*Kostas Jarvis: Seeking freedom wherever he goes*

***“Fencing is a sport for individuals, it’s very similar to playing chess, but also very physical and has an element of danger. It’s like life, at the end of the day, no matter what happens, you’re alone against everybody else.”***

No phase of Kostas’s journey has ever followed the conventional expectations for a mediocre day-to-day lifestyle. He has always considered his life as an aspect that cannot be planned, but as something you have to strive to work with and make the best of. During his years, he has learned that although people seem to differ, in the end everyone shares similar values that they are willing to stand for. Kostas has always fought for his right of freedom, and the events of his life serve as evidence for his unbreakable and steadfast character.

**Early Years**

 Kostas’s journey has been never been anything short of surprises and continuous changes. Starting from the very first detail of his life, Kostas has grown up with having two birth names & dates. Born on the 28th of September 1949 in Greece, as Demetrios Kostandinos, and also registered in England as having a birth date on the consecutive day with a different name –James Constantine, he has juggled with both the complications and the thrill of his migration journey. He was actually born in Athens, as his mother and father met there. His father was a part of the Military, during WWII, due to which he had to travel to various places; one of them being Greece, where he met Kostas’s mother. His mother, on the other hand, was born in Port Said and decided she wanted to continue her education due to the rural conditions of her place of origin. One of the first stages of Kostas’s life was his coming-into-contact with his mother’s stories of olden day Greece throughout the years of 1941 until 1944. During the German occupation around 90% of the Jewish population was massacred, leaving the other percentage of Greeks and foreigners, such as Kostas’s mother, under a totalitarian regime which not only ensured widespread fear, but food rations were purposefully confiscated, leading to mass deaths due to starvation (World Socialist Organization, 2015). Kostas’s mother was one of the lucky ones who survived, but thousands of other didn’t have that chance. After seven years in Greece, during 1956, his father’s job leads the family to Singapore, where Kostas was faced with the communist uprising era of the country under British colonization. The spread of violence due to the Malayan Communist Part resulted in mass fear for white nationals, like Kostas’s family, who had to be wary of the widespread terrorist attacks against British foreigners (National Library Board of Singapore, 2011). During his years there, Kostas gathers faint memories of his father gathering all his ammunition in front of their house’s front door, trying to scare off anyone who might decide to attack them, but in the same instance, Kostas never lived in the same state of panic, because he was young. He never paid attention to the fact that whilst wondering endlessly in the jungles of Singapore, people a part of the communistic party could have had crossed his path and decided to kill him. During the year span of 1960 until 1967, Kostas moved back to England and started his independent life when his father was transferred to Germany for his last mandate. At the start of 1961, Kostas enrolled in a boarding school, which for him served as a great way to start off his life without his parents. According to a survey conducted between 5,000 pupils both in senior and prep schools, 84% of them agreed that boarding schools “foster” independence. (Indepence News, 2000) After five years without his family, Kostas decided to move to Germany. There, the Iron Curtain, enforced by Stalin, made a very long-lasting impression on Kostas, because when travelling from Germany back to Greece, his family needed to go through Yugoslavia, making 17 year-old Kostas see the isolation of the countries under communistic rule (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2015).

**Legal doesn’t always mean fair**

Having graduated Law School in Newcastle, Kostas started off his career as a lawyer in a legal firm. Soon enough, he already “hated it”, struck by the realization that “the judicial system, supposedly designed to bring justice to people, in fact has nothing to do with justice and was only designed to make lawyers and judges rich.” (Jarvis, 2016) According to the findings of Operation Tiberius, an undercover investigation done by London’s Metropolitan Police, organized crime has taken over Britain’s criminal justice system, and jurors are being bribed by prisoners wanting to buy their way out of jail for £50,000. (Harper, 2014) Indignant at the large-scale bureaucratic dysfunctions and utterly bored from the dreary business, Kostas decided to give up his career in law, despite the financial benefits and stability it offered him. He then started working for the Department of Social Security, where he was sent off to take computer courses. This event turned out to be one of the plot twists of Kostas’s life, since that’s when he first discovered his love for computers. During the courses, his outstanding curiosity and competence was noticed and he was offered a position in a computer company. The transition between the two jobs was a smooth one for him, since he now knew what career he wanted to pursue. Today he sees computers as fine art, and says that he has established a way to speak to them in a way they can understand, as if they’re not machines but ordinary human beings. Kostas made the choice of giving up his high salary in order to dedicate himself to what he really loves, a choice not many people would do. In fact, a survey of 600 employees carried out by the Society of Human Resource Management in 2013, shows that 60% of the questioned workers ranked money as the aspect of their jobs that makes them truly happy. (Adams, 2015) With Kostas, this is not the case. After a certain time and a few agitated employers behind his back, he decided to start working freelance. At the time, Kostas was married to his first wife, who, after being made redundant, quickly started depending solely on his income. The conflicts between them soon became more frequent, resulting in Kostas buying property in the French Pyrenees and moving there, hoping to lead a peaceful existence and indulge in his passion for computers, which was now his source of income, too.

**Falling in love**

Through his love for computers, Kostas started to venture even further into the world of technology, going as far as to meet new people, hoping to find someone he can build a relationship with. Luckily, she was called Zlatka, and was a student professor at the Sofia University. Kostas and Zlatka, started to communicate briefly during 2008, without knowing each other from before. During the end of 2009, going on to 2010, Kostas had grown to trust and love Zlatka, and he consequently decided to visit her in Bulgaria. According to a survey conducted by the Pew Research Center regarding online dating, comparing 2005 and 2013 results, there has been a 23% rise in people who have actually decided to meet the people, which they have been talking to online (Pew Internet Organization, 2013). The rise in the latter mentioned percentage goes to show how Kostas fits in the overall rise of online dating acceptance. When talking about his connection with Zlatka, Kostas said that he knew that he would ultimately drop everything and move to Bulgaria. Contradicting UK Online Dating Statistics, which prove that more than 80% of people lie about their physical appearance and their mental state, Kostas and Zlatka were one of the few people, who managed to secure a healthy and loving relationship (Infogram, 2016). They have been together since the year they met until now.

**Meeting Bulgaria** In 2008, Kostas did not only meet his wife, he also met Bulgaria. He followed his heart to a country he never thought he would ever visit, and little did he know that he would fall in love twice, once with a woman, once with a country. Kostas is exactly the type of person whose choices are based on his simple desire to be happy, regardless of anyone’s disapproval of his actions or the potential hardships they might bring about. His reasons for moving to Bulgaria diverge from the average ones. The Institute for Public Policy Research for the British Government has estimated that 18,000 Brits have settled in the country, for reasons such as the lower cost of living with all its social and political aspects, the friendly, accepting locals, and the freedom of movement. (Price, 2014) Kostas reveals that what he likes the most about Bulgaria is that it reminds him of how Greece used to be back when he was young. To him, the most overwhelming part of fitting in Bulgarian society has been getting used to the established customs and habits of local citizens. For example, he claims that “being late” in Bulgaria is not the same as “being late” in Greece. Kostas doesn’t regret moving to Bulgaria, and he is happy that he is able to get the best of both worlds; he can still run his business back in the United Kingdom, whilst supporting a family in Bulgaria. Being self-employed works great for Kostas, so as for a huge portion of England’s population. The Professional Contractors Group of the United Kingdom has found that 78% of British workers believe freelancing and flexible working provide a good balance between life and work. Furthermore, the majority of all freelancers, or about 41%, have recorded working in the internet technologies and programming. (Matthews, 2014) Lucky Kostas is currently living in one of Sofia’s nicest neighborhoods, completely at ease with all the decisions he has made, and proud to be living in a country like Bulgaria.

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