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This novel is written exclusively for Right Truth Blog ([www.righttruth.typepad.com](http://www.righttruth.typepad.com)) and its readers.

In loving memory of my precious  
Sara (7/25/1951 to 12/13/2003) who always  
encouraged me to write from the heart and was  
at once both my greatest critic and my most  
loyal fan.

**In love with you always!**

*And...*

To the greatest dad anyone like me could ever  
have hoped for: Joseph Stanley Godlewski  
(11/29/1918 to 04/14/2008).

**You gave me life. Thank you!**

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## Chapter Sixty-Nine

Colonel Shuliakovskii stared in silence at the television set that sat on the much-abused steel desk in the corner. It was the first time that the images from distant Washington were aired, but the disaster played extensively in his mind for decades. Sometimes they were of a different location, but the outcome pretty much remained the same. A Russian aircraft bearing a pilfered biological strain going down inside of a populated area. And a very important foreign city at that.

VOLNA operations were nothing new for the department. Whenever one of their overseas agents purchased or stole a clandestine biological specimen, they would quickly transfer the cargo to a Russian intelligence agent moonlighting as a commercial airline pilot and he or she would deliver the package to Moscow secreted amongst their personal belongings.

Often, the packages containing the unknown specimen were properly packaged as a safeguard against release. At other times, highly toxic substances were delivered via standard Thermos bottles or contained within nothing more secure than a brown paper lunch bag. The colonel fought for professionalism and vast improvements were made, yet there still lingered the unforeseen, the hurried, and the green.

Aviation disasters, Shuliakovskii knew, were notoriously messy. Even in the best of circumstances, there would be wreckage, bodies, and fire – any one of which could compound the disruption of the biological agent. Then there was the simple fact that the American authorities would not know that the Russian aircraft contained any such threat. Plagued with an unforeseen disaster, the local authorities would quickly launch an emergency incident response tailored towards extinguishing expected fires and rescuing trapped and injured persons. After

the scene settled, corpse recovery would take place along with accident investigative functions.

Although the aircraft in question belonged to a Russian airline, the U.S. authorities would be in charge of the investigation as it occurred upon American soil. Naturally, the colonel knew, his country would offer all the assistance and cooperation diplomacy could muster. Yet, how much should the department admit?

There was simply no way that Moscow could tell the Americans that one of their agents may have stolen a very deadly substance, placed it into an otherwise innocuous package – probably one that would imitate ninety-percent of the wreckage strewn throughout the crash scene – and contaminated not only one of their most important cities but their nation’s very capital!

Such things nations do not even do to their worst of enemies but Tsar-esque Moscow, Shuliakovskii knew, cared very little for anybody.

“What orders shall I give?” questioned Lieutenant Efimov, almost to himself as he stood nervously to the side of the colonel.

Shuliakovskii remained silent; his gaze glued to the archaic television set that hummed softly in the distance, shaking his head as if he could not comprehend such a broadcast.

“Sir?”

The colonel wiped his brow, crunching the folds of his forehead back against the scalp. “Do we know what the package was?”

“No, sir. The communiqué was simply for us to deliver the package to Doctor Kadyrov at Kakhovka. Presumably it was a routine operation.”

The colonel snarled at the young officer. “Routine? In our line of work?” He glanced back at the television set, wincing over images of blood-soaked passengers being carried into waiting ambulances. “All we needed was an international incident to give that dilettante president of theirs some breathing room. Now that debutante bastard will set up another dozen

committees to do God knows what other than to hamper our activities.”

“Perhaps the package was destroyed?” questioned Efimov hopefully.

“Listen, son.” Shuliakovskii cast another of his trademarked, didactic glances at his young officer. “We assume; we die. Intelligence is all about knowing the facts and perceiving the truth. The Americans may have the luxury of acting like children, of ‘turning the other cheek’ as the weak often do, but not us.

“Yes, we can walk right up to their Speaker of the House and slap them silly and the president would be on the television the very next day laying blame upon his own people. Ours is a very *deadly* business,” The Colonel gestured towards the television to make his point. “That plane could have just as easily crashed into the Kremlin or Mountain University. People will die from sloppiness and jets simply do not fall out of the sky on their own accord.”

Shuliakovskii released his grip on his forehead and paced quickly and authoritatively around the room, ignoring the junior officer frantically attempting to avoid collision with his superior.

“We go into damage control,” exclaimed the colonel. “We admit nothing, we say nothing. As far as we’re concerned, it was a microburst or structural failure. Just in case, however, put a team together that can evidence the crash scene to suggest terrorism. We’ll simply do what the Americans did in reverse back in New York during November of 2001.”

The colonel froze in his steps, spiraling around to catch the young lieutenant with his piercing gaze. “And we have a very important prisoner who can serve as a scapegoat.”