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# Firefox

By Alex Lasker

One target left.  
Rejoin to the west. I'll clean up.  
Lead, this is 3 Watch.  
37 mm off the left.  
Roger. Rolling in left.  
Leave your cover. Get out of there.  
Mayday! Mayday! Mayday!  
I've been hit 20 miles  
southeast of San Juan. Heading 1-3-0.  
Major Gant?  
Can you hear me?  
Sorry we had to surprise you like that.  
Come on, get him out of here.  
This was taken on Friday.  
It is the secret complex at Bilyarsk.  
If you look at the top right corner,  
you will make out the main hangar.  
Could we...?  
This is a detail of that section.  
Take a good look...  
...because we have every reason to believe  
you're looking at the Firefox.  
When the first rumors began to filter  
out of the Soviet Union...  
...some three years ago...  
...our theoretical weapons strategists  
stood before NATO to explain...  
...with confidence, that it would take  
the Soviets a minimum of 10 years...  
...to develop a Mach 5 aircraft  
with thought-control weapons.  
I stand before you today to explain,  
with much regret...  
...that they were wrong.  
At 0400 hours, on Thursday...  
...we were stunned by the encoded  
transmission...  
...that sits in front of you.  
-General Rogers?  
-Along with satellite surveillance...  
...planes were flown up Saturday over  
the Turkish-Soviet border, roughly here.  
And the Finnish-Soviet border, here.  
Using the information

of Dr. Baranovich...  
...about the time and flight path  
of the Firefox...  
...we monitored the arena  
formed by these coordinates...  
...here, with our most sophisticated  
radar devices.  
Except for a flight of cranes headed south,  
nothing entered that airspace all day.  
We checked immediately  
with our source in Bilyarsk.  
The Firefox flew,  
and flew at the exact time...  
...and within the specified coordinates  
given to us by Dr. Baranovich.  
We are left with only one explanation.  
It is quite inescapable.  
The Soviets have developed some  
sort of anti-radar capability for the aircraft.  
The Firefox is...  
...to all intents and purposes...  
...invisible.  
All right, captain.  
You came 5000 miles for this.  
-Let's hear it.  
-Captain Buckholz, sir.  
It's been, what, three years now?  
You're still keeping in shape. That's good.  
A lot of people miss you back home, major.  
They still talk about you.  
All the guys think you must have  
sprouted wings and flown away.  
I had one hell of a time  
tracking you down.  
Look at these figures!  
Fifty thousand pounds of thrust, per!  
These Tumanskys deliver an excess  
in a capacity of 100 percent.  
Combat ceiling, 120,000 feet plus.  
Note the increase in capacity,  
100 percent.  
Speed in excess of Mach 5, even Mach 6,  
and able to maintain it.  
Our best body design begins to melt...

...at Mach 3.  
It should be very clear why the Soviets...  
...were willing to risk using  
a man like Baranovich.  
A genius in theoretical physics, yes...  
...but still a prisoner,  
and a dissident Jew.  
Our weapons system is,  
as far as we can ascertain...  
...one of the most advanced  
ever conceived.  
It couples radar and infrared  
detection devices...  
...with a thought-guided,  
thought-controlled arsenal...  
...onboard the plane.  
The pilot's actual brain emissions  
are translated into a central computer...  
...through sensors in his helmet.  
Whatever target the pilot chooses  
is instantly destroyed...  
...without his even pressing a button.  
Or, as quickly as his eye  
detects a threat...  
...either visually  
or on one of his scopes...  
...his thought impulses are guiding  
a missile to that threat.  
This amounts to a two- to three-second  
speed advantage...  
...in reaction and attack time over  
any defensive system we have today.  
If the Soviets can mass-produce it...  
...it will change  
the structure of our world.  
We at the S.I.S. have been working...  
...on the pipeline into Moscow  
and on to Bilyarsk for two years.  
The mechanics of that phase  
are ready to be implemented.  
I understand that your Navy's phase of the  
operation can be functional within 30 days?  
Am I correct on that, admiral?  
That is correct, sir.

How do they expect me to fly?  
You've seen me.  
We're not worried.  
We have three months to train you.  
It's getting you there, that's the problem.  
Oh? Where is it?  
Russia.  
You've got to steal it.  
Well, I don't choose to mount  
an operation this way.  
We didn't expect you  
to be happy with it, general.  
We're aware of his health record.  
But his mother is Russian,  
he's spoken the language since childhood...  
...and is exactly the same size  
as Colonel Voskov...  
...who the suit and cockpit are fitted for.  
You mean the operation is reduced to  
the decision that he fits the pressure suit?  
You're asking me  
to put our resources on the line...  
...for somebody who's never be  
on an intelligence mission...  
...who's subject to these kind of seizures.  
Delayed stress syndrome  
is common among our vets.  
It manifests itself in civilian life,  
not battle conditions.  
-This is suicide.  
-That's exactly why it'll work.  
They'll never expect it. It's too  
unthinkable for them to ever defend.  
We'll get you on that airplane.  
You just have to fly it.  
-You guys are amazing, you know?  
-We need you, major.  
-You're the best we've got.  
-You'll find somebody.  
There's a lot of guys  
who could fly that plane.  
You fly it.  
Not with your qualifications.  
The decision has been made, gentlemen.

I'm afraid we have on other choice.  
It's already been set in motion.  
This is government land.  
I've been authorized to mention  
it could pass over to the private sector.  
What you're saying then is that  
you've already picked a volunteer.  
You will be flying the fastest,  
most sophisticated warplane...  
...on the face of this earth.  
You probably realized by now...  
...you won't be  
waltzing into Moscow as Mitchell Gant.  
Get to know that man in front of you,  
Leon Sprague.  
He's a businessman from Nevada.  
He's been flying in and out of Moscow  
the last few months...  
...from his factory in Marseilles,  
selling our well-to-do comrades...  
...a carburetor part  
for their outboard motors.  
He's actually been  
defiling the Soviet youth...  
...with large quantities of heroin.  
He's a drug smuggler.  
An enemy of the Soviet people.  
At least that's what the KGB  
has been led to believe.  
He doesn't know it, but he's been  
blazing the trail for you.  
Look at that face.  
Would you believe he had  
5 pounds of heroin right there?  
Looks like he's on a weekend  
to Acapulco.  
Could you be that cool, Gant?  
Your suite will be bugged.  
They know your habits.  
You are trafficking in heroin.  
They will have followed you for months.  
Any slip in character will be noticed.  
It would be lethal.  
I cannot stress this strongly enough.

In the hotel, on the way to the bridge...  
...you must not allow them to lose you.  
As long as you relax, they relax.  
Remember, we are playing  
on their only real weakness.  
Because of its very size,  
the KGB is sometimes slow to awaken.  
It is like a monster.  
If you can walk by carefully enough,  
it may just...  
...lift an eyelid and sniff at you.  
But if you awaken it....  
You have but one objective:  
You must reach  
the Krasnokholmskiy Bridge...  
...at precisely 10:30  
with your KGB tail in tow.  
They will see you make the rendezvous,  
and then you must obey...  
...the people you meet completely.  
Whatever they tell you to do...  
...you do.  
Mr. Cunningham.  
This to any Soviet policemen will appear  
to be a cheap transistor radio.  
It will even pick up  
the local radio stations.  
In actuality,  
this is your life in the air.  
Because once you're airborne,  
you have just two objectives:  
Avoid their tracking systems  
and find your refueling point.  
This little radio is a highly  
complex one-way homing device.  
It will be scanning the airwaves,  
seeking out a complicated set...  
...of alternating frequencies  
coming from Mother 1.  
The Soviets will be listening  
for any transmission up in the air.  
So this is your only link  
with the outside.  
Once it picks up the signal, you're within

100 miles of your refueling point.  
You will then follow it home.  
It must never leave your person.  
If you lose it, if it is confiscated,  
you'll never make it out of Russia.  
You will run out of fuel  
and you will die in the Arctic Ocean.  
Well, get up and walk around.  
Let's have a look at you.  
Mr. Sprague,  
can you be comfortable with it?  
-Yes.  
-Good.  
Bloody damn good.  
-The flight recorder.  
-Huh?  
The flight recorder.  
Oh, yes. I nearly forgot.  
Yes, one last thing.  
We just learned this from Baranovich:  
There will be a recording device  
in the cockpit.  
A "black box"  
I believe you Americans call it.  
It is voice-activated.  
It was installed for their test pilot.  
We'd like you to use it.  
In the event that, well....  
If it should happen, and we were  
somehow able to salvage the aircraft...  
...it might be possible to reconstruct  
enough from your diary, as it were...  
...to be helpful.  
-Sir?  
-Yes, yes, yes, I'm coming.  
Now, Mr. Gant, I suppose this is  
the end of the road for us.  
Actually, let me rephrase that.  
Let's say the beginning.  
I'll be with you every step  
of the way, Mitchell.  
Your papers.  
-Yes, Mr. Sprague?  
-Yes.



What is the nature of your  
visit to Moscow?

-Business.

-Yes, what business? Specifically.

Carburetors. Bearings.

It's all right in there.

Mind telling me what you're looking for?

You have been to the Soviet Union  
several times in the past few months.

Is that correct?

I've been here six times  
in the past few months.

Nothing like this has ever happened.

What's going on?

We apologize for the delay.

But every international airport  
has its own set of...

...unique problems.

I've been in every airport in the world.

I've never been insulted like this.

I'm a businessman.

I do business with your superiors.

-Are you threatening me, Mr. Sprague?

-No.

And why do you bring this?

Perhaps you are hoping to receive your  
stock market report in Moscow?

Moscow Hotel.

Stop over here.

Why here?

Across the square is Hotel Moscow.

Thanks. I'll walk.

Thank you, sir.

I agree. We cannot be too cautious  
at this late point in time.

You will pass that on?

Consider it done, sir. It will make  
a fine complement to the dog patrols.

Very good. Now, tell me...

...where will our traitors be  
in the hours before the flight?

The three scientists will be  
inside the hangar itself, sir.

Baranovich himself will be working on

the weapons system during the night.  
He will be working on the aircraft  
until takeoff.

Yes, comrade colonels.

And what of the others?

Natalia and Semelovsky will be concerned  
with refueling and loading the missiles.

Also, the rearward defense pod.

They are most familiar with the systems.

Not easy to replace.

I understand,

let them continue working.

-Your men will be ready.

-Yes, sir.

Our informers will be with them all night.

They'll be armed.

As long as they can recognize  
attempted sabotage when they see it.

-They do, comrade colonel.

-Good flight back, Viktor.

I want the Moscow end of their pipeline  
arrested at dawn. Wait until then.

I don't want our friends in Bilyarsk  
to disappear.

Very well, sir.

I will have their warehouse watched,  
and move in on your orders.

Very good, Dmitri.

I should like to see them  
before I fly to Bilyarsk.

Just to see their faces.

Your best Havana, please.

Mr. Sprague?

Yeah?

It's him.

I'm Leon Sprague.

How many followed you?

Three of them on foot  
and one car up above.

What are they doing now, Pavel?

The one on the steps  
has returned to the car.

The short one is wondering what to do...  
...since there are four of us now.

I think he is frightened.  
He'll call for assistance.  
We better get him out of here.  
-Take his cigar.  
-What?  
His cigar! Smoke it.  
Smoke it!  
Your papers, quickly.  
Your papers!  
Come on!  
Quickly, follow us to the metro station.  
Quickly!  
They have killed him, Stechko.  
They have killed Mr. Leon Sprague.  
Your name is Michael Lewis now.  
You are a tourist staying  
at the Warsaw Hotel.  
It is all arranged.  
Do not worry, just stay calm.  
Passport.  
-Mr. Lewis, you're American?  
-Yes.  
You do not look like yourself in this  
photograph. Your hair is darker.  
I was a little heavier then too.  
-St. Louis is a fine city, I understand.  
-Yes, nice summers.  
You do not appear to be  
in the best of health.  
I've had stomach problems.  
The food is....  
-The food at the Warsaw is not good?  
-It's fine. Just a little rich for me.  
Ah.  
Thank you, Mr. Lewis.  
You look terrible, Mr. Lewis.  
I watched your performance.  
It was not very convincing.  
-You kill Sprague and dump a cover--  
-Hide in the toilets, over there.  
Get yourself together.  
There will be more KGB on the way.  
We shall leave only when they are confident  
we have been searched three or four times.

Go.  
No.  
No. No.  
I'm busy.  
English or American? State Security.  
Your papers, please.  
-Can you wait a minute?  
-Very well. Quickly.  
Your papers, please.  
Are you ill, or maybe frightened?  
I've been having some  
stomach problems.  
Your papers are not in order.  
-They're in order. Look at them again.  
-No.  
They are not in order.  
You stupid American. You've killed him!  
He went for his gun. He knew.  
He's KGB!  
Do you understand what that means?  
Do you?  
Now go up the stairs,  
make your way quickly to the exit!  
If anyone stops you, obey them.  
Show them your papers.  
And pretend you are ill, as before.  
Understand?  
He said my papers werent in order.  
You damned fool!  
They are in order!  
I was stopped by the KGB.  
My papers also were in order!  
Now get out of here.  
When they find this,  
no one will be allowed to leave. Go!  
I'm an American, I didn't know  
what I was supposed to do.  
-You're an American?  
-Yes.  
Why are you out of line?  
Papers, please.  
You should wait in line, Mr. Lewis.  
You have been most uncooperative  
in your behavior.

-Well, I'm sorry--

-Well, well.

Let's see what we have here.

We don't want to...

...delay you unnecessarily, do we?

No.

You're staying at the Warsaw Hotel?

Wonder if we should call them?

See if someone there knows you.

No.

I think we shall trust you.

Your papers appear to be in order.

I apologize for any delay.

We are engaged in searching for  
criminals, shall we say?

But you are free to continue your  
nocturnal sightseeing tour of our city.

Thank you.

Good.

-Let's get the hell out of here.

-This way, down Kirov Street.

-They found him.

-Let's go.

He has to change, come on.

Your name is Boris Glazunov.

You are married and have two children:

A boy, 3, and a little girl, 4.

You live in a flat on the Mira Prospekt,  
and you work for this company.

You are my driver's mate.

This Boris Glazunov,

does he work for the cause too?

Glazunov stays home today.

You will take his place.

Like Leon Sprague did?

Does he die like Sprague?

Mr. Sprague served a purpose.

You must remember...

...Mr. Sprague was a smuggler in heroin.

He was not one of us.

Study these. You must know  
everything about Glazunov.

They would not look here.

Gant.

Can you fly that plane? Really fly it?

Yeah, I can fly it.

I'm the best there is.

Boris Glazunov?

How many?

One car and three men inside.

Keep watching.

Gant! We must leave now!

They are here. They are out front.

Quickly!

-Do they know?

-No.

These aren't the ones

who followed you last night.

These are KGB assigned to the plane.

-They are coming for me.

-For you?

They know about me.

You can use this?

-Yeah, I can use it.

-Good.

Don't, unless it's absolutely necessary.

Two of them just left, in a delivery truck.

What do you wish me to do, colonel?

Stay with them, but do not close up.

I'll check with Priabin.

Okay, sir.

What happens if they stop us?

If we are stopped,

there are other arrangements.

Other arrangements?

-We've got over 600 miles to go today.

-I am ordered to die, if necessary.

To ensure that you get away free.

What is it with you Jews, anyway?

Don't you ever get tired

of fighting city hall?

Fighting city hall, as you say, Mr. Gant,

is a freedom we don't enjoy.

Dr. Baranovich and Semelovsky...

...are amongst the most brilliant minds

in Soviet science.

They were born here.

This is their country too.

But when the Firefox project is to be completed, they will be sent somewhere. Just because of their religious heritage.

And you? What happens to you?

I don't know. I'm not a Jew, Mr. Gant.

Yes, colonel?

Priabin has just arrested Boris Glazunov at his flat.

-Who is in the van with Upenskoy?

-It should be Boris Glazunov.

Exactly.

It should be Glazunov, should it not?

If Upenskoy is making a delivery, should it not?

Yes, colonel.

The truck is heading out of the city. Shall we pick them up as ordered?

This is....

This is most curious.

Where is Upenskoy scheduled to make the delivery?

I don't know, but we can find out.

No! I want you to stay back.

Follow them until they reach the checkpoint.

Priabin is bringing in the other Jew. Perhaps he can tell me something.

Your photograph is being taken now.

The KGB is in the door.

As far as I can tell, that's Leon Sprague. You could not be mistaken, Mr. Hoskins?

I don't think so, inspector.

There's quite a bit of damage, of course. Indeed. Almost as if his former associate did not want him to be recognized.

-But why?

-I don't know, Mr. Hoskins.

Nor do you, I suppose.

I have a wife.

-Did I tell you that, Gant?

-No, you didn't mention it.

She is a Jew.

She is educated.

And still she married me.  
She's been in prison for 12 years...  
...for demonstrating against  
the invasion of Czechoslovakia.  
They do not treat her well in prison.  
I've spent the last 12 years  
trying to be worthy of her.  
-What is it?  
-Well, sir, I'm not sure.  
I'm sorry, sir.  
-You have killed him.  
-You pressed me!  
-He knew nothing, sir.  
-What?  
-What does that mean?  
-He was ordered to stay home today.  
That's all he knew.  
He would have told us under the pentathol  
if he had anything to tell.  
Very well, Dmitri.  
Contact the tail car.  
Have the van stopped.  
Semelovsky was at the gasoline station.  
I didn't speak to him but he was there.  
-He'll be waiting for me after this turnoff.  
-Yes, on that road.  
You're going to have to jump for it.  
I'll try not to let them overtake me  
for as long past the guard post as possible.  
Don't get yourself caught, now.  
Not if I can help it.  
Ready yourself.  
Don't say anything.  
Your words would be useless.  
Maybe even insulting.  
Just fly the damn plane.  
Dr. Semelovsky?  
You're late.  
It was a long walk.  
It's a question of the guards.  
A little longer...  
...and one of the guard posts would have  
sent someone to discover where I was.  
It's almost an hour since I checked in



with the first guard post.  
That is why the car has to, for all intents  
and purposes, be broken down.  
I am sorry I cannot be  
more accommodating.  
Won't they search it?  
It was searched already  
at the guard post.  
Now get in. Please, we must hurry.  
Quickly!  
Where have you been?  
You were checked through an hour ago.  
Damn, the car broke down.  
Much as the present Five-Year Plan  
has achieved...  
...it has not solved the problem  
of the Moskvitch.  
Open the hood.  
That engine's filthy.  
You're a scientist,  
you should be more careful, huh?  
They work us too hard.  
You are here, Mr. Gant.  
Mr. Gant, I'm Dr. Baranovich. Please....  
This is Natalia.  
So we have some food for you.  
Don't be afraid, you can speak.  
They're listening, but we've devised  
prerecorded tapes for them.  
Television noise, innocuous talk.  
Well, we do not have many hours left.  
Come, you must be hungry.  
There's another fence, electric.  
Guarded by these watchtowers.  
Inside the perimeter fence is only  
one other gate, through this fence.  
Here, on the other side.  
It is used only by security personnel.  
-It is the one you will use.  
-How?  
With bravado, naturally. And a little  
help from myself and the others.  
Don't worry about it. Do you smoke?  
-No, not for years.

-Learn again, now.  
These aren't even Russian cigarettes.  
Foreign cigarettes will prove  
as convincing as anything else.  
Even your papers.  
So you go from this gate here.  
You'll move to this area here,  
on the other side of the airstrip.  
This building is the hangar  
where the work is done.  
There's a corridor here,  
to the pilots' dressing rooms.  
Get there as soon as you can.  
Your pilot,  
Lieutenant Colonel Yuri Voskov...  
...will arrive some hours before the flight.  
You must be ready for him.  
What about visitors?  
I may be there three or four hours.  
Conceal Voskov's body.  
There are a number of lockers.  
All with good locks.  
Since you don't appear  
to be very much like Voskov...  
...except in general build,  
you'll be taking a shower.  
-For three hours?  
-You'll appear to be taking a shower.  
We'll be in the main hangar  
working on the aircraft.  
When the time draws near for our  
diversion to occur, you will dress.  
And the visor of your helmet  
will conceal your features.  
What is this diversion?  
Ah. You need not worry.  
An alarm will sound off when we're ready.  
What you see there will enable you  
to enter the cockpit...  
...and roll the aircraft out of the hangar.  
Here he is. If my colleague here  
were to submit some photographs...  
-...would it delay our priority search?  
-No, the computers can accommodate it.

Then as a favor to an old classmate...  
...please tell us who that man might be.  
Anyway, Aleksei, you were saying?  
We did not realize it was an agent  
until tonight.  
This man who died at the hands  
of his own associates, or so we believed...  
...isn't the same man  
who arrived two days ago.  
But, Aleksei, how does that make him  
a foreign agent?  
Don't you see? The man who arrived  
two days ago is a substitute...  
...covering his tracks  
with the smuggler's dead body.  
Sir.  
You should take a look  
at these photographs.  
These are his photographs, sir.  
It's the same man we are hunting,  
is it not?  
-The guard at the gate has been reinforced.  
-And the perimeter fence?  
The watchtowers are filled  
to overflowing...  
...and there are dog patrols  
inside the fence every 10 minutes now.  
This is not an element  
we had counted on.  
The added security  
is for the first secretary...  
...who's coming for the trials tomorrow.  
We learned of this only yesterday.  
Now it will be that much more difficult.  
But it can be done.  
Well, I'm not gonna walk back.  
You haven't been told,  
but there is a second prototype...  
...identical to the one you will fly.  
It is not to be used in the trials.  
It's not armed.  
It is, however, fully fueled and in a state  
of preparedness at all times.  
It could be weaponed

and sent up in perhaps an hour.  
But it couldn't overtake me.  
No, but it could be refueled in the air,  
where you cannot.  
In our little diversion,  
we must take the plane out.  
-How?  
-Fire.  
We'll set a fire in the hangar.  
The fuel lines to the second prototype  
must catch.  
Hmm.  
So you'll have only a few seconds.  
When you hear the alarm,  
you must immediately come down.  
Ignore what you see in the hangar.  
Just get your plane out.  
A fire is not very predictable.  
It's past 12.  
Natalia and I don't have to report

**until 2:**

Here are the coordinates that you must  
feed into the inertial navigator.  
They'll put you in contact  
with a commercial flight from Moscow.  
As soon as they've seen you  
and it appears that you're flying south...  
...feed in the second set.  
-What happens if I'm late?  
-You won't be, if we time it correctly.  
The second set will take you  
east through the Urals.  
But be extremely cautious of your speed  
during this phase.  
There are listening installations.  
"Big ears" we call them.  
Equipped to detect a supersonic footprint.  
What about this thought-controlled  
weapons system?  
Yes. You don't even  
need to press a button.  
Your thoughts are transmitted  
through the sensors of your helmet...

...into a computer. The rest is automatic.  
Now, Firefox is equipped with missiles  
which drop from under the fuselage.  
There are two cannon under the cockpit.  
There's the rear defense pod  
which fires explosives backwards.  
Which could knock out  
a potential missile.  
But this is very important, Mr. Gant,  
you must think in Russian.  
You can't think in English  
and transpose it.  
You must think in Russian.  
Do you think you can do that, Mr. Gant?  
Yes, I can.  
Yes, captain?  
Colonel. Sir, without your permission...  
...I've ordered a dog for the guards  
of Security Gate 3...  
-...to search the trees in the area.  
-Good thinking. Well done.  
-Well done.  
-Thank you, sir.  
Have a good flight, Colonel Voskov.  
Hell, you didnt do anything.  
Looks like the power transistor,  
Comrade Director Baranovich.  
Scrap it. Get another.  
From the experimental  
technical stores?  
Yes, Grosch.  
I've just come from  
Security Gate Number 3.  
The guards admitted a GRU officer  
four hours ago...  
...who matches one  
of the composite photographs.  
They made a positive identification.  
They say he ordered a dog patrol  
for the forest--  
Wait a minute.  
I have seen this man.  
And he confirmed those same orders  
to me. But where was it I saw him?

-Search the building.  
-It's been searched.  
Search it again, the hangar, every closet  
and stateroom in every building.  
He's here. I know it.  
Colonel Voskov?  
-Yeah, what do you want?  
-Emergency condition. Security check.  
Your identification, comrade colonel.  
I'm taking a shower now.  
I don't want to be disturbed.  
Sorry, but there's a saboteur  
on the loose. We're certain of it.  
Is this your idea, or is it Colonel  
Kontarsky's orders that I be disturbed?  
Sorry, comrade colonel.  
Dmitri, look at this!  
Get Bilyarsk on the phone. Quickly!  
The rearward defense pod...  
...is it completed, Maxim Ilyich?  
I completed the work two hours ago.  
I was just stalling.  
Good luck, my friend.  
Where are you off to?  
The lavatory.  
I want to know immediately.  
-It's Moscow.  
-I'll take it in there.  
Put out the dogs.  
He might be hiding in the hills.  
Sir, control was put on standby.  
The first secretary's car  
will arrive in 12 minutes.  
He wasn't to be here until 9.  
They left Moscow early, sir.  
No explanation.  
-Yes?  
-Colonel, we've got him.  
He's been identified.  
-Are you there?  
-Quickly, tell me!  
He's a pilot, Mitchell Gant.  
-An American.  
-American.

Yes, a member of their  
Aggressor squadron...  
...trained in combat  
with Russian machines.  
-Go on.  
-Obviously, sir...  
...he knows our planes  
as well as anyone.  
He'd be a good choice for sabotage  
or analysis of information.  
Perhaps he intends a close inspection  
of the MiG-31.  
He cannot be here for that!  
No, sir. Surely not.  
He couldn't hope to get away with it.  
Thank you, Dmitri. Well done.  
Arrest Baranovich and the others, now!  
No one is to be let near the aircraft!  
No one! You understand?  
No!  
Spread out, immediately!  
Get away from those aircraft, everyone!  
Dr. Baranovich, come forward immediately!  
They know.  
They know now.  
Baranovich, come forward!  
Colonel Voskov,  
I must have your identification.  
Colonel Voskov, I must have--!  
Mitchell Gant. Dont! Close the door!  
Sir.  
Sir, airborne early warning radar...  
...reports signs of a staggered  
sector scramble.  
Northern and southern squadrons,  
Red Air Force.  
Strike Command is monitoring signs  
of heavy code communications...  
...between Bilyarsk  
and the Red Banner Fleet.  
Predicted activity indicates  
a definite liftoff.  
He's up! Great mother of God, he's up!  
My dear Buckholz, it might be interesting

if you were to contact Washington...  
...and tell them to alert Mother 1.  
My pleasure. He's done it! He's off!  
Whoo-hoo!  
He did it.  
Damn, if he didnt actually do it.  
That should establish my route south.  
I might have cut it a little close,  
but you'll have heard that by now.  
This is making me feel a little strange.  
I'll make it short.  
No sign of missile or search activity  
at this time.  
I'm cruising south-southwest  
at 6-5-0 knots airspeed.  
I'll now engage the homing device.  
Homing device attached.  
I'll activate as soon as you reach  
the north coast if all goes well.  
Reporting that as far as I could tell,  
your contacts at Bilyarsk...  
...were eliminated.  
I don't know the extent  
of the damage to Prototype 2--  
-Mr. Gant?  
-That'll be Bilyarsk.  
Possibly Air Marshal Kutuzov.  
This is the first secretary.  
I'm speaking to the individual who has  
stolen the property of the U.S.S.R.  
-Can you hear me, Mr. Gant?  
-We're getting the royal treatment.  
-Yeah, go ahead, I'm listening.  
-Are you enjoying your ride, Mr. Gant?  
-You like our new toy?  
-It could be improved.  
Huh.  
-Your expert opinion, Mr. Gant?  
-You could say that.  
-Aren't you gonna threaten me?  
-I'll do so if that is what you wish.  
But first, I'll merely ask you  
to return what does not belong to you.  
Then you'll forget the whole thing?



I do not think that you would believe that, Mr. Gant.  
Would you? Well, of course not.  
All I'll say is, you'll live if you return immediately.  
It is calculated that no more than four minutes would be required...  
...before we could sight you back over Bilyarsk.  
-And the alternative?  
-You will not be allowed...  
...to hand over the MiG-31 to the security services of your country.  
I will not allow that to happen.  
I understand.  
I'm sorry, sir, but I can't do that.  
I see.  
You will not, of course, make it to wherever you are going.  
Goodbye, Mr. Gant.  
Okay, the bait's been swallowed.  
Let's head north to the Urals.  
You have considered, first secretary...  
...that this might be some kind of supreme bluff...  
...to distract us from looking to the north?  
While this single aircraft escapes to the south?  
No, they're simply paying the price for too many years of softness.  
Paying with an act of desperation such as this one.  
-You are absolutely certain?  
-I am.  
They know the potential of this plane, they know what it means.  
I would imagine if the roles had been reversed...  
...that we would have acted similarly.  
They will have arranged a refueling point for this madman somewhere.  
Once we have destroyed it and recovered the MiG...

...we will hear no more of this.  
Give us the Wolfpack map  
of the U.S.S.R. quickly!  
General Vladimirov.  
We've ordered a staggered  
sector scramble in two areas.  
We're putting up as many planes as we can  
along our southern borders.  
We merely have to wait  
until the plane is sighted again.  
It appears, in fact,  
that he is heading direct south.  
We should sight him within the hour.  
What is the range of the aircraft?  
Three thousand miles, maximum.  
His refueling point  
will be waiting for him...  
...presumably, either in the deserts  
of Turkey, here, or Greece.  
But, sir, we'll need to know  
only one thing from you.  
What do you wish done  
when the plane is sighted?  
Obliterate it.  
Completely.  
And that's the latest. Still all clear.  
Good. What's the track of Mother 1?  
-Temperature minus 31 and holding.  
-Communications just picked this up.  
Plain language, picked up by the operator  
on the Soviet airline frequency.  
-And?  
-He was spotted northwest of Volgograd.  
Almost tore the nose off the airliner  
before they lost him.  
The pilot was screaming his head off  
before they told him to keep quiet.  
Good show.  
Let's see what this thing can do.  
-He would not have made such an error.  
-General, you have something to add?  
I'm sorry, I was just thinking out loud.  
Perhaps you find us a hindrance...  
...and would prefer to continue

on your own?

Well, are you going to share with us what you have found, or not?

Sir, I've discovered...

...what I believe may be a flaw in our tactics.

If the record is accurate, then he's a fine pilot, perhaps even their best.

You must assume that he would have seen the airliner in plenty of time.

I believe, now, he was deliberately seen heading south to mislead us.

But wasn't it your plan, general, to order this net to the south?

I believe now that he is a better pilot than we first assumed.

Then where is he heading, if not south?

I do not have that information yet.

Tell me what it is.

It is the damage report on the second MiG.

As you are aware, the dissidents failed to put the aircraft out of commission.

How soon can it be ready to fly?

Perhaps an hour, perhaps earlier.

It must be cleaned, preflighted and armed.

Yes, I know that!

What about the pilot?

He is standing by.

He insists that he can still fly.

Positive sound trace.

Installation at Orsk.

Yes? What did you say?

There has been an unidentified sound trace...

...from an aircraft traveling at more than Mach 2.

Picked up west of Orsk.

Yes. Yes, of course. We have him now.

Give me a projection of the Urals and as much of the north as you can.

And get me confirmation of that report.

Trace confirmed, sir.

Aircraft which refused  
a demand for identification...  
...heading northeast into the mountains.  
They lost the trace in 30 seconds  
but they confirm heading and speed.  
Well, Vladimirov?  
If you look at the map,  
I'll explain my deductions.  
He's indeed heading north...  
...along this track here,  
utilizing the eastern slopes of the Urals.  
Apparently an effort to mask himself  
from visual and sound detection.  
Quite clever.  
But if he follows the Urals...  
...then he will have to take  
a sighting somewhere.  
Most likely the Gulf of Ob or Kara.  
There we can track him, sir,  
despite his radar immunity.  
-How?  
-By heat source, his exhaust.  
Yes.  
Alert Wolfpack squadrons, north coast.  
Alert all missile sites  
along the first Firechain.  
Instruct them to train their weapons' aiming  
systems ahead of the expected path...  
...and await further orders.  
The infrared guidance system  
is not the most accurate means of aiming.  
It may be necessary for a Soviet aircraft  
to act as a target for the missiles.  
Will you give that order?  
Of course.  
Very well, then the American  
is about to enter the trap.  
Should be reaching the Gulf of Kara  
by now. Visibility's pretty bad.  
Just turned you guys on.  
Let's hope it works.  
We've got company.  
Single aircraft to the starboard.  
Probably a Badger,

reconnaissance class.  
Gonna take her up.  
I doubt if she'll see me.  
Uh-oh.  
I've got three ground missiles  
homing in on my exhaust.  
The way to go is to make the Badger  
hotter than me.

**Contact time:**

Weapons armed.  
Five seconds till contact.  
Four seconds.  
Helmet firing system locked in.  
Two seconds.  
It's going to work.  
Well, that's it.  
We might as well all go home.  
-We dont know.  
-The hell we don't know!  
You tell me. An explosion over  
the Kara Gulf. Wycombe hears it.  
Our reconnaissance planes report it.  
We don't know he's lost!  
Really? What was all that coded stuff  
we intercepted...  
...between Bilyarsk  
and the Firechain stations?  
They got him.  
They blew his ass right out of the sky!  
I don't know.  
That could mean they didn't get him.  
I think that we should notify Mother 1  
to begin transmitting the signal.  
Right, it's time. Arthur?  
Yeah.  
Great, I just hit a spy trawler.  
Passed right over its head.  
Yeah, they spotted me.  
I'm gonna take her low  
to avoid an infrared fix.  
It is you who's responsible,  
General Vladimirov!  
You who has failed

in bringing down the MiG-31!  
I--  
I am trying, first secretary.  
What about your plan?  
This trap, as you called it?  
And it failed, general!  
We must proceed.  
-Amplify the position of the Riga, please?  
-Sir.  
Now, a computer projection  
of the new heading based on the sighting.  
-Instruct the Riga to hold position.  
-Sir.  
Set a general alert  
to all ships of the Red Banner Fleet.  
Prepare them for the alteration of Gant's  
suspected course. Give them that course.  
What is the prediction  
of Gant's fuel supply?  
The computer predicts  
less than 320 kilometers, sir.  
-What are your thoughts, general?  
-I am thinking, first secretary...  
...that he has not enough fuel  
to reach the polar pack.  
He'll have to fly very low and at  
a greatly reduced speed to conserve fuel.  
On his present course...  
...he should pass within visual range  
of the missile cruiser Riga.  
I'm on reserve tanks now.  
Switched in a few minutes ago.  
Don't know how much time I've got left.  
Not much, I suppose.  
Mother 1 never made it.  
Well, let's just say we gave it  
one hell of a try.  
Missile cruiser, contact dead ahead.  
-Target is not taking avoiding action.  
-He will.  
Can't take evasive action.  
I'm too low on fuel.  
I'm going in.  
Let's see what this baby can do.

Now you come.  
Homing device just activated.  
Estimated 1-4-0 miles out.  
ECM picking up infrared detection beams.  
They've got me locked on.  
I'm coming in at 20 feet.  
Weapons system armed.  
Rear defense system engaged.  
I hope it burns up the sky.  
There she is.  
Picking up choppers now.  
I'll take one out.  
Four missiles launched.  
Got two of them.  
Boy, is this a machine!  
You do not need to be reminded of  
the absolute crisis that we face here.  
The price of failure,  
Colonel Voskov, for you...  
...for many in this room, would be great.  
The American is a dead man,  
first secretary.  
Good.  
Pass the order to the tower.  
You do not seem to agree with  
the sending of the second prototype.  
-I am in agreement.  
-Then, what then?  
Your cruiser is in direct line,  
is it not, general?  
Perhaps you're so confident  
that it can destroy the MiG?  
-No, I am not that confident.  
-What are you confident of?  
There must be something  
you are used to do.  
-Sir, message from the Riga.  
-What is it?  
Contact made with unidentified aircraft.  
Missiles fired.  
-And?  
-The aircraft was carrying...  
...some kind of drone tail unit  
which detached and ignited.

So, what do you intend to do now,  
General Vladimirov?  
First priority is to order  
takeoff of the MiG.  
Yes, that is done, general. And next?  
Order the Riga to head north in the wake  
of the MiG at all possible speed.  
Good. And what else?  
Scramble the Polar Search  
squadrons immediately.  
Instruct them to proceed  
to the predicted landfall of the MiG...  
...on the permanent ice pack.  
Order them to begin searching  
for any possible landing sites.  
The permanent ice pack,  
General Vladimirov?  
Yes, it is the only place he can  
possibly refuel now.  
There is no mother vessel.  
Sir, the MiG is approaching takeoff.  
Let us hope that we are  
more successful this time.  
Contact point, 90 miles. I'm flying on air.  
Estimated ditch point,  
60 miles maximum.  
Don't know if I have the fuel for it,  
but I'm taking her up.  
Gonna try to glide her in.  
Fourteen thousand and climbing.  
Polar pack is in sight now.  
We just received this, transmitted  
with the latest weather report.  
My God.  
My God, he must be flying on vapor.  
-Well?  
-Well.  
You're a bit of an optimist, aren't you?  
We're releasing decoys  
into the North Cape area.  
We just heard from Mother 1.  
He was spotted five minutes ago.  
He's alive?  
-Where is he now?



-Four miles.  
Slightly over 13,000 feet.  
-Still on the same bearing?  
-Yes, sir.  
Can he see the floe?  
He will in a second.  
Cloud base is 13,500.  
Let's surprise him, gentlemen.  
Prepare to surface.  
I've got visibility again...  
...but I'm not showing anything.  
Estimated three miles to target.  
Looks like I'm going swimming.  
I don't believe it.  
-He's coming in a hurry.  
-He must know what he's doing.  
Okay, gentlemen.  
I cant use the brakes.  
It's gonna be close.  
Simple.  
Let's get those hose lines down here.  
Let's go, move!  
Move it!  
Check the nose nozzles.  
Well, you took long enough.  
Check the tires and the windshield,  
will you?  
When were they sighted exactly?  
The submarines appeared seven  
minutes ago south of Spitsbergen.  
Airplanes were just sighted.  
Well, then, there can be on question!  
They have shown us their hand.  
What is the latest from  
the Polar squadrons?  
Still negative.  
No landing sites or fuel dumps  
reported on the permanent pack.  
Come, come, Vladimirov.  
Is it so difficult to accept?  
You were simply matched against  
inferior minds. And you have won.  
There is no runway carved out of the ice.  
There is no mystical beast

waiting to save the American.  
They are here! Now...  
...order all units into the North Cape area!  
Everything you have!  
Captain!  
We have a surface radar contact  
to the south of us.  
-What?  
-Sixty miles out, constant bearing...  
...decreasing range,  
a collision course straight for us.  
-Any idea who it is?  
-Range is too far for a computer image.  
That cruiser I flew over.  
It's supposed to be headed  
for the decoy area.  
That's what they're supposed to be doing,  
but somebody's been on my back.  
There goes the neighborhood. If we can  
see them, they damn well can see us!  
Sir! The Riga is picking up  
a radar contact...  
...which they believe to be  
too strong to be just ice.  
They are showing it to be just short  
of the permanent pack...  
...but in a direct line with the American's  
last reported flight path.  
And they are awaiting orders.  
In my estimation, this contact  
is worth investigation.  
In your estimation?  
I believe I understand how they intend  
to refuel the MiG at sea.  
They have used-- Are using  
a large ice floe as a runway.  
The refueling ship is undoubtedly  
a submarine.  
That is the sonar contact  
the Riga has made.  
What, the aircraft has landed,  
Vladimirov?  
Yes, the aircraft has landed.  
And how would you choose to

investigate this sonar contact?  
Recall the Riga's helicopters at once...  
...and send them  
to the contact source point.  
It would take 20 minutes.  
Lieutenant Colonel Voskov reporting.  
He has just made contact with  
the refueling tanker over Novaya Zemlya...  
...and is awaiting orders.  
-He could be there in two minutes.  
-No!  
You may send the helicopters  
after this dubious sonar contact.  
But not the MiG!  
He must proceed to the North Cape at once!  
Vladimirov to Voskov.  
Vladimirov to Voskov.  
Voskov over.  
Proceed to the North Cape  
area as soon as refueling is completed.  
-Repeat your message, please.  
-I said North Cape.  
They thought you'd need replacements.  
Your bosses got these from a MiG-25  
they borrowed from Syria.  
-What's the news on our friends?  
-Trouble.  
Radar contact.  
Two aircraft heading this way.  
They were heading west  
into the decoy area.  
Yeah. Helicopters from that cruiser.  
You know how to make trouble  
for me, Gant. You really do.  
-How long before they get here?  
-Eight minutes.  
Commence Operation Harmless.  
Commence Operation Harmless.  
We've got eight minutes, maybe less.  
Move it!  
-Contact is confirmed.  
-Calm yourself.  
-Calm myself?  
-Yes, calm yourself.

How can I be calm when  
your stupidity-- Stupidity!  
--is losing that aircraft to the Americans?  
You know what this man Gant is!  
He could land on an ice floe  
and take off again.  
You must act, first secretary!  
Very well, Vladimirov.  
What is it you require?  
The immediate recall of the second MiG  
from the North Cape rendezvous.  
Operation Harmless. Fleischer.

**ETA:**

All right, this is it.  
I want you to call out exact speed  
and distance every 30 seconds.  
Yes, sir.  
-She's all fired up and ready to go, sir.  
-You'll have to steam me a runway.  
-Can you do that in three minutes?  
-That's impossible, major. Why?  
Surface snow is too hard  
on the landing gear.  
-Get to it, Peck.  
-Yes, sir.  
I want steam hoses up here  
on the double!  
-They'll never make it.  
-They'll make it.  
Sir, they want identification immediately.  
The hell they do.  
You know the routine. Stall them.  
They want to speak to you, sir.  
-Tell them I'm taking temperature readings.  
-Yes, sir.  
We're asking for your cooperation.  
We want identification  
from the superior officer.  
Sorry, but as I said...  
...the captain is involved in an important  
experiment at the other end of the floe.  
All right, team. Come on, you guys!  
Move it! Let's go!

The mans got a plane to catch!

-You've gotta go now.

-I'm worried about you guys.

-They'll be watching my heat trail.

-We're in international waters.

As long as you're out of here when they  
get here. You will be, won't you?

-So fast you can't believe it.

-You better be right.

**ETA:**

asking for you, sir. They want convincing.

-I haven't done a very good job.

-The hell with that.

Just keep stalling them.

Okay, secure this detail!

-So long, captain. Thanks.

-Get out of here, you bum.

**-ETA:**

-Gotcha.

Guys, look alive! We're a weather party!

Don't just stand there!

Come on,

we're the greeting party. Here they come.

-We're friendly. Wave, Stewart.

-Wave?

Sixteen thousand feet.

New coordinates punched in.

Radar says all clear.

Nothing can touch us now.

I'll be seeing you in a couple hours.

Better ice up a cold one.

Missiles avoided.

Where did they come from?

I don't know what it is.

I'm a sitting duck.

The second Firefox.

Fire rearward missile.

Come on, damn it, now!

You must think in Russian.

Think in Russian.

Punching in new coordinates.

I'm coming home.