

FEKLISOV

So, let's see how good a reporter you are. How much do you know about *me*, John?

SCALI

A few things.

FEKLISOV

Yes?

*(A pause as they size each other up.)*

SCALI

Maybe we should order.

*(SCALI begins to motion for GEORGE, but FEKLISOV grabs his arm and brings it down carefully but forcefully to the table.)*

FEKLISOV

No. Tell me.

SCALI

Alright. For one thing, I know your name isn't Alexander Fomin.

FEKLISOV

No?

SCALI

No. It's Alexander Feklisov.

FEKLISOV

Feklisov, huh? Odd name. And what else?

SCALI

And I know you aren't an embassy official. You're not a diplomat. You're a spy.

FEKLISOV

Not too loud, John. We don't want to give anyone indigestion.

SCALI

And not just any spy. You're the KGB station chief here in Washington. That's right isn't it?

FEKLISOV

If you say so.

SCALI

And you've been a spy for many years. Here in the U.S. This is your *rezidentura*.

FEKLISOV

I'm sorry. I didn't hear the last part. You see, I have a bad left ear. I lost my hearing at the siege of Stalingrad during the Great Patriotic War. Did I ever speak to you of Stalingrad?

SCALI

You heard exactly what I said.

FEKLISOV

Tell me John, did you get your information about me from your friends in the State Department? Or the CIA?

SCALI

And you're not just a run-of-the-mill spy. You're a pretty famous one. You helped recruit the Rosenbergs in New York. You managed their work.

FEKLISOV

They were friends. The Rosenbergs. Wonderful people. Valiant. Courageous. Martyrs for the cause of peace. Someday your government may acknowledge that.

SCALI

I doubt that.

FEKLISOV

Well, at least one thing hasn't changed, John.

SCALI

And what is that?

FEKLISOV

You can still call me Alex.

*(They drink in silence for a moment.)*

FEKLISOV

By the way, do you know why people take an instant dislike to spies?

SCALI

No.

FEKLISOV

It saves time later. *(Pause)* You know, when I first met you, you looked like a serious man. You looked like a man with connections. *(Pause)* What did I look like to you, John?

SCALI

A spy. *(Pause)* Alex, why don't you tell me why you wanted to see me today?

FEKLISOV

How much does your government know about those "things" you spoke about before. In the photographs?

SCALI

I'm sure they know a great deal.

FEKLISOV

How much? Is that what Mr. Kennedy is going to speak about tonight on television? He has requested time from all the networks.

SCALI

It wouldn't surprise me.

FEKLISOV

Ah, then he has recovered quickly from his cold.

SCALI

Is that why you wanted to meet me today? You want advance information on what Kennedy is going to talk about?

FEKLISOV

I want perspective, John. Perspective is very important.

SCALI

Yes, you've told me. I *can* tell you one thing with certainty, however.

FEKLISOV

And what is that?

SCALI

Whatever happens, you people have brought it on yourselves.

FEKLISOV

Careful, John. War will not make for a pleasant dining experience.

SCALI

Kennedy wanted a fresh start with Khrushchev. He thought maybe they could begin to end this madness. He approached Khrushchev with an olive branch in Vienna but Khrushchev treated him like a boy. He joked that Kennedy was younger than his own son.

FEKLISOV

An example of the Chairman's humor. Nothing more.

SCALI

Even when Kennedy tried to appeal to him about the spread of nuclear weapons, Khrushchev laughed at him. It was the chance of a lifetime. Wasted. For months now, Khrushchev, Gromyko, Dobrynin all of you have been telling us that Russia would never put nuclear weapons in Cuba. But you have. It was all lies. I think Khrushchev just wants to embarrass him now, right before the mid-term elections.

FEKLISOV

I'm afraid, John, that you and Mr. Kennedy share the same American malady.

SCALI

And what is that?

FEKLISOV

Seeing the world only through American eyes. In psychotherapy, I believe this is called narcissistic personality disorder. But we reject the validity of psychotherapy, so I wouldn't worry about it.

SCALI

Thank you. I won't

FEKLISOV

The world is more complicated. It's not... John Wayne and the Indians. You look at Cuba and what do you see? A cancer growing close to you. But the rest of the world sees a small country about to be stamped out. Cuba is the first Socialist state in the Western Hemisphere, and we intend to protect it at all costs. It's also a chance for us to do something else.

SCALI

And what is that?

FEKLISOV

To – what is the phrase? – give you a taste of your own medicine.

SCALI

What are you talking about?

FEKLISOV

To make you sweat a little. That's all. To make you know what it feels like to look down the barrel of a gun.

SCALI

What are you saying?

FEKLISOV

You have nuclear missiles in Turkey. Exactly the same distance as our missiles in Cuba. They are pointed across the Black Sea at Mr. Khrushchev's *dacha* in Sochi. He can see them every morning when he takes his little dog for a walk. Now we have missiles pointed at Mr. Kennedy's *dacha* in Palm Beach.

SCALI

Are you people playing some kind of goddamn game? If you are, it will have consequences you can't imagine.

FEKLISOV

No. It's not a game. Believe me, we know all about consequences. We lost twenty million in the war. What did you lose, half a million? How can you know? I was at Stalingrad. I saw people eating each other to stay alive. What do you know, sitting here in your fancy restaurant with your nice, white-cotton table cloths? Huh?

(GEORGE re-enters.)

GEORGE

So, you gentlemen look like you are ready to order.

FEKLISOV

No. Not now!

SCALI

No. Come back later.

GEORGE

So I was wrong. So shoot me.

*(GEORGE turns and exits)*

SCALI

So why this? Why me?

FEKLISOV

What do you mean?

SCALI

Trying to get information from me. Why not go through official channels?

FEKLISOV

Official channels? Do you know what that means? When Khrushchev wants to talk to Kennedy, he can't pick up the telephone. He has to write him a letter. Then that letter has to be approved by our "political" people. That could take hours. Then it has to be encrypted. Then telegraphed to Western Union, here in Washington.

SCALI

Western Union?

FEKLISOV

Yes. On Connecticut Avenue. A boy on a bicycle is dispatched to pick it up and take it to our embassy. We wonder what will happen to him. Will he stop to talk to his girlfriend? Perhaps he will be struck by an automobile. And even if no catastrophe befalls him, that letter has to be decoded, then translated before it is finally brought the White House. We thought this *(pointing to himself and SCALI)* might be a quicker.

SCALI

Who's "we"? Who are you speaking for, Alex?

FEKLISOV

Speaking?

SCALI

Who are you representing? Your government? Khrushchev? The KGB? Or yourself?

FEKLISOV

Let's put it this way, John. What we speak about here will find its way directly to the Chairman. Directly. Not through layers of *apparatchiks* and generals who would alter our words to their purposes. It's important that we understand not only the decisions your government makes but the process.

SCALI

Who's *we*?

FEKLISOV

Friends of peace within my government. Men who are not insane. So, help me, John. Will you? *(Pause)* How long has your government known about the missiles?

SCALI

*(Pause)* They were discovered a week ago.

FEKLISOV

A week?

SCALI

Last Sunday, the fifteenth. In a U-2 flight over San Cristobel.

FELISOV

A week? Kennedy has known for a week?

SCALI

Yes. The first ones we discovered were two seventy-foot, medium-range ballistic missiles and their support systems. Since then, we've found three more sites. We know there are others. What we don't know is whether they are operational yet. Those missiles can hit Washington. And everything as far west as St. Louis. You don't know any of this?

FEKLISOV

Not these details. Only the military would know that.

SCALI

Then you have your information. Let's eat.

*(SCALI picks up the menu)*

FEKLISOV

John, we know that in the next few days Mr. Kennedy will not be making his decisions alone. Just as Mr. Khrushchev won't be making his decisions alone. They are both only one man, surrounded by other men. Men who will be pulling them in a number of directions. Can you help me, John? Who is Kennedy speaking with?

SCALI

He's created a group called Ex Comm.

FEKLISOV

Ex Comm?

SCALI

Yes. Executive Committee. Ex Comm.

FEKLISOV

And who is on it?

SCALI

Johnson. McNamara. Rusk. Most of the Cabinet. They've been meeting in secret for seven days now. Since the sixteenth. But you're lucky in one regard.

FEKLISOV

And why is that?

SCALI

The President's brother, Robert, is a member of the committee and his vote counts more than any of the others.

FEKLISOV

And why is that important?

SCALI

Because he, also, is not insane. And in the days to come, that may matter more than you know.

FEKLISOV

What has happened so far in those meetings?

SCALI

That's not something I can tell you.

FEKLISOV

Why?

SCALI

It's a matter of national security.

FEKLISOV

John, a few days from now, national security may not matter. Nothing may matter. I have to assure my friends that Mr. Kennedy is surrounded by rational men. Those around the Chairman must have hope.

SCALI

*(Pause)* From what I know, ExComm is divided. The civilians want a diplomatic solution. The generals are pressuring Kennedy for a military response. Now. And there are some who think he doesn't have the nerve to do anything. They think this is going to be another Bay of Pigs.

FEKLISOV

What about Mr. McNamara?

SCALI

I know you'll find this hard to believe but the Secretary of Defense is arguing for restraint. He says that if Soviet military personnel are killed in an air strike your government will be forced to respond militarily. If not in Cuba then somewhere else. Probably Berlin.

FEKLISOV

He's right. An attack would force us to do something. The pressure on Khrushchev would be too great.

SCALI

*(Pause)* Tell me something. What sort of man is he? Khrushchev?

FEKLISOV

Man?

SCALI

Yes. How does he think? What's he likely to do when the pressure becomes "too great?"

FEKLISOV

He's a man like any other. He can be stubborn. Quick to anger. He talks too much and he drinks too much. He lacks self-control. He can't keep his eyes off a pretty girl, even when his

wife is in the room. He's sentimental. When someone sings him a folk song, he cries. He is impulsive but he isn't stupid. He's a shrewd Ukrainian peasant. And your man?

SCALI

He likes to win. He lives within his own mind and very rarely let's anyone know what he's thinking. He's been close to death many times so he's a fatalist. He believes we can do little to change our destiny, which is already written. He'll make every decision based on rationality not emotion. He'll make a deal when the time comes but you have to remember one thing.

FEKLISOV

And what is that?

SCALI

It has to look like he's won. And one other thing.

FEKLISOV

Yes?

SCALI

He won't cry at Ukrainian folk songs but when it comes to pretty girls, he has much in common with the Chairman.

FEKLISOV

Let me ask you a question, John. Why did you agree to see *me* today? I can't remove any missiles from Cuba.

SCALI

Because I agree with you, Alex. Because in the next few days it may become very important to have another channel of communication open. A channel that can be relied on.

FEKLISOV

Or later denied?

SCALI

Yes. Or later denied.

FEKLISOV

So, what will be the next move, John? What will Mr. Kennedy announce tonight?

SCALI

Move? Ah, I see. Like chess. That's what you people love. This is all a big chess game, right?

FEKLISOV

Ah, see. Again you are wrong. Because we're Russian you think we love chess. But the game we love best is a card game, *durak*. That lies at the heart of who we are.

SCALI

*Durak?*

FEKLISOV

Yes. It means “the fool.” It’s unlike any other game. It’s played with thirty-six cards. The object is to get rid of all one's cards. At the end, the last player holding a card loses. He’s the fool. You see, it’s important not to hold back any cards.

SCALI

I’ll try to remember that.

FEKLISOV

So, what will Mr. Kennedy talk about? What is he going to do?