

AUTHOR OF THE INTERNATIONAL BESTSELLER *GORKY PARK*

MARTIN CRUZ SMITH

THE NEW ARKADY RENKO NOVEL

TATIANA

A black and white photograph of a person in a red jacket walking away from the camera on a snowy path. The person is centered in the frame. The background shows a city street with utility poles and buildings. The word "TATIANA" is overlaid in large, bold, red capital letters across the middle of the image.

TATIANA

Also by Martin Cruz Smith

Arkady Renko series

GORKY PARK

POLAR STAR

RED SQUARE

HAVANA BAY

WOLVES EAT DOGS

STALIN'S GHOST

THREE STATIONS

Other titles

GYPSY IN AMBER

CANTO FOR A GYPSY

NIGHTWING

STALLION GATE

ROSE

TOKYO STATION

MARTIN CRUZ SMITH

AN ARKADY RENKO NOVEL

TATIANA



SIMON &
SCHUSTER

London · New York · Sydney · Toronto · New Delhi

A CBS COMPANY

First published in USA by Simon & Schuster, Inc., 2013
First published in Great Britain by Simon & Schuster UK Ltd, 2013
A CBS COMPANY

Copyright © Titanic Productions 2013

This book is copyright under the Berne Convention.
No reproduction without permission.
® and © 1997 Simon & Schuster Inc. All rights reserved.

The right of Martin Cruz Smith to be identified
as author of this work has been asserted in accordance with sections
77 and 78 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988.

1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

Simon & Schuster UK Ltd
1st Floor
222 Gray's Inn Road
London WC1X 8HB

www.simonandschuster.co.uk

Simon & Schuster Australia, Sydney
Simon & Schuster India, New Delhi

A CIP catalogue record for this book
is available from the British Library

HB ISBN: 978-1-84983-810-8
TPB ISBN: 978-1-84983-811-5
EBOOK ISBN: 978-1-84983-813-9

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters,
places and incidents are either a product of the author's imagination
or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual people living or dead,
events or locales is entirely coincidental.

Typeset by M Rules
Printed and bound by CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon, CR0 4YY

For Em Always

TATIANA

Prologue

It was the sort of day that didn't give a damn. Summer was over, the sky was low and drained of color, and dead leaves hung like crepe along the road. Into this stillness dashed a cyclist in red spandex, pumping furiously, taking advantage of the flat terrain.

Joseph spoke six languages. In restaurants he spoke French, with tradesmen he preferred Chinese and he dreamed in Thai. He was a one-man crowd. It meant that he could travel and find work anywhere in the world. The United Nations sent him one place and the European Union sent him somewhere else. Always, he took his black custom-made bike, his designer jersey and shorts, his molded saddle and tear-shaped helmet. He had started biking too late in life to be a competitive racer, but he could astonish the locals at most rallies. Anyway, winning didn't matter. It was the tension, the feeling of a drawn bow, that he found most satisfying. At this point he

calculated he had ridden twice around the world. He'd never married. His schedule wouldn't allow it. He felt sorry for saps stuck on tandem bikes.

He loved word games. He had a photographic memory—an eidetic memory, to be exact. He could look at a crossword puzzle and play it out in his mind while he biked, teasing out those words that existed only in crossword puzzles: *ecru*, *ogee*, *amo*, *amas*, *amat*. A clue that was not in English was all the easier. A *tort* was a civil action; a *torte* was a piece of cake. A full-grown anagram could occupy his mind from Toulon to Aix-en-Provence. He had the afternoon off, and he needed it after interfacing in Russian and Chinese. When the two sides broke early, the interpreter seized the opportunity to ride.

He prided himself on finding routes out of the ordinary. His idea of hell was being in Tuscany or Provence stuck behind tourists wobbling on and off the road in rented bikes as they worked off a lunch of cheese and wine. Elastic pockets in the back of his jersey held water bottles, energy bars, a map and repair kit. He was willing to patch a tire or two if he could have a new vista to himself. Kaliningrad had a reputation of being ugly and crime ridden, a city that was an orphan or bastard or both. Escape the city, however, and, *voilà*, a pastoral delight.

He was born to translate; his father was Russian, his mother French, and both were Berlitz instructors. In boarding school he spread a rumor that they were dead, tragically killed in a car crash in Monte Carlo, and became the boy most invited for the holidays by wealthy classmates. He was ingratiating

and sometimes he imagined ending his days as a guest in a villa not far from the sea. He still sent his parents a card at Christmastime, although he hadn't seen them for years.

He interpreted for film stars and heads of state, but the most lucrative work was corporate negotiations. They were usually carried out by small teams operating in strict confidentiality and an interpreter had to be omnipresent yet nearly invisible. Most of all, he had to be discreet, trusted to forget what he heard, to wipe the slate clean when the job was done.

As the road became a country lane he flew past occasional ruins of brick smothered by lilacs. Fortunately, there was almost no traffic. He navigated pothole after pothole and, at one point, rode through asphalt as humped as waves. A butcher's van with a plastic pig on the roof came the opposite way and seemed to aim straight at the bike until they passed like ships at sea.

In fact, the interpreter had not erased everything. There were his notes. Even if the notes were stolen, they would be safe, because nobody could read them but himself.

The road ended at a desolate parking area with a shuttered kiosk and a billboard of events past. An ice-cream cart lay on its side. Everything described postseason ennui. Nevertheless, when he heard the screech of gulls he got off his bike and carried it over the brow of a dune to a view of a beach that stretched in either direction as far as he could see and wavelets that advanced in regular order. Mist turned the sea and sky into luminous bands of blue. Sand skipped in the wind and nestled into beach grass that grew among the dunes. Rough

wooden beach umbrellas, stripped of canvas, stood guard, but no one else was in view, which made it perfect.

He set the bicycle down on the sand and removed his helmet. This was a find. This was the sort of mini-adventure that would make for a good story around the fireplace with a glass of red wine and a captivated audience. A little derring-do to cap his career. To give it *significance*; that was the word.

Although the air was cool, Joseph was warm from cycling, and he removed his biking shoes and socks. The sand was fine, not like the loose stones of most resorts, and unspoiled, probably because Kaliningrad had been a closed city during the Cold War. Water rushed up, hissed around his feet, and drew back.

His reverie was interrupted by the approach of a vehicle rolling like a drunken sailor across the beach. It was the butcher van. The plastic piggy, pink and smiley, rocked from side to side until the van came to a stop and a man about thirty years old with a homburg and stringy hair climbed out. A dirty apron fluttered around him.

“Looking for amber?”

Joseph asked, “Why would I be looking for amber?”

“This is the place. But you have to wait for a storm. You have to wait for a storm to rile up all the amber.”

Roil, not *rile*, Joseph thought, but let it pass. Joseph detected nothing in common with the man, no intellect to engage with. Sooner or later the character would demand money for vodka and they’d be done.

“I’m waiting for friends,” Joseph said.

The tilt of the homburg lent the butcher an antic air. He seemed dizzy or drunk—in any case, so amused at a private joke that he stumbled into the bike.

“Idiot! Watch where you’re going!” Joseph said.

“Sorry, real sorry. Say, is this Italian?” The butcher picked up the bicycle by its top rail. “S’fucking beautiful. You don’t see many of these in Kaliningrad.”

“I wouldn’t know.”

“You can take my word for it.”

Joseph noticed that the butcher’s hands were nicked and raw from handling frozen beef, and his apron was suitably daubed with liverish stains, although his sandals were hardly appropriate footwear for slippery ice lockers.

“Can you give me the bike, please? The last thing I want is sand in the gears.”

“No problem.” The butcher let the bike drop and brightly asked, “Holidays?”

“What?”

“It’s a question. Are you here on holidays or business?”

“Holidays.”

The butcher’s face split into a grin. “Really? You came to Kaliningrad for a vacation? You deserve a medal.” He pretended to pin a decoration to Joseph’s chest. “Give me the highlights of Kaliningrad. Like, what did you see this morning?”

Joseph had worked all morning, not that it was anyone else’s concern, but the butcher produced a nickel-plated pistol that he weighed in his hand like loose change. What had been to Joseph a cool breeze now gave him a chill, and grains of sand

stuck to the sweat on his skin. Maybe this was an ordinary shakedown. No problem. He would pay whatever was asked and be reimbursed by the client.

“Are you the police?”

“Do I look like the fucking police?”

“No.” Joseph’s heart sank. He had been trained to be calm and cooperative in hostage situations. The statistics were actually reassuring. People only got killed when someone tried to be a hero. “What do you want?”

“I saw you at the hotel with those people. They’re surrounded by bodyguards and have a whole floor to themselves.” The butcher became confidential. “Who are they?”

“Businessmen.”

“International business or they wouldn’t need an interpreter, right? Without you, everything comes to a halt. The machinery stops, doesn’t it? The big wheel is stopped by the little wheel, isn’t that so?”

Joseph was uneasy. This was Kaliningrad, after all. The pig glowed, happy to go to the abattoir. Joseph contemplated running from this madman. Even if he didn’t get shot, he would have to abandon his bike; the sand was too deep and soft for the tires. The entire scene was demeaning.

“I just interpret,” Joseph said. “I’m not responsible for content.”

“And take notes of secret meetings.”

“Totally legal. The notes simply aid my memory.”

“Secret meetings or you wouldn’t be in Kaliningrad; you’d be living it up in Paris.”

“It’s sensitive,” Joseph conceded.

“I bet it is. You have a real skill. People run at the mouth and you translate it word for word. How do you remember it all?”

“That’s where the notes come in.”

“I’d like to see those.”

“You wouldn’t understand them.”

“I can read.”

Joseph was quick to say, “I wasn’t suggesting that you couldn’t, only that the material is highly technical. And they’re confidential. We’d be breaking the law.”

“Show me.”

“I honestly can’t.” Joseph looked around and saw nothing but gulls patrolling the beach in case food appeared. No one had told the gulls that the season was over.

“You don’t get it. I don’t need to know the ins and outs. I’m a pirate like those Africans who hijack tankers. They don’t know a dog’s turd about oil. They’re just a few black bastards with machine guns, but when they hijack a tanker they hold all the cards. Companies pay millions to get their ships back. The hijackers aren’t going to war; they’re just fucking up the system. Tankers are their targets of opportunity and that’s what you are, my target of opportunity. All I’m asking is ten thousand dollars for a notebook. I’m not greedy.”

“If you’re just an errand boy that changes everything.” Immediately, Joseph understood that it was the wrong thing to say and the wrong way to have said it. It was like poking a

cobra. “Let me . . . show . . .” Joseph reached around and wrestled with the pockets of his jersey, spilling a water bottle and energy bars until he found a notebook and pencils.

“Is this it?” the butcher asked.

“Yes, only it’s not what you expect.”

The butcher opened the notebook to the first page. Flipped to the second page, the third and fourth. Finally, he raced to the end.

“What the fuck is this? Pictures of cats? Doodles?”

“That’s how I take notes.” Joseph couldn’t help a hint of pride.

“How do I know these are the notes?”

“I’ll read them to you.”

“You could say anything you fucking please. What am I supposed to show them?”

“Who is *them*?”

“Who do you think? These people, you fuck with them, they fuck with you.”

His employers? If he could just explain.

“My notes—”

“Are a joke? I’ll show you a joke.” The butcher dragged Joseph to the back of the van and opened the rear door. Out of the interpreter’s many languages, the only word that came to mind was *Jesu*. Inside the van, two skinned lambs hung upside down, looking cold and blue.

Joseph couldn’t find more to say. He couldn’t even find the air.

“Let the birds read it.” The butcher cast the notebook into

the wind, then tossed Joseph into the back of the van and climbed in after.

From everywhere gulls materialized. They descended as a succession of thieves, each robbing the other. Every scrap from Joseph's pockets was snatched and inspected. A tug-of-war developed over a half-eaten energy bar. The birds were momentarily startled by a shot and a winner flew off, trailed by other gulls and screams of outrage. The rest settled into a sullen peace facing the wind. As the haze retreated, a horizon appeared and waves rolled in with the sound of beads spilled on a marble floor.