

Second Draft

Chapter Two

George walked through the tatty swing doors of the Vipers Nest, the local pub on the edge of Nottingham where all the old vets met every week on Thursday. They had been doing this for the last 15 years but essentially, all their lives since they were just kids this was the place, they all knew that they would find each other eventually at The Nest'. The familiar smell of beer, a waft of sweet-smelling cigarette smoke coming in from the open doors where all the smokers huddled in every weather. George missed smoking, he loved to smoke, he imagined it now, breathing in the slightly harsh smoke filling his lungs and a lovely nicotine hit, then breathing it out through his mouth making smoke rings that evaporated into the damp English air. His thoughts were interrupted just as he was about to start thinking about the girl....

'Georgie, we gotcha a pint of Best, get yerself over here!' Jackson, his oldest and most vocal old mate shouted over the ambient noise of the pub. George's friends; Jackson, Johnny and Bob were all sitting at their usual table at The Nest'. Johnny was busy fiddling with his tablet and Jackson and Bob were having a rather excitable debate about the quality of the beer today. 'Hey Georgie, heard you had a turn, wasn't sure you'd make it!' Bob looked over concerned, Bob was a hypochondriac and always imagined the worst. Bob always looked pale and drawn and his balding head with little tufts of grey hair that stuck out over his ears, gave him a slightly comic appearance, a bit like an ancient sad clown. 'No, I am totally fine, has Janice been talking to your Shelia again?' (Shelia was Bob's daughter, Janice and Shelia saw each other at least twice a week and shared their woes about their ageing Father's) 'I just had some bad medicine, fit as fiddle I am!' George puffed up his chest and took a gulp of his warm beer. Attention was suddenly diverted as a rather worse-for-wear hen party crashed into the pub and all eyes in the pub turned to the now shabbily dressed older women, who were asking for pints and shots at the bar. The pub owner Cyrill raised an eyebrow and then served them and quietly manoeuvred them to 'the backroom' a space designed for this so as to not disturb the regulars.

Once it had quietened down, George took his chance, 'So, I have a mission and I need all of your help.'A mission of great secrecy, a mission that will change our lives!' George looked up at his mates, Bob just looked worried; 'Are you sure you are well?' 'Yes, yes, better than well, I know what we need to do now.' George and his three friends always said they were vets but really they were too young to have served in the Second World War, their fathers had all served, and as it turned out they had all met during the Cold War on a mission in Japan, which had ended in Canada. This was 1968, Japan was an important economic ally, the young lads as they were then had been recruited for their specialist skills and this was a very early mission which involved obtaining information on economic activity.

George took a deep breath, he knew the next word he said would change everything; '*Mika*', there was a collective gasp and then stunned silence at the table. The lads had vowed never to speak this name or anything to do with it again. 'We have to make it right'. The lads still stunned had gone pale, and were staring at him and then at the table, Bob was the first to speak; 'We can't 'make it right!' and then Johnny backed him up; 'We let that girl be captured, she is gone....gone..', George looked at each man in turn and then said with a

passion very unGeorge like; 'She is *not* gone and we have to find her *and* the pelican case' Jackson looked at him and said; 'Ok George I think that the medicine has really had a bad effect on you, let's take you home' George banged his fists on the table, a silence fell over the pub, when the noise resumed, George stage whispered; 'I am NOT Insane' after a pause he said in a normal voice; 'I know it sounds insane but I saw her in a ...a...a vision, she was older but it was her and then I remembered the Pelican case.' The pelican case was where they had hidden all the intel they had collected. They had buried it near a mountain in British Columbia, this is after Mika was captured by possibly the Russians, but they had never found out for sure, and they had all escaped Canada as quickly as possible by different routes and with different names. They were all totally blown.

Mika was a beautiful Japanese woman only just 20 and working in the Canadian Embassy in Japan, she was a sassy young thing who wanted to help and agreed to honeytrap a Hungarian man named Boldizar, who worked for Russian intelligence in finance, Mika was collecting intel about financial activity. Mika became part of their gang and they met in secret in the backstreets of Toyko in dive bars and street cafes. They all became close and all of them were in love with Mika.