

Girl, do you want to be in a movie?

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Though many young girls dream of becoming actresses, I had never been so romantically inclined. From an early age I've been much more interested in literature. Being an actress is a difficult and taxing profession, whereas being an author allows one to play God-- that is, authors have the right to judge people.

In all honesty, the magic of film has unsettled me since my youth; men have always preyed on me with their little red books, the coveted pass to the Film House entrance, especially during a premier or film festival.

My friends who attract attention from the opposite sex receive special favors. The masculine ideal encourages involvement in the cinema world. It is subtle, but always received by the sensitive female scent of the "factory of dreams." My childhood friend Nina, an actress with extensive experience with filmmakers said, "What do you want from him? This is just movies, wine, and dominoes..." Nina also loved to describe her other theory that says, "Girl, do you want to be in a movie?" When people, especially women, are close to an orgasm.

However, none of this is related to the story that began with a restless call from Goshkin at nine in the morning that woke me from sweet slumber.

"Hello!" He exclaimed when he heard my voice, "I am coming to Berlin from *The Streets of Broken Lights*."

"What?" I asked, yawning and stretching in my cozy bed.

"*The Streets of Broken Lights*," he repeated, "a popular series about cops. You, old woman, are living under a rock!"

"Your ragin sweat has long smelled of sewage."

"Oh, I'll notice our former beauty! Woken up, alive... Alright, let's start again- I need your help. Have you ever starred in a movie? I'll tell you the plot: In St. Petersburg

they are killing and old

antiquarian...." "Well..." I

said after a pause.

“He stole an old box, took the box to Germany, and in the box a family secret was hidden... it was his mother’s letters.”

“So you need an old box?” I guessed.

“Ugh, no! Can you be quiet for even a second? What a character! It’s much simpler than that: The actress doesn’t have a German driver’s license. You’ll sit in the car, drive 100 meters, we’ll get the license from you and give you money in exchange.”

“A lot?” I asked, surprised.

“Enough for a cup of coffee and some tights. You must understand that we aren’t running Hollywood here.”

“What a pity.”

And from that the conversation started.

I arrived at the filming set on time. I was on my best behavior as I got out of the car.

“Oh!” exclaimed the director, “What a photogenic woman! We desperately need an attractive woman to play Frau Kramer. You, my dear, will play Frau Kramer. She is the mother of a Russian man who lives in Germany.”

“Are you sure I'm capable?” I asked.

“Yes. There’s nothing to be capable *of*.” The director smiled warmly. That is how I landed the first role of my life.

Frau Kramer's role was small, but I did have some words. I sat with the protagonists, who were detectives in a cafe. I had to pretend to be worried, look at a photo album and recite a few lines. I was paid one hundred Euros for my participation- not Hollywood, of course, but still something. Besides, the money was not too important; what was most thrilling was the opportunity to do something that many housewives would never have the opportunity to do.

The next morning, the telephone rang and shook me awake again.

“*Why*” Goshkin screamed into my ear, “are you still at home? Did you not understand anything yesterday?! The whole crew is waiting here, the light is installed, and you, as usual, are lying in your bed...”

“And whose bed to you expect me to lie in?” I retorted.

“Get yourself ready and run,” ordered Goshkin, “you should be on set in 20 minutes. And don’t wear makeup, you'll have a team for that.”

I ran to the filming with blotchy skin and tangled hair. Goshkin hadn't been exaggerating; everyone *was* waiting for me. The makeup artist fussed with my hair, powdered my nose, and jabbed me with jet black mascara. After her work was done, it was as if I had been transformed into Frau. I looked in the mirror, pleased with the reflection of my well-dressed twin. I sat at a table with the movie's stars, impressively leaning back in my chair like a chic French movie star, and recited my lines.

“Cut!” Shouted the director, “Great! You’re all free.”

I rushed to call my friend; I wanted to tell her about my day of shooting. She and I met up at a cafe, chatted, and spent my earnings on cakes.

That evening, Goshkin appeared at my apartment. He loved the location and the way I had decorated. Once inside, he became particularly enthralled with the library in the office, a place that is sacred to my husband.

“What an interior, such a grand collection of books..” mused Goshkin, “this place is a storehouse of treasures.. this is the type of place you remember.”

My husband took a liking to Goshkin's flattery. He indulged Goshkin in the stories of how he had acquired the books, many of which were rare and difficult to obtain. My husband was so deep in his stories that he did not realize when he agreed to allow Goshkin to film in our apartment!

“It will only be for half an hour,” Goshkin explained, “during that time, four people will come into the apartment-- the director, the operator, the actor, and the sound engineer-- for forty minutes. Nothing will be moved. I’ll see to it.”

After agreeing to Goshkin's proposal, my husband departed for a business trip. The next morning, a sixty-person crew tumbled in. Needless to say, I was shocked. The "capture team" dispersed throughout the apartment, rolling up carpets, moving furniture and swiping my lush flowers from the rooms. As I ran down the halls like a frightened hen, the filmmakers pushed me out of the way, set up cameras, and moved from room to room. Meanwhile, another group took over the kitchen and turned it into a makeup and dressing room. All the while, nobody paid attention to me.

The filming started in the living room.

I was sweating nervously so I made my way to the bathroom to freshen up. To my dismay, it was crowded with people. I shuffled to another bathroom which, I discovered, was also crowded.

“Who is next in line?” I asked hoarsely, staring at a clump of eight people.

After exiting the bathroom, I walked back to the kitchen. To my horror, a group was comfortably settled and drinking tea from my favorite china cups, which I had carelessly left in the cupboard.

In the children's room the man who played the head cop was asleep in a chair, his mouth wide open. In this moment, it seemed funny that he was adored by millions of fans. Nearby, the pretty heroine slept, sprawled on the rug. I later learned that both had spent the night enjoying Berlin and all of its pleasures, and it made sense that the poor heroes wanted a good sleep. Unfortunately, they were awakened intermittently to perform scenes in the living room.

The actors were true professionals. They boldly recited their lines with feeling and conviction, but as soon as the director yelled: "Cut!" they toppled back to sleep.

“Listen,” I said to Goshkin, who was examining the contents of my fridge, “How long is this going to last?”

“Huh?” he said, snapping out of his trance. “Old woman, where are your cheeses, sausages and bread? It seems we must go to the store. In the meantime, I suppose I'll have to starve.”

“Four hours have passed. When will it all end!?”

Upon hearing the thunder in my voice, Goshkin grew quiet.

“Soon, old woman, very soon ... just until the end of this scene. We aren't here for free you know, we're giving you two hundred Euros...”

“Yes,” I said sourly, “big money...”

In the living room they shot the final scene. They'd removed the pictures from the walls and knocked one of the bookshelves over, dumping a pile of books onto the floor. I calculated how much it would cost me to refurbish the apartment, and silently thanked God for my husband's absence. If he'd have been here, surely he'd have raised hell, caused a scandal, pushed someone down a flight of stairs. Women are always more kind hearted and patient.

The doorbell rang. It was the German neighbors asking what was happening-- why the whole staircase was full of lighting equipment.

“Russian television,” I smiled, pushing them gently out the door. “They're shooting a scene for my new book, everything will be removed within the hour.”

The magic words "TV" and "book" produced their desired effects, and the Germans retreated, smiling and fawning.

“Cut!” shouted the director from the living room. “We have everything we need from this room!”

I sighed with relief.

“Now to the bedroom,” the director ordered. “It's time to shoot the love scene...”

"What!?" I roared, “love scenes in my marital bedroom?”

I became so hoarse that I was unable to ask any more questions.

“Do you have a robe?” Inquired Goshkin after consulting with the costume girl, “we forgot to bring one. And slippers?”

Helplessly, I brought Goshkin everything he needed. “My dear, you have all the troubles of our people on your face,” chuckled Goshkin, “The service of the Muses do not tolerate fuss! Movies are a magic dream factory! Of course, it can be troublesome for some time... but the memories will remain forever.”

“The memories truly *will* last a lifetime,” I said, “as for my bed, and my robe and slippers, and the love scene filmed... everything is fine with the muses, but I don't think this was included in the fee we agreed on.”

“Oh, my dear,” said Goshkin, “yesterday you were much more sublime.”

“Over the years, we all become materialistic,” I responded while walking to

the kitchen.

In the kitchen, the makeup artist drank tea and flirted with the young assistants. I

barely squeezed onto the edge of a stool in the corner.

It was nearing 10:45 pm- *Goshkin and his forty minutes*, I thought. Lord, at this point I would pay them to get out of my home...tomorrow I'll have to call three cleaners and some burly men to restore order before my husband returns in two days. 200 Euros of course will not cover it, I'll have to spend some of my own money as well. All of this simply for movies, wine, and dominoes...

I needed to use the bathroom, but of course it was busy.

"Can you make an exception to let the owner skip the queue?" I inquired cheekily. Reluctantly, they made room.

"You guys work hard," I said.

"What do you mean?" They said, surprised. "This is a solid place. You don't know the conditions we usually work under..."

At 12:30AM the filming finally finished. I sat in the kitchen, dizzy and fatigued, staring blankly ahead. To my surprise, the filmmakers unrolled carpets, moved furniture, hung pictures, neatly stacked books, and rearranged my favorite flowers at lightning speed. In ten minutes flat, they scrubbed the floors, dusted the rooms and left the apartment in a perfect order. Frankly, the apartment looked even better than it had before they'd arrived. Quick as a flash, they gathered their lighting, hopped on a bus, and left.

I took a deep breath. I was too exhausted to make it to my bedroom so I dropped on the living room sofa instead.

The next morning Goshkin called again as if nothing had happened and asked me to send some young extras for a crowd scene in the Berlin Cafe. My daughter brought all of her school friends to the shoot. When they returned, the children were supremely happy and my daughter became very popular among her classmates.

On the kitchen table was an envelope labeled "from the world of cinema to the world of literature." In it were the 200 Euros. Excitedly, I called my childhood friend from St. Petersburg, a well-known actress who starred as a lost barista in this Cops series.

"200 euros?" Nina asked again. "They were shooting in your apartment, they should have paid you ten times as much. You should be happy you're not in the business..."

"How am I not in the business?" I asked, "I'm definitely not your worst barista..."

Six months later, Goshkin sent me a cassette with the film. In it, I was sitting at the table with the cops and speaking in a voice that sounded low and foreign to me. St. Petersburg took care of audio dubbing. My daughter saw herself in the background of the cafe scene and was immensely happy. Additionally, I watched all of the action

that had taken place in my apartment. To my surprise, the show turned out to be quite funny. Furthermore, it had good directing and an intriguing story.

I called my friend Nina again.

“Darling,” I said proudly, “do you think that I am not your competition at my age?”

“Girl, do you want to be in a movie?” Nina mimicked. And we ended our call with laughter as we had in our reckless youth.