

BOUND FOR MIDNIGHT

By Dave Parkin

ACT 1:

JOSEPH TURGENEV, (60s) is a cranky Russian weapons designer and a drunk. He and his wife PETYA, to whom he is hostile and abusive, sit at a Laundromat, nervous for reasons unknown.

A LAUNDRY TRUCK DRIVER with thick glasses pulls his rig through a tight alley to make a delivery. He jumps out of the cab, hands his paperwork to the LAUNDROMAT MANAGER like he seems to have done a thousand times before, jokes about the local football team for a minute, and excuses himself to take a leak up front.

As he passes Joseph and Petya sitting up front, the Driver tips his hat and says, "I bet the weather clears by noon." For some reason, this seems to make the couple nervous. As the Driver moves past a stack of pressed uniforms, he bumps into them and they fall before he enters the bathroom.

When the Driver returns, Joseph and Petya have gone and the manager kneels on the floor arranging the uniforms that fell. He apologizes, thinking he may have bumped the pile on his way to the can. He helps restack the clothing, shakes the manager's hand, and heads back to his truck.

As the Driver passes through the delivery dock, he uses his foot to erase two sets of footprints in the snow, leading to the back of his truck.

He sits down in the cab and puts the keys in the ignition. He pauses, however, when he notices another set of prints leading out of the alley. Instantly, the Driver jumps from the truck and it EXPLODES behind him!

A crowd gathers as LAZARWOLFE, a feared Russian agent appears down the alley with his men. He approaches the burning truck and pulls the burned and bloodied Joseph from the back of the back. The man immediately tells the agents that his wife is the one they really want. Lazarwolfe ignores Joseph and orders his agents to spray the burning truck with bullets, which kills the Laundromat manager when he appears from inside.

Inside the building, the Driver keeps low, careful to stay out of sight. He pulls off his uniform, cap, and thick glasses, steals street clothes from a large dryer, and ducks outside through the gathering crowd.

In new clothes, and shaggy hair, the Driver looks totally unrecognizable. He watches for a moment as people begin to snap photos, then wanders off into the streets and disappears.

This is EDWARD (40s). He's not actually a truck driver, he's not even Russian, but he wears the life carefully tailored to hide the masterful game he plays with those surrounding him. Edward is a spy and a master of disguise. He was at the Laundromat to pull Joseph and Petya out of Russia and deliver them to a US Intelligence officer in Minsk. The weapons designer and his wife had gone rogue but, like most of his professional work, Joseph was sloppy.

As Edward disappears into the bleak streets of the small Russian town, he has no idea that he wasn't the only one to evade capture that day. Petya hides down the alley, crying, with a singed coat and a bloody nose. She has somehow sidestepped the flames and the gunfire but she is now alone and scared, a wanted traitor with nobody to help her.

In the US, we meet MAISIE GRAHAM (18), a student of Russian studies. As she reads the Russian news in the computer lab at school, she finds an article about the attack at the Laundromat. As she flips through the story, she spots Edward in the one of the photos. Suddenly nervous, Maisie prints the photo, packs her bags, and buys a ticket to Russia.

Back in Russia Lazarwolfe interrogates Joseph in a secret location. He is a brutal and unfeeling man who only cares about his mission. Through his harsh interrogation, Lazarwolfe comes to realize that Joseph doesn't know as much about the guided missiles he had supposedly designed, as he should. Turns out, the man is nothing but a useless drunk and a coward. Joseph gives up Petya, claiming she is the real designer who has been doing his work for him for years.

One of Lazarwolfe's men interrupts him to report that no bodies were found in the laundry truck. Joseph offers to help him track Petya down if Lazarwolfe will spare his life but Lazarwolfe kills the coward, disgusted with his incompetence. He orders his men to go after Petya and whoever was driving the truck.

Edward makes his way east disguised as an orthodox priest. He calls to report in and receives intelligence that Lazarwolfe is still looking for the weapons designer. Edward saw Joseph arrested so this means Petya was the real designer and that she is still alive!

Edward learns that Petya is on a train to Barisov, the town where Edward lives. Edward hangs up the phone and races to the station, pulling off his disguise as he goes.

In the train, Maisie sits, her hands shaking as she tucks her curly red hair behind her ear. She sits huddled against the fogged window as the train approaches its next

stop. She picks up a WORN PHOTOGRAPH OF EDWARD, YOUNGER, HAPPIER, WITH A LITTLE GIRL WITH RED HAIR ON HIS LAP and a printout of the photo of a burning laundry truck with Edward looking on from the crowd.

Maisie opens her passport, filled with stamps, and takes out folded a piece of paper inscribed with a list of town names, most of them crossed out. She crosses off a name on the list, the last stop, and taps the name below it with her pen, this stop... Barisov.

As the train slows, Maisie stands with a sigh. She passes Petya sitting four rows back, just as nervous, just as lost, trying to find the courage to stand and show her face to the prying eyes searching for her.

Edward waits outside for Petya to arrive. He keeps his eye out for anyone who could be looking for him. For all he knows, they are all looking for him.

Tensions rise when the train stops and the doors open. While Edward waits for Petya to disembark, Maisie approaches him. She surprises him and he reacts, violently grabbing her coat!

He stops when he sees her face. It can't be... This is not the time for such a shock. Maisie reveals that she is Edward's daughter whom he hasn't seen in ten years. She has been looking for him since her mother died two years ago. Joseph is thrown and confused. In that moment, a photograph is snapped in the crowd and, that quickly, Edward's cover is blown.

Edward grabs Maisie and pulls her back into the train where he finds Petya about to exit. He pulls the two women into a cabin where they sit together as Edward tries to explain himself to his daughter. By the way he talks, Maisie thinks Edward is insane and tries to run away.

She is stopped when the Russian agents from the station enter the cabin and Edward fights them off. Petya helps Edward kill the men, revealing that, though she is a novice when it comes to the spy game, she has seen the ugliness of the world before.

Maisie is shaken by the shock of watching her father, who she hasn't seen since she was a little girl, murder a couple of strangers.

Trying to ensure his daughter's safety, Edward rethinks his mission. He explains that the enemy has Maisie's picture now. If she wants to survive, she has to stay with him. They have to get out of Russia but to do so, she must learn to be a spy.

ACT 2:

In the dining car, Edward begins training Maisie in the art of espionage. While showing her how to stealthily search for people who might mean them harm, Maisie discovers another agent in the car! The man attacks and Edward puts him down just as the train reaches its next stop.

Lazarwolfe and his agents board at the next stop and begin sweeping the cars as the train slowly begins heads into the countryside. Staying ahead of him, Edward, Petya, and Maisie are forced to jump as the train races through the grassland, narrowly escaping the agents.

Edward, Maisie, and Petya approach a local farm. Edward assigns Maisie to steal clothes off the laundry line and Petya to steal food as he steals the farmer's car. Maisie protests, she doesn't like the idea of stealing from an innocent farmer.

Maisie and Edward are at odds. Deep down, she just wants a father. She didn't ask for any of this. Edward needs to be a spy to keep them alive, which supersedes any moral hang-ups Maisie may have. Petya agrees, but doesn't like being caught in the middle of a family squabble, she's just trying to survive.

Reluctantly, Maisie pulls off the heist and jumps in the car as Edward drives off. When the FARMER spots them, he chases them down the lane and fires a SHOT, hitting the rear-mounted engine before the car races off across the Russian countryside.

After they are gone, the Farmer finds money clipped to the clothesline from which Maisie took the clothes.

After a few hours of driving, the bullet hole finally causes the car's engine to die. As Petya watches the sun set over the middle of nowhere, she shares her idea of living out the rest of her days in peace. She never had a loving family growing up, and her husband never allowed them to have kids. Now, all she longs for is a life free of death and lies, painting and watching the sunset someplace green.

They wave down SIMON, an old man driving with his son JACOBI. Edward uses the clothes they stole to disguise he, Maisie, and Petya. He tells Simon that Petya is his wife and Maisie is their mute daughter. They are on their way to visit his sick mother-in-law in Poltava but the family car died. As the men offer to help, Simon sees the bullet hole in the engine but says nothing. He invites the strangers to his home for dinner and a warm bed for the night.

Lazarwolfe arrives at the farm Edward, Maisie, and Petya had robbed. The Farmer shows him the money Maisie left and Lazarwolfe spots immediately that it came from an airport currency exchange. He knows that the girl traveling with Edward is American. We understand Lazarwolfe has done his homework on Edward when he

figures the mysterious companion must be his daughter. She has finally found him, and more importantly, she's not a spy so she will be slowing him down.

At the dinner table, Jacobi seems troubled. He begins asking questions, which makes Maisie uncomfortable but Simon doesn't seem to notice as he drones on about his favorite horse, who's leather he used to make his furniture.

Edward, Maisie, and Petya must share a room and, to keep up the cover, Edward and Petya must share a bed.

Maisie takes a bath. As she exits the bathroom, Jacobi corners her. He believes she can talk and attempts to get her to blow her cover. He drills her with questions to which she cannot keep up. Maisie begins to panic and lets a tiny sound escape her lips but Petya rescues her before she totally blows their cover (maybe?).

Maisie is shaken. Edward and Petya talk to her quietly in their room. She learns why Petya is defecting (she understands the danger of the cruise missile she has designed). Maisie realizes the importance of the mission and of her father's role.

Suddenly, Edward notices something strange outside and tells Maisie and Petya to get dressed.

There's a knock on the door. Simon answers to find Lazarwolfe and his men outside. Lazarwolfe interrogates the old man about his houseguests. Simon keeps changing the subject to his favorite horse and his furniture until Jacobi runs in and announces that the spies have just stolen his father's truck!

Lazarwolfe and his men take off after the spies. They leave Jacobi and Simon but the Commander promises to return with more questions about why Simon is in the business of harboring spies.

After they leave, Jacobi curses his father for being disloyal. Simon curses his son for being a rat, and inviting the authorities into their home and place of business when Jacobi knows they themselves aren't exactly, "innocent" in the eyes of Russian law.

In Simon's truck, Edward, Maisie and Petya race through farms, across rivers, and the open planes of Eastern Russia. Lazarwolfe and his men follow closely behind in a trio of cars. As Edward takes the truck onto an old bridge crossing a wide river, the pursuers suddenly stop behind them.

Maisie is relieved but Petya becomes suspicious. She tells Edward to stop the truck. As Petya steps out onto the bridge, it partially collapses, trapping them above the river!

Lazarwolfe rolls a grenade across the ancient planks and it EXPLODES, breaking the bridge apart and sending Petya and the truck into the water!

As Petya struggles to save herself, a hand reaches for her above the surface. She takes the hand and Lazarwolfe pulls her to safety. Petya shivers in silence as they wait for Edward and Maisie to appear but it seems they have sunken along with the truck. After Lazarwolfe is confident they have died beneath the water, he and his men take Petya and drive away.

Beneath the water, Edward and Maisie hide inside an empty fuel tank in the bed of Simon's truck. Turns out, Edward used his heightened attention to detail to deduce that Simon and his son are smugglers. The hidden compartment in the truck is airtight and full of illegal clothing and supplies that keep them safe. Edward holds Maisie and, in this tight dark space at the bottom of a freezing river, she finally finds the father she's been searching for all these years.

As they discuss how they're going to get out, the truck begins to move and shake. They hear the sound of an engine and men's voices and figure Lazarwolfe and his men are pulling the truck from the water. Edward takes the few moments before they are captured to school Maisie on how to cope with torture. Of course, she is terrified.

When the compartment is opened, however, Edward and Maisie roll out to greet Simon and Jacobi on the lakeshore. Simon makes Jacobi apologize for ratting them out and offers whatever he can to help. Now that they have been associated with spies, Simon says that, it is time for them to leave Russia as well. Edward apologizes for the trouble but Simon waves this off, telling him they would have had been caught sooner or later and he had a plan in place for just such an occasion.

Edward asks if they have room for two more but Maisie interrupts. She's not going anywhere until they finish Edward's mission and get Petya out of danger. Maisie's loyalty isn't to her country but to Petya, with whom they have grown so close. As far as she is concerned, there is no way they can leave her behind. Edward smiles and agrees, proud of his daughter's selflessness.

Simon offers to help. Jacobi complains but his father smacks him across the back of the head and tells them that none of them would be in this situation if it weren't for him.

At Simon's house, Edward teaches them about the art of disguise. He teaches them that one can change their appearance simply by the way they stand, the way they walk, and the way they hold their shoulders.

He takes off a strap around his waist that holds a collection of glasses, wigs, fake teeth, and fake facial hair. He tells them that a disguise is like an onion, a series of transparent layers, one on top of the other, that slowly erase the person underneath. If need be, the layers can be shed or rearranged to change yet again.

He explains that, one of the best ways to disappear is as servants among the upper class. "It's easiest to hide among people who are too snobby to pay attention, and too proud to believe they are capable of deception." With this training, and a few tricks up their sleeves, they head across the countryside together.

Petya is put on a train to the heart of Russia. Edward, Maisie, Simon, and Jacobi board the same train disguised as a doctor, a nurse, their patient, and his porter.

On the train, Maisie shows Jacobi some generosity by helping to adjust his tie. In this moment, she appears human and caring. Even though they don't speak the same language, he seems to understand her better.

When the train stops and Petya is taken into the station, Edward and Maisie attempt to rescue her but Edward is discovered and captured. Just before Maisie is found, Jacobi steps in and distracts the agents, luring them back onto the train.

Maisie disappears by using Edward's advice and shedding a layer of her disguise to become someone else and, as the train continues, she gives Jacobi and Simon a thankful nod through the window as they disappear down the line. Now, she must use her limited training to rescue Petya and her father by herself.

ACT 3:

Edward and Petya are taken to a Russian stronghold. Edward is strapped to a table where Lazarwolfe plans to torture him. He reveals to Edward that he used the money Maisie left on the farmer's laundry line to find out who he really is, a spy that doesn't have such a squeaky clean history.

Years ago, while working undercover in the Russian mob, Edward had stolen money that came back to bite the operation and their cover was blown. The American Government labeled Edward a "rogue agent," and erased his file. This is why he's been in hiding for ten years, keeping clear of his daughter, who would be in danger if the wrong people were to discover her existence. This mission to get Petya out of Russia was Edward's last chance to get back in the good graces of the CIA, to go home, and to be with his daughter again... but he has failed. At this, Lazarwolfe begins torturing Edward.

When Maisie arrives at the stronghold, now disguised as a janitor, a GUARD watching Petya corners her and drills her just like Jacobi did at his house. Maisie still can't keep up with the questioning, but this time, she doesn't panic. She calmly asks a question that shuts the guy down and gets her inside Petya's cellblock.

As Lazarwolfe tortures Edward, he gives him a speech about how there is no way to tell who is the "good guy" between their sides, as they both do atrocious things to each other. The Commander wants to know where Edward's daughter is but he stays strong and keeps his mouth shut.

Frustrated, Lazarwolfe steps into the hallway and yells at the TWO GUARDS outside the room. He tells them he is not to be bothered, no matter what, then asks them to help him inside and slams the door.

Frightened of Lazarwolfe, the two guards stop TWO OTHER GUARDS walking down the hall and tell them the commander needs their help inside.

The two guards enter the room as the commander continues his speech. Suddenly, the alarm sounds, announcing that Petya has escaped.

As the guards flood the stronghold, Lazarwolfe looks to Edward with a smile, now he knows where his daughter is. The Commander says he's not worried, however, "They're just women and they're not professionals. They will be found and join Edward on his table soon enough.

Lazarwolfe asks the guards behind him for a tool on the table by the door. Reluctantly, one of the guards picks up the tool and approaches. Before he hands it to the Commander, however, he points a gun at Lazarwolfe's neck. The guards reveal themselves as Maisie and Petya in disguise. When she pulls off her cap, Maisie says, "It's easiest to hide among people who are too proud to believe they are capable of deception."

They free Edward and tie Lazarwolfe to the torture table. Edward stands over the Commander, now fully capable of dealing the same torture that was done to him. Terrified, Lazarwolfe breaks down instantly, revealing that he is nowhere near as brave as Edward. Calmly, Edward hands Lazarwolfe his radio and tells him to report that the spies have escaped through the sewers.

After Lazarwolfe complies, Edward tells the Commander that he is right; there is no difference between the two sides. They will always spy on each other and always do heinous things for their cause, but there IS a difference between Edward and Lazarwolfe... "Mercy" is what separates the two of us," Edward says, "And that is what makes me the, 'good guy.'" Edward leaves without laying a hand on Lazarwolfe, humiliating the Commander, still tied to his own table.

There is no big action scene; just good spy work as the compound guards all run for the sewers underground and Edward simply locks the steel door behind them. Calmly, Edward, Maisie, and Petya slip through the cracks and disappear.

They reach a lakeshore below the walls of the compound where Simon and Jacobi wait in a fishing boat fit with hidden smugglers compartments in the net hold.

Using their skills, Simon and Jacobi smuggle Edward, Maisie, and Petya into Belarus and help finish Edward's mission, delivering Petya to the US Government.

Simon and Jacobi are offered asylum in the states but they turn it down. Simon plans to use his contacts in Belarus to set up his operation there. They shake hands, embrace, and go their separate ways.

Months later, Edward and Maisie arrive at a mountain cabin in Colorado. They find Petya painting the sunset and the three embrace.

As the credits roll, we know that our three heroes have finally found the family they have been looking for all their lives.

THE END