

The Garden of Eden

In the murky world of Cold War espionage and double agents, Harry Eden is tasked with investigating the mystery of a British agent murdered in cold blood behind the Iron Curtain. Before long Harry realises he can trust no one and soon has to make deadly decisions to ensure his own survival.

Harry Eden read the encrypted note, placed it into the shredder and walked over to the large window that looked out across Moscow from his office in the British Embassy. It was a sullen city, he mused, that reflected Muscovites generally. Yet Eva was different. She'd always displayed an animated innocence that was so lacking in other Russians.

Slung on his jacket, Harry sighed and cursed the day the Service had ever posted him to Moscow. Although he was there under the official guise of Cultural Attaché to Her Majesty's Government in the Soviet Union, Moscow was still a tough posting - even without the whole damn Odessa debacle turning good friends into sworn enemies overnight.

"It's serious, Harry boy," Bernard Adams, Operations Director, had said furtively a few weeks earlier, over gin in the Secure Room. "This goes beyond some sinner leaking details about our operations to the Boris. Someone in the Service has totally lost the faith, Harry, someone's carrying out Boris's dirty work for them!"

"I don't understand," Harry replied, shocked.

Adams had held his eye for a moment, as if appraising Harry's own loyalty, before finally saying, "I fear a British finger pulled the trigger in Odessa Harry. One of our own is killing for the Soviets and I need you to find the snake before he poisons the entire damned Service here in Moscow!"

"But why me Bernard?"

"You're discreet Harry, always have been. We can't risk this getting back to bloody interfering mandarins in Whitehall. One sniff and they'll insist on some official inquisition which will crucify us all. No-one is pure, Harry - we're all tainted by sin in some way. The Service might try and be holier than thou but it's not perfect. So I'm relying on you to sort this, Harry."

It was only a short walk to Red Square, where Harry was meeting Eva, but he took the usual precaution of doubling back on himself a number of times. By the time he reached it he was confident he hadn't been followed.

The Square was already crowded for the annual Victory in Europe parade. Russians always jokingly called the parade Brezhnev's Carnival - a Mardi Gras where tanks, troops and nuclear warheads took the place of dancers, costumes and pageant queens.

Harry undertook one final reconnaissance sweep before removing a lollipop from his jacket pocket and placing it in his mouth. This was his usual signal to Eva to confirm it was safe to approach.

Already columns of stern faced soldiers were lining the parade route in front of him. With no sign of Eva, Harry reflected upon the Odessa Operation as he waited. It'd been a month prior when the Service received unverified intelligence suggesting the Soviets were getting jumpy about an unidentified high-ranking Naval Commander who was preparing to defect. Adams took the reports seriously and authorised a field operative to go down to Odessa, to locate the rogue Soviet and bring him in. But something went wrong and both ended up dead in an alleyway near the naval base, with bullets in the back of their heads, execution style.

"Harry," said a soft voice beside him, breaking his thoughts.

He turned to see a smiling Eva, stood amongst the cheering crowds and he was struck by how she still looked as beautiful as the night he had first set eyes upon her. It had been a post-Bolshoi drinks reception and immediately he knew they'd become lovers. He was even more certain he would turn her, for her eyes betrayed the look of a woman eager to find in life what communism could no longer offer her.

The crowd around them roared, as General Secretary Brezhnev emerged out onto the Kremlin balcony and military jets flew overhead in his honour.

"Has there been any chatter about Odessa?" Harry asked, taking the lollipop from his mouth.

The smile faded from Eva's face. "Business straight away Harry? You can't even say hello?"

He thought back to the night they'd made love for the first time, the beauty of her nakedness taking his breath away. She had said she loved him as they both eagerly sought redemption in one another. Two lonely people lost in worlds they could not control.

"Just answer the question, Eva," he said, irritated.

"No Harry, no one is talking. The Party still insists no incident ever took place and no Naval Officer is missing. But I'm scared darling, scared they'll uncover I passed you the Odessa intelligence. You've no idea what they do to traitors. I can't keep living this hell. When are you going to get me out to London?"

"Soon," Harry replied, as tanks rumbled by.

"You promised me that the night before you went down to Odessa..."

"I told you," he hissed, his nostrils flaring. "I never went down to Odessa, you understand Eva? You must never mention me in relation to Odessa again!" His tone softened. "Look, I promise, I'll get you out soon, but I have to sort my garden here first." He put his hand into a trouser pocket and pulled out a lollipop. "Here, have one, go home, forget about all about Odessa and I'll be in touch soon."

Eva took it. "You and your silly lollipops Harry! What kind is it?"

"Apple."

"I love you Harry."

He smiled. "Go, before you're seen."

Back at the Embassy Harry took a file from his safe. It was a Soviet intelligence report that Eva had previously sourced. It confirmed the Odessa misinformation had enabled them to identify the high level defector. It also went on to confirm that the executions had been undertaken by a Soviet mole in the British Embassy codenamed *Zmeya*, or *Snake* in English.

Harry stood, crossed the office and placed the report into the shredder. Watching, as the evidence disappeared, he smiled and wondered how long it would take before the arsenic laced lollipop worked through Eva's digestive system. If only Adams could be tempted by one too.