, which we do not want to do," she said. "My casual inquiry already worried me, since such efforts are never casual or without significance."

I decided to drop the discussion and let the CIA and Mossad interpret this situation for themselves. But I was even more uneasy now, worrying that Marie's disappearance was caused by her fear of being exposed as disloyal to the West. Maybe she still had family in the Russian Federation that made her susceptible to becoming a double

agent. But I recognized that I cared more for her than for these political issues or realities. Yet, I had a mission to perform, and if Marie were a double agent, I was exposed and at personal risk here in Russia and maybe anywhere.

It was a relief to relax in Natasha's living room, sipping a glass of wine while she checked her computer for emails and messages. There was nothing imminent, she said, as she came over to sit next to me on the couch. We toasted to working on the clinical project together, and I asked how she could take this project on, given her other responsibilities.

“Working for a highly structured bureaucratic government organization does have some advantages when you gain a high managerial role,” she said. “I am independent within the system to choose my personal tasks while assigning others to my staff, who are happy to be challenged by assignments that I have labeled important. This gives me a lot of latitude to choose projects that have major visibility within the government, especially if it involves science that contributes to the military capabilities of the Motherland. Also, we have a lot of staff, so I like to keep them busy.”

“So, you think my project falls into the category of high visibility?”

“I am not sure, but if it has some interest to the FSB or GRU and/or it can make some oligarchs and their government friends wealthy, including possibly President Putin, then my having an association may be politically wise.”

“Besides,” she added, “it gives me a good reason to be with you.” She leaned over and kissed me, and this time I returned her kiss and held her in my arms. At that moment, I couldn't think of Marie or anyone else. Natasha was an exciting, confident, and certainly romantically experienced woman who wanted to please me and

showed a desire to be pleased by me. So, dinner was postponed for at least an hour.

At about 8:00 p.m., I ordered a car to take me back to my apartment, since Natasha and I had agreed that my staying the night could complicate matters if her apartment were under surveillance. Although she doubted that it was, she said that we shouldn't underestimate the interest of the GRU in my activities, especially with my interactions with Marie and now with Dr. Breslau's sister. It would be quite easy to connect the dots and implicate me in an espionage plot to learn about the research at Oryol. But I guess Natasha's opinion of me was that I did not show sufficient sophistication to cause this suspicion.

As I was driven home, I thought about Natasha and our new relationship and whether I should reveal it to my CIA handlers. I concluded that I didn't have a choice, since they were probably monitoring my activities, and not telling them would raise loyalty and trust concerns.

In the back of my mind, I also thought that if Natasha could get more involved in the Pharmascent research, maybe she could take over my role in Moscow, allowing me to return to the States and expand Pharmascent there while I resumed my research at Empire State University medical center. But it was probably premature to discuss such a scenario with my CIA contacts. I knew they had a bias against Natasha getting involved with Pharmascent. And I doubted that Pharmascent was a long-time opportunity for her, certainly not reason enough to leave her government position and career.

12.

“HELLO, MILT. NICE to hear from you,” Simon began after being connected to the airport phone I used, incredibly early in the morning in Toronto.

“Yes, I am glad to talk with you. I don’t want to cause you to violate any confidentiality you may have regarding Marie with The Office,” I said, “but I want to inform you that I will soon arrive in the Caribbean.”

Simon did not respond immediately, but then said, “I understand your decision, Milt, but be very careful because everyone is concerned that her present location and new identity not be discovered. We know that the Hezbollah has a directive out to trace her, and even a reward for her capture or assassination. But we do not know if they are acting alone or with a foreign government.”

I trusted Simon not to attempt through the Mossad to either move Marie from her residence in St. Martin or interfere with my trip. In fact, if my travel there increased Marie’s risk, then perhaps it would be better for the Mossad to know of my trip, but not to interfere. I guessed Simon would make the right decision.

*

IT WAS A long flight, arriving in St. Martin’s Princess Juliana airport at 2:45 p.m. local time, just a few minutes ahead of schedule. I read during most of the trip, except for about an hour when I think I dozed off while watching a movie. I did notice a large man with a bald head, and otherwise very typically dressed as a tourist, passing my seat twice during the flight, glancing at and around me to assess who was sitting in my vicinity.

Could this be a Mossad tail, and how could they know I was on this flight? So much for my circuitous route! Maybe they were involved with the postcards received. Or maybe the Hezbollah has been following me?

Princess Juliana airport in St. Martin was small, noisy, but clean, and when I went outside to find a taxi, the weather was quite sunny and hot. I gave the taxi driver directions to the small hotel on Simpson Bay, near the Coco Beach Club, and it took him about twenty-five minutes of winding through the traffic on a double-lane road before we got there. I didn't check if the passenger I noticed on the flight was behind me in a cab, but I planned to watch the hotel front after I checked in to see if he also arrived there. I also assumed that The Office may have agents already at the hotel protecting Marie.

The receptionist located my reservation, and I was offered a rum cocktail with pineapple while I waited to be shown to my room. A few minutes later, a woman with short blonde hair wearing a typical island dress, sandals, and straw hat came out to greet me. It was Marie, but she looked so different, with a dark tan on her face, arms, and legs! Even her eyes were a different color.

She greeted me formally in the lobby, shaking my hand, not showing any recognition. She introduced herself as 'Lucy' and said she would escort me to my room. She appeared to be the only Caucasian among the native Caribbean staff.

The hotel was quite small, maybe fifteen rooms on two floors, but with a beautiful view of Simpson Bay, where many boats and yachts were docked. Just as the door to my room closed, Marie threw her arms around me and kissed me passionately, pulling my clothes off and pushing me over to the bed. "We'll talk later," Marie whispered as she took off her clothes and pulled me on top of her.

I had not had sex with Marie since before she left Moscow for Tel Aviv, about three months ago. She looked a little more curvaceous

than I recall from being with her in Moscow; maybe she enjoys the Caribbean food.

Afterward, we lay on the bed talking quietly, caressing each other. “I missed you so much that I violated all of the Mossad rules by contacting you so we could meet in person,” said Marie. “They are very angry, and I expect that I will be discharged from The Office, but I knew I had to retire either temporarily or permanently.”

It was wonderful having Marie in my arms again, but I also kept thinking about Natasha, with whom I was also involved and had strong feelings of affection and passion. I wondered, as I had her in my arms, whether I could ever be monogamous.

“So, I guess our being together is now unlikely,” I said, realizing, even as I said it, that I was being dishonest, having just left Natasha. Besides, I had no desire to move to Israel or anywhere else with Marie, even if that were possible, which it wasn’t if indeed, she disappeared. It was a shock when I first learned that she was a special Mossad agent, one of their expert assassins, which I could not imagine for this gentle and loving woman.

I guess I never knew her well.

“We had a wonderful time together,” she said, smiling at me tenderly, “and I will miss you. But maybe you can come visit me in Israel sometime if the Mossad thinks it’s possible?”

“We both know that’s unlikely,” I said. “You need to hide and take on a new identity, and it would be risky for me to show up, especially since we don’t know if the Russian GRU considers me to be a foreign agent and what relationship they may have with Hezbollah. If the Hezbollah is, in some way, implicated with the Iranians who are focusing also on the research in Oryol, we may both be exposed further.”

“I hope it’s enough to have a few Mossad agents now at the hotel,” said Marie. “They have been guarding over me since I advised

The Office that I thought you were planning to come here. Their leader, Moshe, is very experienced and, in fact, worked with me in the past in France.”

So much for thinking my secret trip here was secret. And Simon never said a word about this! I just hoped the Mossad didn't share this with my CIA handler, Brad. I probably didn't have to turn off the GPS tracking on my cell phone if the CIA knew of my whereabouts anyway.

She turned to me. “So, you can only stay three days?” she asked.

“Actually, I have to leave the day after tomorrow, taking a United flight in the early afternoon to Newark airport, or if I can avoid returning to New York, I will need to fly to Moscow.”

“My God, this is so short!” said Marie. “I wanted to show you my little paradise in the Caribbean! I was planning to rent a boat and crew to take us on a cruise tomorrow, do some snorkeling off Saba Island, and then have a nice sunset dinner at one of St Martin's best Italian restaurants. Would you like to go for a swim this afternoon?”

“Remember, I'm supposed to be in New York, or returning to Moscow” I said. “I can't suddenly appear with a sunburn.”

“I have plenty of sunscreen!” she said, as she looked at my pale body.

*

SHE LEFT ME alone to unpack and relax for an hour before picking me up for the drive to the small beach on Simpson Bay. I wondered if this and her other planned outings were wise, since we would be very vulnerable on a beach or out in a small boat. When Marie came back, I asked her about our security for the next couple of days.

“Moshe and his colleagues will be watching us during your entire stay here,” she said, “and we hope this will be enough protection should Hezbollah really be tracking you to find me. If nothing

happens, then we can be relieved that the Hezbollah may not be aware of my presence here, and you will also then not be connected to the Mossad assassin of their former leader.

“But we should carry our passports, all of them, with us all the time in case we both have to disappear quickly. Moshe has a plan for this, which I will tell you about when we are on the beach.”

Marie drove us in her small Toyota to Cupecoy beach, which I was glad to see had very few other people on it. When we selected a spot for our towels, I noticed that most of the other bathers were nude. “I’m not going to take off my swimsuit,” I said. “I’m too modest.” Marie just smiled as she removed her bikini top. Her yellow bikini fit well and emphasized her tan skin and attractive body. She had gained some weight in the time we’d been apart – she had fuller breasts. I didn’t want to comment, since she could be very sensitive about her appearance. It was already about three months since she disappeared to St. Martin.

In a little while, as we were splashing each other in the beautiful clear water, it suddenly struck me how incongruous this whole scene was. Here we were in paradise, and I was splashing water on a beautiful assassin. “Why didn’t you tell me about your role with the Mossad assassination team?” I asked, clearly showing my disappointment with being betrayed by her.

“Milt, it is not something I was proud of or needed to share with you. I told you I was recruited and trained by the Mossad, and that was true enough. But it was not everything. I became a member of an elite group of the Metsada, called ‘*Kidon*,’ specializing in assassination. I had the appearance and multilingual assets that allowed me to penetrate Muslim groups, and the Mossad determined that I would be good at this after seeing how I could use guns and knives in combat.

“This became my major job, and I performed well as a member of the team tasked with taking out a dangerous Hezbollah leader. The team believed that having a female involved was an asset, and I had the training that resulted in my being recruited for this.

“It was also done in France, which made me an important player because of also being French. I don’t regret this; it was my job and important for the protection and defense of our biblical nation.”

“But it will result in our separation, Marie,” I said, “if that’s your real name.’

“It is one of my names, Milt, and it will have to do for the time being. I will miss you dearly, since I know I love you. But life is not always ‘boy meets girl, and they live happily ever after.’ We live in a dangerous world. I am a product of the Jewish diaspora and a proud Zionist devoted to Israel while also living and working in France, which has been both a friend and critic of Israel. France is populated today with many Muslims who are anti-Israel and anti-Jews, threatening Jews and other democratic institutions in France and elsewhere in the world. Therefore, we cannot just watch from a distance and remain passive. We cannot allow a return of anti-Semitism that threatens our people and the nation of our birthright, which is an oasis in a very hostile Arab world.”

Such a speech.

It was clear that Marie was a devoted Zionist and was willing to sacrifice herself for the protection of her homeland and people. I admired her for it, but not her committing murder for this cause. “Have you assassinated many enemy agents?” I asked.

“You know I cannot get specific and divulge our activities,” she said. “But let’s just say that I have done this more than once. And because of my French background, I am used often in France and neighboring countries.”

This all amazed me and proved once again that it was easy for someone really trained in espionage to hide her true personality and character. She apparently read my mind.

“But while we are here together, we will be regular tourists enjoying this paradise, sunning on the beach, snorkeling in the ocean, and enjoying the evening sunset and dinner together,” she said. “But always, Moshe and his associates will be protecting us, hopefully successfully. This will determine if we are clear or if Hezbollah has tracked me here through you and is preparing to attack.

“Moshe and his associates are very resourceful,” she continued. “They will work with the local authorities to review all passengers from Paris and Amsterdam who arrived during the past few days, as well as those on your flight and any after it. Moshe has an Interpol identification, so I am sure the local St. Martin police will not interfere and will cooperate. He will tell them that he is officially here to trace a French ring of drug smugglers. Drug smuggling is a big problem here, so he will get full cooperation from the St. Martin and Dutch immigration and drug police.”

“Do you carry a gun?” I asked.

“I do have a .22-caliber Baretta that is often, but not always, with me, like I had when I was in Moscow with you. It is sometimes exceedingly difficult to carry this when I wear dresses or other tight clothing that are not suitable for carrying a weapon, although I have carried the gun on my inside left thigh when wearing a wide dress or skirt.”

“And you did this while we were out together?”

“Of course,” she said, smiling, “and you did not know the difference. I removed it when I knew we would be alone, and sometimes I kept my revolver in my handbag — as you well know after discovering it in Moscow.”

We both laughed. “I guess I’m not much of a spy myself,” I said.

“No one expects you to be other than a medical scientist, and that is your unique advantage and cover in this espionage.”

“Let’s hope so,” I said. “I still find it hard to believe that the woman I’ve been so intimate with has been an assassin for the Mossad, someone employed to kill people.”

“I am sorry to have misled you, Milt, but my feelings for you were always authentic, which was not the mission but just happened. I did my best to always protect you. But I also understand that you have replaced me with a Russian government administrator.” She smirked at having delivered that jab so deftly.

Like a true assassin.

“Natasha and I are good friends and work well together,” I said, embarrassed.

“Well,” she said, softer now, “since I cannot spend more time with you, I understand that this is perhaps best. You are a bright, capable, and sometimes naïve male.”

“Naïve?”

“Not in a bad way,” she said. “But sometimes you are in need of some management, as only a woman can provide.”

At this point, I decided that my best course was to change the subject. “I realize that the boat trip and snorkeling are to set a trap for any Hezbollah agents following us,” I said, “but isn’t it inviting more risk than we should take?”

“Moshe and his crew will have at least one other boat following us,” said Marie, “and probably also a helicopter tracking us from above. But I don’t know all the arrangements yet. Don’t look now, but Moshe and another agent are watching us from the beach.”

A moment or two later, I nonchalantly positioned myself so that I had a view toward the shore. Moshe and an associate were sitting

on a blanket about thirty yards away, scanning the ocean and surroundings through binoculars. I noticed that their viewing of the beach always returned to the nude women; they were quite normal Israelis. They wore shorts and untucked beach shirts, and I was comforted by the thought of the weapons those shirts were hiding.

Marie and I dove into the surf for a short swim, which I'm sure worried Moshe. But we didn't stay out there long. Marie took my hand and led me toward the beach. "We need to change for dinner," she said. "I made reservations at 6 p.m. at Mario's Bistro in Cupecoy Bay. The restaurant is usually full, but later. So, if we are being followed, it will be more obvious at an early dinner."



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