

## Truce

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# Truce

by [nanuk\\_dain](#)

## Summary

Jason Bourne alone was already incredibly dangerous. Jason Bourne and Kirill working together were downright deadly.

## Notes

This is basically a rewrite of the Bourne Ultimatum under the premise that Kirill survived and sided with Bourne to get rid of his employers who now want to see him dead, too. It might be helpful to have seen the movie, since I'm more writing in moments than actually retelling all the twists and turns of the plot.

The beautiful series banner was made by my beloved Megan Moonlight!



It hurt. Everything hurt, his skin, his head, every single bone in his body, just everything. Breathing was pure torture. But the worst was not physical pain, it was this question in his mind, this moment he couldn't forget, that had made his world crumble down and lose all the sense there had ever been to it.

Jason Bourne. Why hadn't he taken that final shot?

Kirill clenched his teeth and forced himself to keep walking even though he wasn't even sure the bones of his legs were intact. He couldn't tell, he felt only intense pain and a confusion that went so deep it touched something in him that had been dead for ages. He didn't want this, didn't want that question in his mind, repeating over and over again until he was convinced he heard it for real, said out aloud. He didn't want this image in his head, burned into his memory, this image of Bourne's eyes locked with his, slowly lowering his gun, turning, walking away.

Leaving him alive.

Kirill growled and limped on. He should have been dead. He had no right to be alive. His mission failed, twice even, and he had lost the fight. Bourne should have killed him, just like it was the rule within their world. Yet he hadn't fired the shot. It shook Kirill's world, his understanding of it, his perception of the universe. This wasn't right. This wasn't how things were supposed to be.

He had to find that man. He had to know why he hadn't pulled the trigger. He had to understand so that his world could regain balance.

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Getting out of Russia was easy once he'd shaken his tail and had let enough time pass to be forgotten. At least enough that nobody turned at the sight of his face any more. Passing by Irena Neski had been one of the hardest things Jason had ever done, and it had left him feeling hollow and wounded in an entirely different way from his physical injuries, but he'd known he had to do it.

It was a relief to leave Russia behind. Jason walked through the airport after the plane had landed, all the while scanning the crowd and the building just like it was implanted in his very being. He was still sore, the gun shot wound in his shoulder pulsed with dull pain and he still felt as if a truck had run him over. He knew he had to lay low for a while, a few weeks

maybe, so he could heal enough that he was mobile again and was able to defend himself. Munich was just the perfect place to disappear for some time, play an American tourist, especially since it was October and the city was rife with American tourists. He couldn't have timed it better.

The dreams were worse than before. They were different, not shreds of the memories he'd lost, but reruns of the worst moments of Boa, of Berlin, of Moscow. Of the tunnel, of the moment the car had crashed against the pillar, of those eyes that had been so utterly calm when he'd pointed his gun at the man who'd killed Marie. Of the sudden knowledge that he couldn't kill the man, that Marie wouldn't have wanted him to enter the spiral of revenge for her sake. Had she been there, she would have put her hand on his arm and make him lower the gun. It was as if he'd felt her touch at that moment and he had been unable not to follow her silent request. He just didn't understand why he kept dreaming about this moment, dreaming about those eyes, about the face of a man he should hate.

Sometimes when he woke, Jason wondered if the man had died in the tunnel after he'd left. Most likely he had; the crash had been terrible and the impact must have broken every bond in his body. And if that hadn't done it, his employer would have the job finished. Jason was well aware that an assassin who'd failed his mission twice was about to be eliminated on sight. That was the rule of their world.

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It took him three weeks until he was able to walk without keeling over. Kirill had no idea how he'd made it to the hospital. He remembered that he'd just pressed a very healthy amount of money into the doctor's hand and had told him to check him in as Mikhail Koslov who'd been beaten up by a gang of youngsters. The doctor hadn't hesitated for a moment, he'd had dealings with Kirill twice before and knew he was a well paying customer who was quiet and made no trouble, so there was little risk in this for the doctor. Greed made good allies, and Kirill knew that.

Just as he knew that the last place the FSB were going to look for him was a public hospital. He had no illusions that there was a standing kill order on his head and that the FSB would do anything to see him dead. He knew too much to be left alive. But they weren't looking for a guy who'd been beaten up and was stationed in hospital, no, they would expect him to go into hiding. Well, he had gone into hiding, he was just hiding in plain sight, a strategy he'd found to work fantastically most of the times. People only saw what they wanted to see.

It was only four days after his arrival that he regained consciousness, groggy and hurting and his memories foggy. When the doctor talked to him about the treatment he'd been given, Kirill realised that his injuries had been far more serious than he'd thought. There had been a surgery for his right leg which had taken damage in the crash and the doctor hesitated a split second before telling him that he would never be able to walk without limp again. That it would be a miracle if he was even able to walk without a cane.

Kirill could feel the thick bandage around his head and heard the doctor say something about a very severe trauma and another surgery that had been necessary, but he didn't grasp all the doctor said and then he was back in the darkness without being able to stop it. The last thing he saw was the face of a man behind the barrel of a gun that was pointed at Kirill, his eyes

flickering with various emotions before he lowered the weapon and walked away. He couldn't place the memory, but the confusion and the anger it left in its wake didn't ease off even after he woke the next time.

It was this picture that made him grit his teeth and get through every painful moment of relearning to use his leg. He had to find Jason Bourne and in order to do that, he had to be able to walk.

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It was after about five weeks that Jason decided that he had to find Marie's brother, had to let him know what had happened. Had to apologize for something that had been bound to happen, that he was actually surprised hadn't happened sooner. Two years of relative peace had been a very long period of grace considering his background. Of course they had moved around again and again, never remaining too long in one place, but he had been lucky to have a partner like Marie who hadn't minded moving around, who actually had an inner urge to leave a place after a while. They had been a perfect fit, Marie and him. He owed it to her to let her brother know what really had happened. She would have wanted him to know.

So he left for Paris.

Jason had always thought he was very attentive and tuned to unusual details that warned him of possible danger. He'd also thought there wasn't any chance for somebody to trail him without him noticing. He decided that he had to rethink his assessment of his abilities when he found himself surprised – actually *surprised* – by a man in the hallway of the house where Marie's brother lived. He had only just left the flat when he felt the muzzle of a gun pressed against his temple. It took him only a split second to recognise the man as the Russian assassin who had killed Marie, even though his appearance had changed, his clothes were slightly rumpled and his hair had grown out of the military cut he'd had the last time Jason had seen him. His face seemed to be expressionless at the first glance, but his eyes were intense and his whole posture radiated tension. It was only after a moment that Jason noticed the tremors in the man's right leg as if it took him an enormous effort to stand on it. Jason had to admit that he was amazed the man was standing at all, he'd figured he'd long since died of either his injuries or by the hands of another assassin.

“What do you want?” Jason asked when the Russian hadn't said a word, hadn't even moved for a whole minute, only stared in his eyes with this intense gaze as if he was trying to figure something out. It was only then that Jason realised that he didn't even know the man's name. “Do you want to finish the job?”

The man still didn't move, but he frowned. “Why?”

The Russian's voice was darker than he had expected, and it was rough with something that could be pain as well as emotion. Jason let his gaze take in the man in front of him. He looked somehow different, even though Bourne couldn't put his finger on what it was. He was quite sure now, though, that the man wasn't here on a mission. The small signs told him that. Whatever this was, it was personal.

“Why what?” Jason asked carefully, not at all certain what to expect from the Russian assassin. There was an air of wildness about him, an unsettled energy that hadn't been there before. He had been calm, certain, precise, efficient. Those were not words Jason would use to describe him now, even though the gun didn't waver once.

“Why did you not pull the trigger?” The accent became even more pronounced when the Russian elaborated his question, his eyes narrowing, but to Jason it appeared to be more out of confusion than threat.

He frowned. “Is that what you're here for?”

“Answer.” The man replied, his voice low, but definitely threatening now, and the gun still aimed steadily at Jason's head. If he decided to fire, a head shot had the highest possibility of being fatal. The man knew what he was doing, but then, Jason had known that ever since their chase in Moscow. And he didn't doubt that the Russian would shoot him, not caring the least about the semi-public location of the hallway.

“You wouldn't understand.” Jason replied after a moment. He didn't entirely understand himself, so how was he supposed to explain to somebody else?

“Try me.” The voice was still rough, as if it hadn't been used a lot lately, and if Jason's guess was correct, then the man had probably spent most of the past six weeks somewhere in medical care. He didn't look too good, either.

Still, Jason wasn't certain that he could move faster than the assassin could pull the trigger, so he hesitated, wondering if he should reply, play for time. “Somebody once told me that I always had a choice.”

The frown deepened and the gun didn't move. Jason steadily held the intense gaze that seemed to try to take him apart, assess if he had said the truth. There was confusion, incomprehension, anger even, that passed through the green eyes, the dark expression never leaving the pale face.

“I am hunted, now.” the assassin stated. “The people who want *me* dead work with the people who want *you* dead.”

Jason frowned. “What are you trying to say?”

“We have the same interests. We work together until the threat is eliminated, then we can go separate ways without anybody ordering our deaths.” The man sounded sincere, if guarded. He lowered his gun, but didn't set the safety. His posture was seemingly relaxed, but Jason could see the ready alert underneath the fake casualness.

“Why should I trust you?” Jason asked suspiciously and wondered if it wasn't best to disappear as quickly as possible. Now that the gun wasn't levelled at his head any more, he was quite certain he was in a superior position to the assassin. And there was just something about the Russian that raised his hackles.

“I did not shoot you when I could have. And I do not ask you to trust me.” The man snorted. “You would be stupid if you did.”

Jason only raised an eyebrow. At least the man was honest.

“I offer you truce until we achieve to neutralise the people who pose a threat to both of us.” The Russian shrugged. “As I said, call it an interest we have in common.”

Jason remained still and watched the other man for a long moment. The Russian didn't flinch, didn't waver, didn't avert his gaze. He was calm again, even though it was different from before. Jason had relied on his instincts ever since he'd woken up on that ship in the Mediterranean Sea and he had learned he could trust them, and right now, as crazy as it seemed, they told him that the Russian wasn't trying to entrap him.

“All right.” Jason nodded slowly, eyes still fixed on the assassin. “Truce until we have eliminated the threat.”

“*Da.*” The Russian said and held out his hand. Jason hesitated for a moment, then he took it and sealed the deal. It was strange to shake hands with the man who had killed Marie, and for a moment, Jason had to fight down the sudden anger that washed over him.

“I am Kirill.” The Russian offered once they'd stepped back and Jason felt an inexplicable certainty that the man had just given him his real name. It took him by surprise because it was something an assassin didn't do, give his real name. Real names were dangerous.

“Jason Bourne.” He replied and smirked, a tense edge to it. “But you certainly knew that already.”

The Russian held his gaze and nodded. “*Da.*”

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That was actually all Kirill knew about this man. His name and his location had been everything he'd been given for the contract, more information hadn't been necessary. He didn't want to know about his marks but what he had to know to find and eliminate them, he actually didn't care about knowing anything else. This was the first time he did. Jason Bourne was a riddle to him, a closed book. Bourne didn't stick to the rules of their world, didn't behave as he was supposed to, didn't react as expected. It confused Kirill and made him wary around the man, yet he couldn't let go until he knew – no, *understood* – why the American hadn't pulled the trigger.

It took Kirill every ounce of discipline to control the shaking of his leg and to not let the pain show that coursed through his whole right side, from his foot to his shoulder. He was aware that the American would see the faint tremor in his leg – he was trained to observe such details after all – and he had to be good if he had managed to survive until now. But that was all Kirill was ready to give, and only because he couldn't suppress it.

“Well, I was about to leave Paris.” the American said after a moment of uncomfortable silence. “Feel free to join me.”

Kirill just inclined his head and set the safety of his gun before putting it away.

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When they were in the train for London some hours later, the third part of the reportage 'Who is Jason Bourne?' had left the printing press. Kirill handed Jason the page of the newspaper without a word, only his raised eyebrow indicated that he had already skimmed the article. Jason leaned back into the seat and began to read. When he saw the picture of Marie smiling at him from the bottom of the page, he was overwhelmed by pain, grief and anger and for a moment, he had to force himself not to lash out at the Russian, who was sitting quietly next to him with another part of the paper in his hand.

Ever since their truce had started, Jason couldn't help the prickling of the skin of his neck whenever he turned his back towards the Russian. Actually, his skin prickled the whole time he was around the man, and his senses were tuned to his every movement, always expecting an attack of some kind. Nothing had happened yet, but that hadn't made him relax, it had only raised the tension even higher.

"Simon Ross." Jason murmured when he'd finished reading, a frown on his face.

Kirill looked up from his paper, one eyebrow raised. "After writing this, he will be under surveillance."

Jason nodded. He shared that opinion. It would be a surprise if the CIA hadn't taken him in yet. "Well, let's call him and arrange for a meeting."

The Russian nodded, comprehending. "Find out who his source is."

Jason pulled out his current mobile. "Exactly."

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Waterloo Station was crowded. It was the perfect time to get in contact with the journalist, and Kirill knew that was the reason Bourne had chosen this precise time and this exact location for the meeting. He would have done the same.

"We split up. I will trace you and watch your back." Kirill said quietly while they left the platform where their train had stopped, never looking at the other man. "I have your number. I will find you afterwards."

He saw the American give an almost unnoticeable nod and without another word, Kirill slid away into the crowd. He was just as aware of the cameras as Bourne was and he knew it was important that there was no evidence on any tape that they knew each other. So he made his way through the station, walking slowly and emphasizing his limp to provide a reason for it. He kept his eyes on the Bourne, watching him buy a phone at a vendor stall and when the American slipped it into the journalist's pocket, the chase began.

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There had to be something common to the training of black op agents all over the world, it was the only explanation Jason had for the flawless way he and Kirill worked together. There was no need for many words, they just seemed to know what the other would do. It was downright eerie. They had never even talked to each other before their meeting in Paris this morning, yet from the very first moment on, they had acted in such perfect sync that it almost crept Jason out. He wasn't used to working with somebody, ever since the loss of his memories he had basically worked alone, and he had dreaded to have to consider another person in his actions.

But it hadn't posed any problems. What made it easier was that he didn't worry about Kirill – first of all, the man wasn't somebody he cared about, and second, he knew perfectly well that Kirill was more than capable of taking care of himself – and on top of that the Russian seemed to work on very similar patterns to his own which made them a perfect team. Still, it felt strange to know there was somebody watching him, tracking his every movement, somebody who was actually watching his back. He felt Kirill's eyes on him, even though he had no idea how that was possible or how the Russian managed to always stay within sight of him in this crowded building, especially considering that his injured leg had to affect him. Yet Jason just knew that Kirill had never lost him during the whole operation and he was certain that the Russian had unobtrusively taken out more than one of the agents who'd tracked Ross.

It made his skin prickle even more to realise just how good the Russian was.

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Kirill was certain that the aim of the whole operation was to take out that journalist, so while tracking Bourne, he scanned the station to decide where he would take up position to eliminate a person within this crowded building. It took all his attention to keep Bourne in his sight and all the while analyse the area. A moment after he had watched Bourne disappear in a staff stairway, he spotted the perfect place.

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Jason left the stairway and walked through the crowd, scanning the area. Something was off, but he couldn't put his finger on what it was. His phone vibrated and he recognised Kirill's number and opened the text while telling Ross to stay inside the staircase.

*Sniper behind turning add screen.*

Bourne looked up and saw the reflection of a scope at the same time as Ross declared anxiously over the line that there was somebody coming and he could make it towards the entrance. "I'm going for it!"

Jason rushed forwards. "No!"

It was too late.

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Kirill had been on the way to the access point to the space behind the turning commercial screen when he heard the screams and the commotion that told him the shot had already been fired. He cursed through his teeth and forced his right leg to move faster. He just arrived at the entrance to the staircase to see a man disappear around the corner and instinct told him that this was the shooter, so he turned on the spot and hurried after him. He ran as fast as his leg could carry him, down several flights of stairs, outside, down into the Underground. He kept his eyes on the back of the man until he disappeared for a moment at the corner to the platforms. Kirill had to stop for a second and looked both ways, then he turned right. There were people exiting the tube that had just arrived and gritted his teeth to keep down another curse while he fought his way through the masses of people.

He arrived at the train just in time to see the doors closing in front of him, and he spotted the man he had been chasing inside the wagon as the train began moving.

He cursed again.

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“What have you got there?” Bourne heard an accented voice ask which had become familiar to him even after only a day. How the former FSB agent had managed to find him in the internet café was a mystery to him, but then, the man had shown considerable tracking talent ever since their first encounter in Goa.

“His notebook.” Jason didn't turn towards Kirill, he just kept leafing through the pages full of hand-scribbled notes with a frown on his face.

“Anything of interest?”

Jason skimmed another page and stopped at the words 'Sewell and Marbury'. They were underlined and written in capitals with notes about drugs and hypnosis scribbled down beneath. He googled the name and came across an entry of a 'Global Markets and Investment Banking Group' based in Madrid. “Maybe.”

Kirill leaned over his shoulder to have a look at the screen. “Let us find a train to Madrid, then.”

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Working and travelling with Bourne wasn't half as bad as Kirill had expected. The man was not much of a talker, especially not in public, he was just a quiet presence in the seat next to Kirill. He still didn't understand what had made him offer the American a truce, but in hindsight, he had to admit that it had been a very risky thing to do. He had been even more surprised that Bourne had accepted his offer, he had considered the man as some kind of lone wolf.

They changed trains in Paris and took a night train to Madrid. Kirill didn't sleep next to the American, he just let his mind wander, staring out of the window and wondering how he had ended up siding with his mark. He still didn't really know.

The afternoon in Madrid was rainy and grey. Kirill fell back and watched while Bourne stood in front of the building which the contact address of 'Sewell and Marbury' had given. He let his gaze casually wander over the surroundings, then he informed Bourne over the headset of his mobile, "Police. Two men. Coming towards you from your right."

Bourne gave them a fleeting gaze and left unobtrusively. So it was going to be Plan B: They would return tonight.

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The corridor that led to the meeting cell was no different from the rest of this godforsaken place. The bare concrete walls were cold and oppressive, just as they were intended to be. Yuri Getkov wasn't exactly impressed by it, he had been in the game for too long to react to such subtleties. There were two guards escorting him, one behind and one in front of him. His hands were in cuffs, but that was more for the show than anything else.

The first guard opened the door to the meeting cell and motioned for Getkov to enter while the second released the cuffs. Getkov immediately spotted his assistant, Andrei Nemov, who offered him a cigarette the moment he had entered. Getkov took it and Nemov gave him a light. The door fell shut behind them, the guards remaining outside of the cell.

"Why are you here?"

Nemov sat down on the opposite side of the table, then he reached into the inside pocket of his jacket and pulled out a piece of paper. He put it on the table and pushed it over to Getkov without saying a word.

Getkov leaned over to have a better look. It was a black and white picture, the blurry kind of quality that was typical for surveillance cameras. It showed a crowd, but it was the man in the right corner of the picture that caught his eye.

"Where?"

"London, Sir."

So he was still alive, this failure of an assassin. Why hadn't the FSB taken care of this already? Technically, the man was their problem. Getkov leaned back in the uncomfortable metal chair and frowned at the blurry picture. He might be in prison, but the reach of his arm was still long. And to have the authorities get hold of Kirill to have him testify in the running trial would do irreparable damage. So he would have to take care of this himself.

"Do you have a trail?" Getkov took a deep drag of the cigarette.

"Yes, Sir."

Getkov tapped his finger on the man in the picture. "Send someone good. I want this problem solved once and for all."

"Yes, Sir."

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“Bourne.” There was a firm hand on his shoulder, pulling him back out of the memory, but he still couldn't shake it entirely. “Bourne!”

Jason panted, he felt the floor under his knees and hands, the photo clutched in his hand. When he raised his head, he found Kirill's gaze fixed on him, an expression on the Russian's face that for a moment he was tempted to call worried. “Are you all right?”

Jason fought against the pain in his head, against the fog that clouded his perception. He wondered how long he had been out if he had managed to unsettle Kirill. He felt the hands grab him and pull him off the floor.

“Visitors.” Kirill remarked somewhere close to his ear and Jason heard him take a deep breath. “We have to leave.”

Jason shook off the haze and blinked a few times to clear his head. After a quick look on the screen of the surveillance camera that was pointed at the outside the building, he understood what Kirill meant and his training kicked in immediately. The men had entered the hallway, it was too late to leave.

It was embarrassingly easy to take out the two agent the CIA had sent to the abandoned office. Jason could have done it alone without any real problems, but it was even easier with Kirill in the equation. It became complicated when the camera informed them of another visitor coming up. The woman was obviously not part of a task team, she approached without the slightest caution.

Jason saw Kirill jerk his chin towards the back room, then the Russian disappeared into it and pulled the door ajar. Only a second later, there was the sound of the keys in the door and Jason found himself face to face to Nicky Parsons. She was about the last person he had expected to come across here. Still, she proved to be useful.

When he exited the building with her, he never saw Kirill follow, but he was certain the Russian was right behind him. He could feel his eyes on his skin. It had already become a familiar sensation.

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Kirill had left the building through the back and had arrived in the street just in time to see Bourne and the woman get into a car, then there was police all over the place, screaming at the agents the CIA had sent after them.

It took Kirill only a few seconds to enter and hot-wire a parked Audi, then he was on the trail of the silver Volkswagen that Bourne had got into. He still felt the ghost of Bourne's warmth against his fingers from when he'd pulled the American up, remembered breathing in his scent, a mixture of rain and sweat and something that was simply Bourne. It was a strange sensation that didn't leave him during the hours of driving.

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“We need gas.” Nicky said some hours into the journey to Tarifa where they'd planned on taking the ferry over to Tangier.

“We get out at the next stop and fill up.” Jason replied when saw a sign for a service area pass the window. “We need something to eat something anyway.”

When they stopped at the gas station, Nicky filled up and went to pay. Jason stayed by the car and watched a light silver Audi A6 pull into the place next to him. The driver got out and Jason wasn't too surprised to see that it was Kirill. The Russian began to refuel the car that he must have stolen somewhere. Hot-wiring an Audi wasn't that easy, Bourne knew that from personal experience. The man was quite talented.

“You like big cars, don't you?” Jason remarked quietly and grinned at Kirill who stood on the other side of the Audi.

The Russian didn't look up, didn't show any reaction the camera would have caught, but there was a smirk tugging at his lips. “I may have a thing for them.”

Jason only chuckled and retreated when he saw Nicky come back so they could drive over to the restaurant's parking place.

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Kirill knew his body perfectly. Its limits, its reactions, its strengths and its weaknesses. As a FSB agent, he had been trained to understand and control his body. He had to know it inside out because the success of his missions and his life depended on it. So now, when his gaze was following Bourne and the American woman and he still had Bourne's scent in his nose and felt the goosebumps that had instantly spread over his skin at the sound of Bourne's chuckle, he knew what was happening to him.

But he didn't know how he was supposed to force his body into not reacting to that man. Fear, pain, anger he knew how to control, but this subconscious focussing of his senses on another person was something they hadn't taught him how to deal with. He had never experienced it before, hadn't known it could be so strong.

He frowned and leaned against the stolen Audi while he waited for the fuel tank to fill up. He had always been taught to be honest with himself, because if he wasn't, it could be used against him. 'Acknowledge your weakness and deal with it, before somebody kills you because of it', he remembered his instructor from FSB special ops training repeat over and over again. He had always followed that rule and it had served him well. So he followed it now.

He was attracted to Bourne, he admitted to himself, and if he didn't want the American to use that against him, he had to deal with it accordingly.

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Nicky wondered if she was becoming insane. Or paranoid. Because she had the feeling they were being followed. Well, the CIA *was* looking for them, but that wasn't the kind of

'followed' she meant. It was like there was a shadow that clung to them. Clung to Bourne, and he either didn't notice – which was entirely impossible – or he didn't care. Or, she thought while gazing over the sea, he knew who was trailing them and he was all right with it. Which was entirely strange, especially for Bourne.

Still, she hadn't actually seen their shadow, couldn't say who it was. She was certain, though, that the person was on board with them, because the feeling had intensified ever since they'd boarded the ferry. She looked around, but there was nobody out of the ordinary. She felt an unpleasant shiver run down her back and turned to look at Bourne who was standing next to her.

He didn't seem disturbed at all.

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Out of the corner of his eye, Jason saw Kirill approach, walking down the sidewalk of the Place de France, his steps unhurried and mostly even. Jason was certain it took the Russian some effort to suppress his limp, but he did it well. Without knowing what to look for, there was no way to guess his injury.

Jason wondered why the Russian tried to make contact at all and got his answer once Kirill passed by him, never stopping or slowing his pace. "I have a tail. At the corner behind me, about thirty years, tall, blonde hair. Russian."

The words were just loud enough for Jason to hear, then Kirill had passed him and continued his way down the street as if they didn't know each other. And true enough, there was his tail. Jason fell back a bit, keeping his eyes on Nicky, and at the same time inspecting the man who unobtrusively followed Kirill. He was Russian, Jason agreed on that, which meant that the FSB was coming after their lost agent to get rid of him. The man moved with the trained straightness of a soldier and seemed out of place here in the casual atmosphere of Tangier. His bright blond hair was only adding to attract attention. Jason didn't doubt for a moment that the man was good, though, because if he wasn't, he'd never been sent after Kirill.

This just added to the load of problems they already had. But he couldn't do anything about it right now, because the asset had just taken the phone from Nicky's table and was about to leave. Jason knew he had to trail the man if he wanted to find Daniels before he was killed, and he just had to trust that Kirill could take care of the blond asset himself.

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Kirill didn't quicken his pace, he strode towards the market with the same casualness he had displayed ever since the blond man had begun to trail him. He'd been aware of the man the moment he'd crossed the harbour somewhere behind Bourne and the American woman. The agent had to have known where to find him, and that was disturbing. Kirill suspected that he'd been caught on a surveillance camera somewhere on their journey from Paris to London to Spain, but it wasn't really important where. What counted was that someone who wanted him dead – he figured it was either the FSB or Gretkov – had found him and sent an assassin after him. If he defeated this one, then they would just send another. He suddenly understood

how Bourne must have felt for the past years. Until now, Kirill had always been the hunter. It felt strange to be the prey. It made him uneasy.

He entered the market which was crammed with people and vendor stalls. He smirked. Time to turn the tables and make the hunter become the prey.

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The moment he looked into the asset's eyes, Jason knew their cover was blown. The man knew his face and there was no doubt that the only possible way this could have happened within the past few minutes was that their breach in the CIA network had been discovered. Jason knew the Agency well enough to be aware of the consequences for Nicky and him: elimination. When the asset pressed the button and the bomb in his moped went off, Jason knew the man counted on completing two jobs in one, him and Daniels.

Then he felt the explosion hit him with incredible force.

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Nicky felt the panic rise with every metre she went further. The market was only a shallow illusion of safety, the asset was going to follow her until he had an opportunity to kill her, and the market was going to end somewhere and then he would finish the job. She forced herself not to run, it would attract attention and that wouldn't help her at all. She turned into a side street, tried the doors, and with every one she found locked, her fear mounted to incredible heights. Finally, one door opened, but before she could enter, she felt her arm being grabbed, then she was pulled tight to a man's body and a hand closed over her mouth. She went rigid with fear.

"Be quiet. He's only some doors down the street." The low voice next to her ear was dark and accented. Russian, her analytic mind provided. And he knew about the asset following her. "You will go out back. I take him."

She frowned, surprise penetrating her fear. Who was that man? And why was he offering his help?

"I will release you now. Be quiet and go to the back. Get a new hotel room." He made good of his word and the iron grip around her body eased, the hand over her mouth pulled away. The second she could move, she stepped back to bring some distance between herself and the man. There were bruises on his face, a trickle of blood ran down his temple and he held himself as if he had just come out of a fight. Yet there was an aura of resolution and aggression around him that was a stark contrast to his obviously beaten up condition. It didn't do anything to ease her mind, though.

His gaze was intense and she felt her skin prickle unpleasantly. "We will meet you tonight at the bus terminal."

And suddenly she recognised the feeling and knew that the man was Bourne's shadow.

“Go now.” the man whispered and she heard the sound of footsteps outside. She turned and hurried to the back of the house without looking back.

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Kirill had just managed to eliminate the asset the FSB had sent after him and had planned to return to the Place de France when he saw the American woman who had been with Bourne hurry over the market. It wasn't too difficult to spot the man trailing her, and one look was enough to tell Kirill that the man was a professional killer. Kirill watched only long enough to decide where the woman was most likely to go, then he crossed over the roofs, entered the house and just waited for her. It was fairly easy, and he knew the asset was going to get her in the end if she didn't get some help. He didn't really care about the woman, but he was certain that Bourne would mind if he just left her to the assassin.

So he intercepted her flight, gave her enough information that Bourne could find her again and made sure she left. It was only seconds afterwards that the asset entered the building and Kirill made good use of the moment of surprise and placed a kick into his abdomen. He still cursed the fact that he had no weapon, because he wasn't really up for another long fight. It took the other man only a split second to assess the situation, then he hit back with a well-aimed blow to Kirill's stomach.

Damn, the man was good. And quick, Kirill added after a few moments.

Kirill ducked in the last moment to avoid a hit that would have sent him down the stairway behind him. The other assassin had the advantage of being well rested and unhurt, something Kirill couldn't say for himself. The asset his former employers had sent after him had been a good one, and he had put up a hell of a fight. Kirill had taken more blows than he preferred and not only did he feel bruises forming all over his body, he also knew that his leg was fast approaching its limits. He tried not to favour it, because he knew the moment the asset discovered his weak spot, he would aim for it. And Kirill was quite certain he couldn't take any hard blows to his leg without it failing for good.

The pace quickened and the asset attacked him from all sides. Kirill blocked another blow, then he delivered one of his own. He needed to finish this before the man finished him. He took the stairs to the upper floor when he had managed to make the asset take a step back, bringing some distance between them and giving himself a second to take a quick look around for anything he could possibly use as a weapons. There wasn't much.

Kirill saw the swing the assassin had taken just before he felt the fist connect with his right knee. For a second, his mind went white with pain. This was it, he just knew it, and at that moment his leg gave out and he went down. Kirill panted, he was face down on the floor and through the pain induced fog in his mind he noticed the metal hook in the wall at the end of the flight of stairs. He gritted his teeth. He had no problems playing dirty, and now was exactly the right moment for it.

He felt a rush of adrenalin course through his body at the prospect of his next action and it dulled the pain momentarily. It was enough to make him turn around, then he kicked out with his left leg with as much force as he could muster, aiming for the other man's chest. He felt his boot connect, then the man went flying down the stairs he had just come up. That he



really landed where the hook came out of the wall was more chance than actual skill, but Kirill didn't really care right now. He heard the sickening sound of the metal impaling the asset's body, penetrating skin and flesh and bone, and all he cared about was that the man was most certainly not coming back for him again.

Kirill huffed out a satisfied snort, then he let his head fall back onto the floor and the pain finally took over his mind.

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When Jason reached the Place de France where he had left Nicky, he found her gone and for a moment, he couldn't decide if that was a good or a bad sign. When he noticed the pieces of her mobile on the ground, leading towards the market, he knew she had left on her own, and that meant that she had still been alive then. He cursed under his breath, hoping the asset hadn't reached her yet. She was no match for Desh, he could kill her easily.

He straightened and hurried towards the crowd of the market, and just when he was about to enter it, he saw Nicky coming towards him. She stopped in front of him, an expression of barely suppressed relief on her face.

"I met your shadow." she just said as if it explained all. Oddly enough, it did.

"Where is he?"

"When I left he was about to take on Desh." she replied with a frown. "Across the market, fourth street to the right, third door. It's the only one that's open."

Jason gritted his teeth. If Kirill was taking care of Desh, that meant that he had either already got rid of the blonde asset who'd been following him, or that he was hunted by two assassins now. Jason set to walk off, then he stopped suddenly and turned back to Nicky. "Find a new hotel room. Don't go back to the old one."

Nicky nodded. "That's about what he said."

"We will meet up. Tonight, nine pm, bus terminal." Jason said and turned.

He heard her snort behind him. "Either the two of you planned this, or you're thinking very alike."

He stopped in his movement and frowned at her retreating form. Maybe he and Kirill really were alike more alike than he'd thought. Because this hadn't be planned at all.

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Kirill felt his head spin with the dizziness the pain caused. His leg hurt so badly that he couldn't tell how serious his injuries really were. His whole perception concentrated on the searing pain and he felt his breath come in short pants.

Then there was a hand on his, pressing something in his palm, and a voice addressed him in accented Russian. "Here, take this. It will help with the pain."

He wanted to fight it off, knew he shouldn't take any pills he was given, so he pushed against the hand that held his.

“Kirill, listen to me!” The voice was back, and its sound was familiar. Whoever they were, they knew his name, and it was part of the reason he stilled in his frantic efforts to fight off the other person. “We have to leave here! The police is coming! Take the pill so you can walk! I can't carry you through the streets without causing a commotion.”

It took him a moment, but even in his dazed mind, Kirill could follow the logic of this statement and he wordlessly accepted the pill, swallowing it dry. He felt hands grip his arms, then he was pulled off the ground and pressed into a wall, the person trying to keep him upright with their body. The sudden weight on his right leg made another white flash of searing pain rush through his body and he doubled over. His forehead came to rest against a soft cotton shirt and when he breathed in, a familiar scent filled Kirill's nostrils.

Bourne. He'd recognise that scent everywhere.

\*\*\*

Jason gritted his teeth and pulled the Russian assassin up. The man was really out of it and that alone told Jason how strong his pain had to be. He had seen enough of Kirill by now to know the Russian had a tight grip on his body, especially his control of pain was impressive, considering that his right leg had to be hurting ever since the crash in Moscow. But whatever Desh had done to him, it had caused a pain so intense that Kirill wasn't able to control it, worse even, he had lost focus on the world around him.

They really had to get away from here. The fight most certainly had been loud enough that the neighbours had to have heard it – not to mention that there was a man impaled next to the entrance door – and Kirill was in no condition to fight right now. Jason just hoped that the pill would finally kick in, because as heavily as the Russian was leaning onto him right now, needing support to even remain standing, there was no way he was walking anywhere on his own. Kirill was still bend over in pain and Jason felt his forehead pressed against his collarbone, the Russian's fingers digging into the skin of Jason's arms so hard that he was certain there would be bruises later. The panting had stopped, actually there was no sound at all coming from Kirill, even though his whole body spoke of pain.

“Kirill, breathe.” Jason instructed, staying in Russian since he guessed that it was easier for Kirill to understand through the haze of pain. He heard a gasp as some air was sucked in, then the breathing took up in a less laboured rhythm. Jason was too aware of how close they were, feeling uneasy with Kirill touching him, with how he was reacting to it. This was the man who'd shot Marie. He was an assassin, just like Jason himself. There was no friendship between them, just the deal to uphold their truce until the threat to their lives was eliminated.

There was no reason for Jason no feel concern over the Russian's obviously bad condition. Yet he did.

Jason pushed the disconcerting thoughts aside and took hold of Kirill's shoulders. “Can you stand?”

There was a pained snort. "I will have to."

\*\*\*

The most prominent sensation was pain, even though it eased more and more with every minute. That must have been the pill Bourne had given him, some kind of really good pain killer. The sensation that followed right behind the pain was the feeling of Bourne's body against his as the American supported his weight all the way to some random hotel. It took longer than Kirill was comfortable with, but he was well aware that pain influenced the perception of time and space.

Kirill couldn't say if it was the closeness or Jason's scent, all he knew was that his senses were focussing on the American again, and between the pain and the pill dazing his mind, Kirill's control of his body wasn't strong enough to resist. When the door of the hotel room had closed behind them, he just allowed his body to lean against the welcoming warmth that was Jason Bourne, allowed to give in to his need to be close to the man, to feel him, to taste him, to smell him. It was easy to let his head fall forwards until the tip of his nose touched he skin of Bourne's throat and breath in until the comfort of his scent surrounded him.

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When Jason had pushed the door shut, he felt Kirill lean against him, right leg pulled up to take the weight off the injured limb, and then the Russian pressed him into the wall. Jason's skin burned where the former FSB agent was touching him. After a moment, he wondered if Kirill was actually *sniffing* him, because it certainly seemed so. The Russian had buried his nose against Jason's neck and was taking a deep breath.

"I would recognise your scent everywhere." Jason heard Kirill's low voice grumble in Russian, rough with either pain or emotion, he couldn't tell.

For a moment, Jason was actually stunned. He was so surprised at the words, especially coming from *Kirill* of all people, that speech failed him. "Kirill, what...?"

The Russian took another deep breath and Jason's mind stuttered to a halt. This was highly distracting. It made goosebumps spread all over his body and his skin prickled under Kirill's touch. It took Jason a moment to get his wits back together and push the Russian back a little.

"You're not intolerant to certain pain killers, are you?" he asked, switching back into English unconsciously.

Kirill just looked at him, a frown of concentration on his face. "*Niet.*"

Jason cleared his throat and wrapped his arm around Kirill's waist to guide him over to the bed. "Well, let's get your injuries cleaned up."

Kirill let himself be pushed down on the edge of the bed and Jason went into the bathroom to get some towels. He held the fabric under the running water and threw a gaze over his shoulder. "You should get your shirt off."

He was rather surprised that the Russian did as he was told, then he frowned at the array of bruises that had begun to form on the pale skin. Kirill had taken some serious blows today, not to mention the damage to his right leg. Jason himself still felt beat from the explosion that had been far too close to him, but overall, he'd been lucky not to have any more serious injuries. Kirill looked far worse than him.

Jason walked over and handed Kirill one of the wet towels. The Russian began to clean his face and wash away the dried blood. Jason watched him for a moment. "You'd feel better after a shower."

"I really don't want to stand right now." Kirill growled from under the towel and looked at Jason. "Even though your painkillers are amazing."

"I know." Jason shrugged and slowly passed with the towel over a nasty looking bruise on Kirill's left arm. "After Moscow, I have taken up the habit of carrying around a few of those pills."

"Good habit."

Jason chuckled. "So I've realised."

Suddenly, Kirill's hands grabbed his face and pulled him down with a strength he hadn't expected. Before he had time to react, he was face to face with the Russian who's eyes were focussed on him, dark and intense with something Jason couldn't quite place.

"Don't do that." Kirill's voice was strained, as if forming the words took him a real effort.

"Do what?" Jason held still, didn't try to move away, and he couldn't say if it was out of curiosity or because he was caught in some weird kind of spell.

"Chuckle." Kirill's tongue shot out and he licked his lips.

"Why?"

"It drives me crazy." Kirill growled and bend forwards to press his lips to Jason's. And yet again, Jason was stunned. He hadn't been expecting that. He felt the tip of a tongue pass over his bottom lips and his body was reacting before his mind had managed to assess what was happening here. It took him a few seconds before he managed to pull away.

While Jason tried to find his speech, he noticed that he was panting. "What are you doing?"

Kirill just raised an eyebrow. "I thought that was rather obvious."

Jason frowned. "You are aware that you're on drugs, right?"

"I don't care."

"You'll care later."

“I will think about it then.” Kirill's hands buried in Jason's short hair, pulling him close until their lips were but a breath apart. “Now I want to feel good.”

This time it was Jason who closed the remaining distance. He decided that he had to be under a spell, because there was just no logical explanation for this. He just knew that he wanted to feel more of those lips, of that skin, of these hands. His fingers left Kirill's shoulders and began to wander over his body all on their own, sliding down the Russian's arms, over his sides, tracing lightly along the outlines of the bruises that were forming under the skin. There were goosebumps under his fingertips and he felt Kirill's one hand tighten into a fist in his hair while the other hand found its way to the hem of Jason's shirt and pushed under it, found his bare skin.

Kirill's hand took a firm hold of Jason's waist, then he let himself fall back onto the bed, pulling the American down with him. Jason wanted to know if Kirill was really into this or if it was just the drugs speaking, so he let his hand travel down the naked skin of the Russian's stomach, careful not to press on any of the multiple bruises, until his hand cupped Kirill's groin. There was an unmistakable hardness under the jeans, straining against the fabric and fitting into his palm perfectly. He squeezed with just the pressure he himself liked.

Kirill promptly arched into his hand, his head thrown back, the beautiful line of his throat exposed to Jason's gaze. “Ahh, Bourne!”

Jason bend down, unable to resist the temptation, and trailed a line of sharp nips up to Kirill's ear, then he bit down on his earlobe. “It's Jason.”

He felt the body of the taller Russian shudder under his hands. Kirill leaned into his touch, then his arms wrapped around the American's waist and pulled him closer, pressed against him. Kirill turned his head, licked along Jason's jaw, then his surprisingly soft lips found his pulse point.

“Jason...” he growled against the ear under his lips, his voice was dark, his accent thick even in this one word. It made a shiver of arousal run down Jason's spine. He would never have guessed that this voice, this accent, could be such a turn-on for him.

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Somewhere deep down, Kirill knew he was high on the strong pain killers he had taken, but his senses didn't feel dulled, to the contrary, they felt sharpened. They were all focussed on the feeling of Bourne – no, *Jason* – against his skin, his lips, his body. The warm press of his hands on Kirill's groin, on his stomach, on his bare skin. It made him feel alive, dizzy with an arousal so strong that he couldn't control it, didn't want to control it. He wanted this man, right now and right here, and he didn't care about later. He needed to feel Jason's skin against his own, needed his taste on his tongue.

So Kirill took hold of the hem of Jason's shirt and pulled it over his head, threw it aside carelessly. His hands were back on Jason's waist immediately, pulled him close so he could feel the warm skin against his, could press his lips to the American's mouth. He was received eagerly, Jason's lips parting under his and his tongue meeting his with equal hunger, challenging him into a battle for dominance. There were hands wandering all over his back,

his arms, his sides, his neck. He shuddered under the onslaught of feelings, sensations, emotions. It was all too much, but he didn't want to stop. Couldn't.

Jason turned them around so he came to lie on his back with Kirill on top of him. His breath was ghosting over Kirill's neck, close to his ear, and he felt his pulse quicken. "I don't want to put pressure on your bruises."

Kirill just chuckled. "I told you the painkillers were good."

He felt Jason's answering grin against his skin, then the American was biting his neck again, leaving bruises of his own, and Kirill pressed into his touch. A leg pushed between his and suddenly there was just the right kind of friction against his groin and he couldn't help pressing into it. Jason's hands were on his jeans, then the fingers had opened his fly and pushed under the fabric, finding his backside and grabbing it, intensifying the pressure of his erection against Jason's thigh. Kirill couldn't keep the hoarse moan inside, didn't care if it could be heard in the next room, he only wanted – needed – to get rid of their trousers, to have unlimited contact, with no barrier between their skin.

He let his own finger wander to Jason's jeans and the man seemed to understand what he wanted, pushed Kirill's trousers down his legs, then Jason raised his hips off the bed to strip off his remaining clothes. It was a rather awkward movement, but Kirill didn't care, he got what he wanted. He pressed against the heat of Jason's body, slid between his legs, and then their erections were sliding against each other, the sensation of hot velvet touching his hardness, making him groan.

Russian, English, it all became one, he couldn't distinguish the languages any more, wasn't even certain he was still forming proper words. It could have been a string of senseless noises, he wouldn't have been able to tell. He threw his head back when one of Jason's hands cupped his buttock, pulling him down, while the other wrapped around their combined members, pressing his erection against Jason's hardness with delicious friction. He ground down, heard a hoarse moan, felt Jason's fingers dig into his flesh. His lips found Jason's in an open-mouthed kiss, his tongue sliding against its hot counterpart, along the swollen bottom lip, back into the mouth of his fiery American.

"Kirill..." He was certain he heard his name in Jason's hoarse voice, felt his breath against the skin of his neck, coming in harsh pants, before he felt him arch up against him, coming with a barely suppressed groan. Kirill wasn't far behind, the extra fraction of Jason's groin pressing up was enough to undo him and he spilled his release between their bodies. All his strength left him, his arms caved in and he sank down on Jason, letting his head rest where it landed. His mind was still blank with the shock of climax and he indulged in the pleasant laziness of aftermath.

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It took him a long time to come down from his orgasm, his breathing only slowly returning to normal. He had never experienced such an intense orgasm, not even with Marie. He had never felt so spent, yet so comfortable and satisfied afterwards. There was a heaviness to his body that kept him from moving, he just remained where he was, with Kirill atop of him

where he had collapsed, his head resting on Jason's shoulder, his breathing still equally laboured as Jason's.

Jason let his eyes fall shut and his arms found their way around Kirill's body all on their own, one hand trailing up his spine into his tousled hair. When he combed with his fingers through the outgrown strands, he felt a scar along the side of Kirill's head. He stilled when he realised that it was a surgical scar which felt still soft, meaning it wasn't entirely healed yet. It had to be part of the treatment of the aftermath of the crash and it had been *him* who'd given it to Kirill. It reminded him with sudden force of how close he'd come to kill him.

“Don't feel guilty.” He heard Kirill's quiet voice come from somewhere beneath his chin, sounding rough from approaching sleep and the pain meds. “I would have killed you that day had I been in your place.”

Jason remained silent and swallowed against the lump in his throat. Kirill's words were bare of emotion, a simple statement of the truth. Brutal honesty. But then, Kirill had never lied to him. Still, it made him feel uneasy to be reminded of how easily they could have missed their chance, how thin the line between pulling the trigger and letting Kirill live had been.

His fingers slowly passed over the scar again where it was hidden under the outgrown hair, learning its form, its feel, its every curve. His touch was gentle, a caress, a promise to never hurt Kirill again. Jason couldn't even say that he was sorry, because at that time, he hadn't been and it would have felt like a lie to apologise. Even if now, he meant it.

Kirill sighed quietly and leaned into his touch. “It was another time. A different situation.”

Jason nodded slightly. “I know.”

He fell silent, never ceasing the slow caress of his fingers in Kirill's hair. He was surprised that the Russian let him be so close, that he hadn't fought off the touches that were not meant to arouse but to comfort, himself as much as Kirill. The former FSB agent actually seemed to lean into his touch, seemed to be comfortable in his embrace, and Jason couldn't help wondering how much of it was induced by the strong painkillers. He pointedly didn't think about the fact that he himself wasn't under the influence of drugs.

“They won't stop coming after you. You know that.” Jason remarked after a long time. He wasn't even sure if Kirill was still awake.

“Yes, I know that. They will only stop when I am dead.” Kirill replied with this sleepy, rough voice, his accent so strong that Jason had problems understanding him at first.

“Then we will have to come after them first.” Jason said before he had even thought about his words. He surprised himself with them, didn't know where they had come from, but he knew that he meant them. He wouldn't let Kirill get killed.

He felt Kirill raise his head and when he looked up, Jason found Kirill's eyes on him, his pupils blown wide by the meds, his gaze intense and focussed, even though he was obviously under the influence of the drugs. There were so many emotions flickering through his eyes that Jason had no opportunity to grasp them all.

Then Kirill gave a little smile that changed his whole face, and let his head sink back on Jason's shoulder. "All right."

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Kirill woke after what felt like too little sleep, and the light in the room told him that the sun had begun setting. He felt a comfortable warmth at his side and when he turned this head, he found Jason had cuddled up against him, his head placed on Kirill's shoulder, an arm thrown over his chest. The sight was enough to make all the memories come back and Kirill suppressed a groan. He was sure this wasn't what his instructor had meant when he'd said 'deal with it'.

He couldn't help watching Jason's relaxed face, though, so open and young in sleep, the complete opposite of what he looked like when he was awake. Kirill felt the warmth of his breath on his skin and he just knew somewhere deep down inside of him that he would go to any length necessary to protect the American. He couldn't say when this feeling had started, but it didn't feel new, it wasn't even a real surprise to acknowledge it now. It had been a steady, if unconscious companion in his thoughts for quite a while, had settled clandestinely in his mind and had made itself a certainty.

He became aware of the pain in his leg and on top of that he felt the need to go to the bathroom, so he untangled from Jason's sleeping figure and was surprised that the man didn't wake at the movement. He didn't think about it, though, deciding it was time to take care of more pressing matters right now.

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It wasn't conscious thought that made Jason consider Kirill's bad leg when they chose who took which task. They had never talked about it and Jason had the distinct feeling that it would be a mistake to address the matter. Especially since there wasn't anything to address, Kirill had kept up with him whatever they'd done. Jason never thought him any less dangerous due to his injury, and the Russian certainly compensated for his incapacity by thinking ahead. He had always managed to keep track of Jason throughout the whole time that had passed since they'd sealed their deal. Sometimes Jason wondered how he did it. His leg had to hurt terribly, especially after today's encounter with the asset.

Jason only knew that because he had caught Kirill bend over in pain in the bathroom of their hotel room that evening. Once he had noticed Jason, Kirill had quickly hidden his pain as if it had never been there. Jason had frowned, but he understood Kirill's urge not to show any weakness. Ever since the pain meds had worn off, the Russian didn't show the open acceptance of Jason's touches any more, didn't touch in return. It was as if he didn't remember, but one look in his eyes in the bathroom and Jason had known that Kirill remembered everything.

It was as if he didn't know how to deal with the closeness he had allowed, had even actively sought the just some hours ago. Jason understood that feeling, he wasn't entirely sure how to deal with it either, so he accepted Kirill's decision to ignore it for now. They had other things on their mind, anyway.



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Nicky fingered the short strands of her now black hair. It felt strange to wear it that short, just like it felt strange to realise that from now on, she was going to have to be on the run for the rest of her life if she wanted to stay alive. She let her gaze travel over the people who were standing, waiting and walking around all over the bus terminal. One of them could be an asset, somebody sent for her, and she would only know when it was too late. She didn't have Bourne's abilities and she wondered how long she would manage before the CIA finally got her.

Her thoughts were interrupted when she saw Bourne walk over to her. The man from the market was next to him, walking with a slight limp. Nicky frowned. There was something around them she hadn't sensed before, something she couldn't put her finger on. It wasn't exactly tension, but something like it, yet it was also a measure of trust she had never expected Bourne to show, and then there was an atmosphere of... *unity* – for lack of a better word.

There wasn't much to say, but the Russian fell back politely and allowed them some words in private. She doubted that running would ever become easier, whatever Bourne might say, because she was just not like him. Nicky didn't say good-bye, didn't wish him luck, because it would just have felt hollow. There wasn't anything to say. They all had to arrange with the circumstances, and it had been her choice to leave Madrid with Bourne.

She turned back to look at Bourne one last time when she entered the bus that would carry her off to somewhere else, just far away from here. The Russian stood close behind him, a silent shadow, just as he had been all the time, even when she hadn't known it was him. Somehow she was certain those two were going to fight together, and she felt pity for all those who had made these men their enemies. Bourne alone had been incredibly dangerous in her opinion, but she thought that together with the Russian, he was unstoppable. They held just the perfect balance of alike and different that they made the perfect team.

A very efficient, very deadly team.

\*\*\*

Kirill threw a sideways glance to Jason who sat at the opposite end of the row, reading the newspaper he'd been given. They'd taken the next flight available after the visit to the morgue had provided them with an address. It wasn't Kirill's first time in New York and he didn't really care about the city, but he knew that this could be the final lead to the people who had ordered Jason's death. They'd agreed to observe the CIA building after they arrived in the city and to decide afterwards how to proceed.

That was about everything they'd said to each other ever since they'd woken up *afterwards*, and Kirill grudgingly admitted to himself that Jason had been right. The painkillers *had* affected him, and he may not have cared then, but he *did* care now. He was slightly embarrassed at how he'd basically thrown himself at Jason, but his mind was eased by the fact that Jason hadn't been any less involved once they'd started. Still, he'd given Jason solid evidence – that just sounded ambiguous, he thought and suppressed a snort – of his attraction and he wasn't entirely certain what the American was thinking about it. He didn't really behave any different, but Kirill freely admitted that didn't understand the man, so he couldn't

say what it meant. He just knew that he was *not* taking any of those pills again, even though his leg was killing him. He'd rather grit his teeth and live through the pain than lose control like that again.

He frowned at the city that grew larger outside the window of the plane. Well, there was no point in thinking about it now, though. It had happened. He'd just have to deal with it.

\*\*\*

“Gilberto de Piento, Gilberto de Piento. Your party is waiting.”

Jason glanced at Kirill who was walking next to him in a casual distance that made it seem as if they didn't know each other.

The Russian only raised an eyebrow and murmured under his breath, “All right, so she understood your message.”

Jason hid a smirk and continued for the exit.

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“I need those files.” Jason watched Vosen put the Blackbriar files into a folder. “In the right hands, they could break their necks.”

“How do you plan to get them all out of the building?” Kirill asked, watching the CIA man through his scope. He saw how Jason turned his focus back on the woman, then the American took out his mobile and began to dial.

“Let's send the agents on a wild goose chase.”

\*\*\*

Kirill walked past the entrance of the CIA building, saw Jason pass him and felt a bag pressed into his hand. He gripped it and walked on as if nothing had happened, swinging it over his shoulder casually. He walked down the street, observing how the first black cars pulled to the side of the street, men exiting and taking up pursuit of Jason.

The main advantage of nobody knowing that he and Jason were working together was that nobody was looking for Kirill, nobody paid him any attention. He was just another nameless face in the crowd. If they caught Jason now they gained nothing, Kirill knew what to do and he would make sure that the files reached their destination.

And the CIA would only find out when it was too late.

\*\*\*

He couldn't help noticing the parallels to Moscow.

The agent's head was leaning on the steering wheel, there was blood running down to the side of his face, his breathing laboured. His eyes were focussed on Jason, showing acceptance of

what he knew was going to happen.

Jason stared at him over the barrel of his gun, teeth gritted, and knew he wouldn't shoot. Couldn't. The man was looking so much like Kirill had back in that tunnel in Moscow, and Jason was aware that not pulling the trigger back then had been one of the best decisions he'd ever made.

He lowered his gun and walked away.

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Pamela saw Bourne cross the street and waited until he was in front of the building, only then did she reveal her position and stepped out of the shadow of the pier. It felt strange to be standing in front of the man she had been chasing for the past months and it was even stranger to find herself on his side instead of the CIA's. He didn't look like the killer she knew he was, but she knew better than to be fooled by his appearance. She had seen what he was capable of.

"They will kill you for giving me this." He remarked and she noticed him scanning the surroundings unobtrusively, alert to react as the slightest chance on this being a trap.

"4 15 71 isn't much of a code." She replied and couldn't help her own gaze wandering around for a moment. "My guess is that Vosen is on his way already."

Bourne frowned at her, confusion in his eyes. "Why did you do it?"

She returned her gaze to him. "Because this isn't what I signed up for. What they did to you. Blackbriar. This isn't us."

He looked at her for a moment and she had the feeling he was assessing her, analysing if he could believe her. She wasn't sure what he was looking for, but he seemed to have found it, because he nodded. "Then do something about it."

Behind him appeared another man who must have been hidden behind the pier the whole time. It took Pamela a moment, but then she recognised him. She'd seen a picture of him in the files and she couldn't help to be completely surprised at his presence. The man was no other than the Russian assassin who'd shot her agent in Berlin, had blown the deal and had stolen the files and their three million dollars. The one who had been sent to eliminate Bourne and had killed Marie Kreutz instead.

Yet here Bourne was, turning his back to the man with such an ease that there was no doubt that he knew the Russian. And the assassin's eyes were telling her that the moment he considered her a threat, he wouldn't hesitate to kill her. The feeling sent a shiver of fear down her spine, because she had no doubt that the Russian would follow through with it.

The realisation that Bourne wasn't working alone suddenly hit Pamela. She wondered just how long this strange alliance had been going on when the Russian handed Bourne the bag he'd been carrying over his shoulder and Bourne held it out to her.

“Everything you need is in there.”

Pamela didn't hesitate to take it. She understood that the files Bourne had stolen from Vosen were in this bag, all the evidence necessary to bring down this whole operation. Bourne looked at her, gaze intense, and she understood that he trusted her to do the right thing.

“Everything.” Bourne repeated, making it clear that there were no copies, that she held the sole responsibility of what was going to happen now. And she knew what she had to do to set things right.

He walked past her and the Russian was at his side immediately.

“David.” She turned, because she just couldn't help trying. “Why don't you come in with me. It'll be better if we do this together.”

“No.” His voice was resolute, certain. His decision had been made. “This is where it started for me. This is where it ends.”

Bourne turned towards the entrance again. The Russian assassin walked into the building with him, his hand finding Bourne's arm in a fleeting touch that looked like reassurance to her. They exchanged a gaze that seemed to communicate everything that had to be said, even though there was no word spoken.

Pamela followed them with her gaze and wondered for the first time if maybe Bourne hadn't only found a person he worked with, but somebody he actually trusted.

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“Get away from him!”

Dr. Hirsch felt hands grab him, then he was pulled back and shoved into the wall with more force than necessary. His shoulder connected with the concrete and pain erupted in his arm. He turned to the source of the unexpected violence and found himself facing a unknown man. He was standing front of Bourne who looked pained, shocked, disgusted with himself. On the stranger's face was a snarl, his teeth bared in instinctive threat.

Hirsch had just enough time to wonder who that man was, then there came loud banging from the door. Before the bullets crashed through the door's window and the agent could get in, Hirsch saw the stranger turn and a fist connected hard with his stomach. Then Bourne and the man were gone, out of the window, the agent chasing after them.

Hirsch leaned against the wall, bend over in pain, trying to regain his breath, his mind swirling with questions about the identity of the unexpected stranger at Bourne's side. There shouldn't have been anybody with him.

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Ever since they had begun working together, Jason had noticed how Kirill's accent became more pronounced when he was letting down his guard, when he was relaxed and felt safe. It hadn't taken him long to understand that it also thickened when Kirill was emotionally

excited, when he felt something so deeply that it literally made him lose control of his speech. It had happened when they'd slept with each other that one time, and Jason had instinctively known that it had not only been due to the physical pleasure.

And it was happening now, while Kirill had his gun pointed at the other assassin's head, his arm steady, his aim secure.

“You shoot him, I will kill you.” Kirill said in a low, threatening voice, his accent so thick that Jason couldn't help his gaze from flickering towards the Russian's face. There was anger in his eyes, cold and hot at the same time, his mouth was a thin line.

The sound of footsteps could be heard from the stairway that led to the roof and Jason knew there wasn't much time left. He noticed how Kirill had moved towards him, had slowly approached him until the Russian had directed himself in the line of fire of the other assassin, using his own body to shield Jason. It was a gesture that touched something deep inside Jason and he felt overwhelmed by a sudden surge of protectiveness. They were leaving here together, or they weren't leaving at all, he decided in a slip second. He just couldn't lose another person he cared about.

For a fleeting moment, he wondered when he had actually begun to care about Kirill.

Jason turned towards the agent whose gun was pointed at him and found his gaze, held it, spread his arm in a non-threatening gesture. “Just look at us. Look at what they make you give.” He made a break to let his words sink in. “Do you even know why you're supposed to kill me?”

The man didn't show any outside reaction, yet Jason knew that he hesitated, as if the thought had never crossed his mind before. It probably hadn't.

Kirill seemed to get what he was trying to do and slowly but pointedly lowered his gun. “We are not here for you.”

It seemed to confuse the assassin beyond understanding that they didn't try to fight him, didn't want to kill him. He slowly straightened up, his gun wavering, then it began to lower. At that moment the door to the roof crashed open and there were more agents coming out. Jason held the gaze of the assassin while he turned his back towards him. They needed to leave now or their escape route was going to be blocked.

He stepped up to the edge of the roof and caught Kirill's eyes. There was a sharp nod, then he jumped, knowing the Russian at his side. He heard the shot just before he began to fall.

The impact with the water was hard, so hard that it pressed all air out of his lungs and the world went dark.

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When he resurfaced, Kirill felt utter relief to find Jason come up some metres away from him. He had heard the shot right before they had started to fall, and ever since he'd been worried that the bullet might have found its target.

“Are you hurt?”

“No.” Jason shook his head. “But we're the only ones who know that.”

“Then let us get out of here before they start searching.” Kirill began swimming towards the nearby shore. He already felt his right leg showing the first signs of a cramp.

It took longer than he had expected and with every metre his leg hurt more, but he kept going, determined not to drown due to a cramp after all the things he had survived in the past weeks. He noticed that Jason swam closer to him, as if he knew that Kirill was having problems with his leg, ready to grab him should it become necessary.

He managed, even though it was close. He was relieved when his feet touched the ground, and he began limping out of the water. He let himself fall down onto the sandy shore and began the firm massage the physical therapist in the hospital had shown him. It usually helped.

Jason just sat down next to him, watching him with a serious expression. “Time to take care of your former employers now.”

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