Bourne toWrite...
creative writing workshops

Sabre

by Douglas Fresh

We might have forgiven Dad for leaving him if he hadn't taken the dog. That was why, ten weeks later, ten-year-old Freddy Dutchman was at the Embassy reception in the capital, Tbilisi. He'd used Google Translate to decipher the squiggles in a Georgian letter, and its contents had brought him to this moment at the Embassy reception.

'Freddy!' choked his mum, Janice, as she would many a time.

Freddy addressed the staff more politely.

'Look at the bloody letter!'

Jan's apologetic desperation opened some heavy doors. Freddy had been onto something, but the mystery of Sabre's absence was to unravel in alarming and lethal ways.

A rather grumpy officer with a large German Shepherd led them past a magical, Tolkienesque fort on a lush green hill to the British Embassy, a rather smaller building with a small Union Jack in the window. A large, serpentine, fat-tongued man in a white suit, his complexion strangled with rage, barked orders at the officer, who slowly left the room. He instructed two other men, who left.

'I work for the Interior Ministry. I'm sorry your search gave nothing. I'll take you to the plane.'

Freddy much preferred the grumpy policeman to this 'smiling assassin', as his grandfather used to call fake backstabbers.

Bam! A door slammed. Twice. The man in the white suit, Navzirmov, giddily rolled his eyes and smiled as if it were his birthday.

He slipped his hand into a white Gola bag, pointing it in Freddy and Janice's direction.

'Freddy—lucky man, good changes for you! Yes, and I now have a present.'

He raised the bag.

'Turn around. It's a lovely surprise.'

Jan wasn't happy. 'What are you on about? We're going home. Where's the officer?'

'Come on now, play this game. Let's make memories. Life always too short!'

Navzirmov's eyes hardened mournfully.

'You'd better let us go, you idiot.'

Janice was quiet and didn't reprimand Freddy this time. Once mother and child had turned around, Navzirmov raised the bag silently and efficiently.

There was a click. Then—Bang! The door flew open.

'Woof, woof!'

Two precise barks from the police dog.

Then —Zzzzzzzzp!

They smelled burning.

The dog pulled Freddy's sleeve, and he turned around slowly. Walking past a pair of cowboy boots that were on fire. Freddy looked up. He didn't care to look too closely at the bag or what was around it.The ceiling had the roundest hole he'd ever seen in it, through which he could see the sky.

'Come,' said the officer gruffly. He made them get into the canine compartment of his response vehicle. Freddy muffled a laugh at his mum's face. She strained to be serious. A buzzing sound heckled the van. It was very close now.

The dog growled. The officer stroked its paw, whispering something as he opened the window. The Alsatian stuck its head out. Its collar beeped and spewed something into the air.

Bang!

What appeared to be a drone clattered onto the road in an undignified fireball.

The officer blazed to Tbilisi Airport. They flew back to the UK, mostly in silence, then drove home to Arundel.

Freddy had since developed a keen interest in counterintelligence, particularly S.A.T.A.A.N.—Satellite Automated Attack Node—which NATO might have in the future.

Five months passed then - Briiiing!

Janice went to the door.

'Freddy, come here a minute?'

It was the police dog. Freddy bit his lip.

'They've let us adopt it—seeing as your dad took the other one.'

Over the following days they grew very close. Then Freddy let it out for a wee, even though it was raining. The dog dutifully returned.

'What the fuck! Jesus!' said Janice, dropping her tea.

'Mum!' said Freddy.

The dog had slowly but surely changed to a whitish colour.

It was Sabre!

Freddy and his mum tearfully phoned his sister. Dad was maybe forgiven.