

# Defenders: Russia – chapter 22

A live World Cup story by Tom Palmer

**Seth and Nadiya are trapped in a room with one of the most notorious and powerful men on the planet. The man has overheard them saying that they are going to kidnap his beloved dogs and now he has Nadiya and Seth at his mercy. Can our heroes escape this most dangerous of situations in the very last chapter of *Defenders: Russia*?**

## Лидс Юнайтед

‘I shall ask you question again,’ the Russian man barked. ‘You are planning to kidnap my dogs?’

He was standing now. Looming over them, his fists clenched. And, although he was neither a tall nor a large man, he looked strong, his arms like thick pieces of taut rope.

‘We weren’t going to go through with it,’ Seth said, his voice coming out embarrassingly high-pitched. ‘We changed our minds.’

‘No,’ the man raged. ‘You are here. Breaking into Kremlin. You have come through Romanov Tunnel. This is illegal in Russia. You have broken law.’

‘The what?’ Nadiya said. ‘What’s the tunnel called?’

The man looked at Nadiya for a moment as if she was mad asking him about the tunnel. Then he smiled.

‘The Romanov Tunnel. It is how the illustrious Romanov family moved secretly in and out of Moscow. How did you find tunnel? Tell me.’

‘Alexei Romanov showed it to us,’ Seth lied.

The man stared at Seth, uncomprehending. He opened his mouth to speak, but then his face began to change as he stared over the children’s heads.

At the same time, Seth noticed the shadow being cast ahead of him: his own shape. As if the light was moving in this underground room. He already had an inkling what was happening. It emboldened him.

‘Alexei Romanov,’ he said, louder, as the light behind him became brighter. ‘He is our guardian angel.’

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Suddenly the man covered his eyes and fell to his knees. His dogs scrambled to cower behind him.

Then Seth turned round to see what he knew was there.

A bright light. And at the centre two figures.

One, he expected. Alexei Romanov.

The other, he did not. It was Laika, the space dog. His two Russian spectres.

'Kneel, peasant!' Alexei Romanov said.

The man kneeled without hesitating.

Then the ghost of Alexei Romanov spoke. 'This coming Monday it will be 100 years since, I, Alexei Romanov and my family were murdered. I wish you to release these children in memory of the Romanov family. And Laika, here, wishes you to stop the slaughter of the city's stray dogs.'

The man nodded vigorously just as his dogs came to lean in at his side. He no longer looked strong. He looked afraid, trembling.

'Your excellence,' he said. 'I am honoured...'

'Show that honour and grant me two favours,' Alexei said.

'Anything. Name it. I am your servant.'

Nadiya watched the scene with incredulity. She never imagined she would see this powerful man being *put in* his place.

'I will let them go,' the man gibbered. 'I will stop the crews killing the dogs.'

Nadiya decided it was time to go. She had noticed that Alexei's ghost was fading... Who knew what that meant? She grabbed Seth and pulled him towards the door.

'Come on,' she insisted. 'We're going.'

Seth followed and looked back to see Alexei and Laika, their glow certainly fading now. The man kneeling before them, his eyes screwed tightly shut.

Then they headed to the tunnel.

As they left both of them made eye contact with Alexei and Laika. A warmth passed between them. An understanding. Seth put his hand out to Alexei and felt a ripple of electricity run through him

Then Nadiya shut the metallic door behind them and they walked through the Romanov Tunnel to their apartment by torch light.

'I'm sorry,' Seth said as they walked.

'Sorry about what?'

'Sorry for dragging you into these dangerous ghost history situations.'

'Sorry? You shouldn't be sorry. I want you to promise me something, actually.'

'What?'

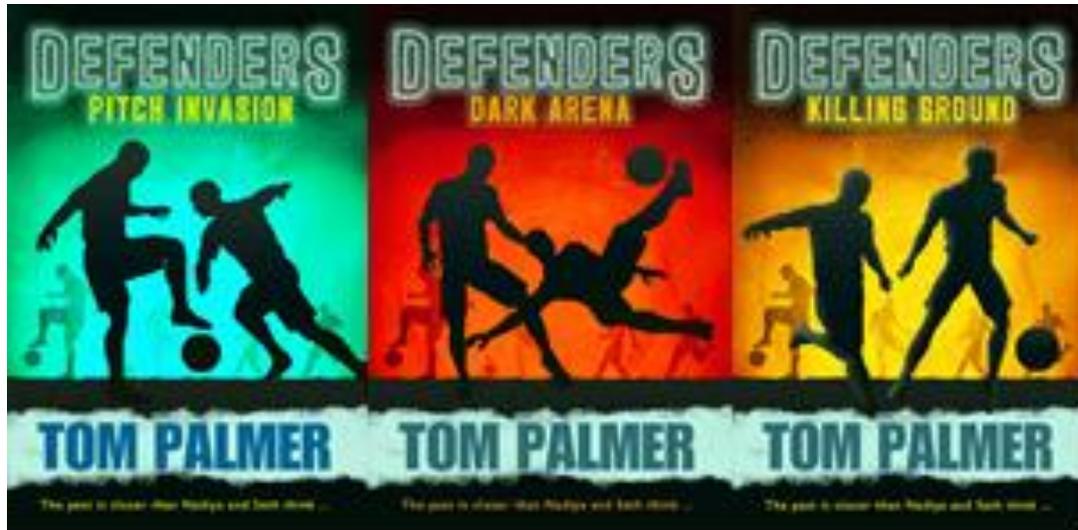
'Next time... you'll take me with you.'

'Really?'

'Really.'

Seth smiled. 'Okay,' he said.

**Nadiya and Seth will travel home, after watching the 3<sup>rd</sup> place play-off game, England against Belgium, on Saturday. Back to their last week of term at school, then the summer holidays. If you want to go on holiday with Seth and Nadiya this summer you can travel to Cornwall with them by reading *Defenders: Pitch Invasion*, or London, by reading *Defenders: Dark Arena*. And, if you're staying at home, try *Defenders: Killing Ground*.**



If you'd like a certificate for children who have read *Defenders: Russia*, please find one to download at <http://tompalmer.co.uk/defenders>. A full version of *Defenders: Russia* will be available very soon at <http://tompalmer.co.uk/free-reads>.

Thank you very much for following the *Defenders: Russia*. If you've had a teacher or someone else reading it to you, please give them a round of applause now.

Tom would like to say a HUGE thank you to his wife for spending at least an hour every night editing his chapters – and for producing the 22 Words of the Day.

Finally, have a happy summer and thanks for reading *Defenders: Russia*. We hope you've enjoyed it.

World Cup word of the day

# Ripple



Remember, even if you can't see the ripples, your actions have consequences.

Always be kind!