

*Oksana*

*Quinn M. Kelley*

*"We shall find Peace.*

*We shall hear Angels,*

*We shall see the Sky,*

*Sparkling with Diamonds. "*

*Anton Chekhov*

# Chapter I

My introduction to international traveling was both memorable and unpredictable. I was flying alone, so it was an extremely difficult challenge to partake.

I left Indianapolis International Airport on June 30, 2003 on Delta Flight #6466, at 1:50 p.m. A flight delay in New York City (JFK), due to unexpected storm conditions, presented a ripple effect.

I recall being extremely disoriented in the mammoth *John F. Kennedy Airport*. I attempted to get assistance from multiple airport personnel; from the Delta Wing to the Austrian Airlines Wing. However, I was more-less ignored.

There was a covered sidewalk from *Delta Airlines* to *Austrian Airlines*, which finally weaved me into the correct place I was attempting to venture.

My scheduled departure time in New York City was 4:45 p.m. However the storm caused a delayed ascent of my flight. I was scheduled for a 6:30 p.m. take-off; we ultimately took off at 7:00 p.m.

My flight from JFK to Vienna (Austrian Air #88) took approximately twelve hours. I got absolutely no rest. It was the first time I heard a choir of crying babies on a plane, screeching in unison.

I viewed *Maid in Manhattan*, in *French*. Once I touched down on the runway in Vienna, Austria, I was allotted twenty minutes to catch my connecting flight to *Odessa, Ukraine*. There was a group of people headed to *Budapest, Hungary*, who had less time than I.

My scheduled arrival time was 9:10 a.m. The flight exceeded this time. I had switched my watch to the local time in Vienna, as we were approaching *Vienna International Airport*, and I was attempting to find *Flight PS 819* in Vienna for *Ukraine International Airport (Aerosvit Airlines)*.

This departure was at 10:45 a.m. As disheartening as it is in my mind to replay once again, all I saw was the courtesy van for *Aerosvit Airlines* leaving the gate for the airliner. Everyone on that same flight into Vienna missed his or her connecting flights.

There were a few people headed to *Dublin, Ireland*, who missed their connecting flights out. A couple and their child, behind me, missed their connecting flight to Egypt.

I had *two possibilities*; either fly from *Vienna*, to *Tel-Aviv-Jaffa (Israel)*, and then to *Odessa*; or *stay in Vienna, Austria* for the *remainder of the day, that night*, and then fly to *Odessa* the *next day*. I chose to stay at the *Vienna Hilton Danube Waterfront*.

## Chapter II.

I studied *German* for five years, in high school and at *Purdue University*.

I knew it was in my best interest to stay in *Vienna*. My *parents* had lived in *West Germany* from 1964-1966, in the *military*, and had traveled to *Vienna* for *eight days*.

I got my *\$500 traveler's cheque's* cashed for *Euro's* at the *Vienna International Airport*, by one of the most uninviting clerks I had ever met.

Three of my four bags made it to Vienna, Austria. One bag went ahead to Odessa, Ukraine.

Fortunately, the green bag that went ahead was full of lingerie and sportswear for Oksana. Her Christmas in July.

Specifically, *Chemise Gowns, boy short panties, panty/bra sets* were part of the gift basket, along with tonics and lotions. I met some American travelers in the *Waterfront Kitchen* of the Hilton, from St. Louis.

I walked along the *Danube River*, and decided to take some photos. I e-mailed my parents in Indiana and Oksana in Odessa to let everyone know what had happened, and what my travel plans were for the next day.

I spent \$7.00 Euros on his in-room mini-bar on *Cokes*, because I did not want to risk drinking the water. I took a hot shower in my plush hotel room that morning at 3:30 a.m. I left for the airport at 6:00 a.m. on July 1, 2003.

I went downstairs, and had Euros to spare, after my checkout. I needed the Euros to pay my friendly taxi driver, Mathias, to take me to the airport.

My flight out was not until 10:45 a.m. I just wanted to make sure everything was copacetic on this day.

It was a steamy, sunny morning in Vienna. I bought a red plaquet shirt (\$40 Euros) and a *Lanvin Parisian* tie (\$70 Euros) at the airport.

There were many delectable looking *German pastries*, at the Vienna Airport eatery. I went through *Passport Control*, approximately fifty times that day, because I was meandering in and out of stores; purchasing items, perusing images, and looking in on *Western European Culture*.

Ergo, I came back to the United States with *Wein*, stamped all over my passport.

That morning my plane left from Vienna right on time; *Aerosvit Flight # PS 819, to Odessa, Ukraine.*

I met a woman on that plane, seated next to me, who was working at a *Baptist Mission, established in Odessa in 2001.*

## Chapter III.

Seven Hours in time difference elapsed from New York to Ukraine. Once the *Aerosvit Airlines* jet landed, we walked down the ladder, onto the runway (a practice uncommon to me).

We headed to the most horrifically ugly, dark green transport-trolley imaginable. A group of us timidly ventured towards Odessa's finest Customs Officials.

I was the very last passenger in line. I was having trouble reciting Oksana's address, because she had just changed apartments several weeks prior to my arrival. I had to go into a room off to the side, to get my two huge bags. My two carry on's were already fast in hand.

I presented the Custom Control Officials with the *princess-cut diamond engagement ring, the diamond earrings, and the gold watch*. I was carrying them in my black, leather briefcase.

I was *taxed \$244.67* for bringing in *\$680.00 worth of jewelry. In the end, they valued it as \$1223.34 U.S.D. (a.k.a., \$6116.70 UAH)*.

## Chapter IV.

As I stood in a room waiting to enter the actual meeting area of the airport with the interpreter, I remember feeling *Star Struck* as Oksana looked into my eyes.

It was like a reflection of perception. I had this same distinct memory burned into my soul for quite some time. Her majestic blue eyes and fiery red hair aroused me to the core.

We left with Oksana's hand in my back pocket, and myself with my hand in her back pocket. It was quite sensual.

Oksana, Myself and Ludmila (the interpreter), took a *Mercedes Benz taxi* to the apartment where I was staying.

Oksana could not understand what I was saying, and vice-versa. The interpreter told me this. I was not aware that they spoke *Russian*.

I thought they spoke *Ukrainian*. However I was told by the interpreter that it (Ukrainian) was an “archaic language.”

## Chapter V.

Since the interpreter did battle for me at Customs Control, I let her eat 33% of the meals at the diners around Odessa.

The first night, all three of us proceeded to the restaurant for dinner. We had *cooked rabbit* with *Caesar Salads*.

*I proposed to Oksana, on a hardwood floor on bended knee, after dinner that night.* It was done in the gift room, of the three room apartment she had picked for me. She accepted my proposal.

We quickly went and washed our hands together (Ukrainian Custom), and went up the winding stairs to eat *Russian Caviar* on *crackers*. Oksana and I were so pleased!

The Ukrainian phrase: “*Ja tebe koKHAju,*” which translates, *Real True Love*; adequately describing the most delightful event in my life!

I had the ring custom fitted in Indianapolis, due to her European ring finger size. It was a *Size 17*. I also got her a sparkling set of diamond earrings.

It was July, and all of Western Europe was under a heat wave.

Arctic cold water was not seen by the masses as a problem. However, the salty tap water coming out of my apartment sink tasted terrible! I could only tolerate *Bon Aqua*. I drank *Cherry Coke*. The natives referred to it as *Coca Cola Cherry*.

We had to go to the market to buy all of these items. The can of *Russian Caviar*, for example, was \$50 UAH, or \$10.00 USD. I thought this was very reasonable.

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