

# Earl Kashov's

## Bloody Soirée

a new crime thriller by

**Paul Riedel**



## The Author

Paul Riedel is a name which has been recurrent in my family for many generations. You could suppose this family to be short on imagination when it comes to naming their newborns; however, you would be mistaken!

We are a family where creativity for baby names is handed down from one generation to another.

We had an art historian, an editor, a technical draughtsman and now me, in the current generation, as an artist and computer scientist in our family.

This shows that all Paul Riedels stayed true to art, directly or indirectly. As I don't have any sons, this line of Pauls will end, unless one of my sisters changes my prophecy—wonders never cease. All of my ancestors had, besides their art, another career going on.

I was born in Brazil where I grew up under a mixed upbringing which included knowledge of mixed ethnicity. I saw black ghettos where people believed in Umbanda, the Brazilian pagan belief which originates in Africa.

I explored the strict Catholic background of my Italian ancestry. From my mother's side I learned about her Neapolitan and Umbrian foundation to the Lutheran origin coming from my father's side. I developed a comprehensive vision of belief and reality.

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## Preface

When I started writing at the beginning of the eighties, I was caught somewhere between many influences of wild love of the seventies and the young rebels, as we called them in Brazil. Today, I'm aware that being twenty means still being in a phase of self-discovery. All of this together led to me having such a broad sense of creativity with several exhibitions where I showed colourful pictures, which are still part of my artistic journey.

It took me a few years longer to start writing, as it always seemed harder for me to find the words in which I could describe what I saw. This encompassed the language of technology, emoticons and immature Anglicism or fashionable, changing expressions and obviously the perceptions of people.

During this story I refer to one of my first concepts: a small group of actors and murder. Back in the day, several friends of mine died from the battle against AIDS. They were diagnosed with pneumonia, immunodeficiency or even cancer. No one wanted to face the truth and say what illness it actually was.

Sexual freedom was, and still is, a problem. What I took from this phase of my life, however, is that there are many actors who try to portray the life of a stranger, just as if it were theirs. Prejudices are why we don't meet new people and why we don't develop further in life. Those fears, which we express as belief, tradition and conviction, become some kind of blindfold which keeps us from seeing all those

possibilities the future could hold for us. What is special about those people who try so hard to work against those standards and regulations, is not only their ability to act like others, to show us how other people suffer, but also to hide their own characters.

It could be they don't actually know themselves how they feel. And even if they do, they hardly know that these feelings are not part of a personalised character.

This book contains insights into my experiences from my time as an actor and from all the groups I could work with. I hope the story shows how I personally gained so much from those people.

And now I will hand over to Earl Rasnov and his ensemble.

## Earl Rasnov's invitation

The sun had already set and left only a glimmer behind in the sky. An uncomfortable coldness made its way into the bedroom of Natalia, a thirty-four old daughter of an Italian family. Her graceful and romantic temper was hidden under the veil of depression today. She felt like she was too tired to get up and too tired to fall asleep.

On her old clock from the nineties she could see one of the numbers flickering. It was hard for her to read what it actually said.

'I have to get up,' Natalia tried to convince herself, but she felt too tired to even try.

She pushed up her hips, which were slightly too wide, and the bed made a warning noise as her weight shifted. On the wall was a poster of herself as a graceful dancer in a variety. Today this picture looked like a dream which could've been true a long time ago. On the small table with the clock was also a sealed purple envelope which had big letters on it. They looked like they had been made by spider which took a bath in ink and had a lot of fun while dancing those letters out on the envelope.

The heavy pollination gave her immune system a hard time. She hadn't been able to move properly for a few days and now she had a migraine as well.

Once her bum had found the right place in bed, she reached over to get her reading glasses. The phone rang, distracting her from thinking about how much weight she had gained.

She lifted the receiver.

“Grossbeck!” she announced, slightly too fast and a bit too miserably, while her glasses fell to the floor. “Damn!” slipped out of her mouth.

“Oh dear, what’s wrong with you? Why did you say damn? You didn’t even ask who it was that called you. So ...” A heap of accusations came from the other end of the line, but she was used to her husband talking to her like this.

The last time they had talked was already two weeks ago and it almost felt like she was answering the call of a stranger.

“What’s up, Otto?” She was slightly annoyed when she interrupted her moaning partner. Natalia bent over the edge of the bed and reached down, trying to find her glasses again.

Otto was a few years older than she and more successful than her acting career with his music business.

The small pause he made between her question and her moaning on his end of the phone indicated what this call was about.

“You’re *still* not coming back home?” she asked slowly and made sure to emphasise that this wasn’t the first time this had happened.

“No,” Otto admitted, slightly ashamed.

“What kind of company is this? They make you fly around the globe without a plan as to when you’ll come back? When are you going to come home?” Natalia realised that they

had been having this same discussion every week for almost a year.

“I booked my flight for Friday, so I’ll arrive at eight p.m.,” Otto whined, and it was obvious that Natalia made him feel defensive.

She picked up her glasses and resumed her old position, ignoring the warning noises the bed made.

“Last week you said the same thing in your email. You told me you’d come back today. I’m looking forward to seeing if this time you’ll actually return on Friday. What’s wrong with you? Don’t you want to come home?” She knew herself how unnecessary this question was. It was simply a cry for help with no sign of a response.

She could hardly hide her disappointment. Otto stayed away most nights, as he took on jobs from a big company where he had to arrange shows in several cities. He seemed to make good money, but their private life suffered a lot. Otto had married her when she announced she was pregnant.

“We can talk over the computer,” whined Otto.

She looked at the envelope and put on her glasses.

“Rasno sent us a letter,” Natalia said, holding the phone between her shoulder and her ear.

Rasno was short for Rasnov, or, as he liked to call himself, Earl Rasnov. He was an acquaintance who liked to invite them to a special event every year. He was also the producer of the variety show where Otto had met Natalia for the first time.



“Rasno? Ah, Earl Rasnov?” Otto had a teasing undertone in his voice. Everyone knew that Earl Rasnov had never been an actual Earl. It was the name of a character from a circus at the beginning of the twentieth century. During these shows, the character proved adventurous and mediumistic skills. Earl Rasnov took on his name and cherished his ancestors on many posters in his theatre. They showed pictures of him in magical blue gowns with tight trousers in black and red or horrific purple, with a face so white, it could easily have been mistaken for the narrator of a horror show.

“Obviously, Otto. What else do we call Rasnov?”

“What’s the occasion? Is it the anniversary of his daughter again?”

Less than three years ago, Earl Rasnov’s daughter, Elmira, had died in an accident on stage. Natalia had ended up with minor injuries when she tried to save his daughter.

Natalia had already ripped the envelope open when she saw that there was a dedicated side to open it. She had accidentally damaged the side of the letter. Her small fingers groped for what was inside the envelope and she pulled out a card.

“I ripped the side of the letter, damn it!” Natalia was irritated with herself for having ripped the beautifully decorated card.

“What does he say?”

“Wait. There’s a lot of paper in here,” said Natalia while she spread out tickets and a voucher for a hotel in front of her.

“Well, okay – so?” Otto urged her.

“Ah, okay. It’s an invitation to a soirée. He sent instructions for what we should prepare. The song you once wrote ... blah, blah blah ... wait. Hmm? He wants me to dance. Apparently, he’s forgotten that my leg is not as pretty as it was, but I’m sure I can manage. Okay, tickets are included, as well as travel documents – wait, what?”

The last words sounded more like protest coming out of her mouth.

“What’s wrong?” asked Otto. He was now even more curious.

“Separate rooms. But we’re married. That’s rubbish. We’ll change it as soon as we’re there. We will get paid as well. Well, when all’s said and done, it was his daughter. We really can’t cancel on him, can we? He will also present his new show and I could really do with the money.” This question was not needed, as Natalia needed the money from Earl Rasnov and Otto got all his offers because the Earl recommended him everywhere.

“I really don’t know why he has to call his afternoon teas a soirée.” Natalia had never understood that this word was also part of the German language and in all the dictionaries she never opened. She wasn’t too interested in foreign words and malicious tongues said she wasn’t very good with German words either.

“Natalia, my dear. It’s a reception in the evening and not just afternoon tea. That’d be called *début de soirée*. Leave it now.” It wasn’t the first time Otto had explained it to her. Every year she was confused when they received Rasnov’s invitation.

“Please go ahead if you want to treat me like a fool. But I know it’s called zoarrey as well,” she said in her own French

version. Otto just ignored her and continued the conversation.

“He invited us; what’s the date? Tell me, so I can put it in my calendar. I’ll have to talk to my tour manager.” Otto never argued with the way Natalia perceived things, nor her interpretation of more sophisticated vocabulary. He knew that it was just a waste of time. She soon forgot his explanations. Sometimes he thought about how close Natalia must be to a fish, as they always forget everything immediately as well.

“Don’t be such a smart arse! Is a *Tourmanager* not some kind of German football position? I will send the date to you as a text message. We have to go. I really need his recommendations and his money. I don’t have many students, and once the current courses are over, I don’t know what to do anymore. I think, in case we get another bad summer like the last one, we might have to close the school. I just don’t know what Rasno wants to do with the part his daughter owned. I can’t give him the money for it.”

There was an unexpected noise on the other end of the call, and it made Natalia suspicious. It wasn’t anything in particular, but there was something that got her attention.

Otto inhaled deeply. Apparently, he wasn’t very interested in the problems she had with her dancing school. He just didn’t know how to end the conversation.

“Sorry, I’m tired.” Otto sounded like he wasn’t even listening to Natalia.

“Is there someone with you?” Natalia asked, feeling slightly jealous, as she couldn’t stop herself from asking.

“No, I’m watching TV. I’ll call you tomorrow. I have to go to dinner now and then I’ll go to bed.” Natalia could hear someone pouring a glass of water. Again, she wanted to ask who was with him in his room. However, as soon as he finished his sentence, he hung up on her. He just mumbled a goodbye, which was cut off mid word by him pressing the red button on his phone. She was hurt and convinced that Otto was cheating on her.

She looked down at the carefully written invitation and pressed the envelope against her bosom. The alarm went off and reminded her that she had to be at the dance school in one hour. As always, she would have to smile and pretend to be a successful dancer for one hour.



Otto was on his bed in his hotel room in Hanover. His voice sounded off as he rested his hand on his throat when he hung up. He threw the phone on the bed and looked in the direction of the fridge. A man, who was almost two metres tall, was pouring himself a glass of water.

“Don’t make such a noise when I’m on the phone. I can’t stand those outbursts of jealousy and I’m sure she’ll ask me for money again.” Otto repeatedly pushed the red button on his phone, but the screen looked like it was waiting for something else.

The red-haired man was in his underwear and sat down on the edge of the bed. He didn’t look too guilty with the glass of water in his hand, which he had poured while Otto was on the phone to his wife.

“I just wanted to drink something.” Pavel raised the glass with his other hand and pointed at it while faking a burp.

“And if you were any louder when you burp, I would’ve thrown my phone at you.” Otto enjoyed the way Pavel teased him.

Pavel was a contradiction in himself. He was tall, very big and hairy like a bear. At the same time, he acted like a child; he was funny and very charismatic. Nothing seemed to be threatening about him when he smiled. But his strong hands could make people talking to him feel intimidated. Pavel put the empty glass down on the desk in front of the bed, jumped towards Otto and pulled him towards his warm body.

“I know you like it when I burp loudly and provoke Natalia.” Pavel laughed at his own joke. Otto pulled a face and the disgust he felt for noises like these showed.

“I’m serious. Don’t cause any trouble. As soon as she finds out about the two of us, she’ll sue me for everything I own. And if you’re not careful, she’ll sue you as well. Mental cruelty or something. She already mentioned something like it.” Otto put his phone aside and let Pavel push him to his side. He enjoyed the feeling of closure and how tender Pavel’s big hands felt.

“Otto, eventually we’ll have to stop hiding. Natalia is not that stupid. She’ll realise that you’re not spending all those weeks at your shows. I might be your assistant, but eventually she’ll realise that we’re sharing a room. What did you talk about? What kind of invitation?”

Otto led Pavel’s hand towards his chest and indicated to him to undo his shirt. Pavel did what he wished for and his beard touched Otto’s small neck. He could smell the woody scent of Pavel’s freshly washed skin and he soon forgot about the conversation.

Over the last few years, Otto had lost a lot of hair and his face showed the stress Natalia caused him.

His face was wrinkly and pale, instead of fresh and young and as soon as he put on his glasses, he looked even older and more resigned.

Pavel traced his hand gently from Otto's belly button up to his neck and took off his glasses. They had been dating long before Otto got married and when Natalia announced her pregnancy, Pavel started to suffer from a horrible depression.

"Earl Rasnov has invited us to one of his soirées again. His daughter Elmira has been dead for almost three years now. I think he wants to socialise again and the last time we were together was when Elmira died. I will definitely have to go to this. I even get paid this time."

Pavel only listened with one ear. He gently tried to take off Otto's work clothes.

Their bodies pushed aside the cold hotel duvet and it made a rustling noise when it fell to the floor. Soon, Otto's clothes landed next to it.

"You were his musician and I'm sure you'll have to go. But definitely not without his comedian. Don't forget that it was me who got most of the applause. I'll have an invitation once I get home as well."

Otto was still thinking about how he'd leave Natalia to continue his life with Pavel. He wanted to quit playing hide and seek and wished he could finally be proud of their relationship. Natalia put too much pressure on him, and he couldn't handle it anymore.

“Sure,” Otto tried to say while trying to escape from one of Pavel’s kisses.

“We’ve been dating for more than four years now. Don’t you think we should finally stop this farce? I don’t want to hide and be scared of Natalia all the time. She’s busy handling her school and I know that she’ll get over it. I still don’t believe that she was pregnant anyway. I don’t believe it. Not back then and not today. As soon as she told you she was no longer pregnant, you should’ve left her.” Pavel threw Otto’s ripped jeans onto the pile on the floor and looked concerned when he faced his lover. His Ukrainian accent was charming, and his baritone voice sounded soothing. He didn’t keep it a secret that he was only interested in same-sex relationships; however, Otto wasn’t out yet and was scared to lose the few friends he had once their relationship became public.

“Money is just one problem. The other one is that Natalia wants revenge and I’m sure you don’t know what you signed up for. You don’t know what she’ll try once she knows about us. She can just tell everyone about my past, simply to seek revenge.”

“Darling. She’s so stupid, no one actually listens to her when she speaks. I have to admit that many of my own jokes are on her account and the things she once said. She’s just a fountain of stupidity. For example, she once said that Oscar Wilde was a composer on Broadway, and you were friends with him. I don’t think the mushroom growing between her ears actually contains anything like a brain. I’m sure there’s just a sign saying, ‘For hire’. But let me tell you, Oscar Wilde once said: ‘Blessed are those who don’t have anything to say and just shut up.’ And she asked when I heard him say that, but yes, she’s really just a silly girl.”

Pavel spoke slowly and gently, but he sounded like he was on stage. He was always funny and sometimes very mischievous. He didn't keep it a secret that he couldn't stand Natalia, but always made it sound like a joke. While Pavel tried to distract Otto from their conversation, his libido woke up and he didn't worry about anything else anymore.

"Don't be so rude. I admit, I don't know why I actually agreed to marry her. But it'd cost me a fortune to get a divorce now."

The last bit of clothing on Otto offered no resistance and Pavel's big hands pulled Otto's body towards his chest. His long and curly chest hair felt like an inviting and warm blanket and Otto stopped fighting those cuddles.

"She's a liar. No, she's a stupid liar. She claimed to be pregnant, just so you'd marry her. Just because of this lie you should've left her, to move in with me."

Otto pulled the duvet up from the floor over both of them and thought about his situation. He couldn't keep his relationship with Pavel a secret anymore and he just had to divorce Natalia.

"Don't you think Ignez will be at Rasno's event as well?" Otto asked, caught in his thoughts.

"I thought Ignez was busy with an exhibition in Lyon. She sent me a postcard together with the invitation. Unfortunately, I couldn't find anything online about it. Must've been something private. I'm sure she'll have received an invitation as she's part of the core group of Earl Rasnov. I bet he's planning on producing another show with us if he invited all of us to see his soirée. Ignez might be a good painter, but she rarely sells her art. I'm sure she'll be



happy about the new season with Rasno. Why? Do you think she could help you with your divorce?”

“It’s just a thought, but I know that Ignez hates Natalia just as much as you do and once she told me that if I ever wanted to divorce her, she’d help me out. It’s something you don’t discuss over the phone. I wanted to talk to her about it last year already, but Natalia was with me the whole evening and I didn’t get the chance to speak to Ignez. You two get along very well.”

“Sure. I was the one who recommended her to join our group. I’ve known her for more than ten years now. Do you want me to call her?” Pavel got rid of his very last piece of clothing and threw it to the floor.

“Could you ask her if she got an invitation as well? And please let her know that I want to talk to her. I’m thankful for every bit of help I can get. Should we go and get some food now?”

Pavel traced Otto’s arm and ended in his hand. He then pulled it towards his warm, inviting genitals and whispered hoarsely: “Now? Food? Are you sure?”

“No. Maybe in half an hour?” asked Otto.

“Let’s say forty-five minutes,” murmured Pavel and finished off his sentence with a teasing kiss.



White walls, covered in paintings, vibrated because of the loud screams from a forty-year old crying woman. Her black hair was long and touched her hips. It was all around her gentle face and made her look like a character out of a horror film. She scrunched up a tissue and threw it with all

her rage towards the floor. Quickly, she got out another tissue from the box on the table and continued screaming.

“Dear, don’t cry. It was just a stupid exhibition. Who could’ve known that it was fraud?” A woman with greying hair, Catalan dialect and a dark voice tried to calm her down. Benta used to be a professional soprano with her own shows in the variety shows of Earl Rasnov. As expected, her voice changed with her age, but she could still reach all the high notes. She was the reason why Rasno’s shows were sold out. People loved her Spanish aura, which gave her a more noble appearance on posters and on stage.

Her daughter was a very unlucky person. Ignez walked into every trap she could find. She was a good, but definitely not exceptional painter, who used to design the concepts for Earl Rasnov’s stage and paint it during the florescence of his variety shows. After Elmira died and when Rasno stopped the show, she tried to get through life with one exhibition after another. During the last three years, she’d had people cheat on her, steal from her and use her, and now a woman called Natalia stole from her.

Natalia tried to be a good agent, but there was definitely room for improvement. This time, it included a lot of trouble and expenses.

“They gave me an award and claimed to pay for every single one of my paintings. I put so much money into this, and they promised me to give back twice as much.” Ignez sounded almost like a Swabian now. She concealed her Spanish origin under the veil of integration. Another paper tissue landed on the floor and she was even more in a rage when she pulled out the next one.

Ignez went up and down, her heels damaging the oak-coloured floor. Benta rolled her eyes towards the sky and took a deep breath in.

“You don’t have a copy of your paintings, no picture, not even a document of delivery. I’m sorry dear, but I didn’t pay for your expensive training for you to do something as stupid as this.” For one moment, Benta lost her temper.

Ignez got up again and forgot to cry for one second. She grabbed the tissue, made a fist and pointed it towards Benta. Benta loved her daughter dearly, but it took a lot of strength to endure her outbursts as the drama queen she was. She knew that for the next three weeks this would be the main topic, and every time Ignez would come up with an even more evil way to seek revenge, which she wouldn’t let go for hours afterwards. Sometimes she was scared that her daughter would actually follow up on those threats.

“Mother? What camera am I supposed to use for those pictures? I don’t even have a phone and those awards seemed trustworthy to me. They’ll all have to pay. Especially Natalia.”

Although Ignez was so unlucky, she lacked neither motivation nor anger. Her black hair flew around her head and made her look quite creepy, as if she would soon put a curse on the world and transform into a demon. Even Benta, who was used to outbreaks like these, got the chills this time.

“You now know that the award was just fake, and the agency doesn’t even exist online. They cancelled their website just three days after you left. What did you do in that time? Why did you not realize that there wasn’t an

exhibition?” asked Benta. She was shocked at how naïve her daughter was.

“I just trusted that I’d read everything more carefully this time. It looked super-serious and Natalia convinced me completely. Now my pictures are somewhere in Switzerland and everything I did in the last six months was for nothing.” Ignez wanted to prompt Benta to feel sorry for her and presented everything even more emotionally. But Benta just lost her temper again.

“Enough now! You’re naïve and careless. Something Natalia recommends is never anything you can base your business on. That’s a common fact. Especially because you don’t even like her. Why did you listen to what she said? She’s an even bigger drama than you and your business. We have to focus on the future now. Earl Rasnov contacted us. Every one of us. This year, we’ll get paid. He wants me to sing for him. He wrote down some songs, but I think this year I have a new one for him. He’ll like it. And you’re supposed to design the stage the exact way it looked like when his daughter died. Cruel. But as long as he pays us ...” Benta was so honoured she almost rolled her eyes towards the sky and touched her chest, looking very ladylike.

Ignez blew her nose which didn’t sound as ladylike as hoped. As soon as she went to throw away the dirty tissue, her eyes met the warning look from her mother. Ignez snorted and put the tissue on the table.

“I see. Earl Rasnov wants to hear you sing. Do you think Natalia knew about what those traitors did to me?” asked Ignez in an undertone.

The wavy dress, made of fancy chiffon, followed every movement, which made it look like it would fly behind Ignez.

It was the most expensive gift she had received from Rasno at the time when she was working for his variety show. Ignez was a woman of much jewellery and accessories and there was always something dramatic about her appearance. She was slightly more composed when she thought about her chances of getting back all the money she had lost at this fake exhibition.

“I’m sure Natalia knew about it. There’s nothing I would put past her. I could bet that she received some kind of provision for your simplicity. This bitch might be just as stupid as a pile of hay, but she’s smart when it comes to her business. *Hija*, you’ll never get your money back. Even if you could prove they stole all your paintings. Natalia is broke. She had to pass on the money she got from you immediately. She’s in too much debt. I’m sure everyone knows about it.”

Ignez continued to go up and down the room and her Spanish roots became very obvious. Since both of them had moved to Germany, they tried their best to integrate, but they couldn’t deny their roots. Even without Benta’s dialect, it was obvious that both women were proud and determined Spaniards. Ignez put both her hands to her hips and raised her chest.

“I’ll make sure she’ll feel the consequences. This was the third time I believed what she said. Every time it was just another fraud. I’m done with her. I should’ve told everybody about how she seduced Frederik and went back to Otto where she faked her pregnancy.” Her beautiful dark eyes were still sparkling while her look changed, and she asked calmly: “What exactly did Earl Rasnov tell us?”

Benta thought that it was slightly weird how Ignez just changed her moods, but she got out the invitations and read

them out loud.

“‘You’re invited to join Earl Rasnov’s bloody soirée.’ He sent train tickets and a voucher for a hotel in Eschenlohe. I don’t even know where Eschenlohe would be.” Benta got out her tablet and looked for it on her route planner.

“Where is it?” asked Ignez. She was caught in her own thoughts and touched her chin.

“It’s in the South. Lower Bavaria, isn’t it?” Benta never understood the difference between South and Lower and Upper Bavaria.

“No, that’s Upper Bavaria if it’s in the south. Did anything else arrive today? I’m expecting a parcel.”

“No, but Pavel called. If I understood correctly, he wants to take you out for some food. I wrote down his number, but I never understand what his Ukrainian shirtlifter has to say. He can’t speak German, although he’s been in Munich longer than the two of us together. It’s embarrassing how he pronounces the name of Earl Rasnov. Every time, I think he sneezed or needs to cough. ‘Raash’!” parroted Benta.

“Mother, please. I don’t even want to hear you criticising the way he talks. He’s more Russian than you and if he pronounces a Russian name like this, we should be the ones learning from him.” Her warning looks didn’t show any effect on Benta who just ignored her. “You shouldn’t call him a shirtlifter either.”

“But he does get changed in the women’s changing room, doesn’t he? He’s tall, but hmmm...” Benta pointed towards her crotch and laughed.

Pavel's size was a common topic which all women liked to talk about. He showed his genitals to everyone without any embarrassment whatsoever, so every comment in the group was aimed at him.

"Please, mother. I really like Pavel and I feel comfortable around him. He never cheated on me, nor did he steal from me like your hetero girlfriends. I don't care who he's into, about his comments and his ... size ..." Both women laughed loudly and Ignez sat down next to her mother. She read the invitation and looked at the tickets and vouchers.

"I'm looking forward to seeing all of them again. I'm sure Frederik and Bianca will be there too." Ignez seemed to be a lot calmer now.

"I'm not too sure if it's the best idea to have Bianca and Natalia in one room together after Elmira died. They despise each other," Benta said chattily, just like she usually did.

"Frederik had something with every woman in the group. Even with you, but we always respected Bianca," Ignez explained.

"How do you know? We're just good friends, the other part of the story doesn't necessarily have to be true," said Benta, slightly offended. She adjusted her hair, as if the topic didn't concern her at all.

"What does Elmira's death have to do with both of them?" thought Ignez.

"Actually, not much. But it was this day when Bianca realised that Natalia had something with Frederik. Natalia should've just got dressed and left the caravan, but she wanted to take on the role of being the new lover. Bad luck. Normally, women don't like anything like that, do they?"

Frederik submitted like a dog.” Benta loved to gossip and she told the story every year. But every time she tweaked it slightly by changing the emphasis and point.

“Right. Apparently, it was just a caravan thing, not a real affair. Just like all the others. That’s how I understood it. I wasn’t interested in the problem back when Bianca came screaming out of her changing room and met Natalia. It really was scandalous. But it’s a good time for me to find like-minded people. Natalia will suffer for this. Do you have Bianca’s phone number?”

Benta got up and closed the living room window. The cold evening air seemed wetter and it made her shiver. She got out her tablet again and looked through it until she found a page with every address.

“Mother. You’re just brilliant. So organised. Thank you. I don’t need Pavel’s number. I know it by heart.”

Ignez got out her phone and noted all the numbers. Once she was finished, she looked at her mother and smiled.

“I just came up with a great idea. *Gracias*, mother.”



Shelves with hundreds of books covered the walls. Small, big, old and new books were piled on top of each other with no order. Although it looked more chaotic than the interesting method of Frederik van Marwijck to keep it all tidy, it was still obvious that he was a very clean person. He had an eye on everything and it was more organised than in any other usual home.

He was always aware of a harmonic colour and style when it came to buying his own clothes. It was important for him