

200 STEPS DOWN.

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The forces of good and evil are working within and around me, I must choose, and in a free will universe I do have a choice.

Anonymous

When his crime boss in Odessa, Ukraine, decides to up his game by getting involved in people trafficking, Nicolae Caramarin must make a choice. Should he turn a blind eye to the horrors he witnesses and carry on being a good soldier for the gang; or take his stand and bring them all down in the only way he knows how?

* **WARNING!** This book contains scenes of a sexual nature, graphic violence, strong language and drug abuse. It is not intended for the easily offended or persons under eighteen years. You have been warned, so if you read on, don't blame me.

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200 STEPS DOWN.

CHAPTER 1. MONDAY

OCTOBER 5, 20:30.

If Nicolae Caramarin was nervous, he didn't show it. Not when he was holding six tits he wasn't. And two nine spots in his hand. Drank from the vodka bottle and slid it back over. Opposite him, Nedelcho Videnov took a longer pull. Videnov glanced at his bodyguard standing just behind the players. The guard was leaning against the office wall with his hands in his pockets, next to a hastily wiped whiteboard.

Caramarin took a longer look at the woman in the corner. She was worth another look. Tied to a chair with a piece of duct tape gagging her is not the best look for any woman. As an image, it will never make the front cover of Vogue magazine. But you could see that she was beautiful.

"Your boss is branching out, then?" Videnov said. Money always interested the accountant. He liked being around it and if he could cut himself into a slice of any deal then he wanted his piece.

There was a disreputable air about the man. Only young, late twenties, but already balding. Pale blue eyes behind gold framed designer glasses. His silk tie was loosened and rode half way down his chest. He'd chosen his short cut to wealth by advising on tax evasion and money laundering for the underworld.

"Yeah," grunted Caramarin.

"Hear he got stiffed by the Georgian. Lost a lot of money?"

"Abkhazian, actually, comrade. But he's dealing with the matter," Caramarin said.

"Bit of a step up from money lending and protection to people trafficking?" Videnov took another pull from the bottle and slid it back again. The man's eyes glassy now.

Caramarin took another slug, saw Videnov trying to stare him down and took a deeper drink. The vodka burned its way down his throat. Only a cheap brand poured into an expensive bottle. Fooled no-one.

"He has contacts. From the time of the Bosnian War. He knows what he's doing."

"Word of advice," said Videnov. "And I don't give many of those for free. It's not as easy as it once was. The E. U. has toughened their border controls recently."

"He knows what he's doing. And it's me taking the risks while he gets the money. As always." Caramarin looked over at the woman. "She's a bit knocked about, isn't she?"

"Tried to get away. But she'll clean up fine." Videnov paused and drank again. "She's pure, too."

"You mean...?"

"Yeah. She's virgo intacta. Unusual, these days I know. That's why she costs more."

Caramarin raised his eyebrows. "Unless she's had that op I've heard they can do." He glanced at his cards again then dropped another hundred hryvnias onto the pile of currency on the desk. Euros, roubles, Ukrainian hryvnias and Turkish lira all lay mixed up together.

"I've a long way to go tonight," Caramarin said, stretching his back. "I'll see you now."

He turned over his three Queens and laid them out in front of him. Videnov turned over three Jacks and shrugged. Disappointment in his eyes. The man hated to see money leave his office. Unless it was heading into an offshore account. Caramarin swept up the cash and casually stuffed the notes into his combat jacket. Then he picked up a padded envelope from the floor next to him and tossed it onto the desk on top of the cards.

"It's all there. A kilo of Afghan brown."

"Surprised he could get it together so quickly," Videnov said. "Heard the Georgian – sorry, Abkhazian – really hurt him."

"Maireescu's doing all right. He knows what he's doing. Looking to expand again now."

Videnov looked unimpressed. He knew as well as Caramarin that Eugen Maireescu was in trouble. He called his bodyguard over.

"Open it, please. Make sure there are no nasty surprises."

The thick set man swaggered over. Slid the envelope over to his side of the desk. Caramarin watched light reflect off his shaved head as the man leaned forward. He picked up a package tightly wrapped with tape from out of the envelope and tossed it in his hand. Then a second package.

"Looks like it's all there. Weighs about right."

"You know, I may be wrong but I'm getting a bad feeling about this." said Videnov. "Where did a piece of shit like Maiorescu get this from? Let's check this out." Videnov leaned down and fetched a small Swiss Army knife from out of his desk drawer and passed it to the man.

"Test it," he ordered.

The guard jabbed the point of the blade into the first package and licked the powdered tip. He frowned at Caramarin and poked into the second package.

"You cheap weasel. As I thought, boss, it's cut to fuck - really low quality."

Probably the only one surprised in the room was Caramarin. Maiorescu had never let him down before. A split second of hesitation was all it took before his old paratrooper training took over. He jumped to the balls of his feet and slammed the cheap desk into Videnov and his guard.

Videnov fell down, hitting his back on the floor, his chair under him. The guard was caught off balance but with his boxer training recovered himself quickly. The thug leaned forward and slashed out at Caramarin with the Swiss Army knife, narrowly missing his face.

Caramarin snatched up the vodka bottle before it rolled off the desk and shattered it against the edge. He jabbed it full into the guard's face and twisted it. A shard ripped his cheek open, a flap of skin falling loose. The guard screamed and his hands flew to his face in agony. Blood poured from the open wound flooding down his white shirt.

Caramarin vaulted the desk and stamped on the still prone Videnov. He punched the guard twice in the gut, knocking the wind out of him and then smashed his bald head once, twice onto the desk top, a crack as his nose broke, then kicked his legs out from under him.

He turned to Videnov, grabbed him by his loose tie and sat him up. His glasses hung loose.

"You're fucking dead," said Videnov. His words were tough but his face betrayed his fear.

"I never knew the H was shite. Maiorescu's always been okay before. You know that," said Caramarin. He dragged the accountant up. "Pick up your chair and sit down. Hands on your head."

Videnov did as told and Caramarin crouched, keeping an eye on the accountant. He picked up the Swiss Army knife from by the prone thug and gave him another kick to the ribs to remember him by. He opened a desk drawer; found just the usual office junk. The second held the roll of duct tape, car keys and an envelope full of cash. He pocketed the money and keys.

"Sorry about that. Sit still and it won't hurt." He pulled the accountant's arms down and quickly duct taped him to the chair, gagged him and went through his suit. Videnov's weak eyes bulged and he tried to say something. Too late for that now. Caramarin helped himself to the man's phone and the money in the wallet.

"Nice phone, that. One of those smart ones," said Caramarin patting the man's cheek. "Say if you need it. No?"

Caramarin knelt and wrapped more duct tape around the heavyweight's ankles and wrists. Safe for the time being he was about to exit the office when he remembered the girl in the corner.

"Fuck!" He crossed the office to her. Her eyes widened in horror and she jerked her head back, making a muffled scream. Caramarin realised he was still holding the Swiss Army knife. With what she had just seen, she must think he was a devil straight from the pits of Hell.

"I'm not going to hurt you. Okay? You're safe with me, okay?" He spoke softly.

He cut away her gag. She made a liar of him straight away. The girl started to scream so he slapped her face. Not hard but enough to silence her. The sound whipcracked round the room.

"Don't make a noise. Come with me and you'll be all right."

She didn't look like she believed him. Not surprising really. He knelt and cut away the duct tape binding her arms and legs to the chair and helped her stand up. She rubbed her arms and legs, wincing as circulation returned.

She was taller than he thought, maybe one point seven five metres, slim and graceful. She was only wearing a black sports bra and pants and was barefoot. Her

face was perhaps slightly too long but she looked intelligent. Above it, she had long blonde hair, possibly not from the bottle as he'd thought, tied back in a pony tail.

That was all he had time for at a first glance but it was enough. Caramarin took her arm. He paused by the door. Now the adrenaline was wearing off, he thought about saying something to the tied-up men but didn't. He just switched off the light then locked the door behind him.

CHAPTER 2. MONDAY

OCTOBER 5, 20:50.

Videnov's office was part of a Soviet era run-down complex just off Prymor'ska Street near the docks. Just outside directly under a street light was a black Mercedes S320. It gleamed darkly in the sodium glow. Old-fashioned but Caramarin could see why it would appeal to the accountant. He opened it and pushed the girl into the passenger seat then ran round to the driver's side before she could do anything stupid. He adjusted his seat, sparked it up and drove away.

He was at a bit of a loss and needed time to think. But time was one luxury he didn't have. He'd made two bad enemies tonight. Sure, Maiorescu wasn't quite the force he had been recently but the people that Videnov represented were far worse.

Maiorescu was strictly mid-league in the region's underworld. Protection rackets, extortion, loan sharking, property scams, knock-off gear, supplying a few night clubs with what they needed at over inflated prices. Yeah, that was Maiorescu's level. Mid level pond life.

Caramarin was happy with that. Well, not happy but he made out. Could live with it. But trading in sex workers was a big step up. Caramarin never wanted to get involved with people trafficking but he owed too much money to refuse. And now he was in deep trouble.

He swung right onto Prymor'ska Street and headed south. Past the magnificent Potemkin Stairs and the Hotel Odessa towering above the marine terminal. The girl was shivering in her seat so he turned the heating to full, even though the night was mild. He unwrapped his black and white keffiyeh scarf he usually wore and passed it over to her.

She flashed a quick smile at him. "Thanks," she said. "What are you going to do with me now?" Her voice husky.

"I hadn't really thought," he replied. "Don't think I can put it right just now."

"No." They sat silently as he drove on past the huge container port on the dock road. In the dark, the port spotlights shone with bright white intensity, the shadows harsh and dark. But they could do nothing to help lighten his mood.

"You're not from round here?" he asked.

"No, I'm from Donetsk, in the east."

"How did you get into this mess?"

"A woman at my dancing school said they were looking for dancers to audition in Paris. I wasn't interested at first but then my mum got herself a new fella and there wasn't room for me in the flat any more." She sniffed then carried on.

"I was sleeping on friends' couches and then I ended up sleeping in one of the parks so I thought I'd give it a go. But when I turned up, they wanted me to undress. I said no, I wasn't doing that no way but then he hit me, said they'd come after my little sister and threw me in a van."

Caramarin thought there may have been a little more to it than that, or a lot more, but let it slide.

"Do you want to go back? To Donetsk?" he asked.

"No way," she said. "But I don't know what to do."

By this time, they were entering the suburb of Moldavanka where Caramarin rented an apartment. He swung onto the grid of streets and pulled up outside his place. Took the keys out the ignition.

"Stay here and be quiet. I just need a few things."

"I can't drive anyway," she said.

"Right."

He ran up the outside flight of stairs and let himself in. Doubted if he could stay at this place again. Maiorescu had been here several times and it would be too easy for Videnov to trace him back here. He would be sorry to leave this place but he didn't own much. He knelt by the bed and pulled out a shoe box from a hollow in the wall. A bit of cash – nowhere near enough as he'd lost too much recently – his foreign passport and a razor sharp combat knife was what he took.

Caramarin stuffed a rucksack with underwear and a couple of shirts and jeans and that was him. Done. He glanced around the room for possibly the last time. Not

much to show for nearly forty years of life. Was sorry to leave his stereo. But he still had his health. For the time being.

He shut the door behind him and ran down the stairs. He popped the Merc's trunk. He swore. In the trunk was another woman. In the inky darkness, little more than a huddled shape. Tied up and gagged with more of the duct tape. This one was wearing black dancer's sweats. She twisted around to look up at him. In the darkness, he couldn't see much but he guessed that she was young and attractive.

"Fuckshitfuckshitfuckshit."

His life had turned to something resembling rat shit in the course of an hour. Not like this was the first, second or third time he'd been served a large portion of rat shit but Caramarin could have done without this now.

He leaned into the trunk and helped her out. He was right, she was young and attractive. Looked like another dancer type, being slender and toned. Under her sweatshirt he noticed she had only small tits. She looked to be maybe only just eighteen. Young enough to be his daughter.

The girl's ankles were taped together so she couldn't walk. For very obvious reasons, he didn't want to spend too much time out on the street with a tied up girl so he stooped and threw her over his shoulder. Ignored her struggles and muffled squeals. He opened the passenger side and told the first girl to go up the stairs in front of him.

Back in his apartment he slung the bound girl onto the couch and told the first girl to sit down. He ran his hand through his long black hair sweeping it back from his face. He knew he couldn't stay here too long. When he didn't return with the girl Maiorescu had paid for they would come looking for him. Okay, he didn't think Videnov's crew would be here until the morning. But he certainly didn't want to be around for either lot.

Caramarin pulled the Swiss Army knife from out of his camo jacket and tossed it to the first girl. She looked at it like it might bite her. As he didn't want to face the terror on the tied up girl's face, he asked her to free the other girl. Not wanting to leave them alone for too long, Caramarin went into the kitchen and put the kettle on. Then he found a couple of his old sweatshirts and jeans for the girls.

By the time they were dressed, the tea was ready. His too large clothes made them look even younger and more vulnerable than they had before.

The first girl spoke up "I'm Ekaterina and she's Yulia. She's from near Donetsk, too. Look, what's going on? Why are you helping us?" They looked up at him from the couch.

He leaned against the kitchenette doorpost. "Don't know that I should. But this is all too much for me. I mean, I've done some bad things in my time but this is too much.

"I take it you don't want to go back to Donetsk?" They shook their heads, one blonde the second darker. "You can't stay here – in Odessa, I mean. What else..."

"I still want to go to the West," said Ekaterina.

"Don't we all," said Caramarin. Though he didn't really want to go West. He liked it here. He knew where he was and what he was doing. It was his pond and even though he dealt with pond life he got by. At least he did until tonight.

"What about you?" turning to Yulia.

"Yeah, I s'pose so. Why not?" She was shivering now. Whether with cold or a reaction to the terror she must have been in, he had no idea. Would take the girl a while to recover from being locked in a boot for who knows how long.

"Got passports?"

"Only my internal one. Not one for abroad. No, they took it off of me," Ekaterina shivered and looked like she was about to burst into tears. Yulia just shook her head.

"You think they're back at the office?"

"Probably, I mean of course I had it on me when they took me at Donetsk but what happened to it, I dunno now."

"Well, they're no use for going abroad anyway. Maybe I can get you fixed up but it won't be cheap."

Ekaterina suddenly looked horrified again.

"No, I didn't mean it like that." Caramarin said. Embarrassed himself now.

"Look, we can't stay here much longer. Someone's going to come looking for us and we don't want to be here when they do. I know a place where you can stay the night, if you want."

They stood up when Yulia announced she needed to go.

"I know – we're going now," said Caramarin.

"No – I mean I have to go now."

She dashed to his bathroom and closed the door behind her. Ekaterina looked at him. The cheap stud partition wall let you hear just about every sound in the bathroom. It's hard to make conversation when you can hear someone dumping their load only a few feet away. Caramarin found the view from his window over the back of the opposite apartments to be way more interesting than normal.

The two girls still seemed dazed and followed Caramarin down to the Merc. He drove them a few blocks away where he knew one of his ex's mothers took in guests. It was late, but not too late. More importantly, she could be relied on to keep her mouth shut. He'd always got on well with Bohdana – especially when given a few hryvnias to hold in her work worn, arthritic hands. Told the girls he'd be back in the morning and set off again.

This time he drove east over to the night clubs by Arkadia beach. Had two pieces of luck. Managed to find a parking spot and his friend Belgian was on the door of the Skorpio Club. The story went that when Belgian's unit was sent to Beslan back in 2006 during the spill over from the Chechen crisis, he thought they were being sent to Belgium.

Way he heard it, the man was looking forward to mussels and fries with mayo and maybe a romp with an overpaid E. U. Commissioner's secretary but got dust and flies and bearded fanatics who hated all infidels instead. No, not the sharpest knife in the drawer, but the man knew his way around the Odessa underworld.

Belgian was a sharp dresser. Wearing a tux and smelling of expensive cologne, he looked the part standing next to the velvet ropes and red carpet. Caramarin had worked the doors himself in the recent past and still put in the odd shift when business with Maiorescu was slack.

Belgian looked Caramarin up and down from his slicked back hair, combat jacket, check keffiyeh, blue jeans and walking boots. His normal day clothes.

"Still dressing like shit, Nicolae. Can't let you in lookin' like that, you know."

Nicolae glanced at the handful of young and trendy people queuing outside. Lads in fancy shirts and long legged girls wearing too few clothes. The pulse of western dance music spilled out of the entrance.

"Not for me. Too old for all that now. Anyway, it's you I wanna see. Spare a minute?"

Belgian gestured to one of the other bouncers, who nodded and stepped forward. Belgian walked back with Caramarin to the Mercedes. The bouncer raised his eyebrows, stripes etched into the right.

"What you doing with Videnov's ride?"

"Long story, comrade. I'll tell you another time. What do you hear about Maiorescu? He wants me out the way or has he really fucked up this time?" Caramarin briefly filled in Belgian about what had gone down tonight. He could trust Belgian as much as he could trust anyone – which was very little.

"Out of Maiorescu's league," said Belgian. "He's never done much in the way of drugs before. You know that. Certainly not a kilo of brown. Whoever sold it to him must've known he's been losing ground and wanted to give him a little push. But I've not heard that he's got a beef with you so I reckon he didn't know. Fuckin' amateur."

"Thanks, comrade."

"Your big problem is the people Videnov's fronting. They'll think you've shafted them with the baking powder and you've got their chicks for free. You're going to have to sort that out fuckin' fast or you're gonna wind up at the bottom of the Black Sea. Look, if you need a hand, let me know. It'll cost but ... you know."

The queue was building up and Belgian stepped out the Merc.

"I'll give you a bell or come down the gym. Keep in touch Big Guy" he called back. A joke as Belgian was a few inches taller and a twelve to fifteen kilos heavier than Caramarin. And all of it muscle.

"I will." Caramarin fired up the Merc and pulled away. Yes, Belgian knew a lot but he didn't know everything. Caramarin could think of one very good reason why Maiorescu might have a beef with him. But only if he'd found out.

CHAPTER 3. SATURDAY JUNE

27, 14: 00.

It all went back to earlier that summer.

Maiorescu was hosting a hunting weekend at his country villa outside of Yuzhne further up the Black Sea coast. He'd bought it fire damaged off some business man who desperately needed money. So the man had torched it for the insurance.

It had cost a lot to do up and he wanted to flaunt it. Maiorescu had done very well out of a property deal with some gullible British men from Manchester who'd believed too much in what was on show on the website. To them, the price of Ukrainian land and the possibilities for development had been too good to be true. Trouble for them, it was too good to be true. Now they'd been well and truly burned.

The trouble was, Caramarin felt out of place as soon as his beat up Opel Combo was let in through the electric gates. Most of the men were wearing designer leisure clothes, golfing clothes and expensive knits. The women were like birds of paradise in expensive looking dresses and immaculately made up.

Because of the sweaty heat, he was wearing a just a white shirt and jeans. He drove round the back and parked next to the rust buckets driven by the hired help.

Didn't matter what Maiorescu wore, he still looked like what he was – a crook. The gang boss looked like the late President Nixon's uglier brother. That's if President Nixon had ever had a brother with a lifetime of sin and hard living etched on his face. In his mid fifties and looked older. He had a heavy, jowly face with a permanent shadow and home dyed black hair. The hood was holding out a cold Zibert Light beer with the condensation dewing the outside. Caramarin took it. It slipped down easy on the hot day.

Maiorescu led him over to the buffet. Salmon, sturgeon, even caviare. The best Scandinavian import vodka and not the bathtub horilka moonshine Caramarin was used to. He'd even brought over a chef from one of the top French restaurants he protected. But there was also the Ukrainian food that Caramarin preferred.

Maiorescu had invited many of his business associates. A gathering that the Ministry of Internal Affairs should be interested in. Except Caramarin saw the Odessa Colonel of Militia talking to a head Caramarin knew had personally rubbed out several men. Not his problem.

He broke bread with Maiorescu and drank another couple of Zibert Lights. These gatherings didn't do much for him. He drifted over to the buffet. Maiorescu's wife, Natalya, was talking to the wife of Maiorescu's property developer partner. She was definitely a trophy wife, wasn't too sure whether she was Maiorescu's second or third.

Caramarin also knew that Maiorescu usually brought hostesses from the Casinos to his parties. Didn't know for sure if any were here. Though he guessed that some of the girls had been brought in to provide comfort to his important associates.

Maiorescu strolled up. "Nicolae, I'm just going out for an hour or so. Big boy's toys to play with."

Caramarin knew by this that Maiorescu wanted to go out in the forest to let off a few mags of his new Kalashnikov AK-47 assault rifle. The peasant probably thought it would impress his property associates. And the gun almost certainly would. "Stay here and keep an eye on the girls won't you?"

Caramarin was a bit annoyed to have to hang about the party. Wouldn't have minded loosing off a few bursts with the Kalash. Would've reminded him of the good old days. He nodded and took another pull of his beer to show he was man about it.

Maiorescu's Mercedes drove away followed by a couple of other limos and 4X4s in convoy. Couldn't have looked more like gangsters if they'd tried. He shook his head and walked over to the buffet tables.

However, there were good sides to staying behind. Natalya was worth any man looking at twice. Or as much as you can get away with without being caught perving. Beauty may be only skin deep but what do you want – a great looking spleen?

She was in her early thirties, a full figured, dark haired beauty. She was wearing a white Dior dress, off the shoulder that clung to her body, also showed off her deep tan to great effect. Her hair was down to way past temptation and a mouth just made for kissing – and other pleasures as well.

He'd been told a woman's reputation is a brittle thing. Once broken, it can never be whole again. One thing Caramarin knew about her, she'd made some porno tapes back in the day. He'd even watched a few. If Maiorescu didn't care, neither did he. Maybe that's where Maiorescu had found her.

She saw Caramarin standing there, the Zibert almost finished. She blew a smoke ring kiss to him and brought him a fresh bottle. They clinked bottle to vodka glass and kissed on the cheek.

"Don't just stand there," she swayed slightly on her feet sort of but not quite in time to the music. How much has she had? She dragged him over to a wooden dance floor. They danced, she with experience in the clubs behind her, he self consciously. A few other couples were dancing.

He noticed Videnov the accountant talking to some business types over by the pool. A cloud of smoke over them, drifting up in the summer's heat. The man's bald head now reddening in the sun.

The golden sun burning down to orange. The long hot day turning to evening. The booze. Beautiful women. Western dance music. Sweat trickling down his camo vest. Ice cold beer. People coming and going Natalya tripping against him, her breast pressed on his arm just a little too long, her vodka spilling down his front. He mumbled something.

"What was that?" she said.

"I need the toilet," he said again. He had rarely been to this place out in the woods before. She picked up a fresh champagne bottle from out the ice bucket.

"Come with me, I'll show you," she said. She took him by the arm and led him into the house. No one else seemed to notice. There was a cloakroom downstairs but she took him up the wide sweep of curved stairs to the first floor gallery landing and into the master bedroom.

She pointed to the en suite. He looked around the mosaic tiled wet room as he pissed out the beer in an unending flow. Marble tiles, gold everywhere, even a flat screen TV over the bath. Better than any luxury hotel. Washed his hands and came out.

Natalya was naked on the bed, the white dress dropped over a Turkish rug. He looked down, she was still gorgeous. Kept herself in shape, hadn't put on a kilo since making those porno tapes. A body like hers wasted on a slob like Maiorescu.

"Open the champers," Natalya said. "I need you inside me."

There are times when you know you are fucking up big time but you still go ahead and do it anyway. Now was one of them. He picked up the bottle and uncorked it. Didn't do anything stupid like spray it over the room. He wasn't that far gone. She hadn't brought glasses so he put it to his lips and drank deep. The bubbles slipped down very nicely.

Natalya was now kneeling on the bed in front of him. She unbuckled his jeans and pulled them down. His cock stiff and ready. Natalya took the bottle from him and drank. She licked and sucked the neck like she was giving it a blow job. He sighed with expectation. He took the bottle again and drank. It was mostly empty now. Natalya took hold of his buttocks and pulled his body towards her.

She put her mouth over his cock and gave him head. The feeling of her trained lips sliding up and down. She wouldn't let him explode in her mouth but timed it just right just as he couldn't hold on any longer. She took her wicked mouth away and lay down on the satin sheets. Spread her legs letting him see her shaved cunt with her

swollen lips. With one hand, she opened herself, with the other she pulled him up the bed, slipped a rubber onto his cock and guided him in.

His hands on her breasts, hers on his arse. Took her hard, deep thrusts, no mercy. Explosion, ecstasy, a groan of extreme pleasure. Soon, too soon; spent exhausted, lying together. One whole separated into two halves again.

Natalya rolled over, her back to him. He could feel himself stiffening again.

"No, not now," she said. "Nicolae, I need you. I've fancied you for ages, you know that."

He wasn't bragging but he had an idea maybe she had.

"Eugen can't make love to me like he used to. He can't get it up much these days. He drinks, you know." Not telling him anything Caramarin didn't know. Maiorescu could handle his booze if not his woman. She cried a little.

"And he beats me sometimes, too. He stands over me, likes to hurt me and make me cry. I hate him sometimes."

Caramarin didn't ask any stupid questions about why she stayed. He knew you don't just walk away from a gang head like Maiorescu. And she probably needed the money. Liked going shopping in Odessa's boutiques, the jewels and the cars and respect. And what's an ex-porno chick going to do anyway? He put his arms around her and held her tight.

He could feel himself nodding off. Sun, booze and sex. Always does that.

"Do you want anything?" she asked.

He grunted. Could be taken any which way. She stood up. He watched her tanned naked body walk across the room. She came back with a small mirror and two fat lines of coke and a rolled up picture of Taras Shevchenko - a hundred hryvnia note. He snorted up the coke; felt the buzz and tingle shoot up his head and the world became even sharper, clearer and more vivid than before.

"Good stuff."

"Should be – only the very best for Eugen Maiorescu."

Natalya lead him to the wet room, she stepped into the shower and gasped as the initially cold jets hit her body. Caramarin stepped in after. He returned the favour, knelt down in the spray the water dancing off his back and placed his mouth and searching tongue into the tender folds of her sex. She moaned, took his long hair and forced his head down and forward, deeper into her.

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