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Bedtime Stories from Stripperland

Dilemmas of Prince Charming

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Mirror, mirror on the Wall

Once upon a time there was a girl who dreamed about travelling to faraway lands..

It was a beautiful sunny day in April when I locked the door behind me at the apartment, I took a deep breath, lifted up my suitcase and started my journey to the unknown. I faced the huge glass front door of the building. Behind the glass it was warm and secure as the sunrays warmed up the air inside. I knew I still could change my mind. But should I? With no hesitation I placed my hand on the door handle and softly but firmly pushed it forward. The fresh wind stroked my face. I took a taxi to the petrol station, which was a bit far from the centre of the town. My driver who's supposed to take me to a small Italian town, Arezzo, was not familiar with the area I lived so he asked me to meet at the petrol station close to the highway. I didn't find it suspicious at all. Everything was arranged and he arrived on time. I still remember his face, he was a big, chubby guy with a friendly smile. There was nothing scary on him. He welcomed me, introduced himself and put my luggages in to the boot of the car. The other girls in the car seemed to be friendly too. One was the girlfriend of the driver and there were two older women. They all were very welcoming. I found the driver's girlfriend, Maria extremely friendly.

"Is this your first time?" one of the women in the back of the car asked me as I was seated next to her. "Don't worry, if you have any questions, don't hesitate to ask. We will help you. We all started just like you."

How nice! All my worries vanished. In the car we were joking and laughing a lot, just like kids on a school bus taking a trip to the Italian countryside. But this trip was not exactly about getting familiar with the great Italian culture and heritage. We stopped a few times on the long way to stretch out our legs and buy some coffees and food, and to access the toilet. My thoughts were all about the week ahead. In my mind I listed again all the things I've packed. I have two pairs of high heels, just in case one breaks. I have bikinis, extremely short dresses and booty shorts. Tones of makeup. What else do I need? Don't panic, I have one week away from college and study, nobody will notice anything and I will go back with lots of cash. I told my friends at the college I don't feel good and I will go home for a week to my parent's house to the countryside. A white lie. And it's only one week. My secret mission in the night life is started with this lie. Even if I knew later they might get to know about it and I can be easily labelled as a whore for my secretly chosen night job, I decided to walk on my own path without referring to anything or anybody. This is my life and I take all the consequences! So this is the point where my story starts.

We entered the club. That was my very first foot step into a strip club ever and into this strange world. The first thing I noticed was the smell. Sweaty, smoky odour mixed with sweet perfume and cigarette. The club had a small bar at the entrance and on the other side there was HIM. My very good friend of the following years. The pole. (I call it him as some says it represents the male partner during dancing or even the most precious male body part - I think Freud would have a few words to add to it.) He became my loyal and supportive friend when I danced completely drunk or I lost my balance on stage wearing six inch high heel stripper shoes. I make a confession here and I think this is the funniest thing in my entire career as a pole dancer. I've danced around the pole many years, but in school I've never ever climbed the pole. It was required exercise in elementary school, but I

was a weak and often sick child and sometimes I didn't need to attend the P.E. class. I remember my teacher was begging me: "Please just go there and touch the pole, and I will sign your exercise!" I've never thought that years later my professional job would include doing pirouettes and up-side-downs on a pole.

"No worries, nobody uses this one." Maria's voice brought me back to reality and she pushed me to another door. She escorted me through the whole club to our changing room where we got dressed for the night into our sexy costumes, fixed our makeup and did the last touch ups before we started our shift. She showed me around in the club, there were a few customers already inside but nobody was bothered. It seemed everyone knew that a new girl had arrived. The stage was quite big, tables and chairs on both sides, and two poles in each corner. A huge mirrored wall in the back. More customers arrived and girls started their performances on the stage. One after the other. Maria grabbed my hand, she took me to the bar, and without asking me she ordered me a very strong shot. I had no idea what was it.

"Drink it, it makes you feel more relaxed on the stage!" And she forced me to drink it up. And then one more. I started to smile as it was very strong alcohol and usually I don't drink. And then suddenly I heard the DJ telling my name into the mike.

"And now our lovely newbie, Lindsay is next on the stage who has just arrived having joined us today. Please everybody welcome her!"

"Fuck, it's me. It's my turn on stage." (I apologise for my language throughout the book. I don't have a Tourette-syndrome, but I'm only a stripper, so please allow me to swear occasionally.) Before hearing my name I was watching the girls dancing on stage, I was mesmerised and I quite enjoyed it but when I realised I'm the next one, I had my stomach in my throat for a nanosecond. I felt I would throw up. Before that I didn't even think about what I'm going to do on stage. Suddenly hearing my name in the mike didn't let me think about choreography. My brain went blank. My leg followed the order to go on the stage, I was lucky to manage to step up without tripping over the stairs. "You can do that!" I encouraged myself and took a deep breath and started to dance. I just followed the rhythm. At some point I even closed my eyes and totally switched off other noises of the environment. I still remember, the first song I danced on the stage, it burnt into my memory. It was "Get busy" by Sean Paul.

"Psst, you need to take your top off!" I heard Maria's voice from the side of the stage. I followed her demand automatically like this is the most natural thing on Earth. Dancing topless in front of about 50 men in the room. They immediately started to scream and whistle with satisfaction. Everybody knew that I was a strip club virgin and this was my first time on stage. After my show I went to the changing room to get dressed, my legs were shaking. It felt they were made of jelly. "Jesus, I can't believe I survived!"

"You were good! How do you feel?" Maria asked.

"I'm okay." Indeed I felt okay.

"Good to hear. I have a customer who wants to have a double private dance with you and me. Come with me, we'll make you some money!" Another new experience! Too much excitement for one night! She grabbed my hand and took me to one of the private booths downstairs and I survived my first private show ever supervised by Maria. I felt secure as they had told me earlier there are cameras in every booth and I saw the security guy often passing the curtains. I didn't have any bad

feelings or misbehaving customers on my first days. I felt very comfortable in my new role. Dancing, drinking, smiling, making jokes and most of all, making money! And I was already hooked into the game. After Italy very soon I was in Innsbruck, Austria working during my summer holiday. I told everyone I'm going to be a babysitter in Austria, because my friend who used to help out this family had other plans and she asked me if I could replace her. Another lie but everybody believed it. Only my mum, my actual boyfriend and the girl I shared the room with during my collage years knew the truth. They knew me and they knew exactly that if I wanted something, they could not stop me. I just promised to my mum and my boyfriend that I would keep them updated and they don't need to worry about me. For safety reasons I gave them all the contact numbers and addresses I got from the clubs, so they knew promptly where I was working. I was so surprised how easily everyone believed that I'm going to be a babysitter in Austria for almost 3 months. While the idea of lying about what I'm doing in real seemed pretty harmless, later it created distance in my friendships. Because I never told my friends what I was doing for a living, I unconsciously kept my social circles smaller and soon after I started to feel isolated. Some friends thought I was quite mysterious back in those days. Indeed I was living with the presence of fear that one day I may get caught. I know lots of girls who lie about it through the years and they are always afraid that one of their friends or their dad, brother, uncle, or father-in-law might just come across to the club and all their friends and families find out what they're doing. I became another of the stripper stereotypes who's a college student daytime wearing glasses and ponytails and during school holidays by night secretly exchange those accessories for high heels and glittery bikinis. But lying about it seemed a safer option. Lots of people don't have enough information about this world I'm living in and the lack of information could lead them to early judgement or they easily create different fantasies about this work. My main motivation with writing this book is to fill up this gap of information about what an exotic dancer does.

But now back to my story: when I finished the contract in Austria, I had two choices: Carry on dancing and make more money than my teachers, but then lose the energy and knowledge I've already invested in my studies. That was after my second year at the collage, I was half way to get my diploma as a social worker and I'm not the kind of person who gives up easily on things in her life. I decided to go back and to finish my studies first. I had an agreement with myself, if I miss the spotlights I still can work as a dancer after my studies finished. But when I held my diploma in my hand, I forgot all about the stage, private dances, selling champagne and extra high stripper shoes. I just wanted to have an average life in an average workplace.

One who has tasted how it feels working in the night always wishes to go back. I met girls who start again and again because they cannot tear themselves apart from this life style. The money is easy and you can immediately touch the crispy notes, the result of your hard work as most of the clubs pay in cash in the morning when the shift is finished. When I moved to London I immediately started to look for some easy sleazy evening or part time job. I thought in such a big city dancing must be easier. My first job was in a hostess club on Little Portland Street, just behind Oxford Circus. First let's make it clear what I mean working in a hostess club in London. The term needs an explanation as it can be confusing. The idea of hostessing originated from Japanese geisha culture. The hostess bar business in Japan is called mizo shobai, literally it means water trade. It's a grey area of the sex and entertainment trade. A few years back in London there were a few gentlemen's clubs in St. James and Mayfair but these clubs were not much about striptease. We had a few dancers but stripping wasn't the main attraction. These clubs were not brothels either. Since then the Metropolitan Police closed almost all of them in central London in case of prostitution or they

have been sold as the time has been changed. Unfortunately as the result of the years of financial crises that the world went through since I started to dance forced the customers to spend less and girls to offer more. But back in the days when I worked there, if the customer asked about "rooms" I always made a joke with him.

"Yes, we have a changing room, smoking room, cloak room, bathroom, which one you were asking about?" Because hostess clubs - or cabaret type of clubs as they call them in other countries - are usually related to prostitution. Often these clubs secretly have rooms above for sexual activities, like in Switzerland. Here in London they haven't, or at least not in this obvious ways. In my club clearly we didn't have rooms for sex. Our job was selling champagne, entertaining customers to the a highest level and keeping them in the club. The atmosphere was more discreet, intimate and we had lots of customers that they didn't want to show up in any cheap strip clubs in the city damaging their reputations. Company owners, CEOs, business people from the banking and investment sector or men even from the Parliament. I met some important lord in one of those hostess clubs I worked in London. That time my English was quite poor but fortunately I'm a good listener. And I knew how to ask and keep the conversation alive. And quickly learned that people's favourite subject is to talk about themselves. A few very well-placed questions and it seemed I'm talking to my customer for hours in fluent English about how to design steel products or something he was interested in. My secret was to listen, to nod, keep asking and most importantly keep smiling. And customers liked me for that! Sometimes they left some crazy tips for me. Good old days! Most of the time they wanted to take me out for dinner or shopping in the next days, but I always followed the rules of the club. It was prohibited to meet customers outside so I always said no to them. If I think about it now, that time I was stupid not to take advantage on such easy offers. If I look back at those times, I keep reminding myself how many designer clothes I could own by now. And I would definitely need a bigger apartment for my designer shoes and handbags too. But those days I was naive and by lack of experience I didn't realise the rules of the game and I couldn't separate the generous offer from the dodgy ones, so it was safer to reject all of them. Later I mastered all these rules and games and I quickly learned in the early years that things are not as they might seem. I remember once we had three customers, two handsome, tall guys in suit followed by a short, fat guy wearing baseball cap and jeans. All the girls wanted to talk to the good looking ones, but the short guy chose me and called me over to the table. I was seated opposite the two handsome men and one moment I noticed that one of them had a gun under his jacket. I don't know if they were allowed to carry a gun but it became all clear in a second that they were the bodyguards of the fat guy. They didn't stay long though and I have no idea who was he, but must be someone important if he's going out to have some fun with two armed bodyguards.

My job was to talk to customers, drinking with them, dancing with them on the dance floor, escorting them all around the place, pouring their drinks - singing karaoke sometimes - and make sure they were having a fun, relaxed and good time. All with my clothes on. I had no shame working in these clubs, but somehow I felt I still couldn't be totally honest about my work with people in my daily life. Because I worked at night, in their eyes I was no more than a stripper or a slut, it doesn't matter if I took my clothes off or not. Even my flatmate made a statement that "You are so strange" because I started to see things - and specially men - differently after spending some time with them in the clubs. Let's say throughout my experiences I became more liberated and open minded, and that was what my friend found strange.

Indeed we had some innocent fun time there. I remember a group of Latin American guys, they were teaching us how to dance salsa. They arrived to the club around midnight and they booked all the girls. That night maybe there were seven or eight girls working in the club. There was a huge

dance floor in the middle of the room, they asked for some Spanish songs and we danced with them until closing. They constantly bought the champagne, our glasses were always full with bubbly and we all had a wicked night. Lots of fun, lots of laughs, nothing about kinky fantasies or sexual offers. We made good commission on the bottles and the guys had their own private party. In the morning everyone went home to their own place. Another time there were two guys from Texas, they wanted to stay longer after the closing hours because they had a flight back to the States early in the morning and they didn't want to go back to the hotel to sleep so with the manager's approval the staff and two of us stayed with them. They bought champagne, which means money for the club and me and the other girl didn't mind doing overtime if we could make more commission. And guess what we did? No, not an orgy. They were teaching us American country line dance steps! Have you ever tried to follow choreography when you are fully drunk? Literally we were rolling over the dance floor by laughing on each other! That was another example of innocent fun we had in clubs. Or I clearly remember when we dressed up a middle age guy. It was after his company's Christmas party. He came in his office suit, he was already drunk and he ended up wearing my sexy red dress, high heels (no, they weren't mine as I have such a cute little feet), one of the girls blonde clip-on hair extensions and bright red lipstick. Just for pure fun. He was drunk and crazy to let us do all that to him. If I remember well we even painted his nails with bright red nail polish! Better not to think about what his wife told him after he arrived home. I can think of almost everything except complimenting him. Hell yeah, we had some fun time back in those days. It always makes me smile when I recall these memories. I'm telling you these stories beforehand to see hostess or strip clubs are not always about drugs and prostitution but also some fun and enjoyable time for both the girls and customers. Of course there is some TLC involved, most of the customers are lonely men on their usual business trip and they just don't want to spend the night alone in an empty hotel room. End of the night if they ask me to go home with them, I can't be angry at them - especially if they do it in a polite way - I could understand their reaction after spending a good time and sharing some drunk flirtatious moments with a sexy woman. But it was never my case. In those clubs we usually had a few girls that - against the rules - went home with customers. If I was sitting with a guy who kept bothering me asking to go home with him, I just told him I don't do such a thing, but I can introduce my colleague to him. I invited the girl to the table, together we sold more champagne. It was kind of an untold rule that the customer had to buy a bottle of champagne for the girl before the club let the girl leave the premises as the club makes money on selling alcohol. It means he had to purchase another bottle of bubbly before they could talk about other outside business. And we had champagne at the table. We shared the commission and what happened between them after they left the club and I had nothing to do with it. Don't be shocked in the beginning of the book, honestly in some clubs it works like that. But with those girls we could work together and we never crossed each other's line. Or at least it never happened to me. Once I had a young, good looking guy and I really had a crush on him so I asked my manager what if I want to leave with him from work. My manager was correct and he said if I leave the club early and I go with him to his hotel, he must put me in the take-out-girls category and it means from that moment I agree to go home with customers. With any customer. No, thank you. I don't want that. I prefer to choose myself who I want to sleep with but he made his point clear that it is about work not pleasure. What I do after I finished my shift it's my business, but I can't just leave my job whenever or with whoever I want to. I stayed until the end of my shift but the cute guy left. But it was always up to the girl to set up her own limits and decide what category she wanted to belong to. It was never a push from the management side.

After two years I was working in hostess clubs, I had had enough of night shifts. Again I wanted to have a daytime job, normal life, normal people around me. I went to work in a restaurant but that didn't last so long. I met the most arrogant French manager lady there. I swear since I was working in the night, I've never ever met such a bitter woman. The restaurant was newly opened, it was not

so busy and they couldn't give us enough hours to be full time employee. I was lucky with previous cashier experience so they could extend my hours as a replacements in the company's smaller shops and I had my normal 40 hours shift a week. But one week in the restaurant I got a little shocked when I saw my rota for the following week. In the restaurant I got four hours only! And that's because that time there was a football match between the company's shops and restaurants and everyone wanted to go to support the team of our branch, meanwhile they needed someone to work in the restaurant so they put me on the rota. How nice! On my other days I should have covered other people in different shops in different parts of London. I got really upset about the rota and I went straight to my manager asking her what does it mean. Her answer with arrogance in her voice as much as you can imagine, was:

“First of all I let you know, I'm doing my job properly!”

I felt so disappointed. Even at night between those prostitutes I experienced more common sense and tolerance. That very moment I understood you don't need to work in the night to be surrounded by bitches. Now you can think I shouldn't have any problems with the rota as I had my 40 hours shifts, but there were other three girls in my position and she could put them in to shops as well. It was not about the working hours but more about the principal. It felt so unfair! And her reaction to a simple question was the cherry on the top. I didn't want to stay longer with the company, not even for a minute. Very soon I quit. And after this unfortunate experience with “normal people” I started to miss the stage after a few months. A couple of weeks later I got an email from an agency that they were looking for girls to work in Greece as hostesses/dancers. I forgot all about angry managers and restaurant working hours. That's it. I made my decision very quickly. I've never had the money to travel as much as I wanted and now I have the time and the perfect offer to spend three months summer on the beach surrounded by handsome Greek Gods. And on top of that I'm earning money with it?! I'm in! I didn't have a single thought that it could be a scam or that it might end up in a very bad way. I trusted my instincts. I called the woman from the agency and she promptly answered all my questions and she assured me as she lives in Greece, she's waiting for me at the airport in Athens to take me to Loutraki where the club was located. So I bought my tickets, I told everyone I am going for a long holiday, packed my suitcase and jumped in the middle of adventures and travelling. That's how my journey around the world started...

In Greece I met Giselle. She was very nice and we became close friends. I can say we were more like sisters. I remember the first thing I noticed about her was that she was wearing exactly the same pendant on her necklace as I had. But not only our pendants were the same, we shared similar ways of thinking and common interests. We had the same desire to travel as much as we could so we decided to travel and work together in the future as it's always more secure for dancers. If you work in pairs, there is always someone you can rely on, someone who can give you a helping hand in need or sharing the room with. I remember one night there was no electricity in the whole town because of heavy rain. We got a text message from our boss that the club was closed. We lit a candle, the electricity was on and off and with that very bad signal we were surfing on the Internet checking new agencies and clubs where we wished to go, until the battery died in my laptop.

“Wow, there is a club in South Africa! Let's go there, we can go on a safari!”

“Okay, it sounds good. But there is another in Hong Kong! Look at the pictures! After we can go to Thailand and do scuba dive training.”

“Let's go to Guam! There is an army base there!”

“The work conditions are very good in Canada..”

Today I can say I worked in 17 different countries and several towns across the world from Canada to Macau, China. Sometimes with Giselle, other times without her. In some places I stayed 2 days, in other 7 months. I had ultimate freedom and plenty of choices. In this lifestyle I don't have a boss. I'm self employed and I am my own boss. I work in clubs and I must follow their rules but indeed I work for myself. If I don't like the place, I have a chance to leave any time I want with no worries. The world is huge and I can find a lap-dancing club in any corner of it. But the systems of clubs are very varied. In some clubs I get a fixed daily salary because I perform topless or naked on their stage. In others I have to pay house fee to the club - it's like paying the usage of their stage for self-advertising - and tipping the DJ and the security. So many different systems, so many different rules. That's why I hate it when people stereotype. Some men just because they have been in one club where touching or even more was allowed and they felt they are in heaven, they ask for a handjob or a blowjob during private dance from any strippers in any clubs they go. Of course, they are men and they try, but it's a big mistake to think they will get it from every dancer in any club. Another common stereotype is that strippers are all alcoholics or drug addicts. I must confess that I don't like drinking that much. In my private life I rarely drink. Okay, a bottle of wine for a nice dinner to accompany good conversation with friends is always welcome. But I don't like the feeling when I loose having control over myself. I definitely don't like the big headache the next day. I can make better business with a clear head. Dancers usually make their money on dancing and drink commission. I had nights when I sold five or six bottles of champagne or sometimes more. Even for someone who likes champagne, it's impossible to drink that much. I worked with girls who drove home after work and they managed not to drink all night. There are many tricks to get rid of the champagne from the glass, and to make it clear, my job is selling the champagne, not to drink it. I really hate those movies that make people believe dancers are always drunk or drugged.

Let's talk a bit more about what I learned about men. Now I can say I know how to handle a man with money or a man with serious anger issues. And I also learned a lot about relationships. One of my manager told me that this job is the best psychological work experience. And it's so true! Sometimes it requires us to be more of a therapist than just to be the Lady of the Night. Although therapists can earn better salary. If you think my job is to shake my ass for some bucks, you're wrong. Much more about that. On one hand you're right, I sell the image of a sensual woman and my job involves taking off my clothes and dancing in front of men. On the other hand, I often play the role of a therapist. There is a reason why strippers have been called naked therapists. We listen to problems with the partner, frustrating work or issues of sexual life. Lots of men who come to clubs are lonely and they just want someone to talk to. Let me share the following story with you, which is still my favourite club experience. It happened during my work contract in Cape Town, in South Africa. That night I remember the club was quiet. We had customers but not a full house. In a dark corner there was a guy sitting alone and starring into his glass. He didn't bother anyone. I was looking at him for a while, and then he lifted up his head and our eyes met. He wasn't a bad looking one but it was something strange around him. I sent him a smile and I carried on the conversation with my friend, Giselle, I had no intention to approach him. After maybe 10-15 minutes he touched my shoulder. He was polite but this strange feeling around him didn't want to disappear. And I would lie if I say I was absolutely comfortable in his presence. He asked me for a dance. That night I didn't make good business so against the red alert in my head I said “okay”. In that club the private dance is behind closed doors operated by a computer system and the button to open the door was a bit far from the sofa where we danced. So with that guy I didn't feel hundred percent safe when the

door closed. I started to dance against the wall and kept a bit of distance before I got closer. But he asked me to stay there. The whole situation was really strange. I took off my clothes and he asked me to stay at the wall and not get close to him.

"I don't want to hurt you!" he said. I froze for a moment. "Just stay there and don't move. I just want to look at your beautiful body." I started to feel really weird. But then he told me his whole story and everything made perfect sense. "I'm a soldier and I haven't seen a woman for months. I'm afraid if you come close to me I can't handle myself. I just want to stare at you." After the dance he asked me to get dressed, then with my clothes on I just sat next to him and he paid for another three or four dances. We were talking. I mean he was talking and I listened. He told me he just came back from the army and he couldn't find a normal job - a way back to the normal life. That was some pretty heavy stuff in the air...

"Same with women. Nobody wants to be with a guy who killed people!" This sentence really hit my chest. I had mixed feelings for him. I felt sorry for him but at the same time I appreciated that he was telling me all this. I can imagine how hard it was saying out loud and to share all those feelings with someone. I hugged him and I gave him the greatest support I could, but I knew he needed only someone to be there for him and listen. The next 15 minutes this big, strong guy was crying on my shoulder and his tears were rolling down on my arm. That was one of the situations where no words were needed.

After the dance I stayed with him. He offered me a drink, but that was 30 minutes before closing and I rejected his offer because in that club we didn't earn money on drinks and I didn't want to drink alcohol. But my head - and also my heart - was heavy. I was disappointed in our world not to give a second chance to someone who really wants to change. I understood him as being a stripper it's also not easy to find a normal job if I want to quit from the night life. But who decides what is normal? Not everyone can be an office man. The majority of people would agree that is a normal job wearing a suit and working from 9am to 5pm. But I never wanted to be normal, to go from one office to another and bury myself with papers. Maybe I don't live the life my parents wish for me, but I live by my own rules.

Let's get back to South Africa. With the soldier guy we were talking about lighter stuff lately, especially about travelling when the lights were switched on. The manager waved that we are closing. I said goodbye to him and wished good luck to him in the future. I left him. But before I entered the changing room, he came after me holding something in his hand. It was a leopard tooth that he was wearing on a necklace. He said that was the first animal he shot.

"I have nothing else but I want to give you this to remember me." And I do. I keep this necklace on my mirror so every time I look at it I remember him. But things don't need to be always so extreme. Some men deal with daily problems in their life, just like another customer of mine in Iceland, who after having a few glasses of champagne, started to cry on my shoulder because his wife died a few months previously. He counted the days he was without her. He was an old type of gentleman, such a sweet man! Very generous. He kept talking about her and tears were running down from his cheekbone. And tears came to my eyes too. I gave him a big hug and I cried with him. These are useful lessons I've learned. That sometimes how helpful it can be not to give people advice, just to listen and let them speak. Or just holding a hand when the words don't come easy..

Also I remember once I had a young guy from Norway. He was good looking but constantly talked about sex. I was really irritated by him and actually he really pissed me off because it seemed he didn't want to understand that I'm not going to his hotel room.

"Man, I'm only a dancer here not a prostitute!" I lost my temper and I got angry at him. He started to apologise and just glared at his glass on the table.

"Really sorry but you are so hot and I thought you and me.. we could.. errr..."

"No, we can not!" I interrupted him impatiently. I didn't want to hear more. But then he continued.

"You know, I have a baby at home. I love my wife, but I don't remember the last time when we had sex."

Hearing that I got even more angry at him.

"Do you have a wife that you say you love and a baby?? And are you begging me to have sex with you? Have you totally lost your mind? Or really you can think only with your male part between your legs?"

He was ashamed, couldn't look into my eyes - I, the stripper, was giving him a moral speech. That was in the very beginning when I couldn't handle my emotions well and I was wearing my heart on my sleeve. After I calmed down and I tried to explain to him that there was nothing wrong with his wife, she just needed some time after giving birth to get her libido back, and maybe a little more help around the house and with the baby would allow her to relax and pay more attention to his desires. But some men are so impatient, they want everything immediately. Also I'm aware of the fact that in lots of cases the woman just rejects her partner and he's looking for the intimacy somewhere else, no wonder if he comes to a strip club. But a woman who just gave birth to a child deserves more understanding and patience, doesn't she? And do you know what happened after? Before he went home he thanked me for rejecting him because he would regret it terribly the next day.

So do you still think we have an easy job? If you previously thought that strippers are cheap and they are there only to show some skin, I hope I could give you some good points to change your opinion about us. In this life we need to develop other skills than just dancing around the pole. Travelling is always a much appreciated topic. No doubt, that's my favourite. After the short introduction I gain the men's attention because I'm well-travelled and I have interesting stories. I don't need to push my boobies into his face as some people might think. But after the question "Where are you from?" clearly I have some advantage to open up a conversation.

"I'm from Canada."

"Really? I'm already in love with you! Canada is one of my favourite country!" I don't even need to lie.

"Have you been there?"

"Yes!" and the conversation flows easily as all the stories come to my mind and we have the common topic. In Switzerland I had a young customer, he was quite drunk when we first met and he dropped his credit card on the floor. With him our conversation started with this sentence:

"Take better care of your belongings!" as I gave him back the card. He was surprised how generous I was with him and after that he often visited me in the club paying me drinks and dances as well. With him travelling was the main topic, he often visited Japan and the Caribbean, the two

places I wished to travel to. I'm a bit sad that I lost contact with him, after I've been to both countries, we could have shared further interesting stories. So as you can see, in this job it's not enough being pretty. Indeed I'm an exotic talker rather than an exotic dancer. There were some years when I didn't perform on stage much. My personal opinion, these days when men with one single click on the Internet can download thousands pictures of naked women in different positions, more men come to clubs with the intention to talk to sexy women than watching half naked girls on stage. With the technical improvements today a man doesn't need to leave the house to watch naked girls. 20 years ago before the Internet it was possible only in clubs, bars or peep shows. The Internet and the appearance of online webcam sites is the one of the biggest reasons why the club business goes down more and more every year.

I started dancing in 2004 and then I took a break and started again in 2008. Now it's 2015. I can tell how the times changed during this period. In the very beginning it was no problem to open a bottle of mathusalem, which is a 6 litres champagne bottle. In 2004 in Austria my customer asked what I want to drink and I, making a joke, pointed to the huge bottle in the corner. He bought it. Then in 2008 in London it was still no problem selling 10-12 bottles of Dom Perignon to a group of customers in one night. That time guys paid £150 for a bottle of house champagne in the club and that was the cheapest bottle of some no name champagne. And if the customer wanted to take a girl out, she could easily charge him £500 for a couple of hours intimate time. Today as it happened in 2015 in Germany, it's like this:

“How much is a private dance?” the customer grabbed my arm as I passed him. No hello, no introduction, straight to the point.

“€50 for 10 minutes dance. No touching.” I answered him with the same attitude.

“I give you €15 for 3 minutes if I can touch. And you don't give it to the bar, it is just between you and me, nobody sees.” There are more and more customers who think they are in a Turkish bazaar and they can make a deal with a dancer. Bad news, dancers work on fixed price, and the club decides about the prices. The only person he can make a deal is the manager or the person who is in charge. As a dancer I can't - and I'm not willing to - give discounts.

“The security cameras would see and I want to work here not only today but tomorrow as well. Sorry but it's just not worth €15 for me.”

No doubt, the world has changed a lot since I started this profession.

This lifestyle still holds so many secrets. Some people have no clue about it. Men see the pretty girl on stage doing some erotic moves and slowly taking her clothes off while they fantasize what they would do with her body in private. Dancing is the best aphrodisiac as the soft moves of the body helps to unblock the sexual energies. Men like to watch a woman dancing because they can keep an eye on her from a distance seeing her whole body as it moves with the rhythm of the music and makes her irresistibly desirable for them. I know exactly what effects I make with my performance. Men enjoy watching the dance while women are more judgemental towards us. This is totally fine. But I want to point out that we dancers are normal people just like anybody else. We also cry and share the same feelings. Sometimes we are desperate or confused, and sometimes we want to give up everything for a man we trust, just like those women who never worked in this night life. I've seen many movies about strippers life, being constantly drunk and taking drugs, being forced into prostitution. I must say I have never been forced to do anything I didn't want to do. Maybe I was young, naive or a little drunk when I stretched my boundaries, but I wouldn't consider myself

deviant because of that. The judgement is yours. The lessons are mine. Until today I have no regrets about my choice. If I had a chance to change my life, probably I would do everything in the same way. It's not only the easy money, not even the people I've met and the places I've seen, but all the life lessons I've learned during this period. They made me strong without losing myself. They opened my eyes but keep me cautious at the same time. I've learned a lot about myself, but most importantly I've learned how to handle my limits and how to push my boundaries further.

I'm not always on the bright side of the life. I worked in a club where the boss asked me to drink alcohol with him, mixed the champagne with Jägermeister although I told him I cannot mix the drinks and then he thought he can take me to the VIP, while in another club the boss couldn't wait to meet me, my agency told me he was overexcited after seeing my photos and on my first night he filled up my panties with house dollars because that's the way how he welcomes the new girls in his club. I worked in a club where they wanted us to get involved in illegal activity like buying us fake passports, while in other club the management bought us fresh croissants every morning for breakfast. I was rejected to enter a country because the immigration found out I'm an exotic dancer, even though I just wanted to visit a friend there. I was working in such a dirty club where I didn't want to go to the toilet, while in another club the boss put a Tampax box in the lady's room in case of a need. I have really different experiences, good and bad. In Switzerland I had a fetishist customer who bought me tights because he wanted me to wear them during the private show and I've met guys in the clubs who asked me straight without introduction:

“How much?”

“What?” I don't know, he could be asking the price of a basket of apple on the fruit market.

“You come to the hotel after.”

After the umpteen explanation he still couldn't understand that I don't have a price tag and I'm not going anywhere with him.

I worked in a club where the table dance was literally on the top of the table and I was so afraid each time that the table will collapse under my weight. I also worked in clubs where the private dance was in open booths and you could see what's going on in the next booth. It was everything but private. What I was seeing? Surely sometimes I should have washed my eyes with Holy water. Again in another club the private area was in the basement of the club, I had to take an elevator to get there, and there were no security cameras. That was too private and unsafe. If anything happens there they would not hear me screaming. Another time I saved one of my friends from a scam. She was telling me a lot about dancing on a cruise on the Mediterranean where they offered her €7000 for a month plus the commission. The money sounded good - if you ask me, too good - but they asked her for a blood test which made me think.

“Are you sure it is only dancing? Go only if you're sure, because if you find out in the middle of the sea it is not only dancing there is no way to escape!”

At the end I talked to the guy on the phone, his voice was not convincing at all, and when I googled the company and the ship's name he told me, I didn't find any useful information. It made my friend hesitant and luckily she rejected the offer. I was really happy as I had bad feelings about it. My other friends were not so lucky when the agency didn't tell them everything correctly about the club they applied to and after they arrived they couldn't make money because of the lack of information. After a few days they had to choose between buying food or buying cigarettes. They

called me on my mobile crying that they had nothing else but some dried bread rolls to eat that they had been were pecking on for two days.

“When we came back home it felt we arrived in Paradise!”

I always smile when people think how rich strippers are.

Looking back all these years I spent working at night, I had lots of fun but also lots of crying. I fell in love with a wrong guy and I left the man I really loved because other countries were calling me and I couldn't stop myself chasing new adventures. It was my drug. I lost friends because they couldn't keep up with my new life style. Some became envious and jealous because I made my dreams come true. I travelled the world and I collected lots of joyful moments. I did cage diving with the Great White sharks and also with crocodiles, I went on a safari in South Africa, I was feeding and petting baby tigers. I visited the Niagara Falls in Canada, I climbed up the CN Tower and walked on its glass floor 1168 ft high. I swam in the Blue Lagoon in Iceland, I celebrated the Chinese Moon Cake Festival and I had amazing shopping at the Venetian in Macau. Every place I visited I tasted delicious local food and I watched a firework displayed above the Lake Geneva from the Hotel Kempinski. I was sunbathing under palm trees on beautiful beaches, sailing on the sea, having wine at the cellars in Stellenboch in South Africa. I tried bungy jumping above the Corinth Channel in Greece and I walked under the cherry trees in Yokohama during the sakura. If I hadn't start dancing I would have missed out most of these memories. I was not born with the silver spoon in my mouth. I don't have a rich family behind me, although my mum is very supportive emotionally. What I have, what I reached, I did it myself. And I'm proud of it and I don't care if some put a social stigma on my forehead. I don't care what labels you put on me, the more you do, the less I care. Even some of my friends have a bad opinion. On my 30th birthday party I invited some friends to a male stripper show in central London and I paid for all the tickets. Having fun on my budget one of my friends called me a bitch behind my back and she told my other friends that she thinks I work as a prostitute. Well, well.. I still think other people are doing worse things in this world for money than me taking my clothes off.

Someone described me as a very ambivalent person. A day-dreamer by heart, very realistic by experience. Yes, indeed I'm ambivalent. I have a realistic side and a very romantic side. And sometimes these two fight each other inside of me. The realistic side can see and hear and wants to answer all the requirements of this world. My romantic side can't see and can't hear, but it feels intuitively. And it can trust in people blindly. Although I work as a stripper, I never had the mentality of a stripper. I see relationships differently, I see them through a stripper's eye. But I second-guess my own relationships too. I go one place to another, never settle down and I always use it as an excuse why I'm still single. I don't know, maybe it's just bad luck, but I feel I always met the wrong type. Like a Greek guy I was once dating, every time we were talking about my job in public places like in a cafe, he looked around worriedly like we were talking about setting up a crime, although previously he assured me he has no problems with my profession and he can deal with it. Of course, I've read about all the expectations, that you will get what you give, follow your heart and the Universe helps you to achieve your desires and so on, but I've been in some very awkward situations lately. I have great friends from Canada to Japan but when I need a hug I'm often alone. But maybe indeed I'm afraid and that's why I end up often in long distance relationships with emotionally unavailable men. Other men simply are real jerks even with a stripper (how do they behave with their girlfriends/wives then?) and I don't think about dating.

"For me IT'S a stripper" one told loudly to another dancer front of the stage, referring me an IT not even she. "IT'S nothing." Why is he in a strip club then? Especially sitting in the pervert row, as we call the area around the stage to watch the stage shows? You can see how much we need to tolerate in this job! Others want to know everything about us.

"Lindsay is a lie. Tell me your real name!" I don't know why some are so fascinated to know the real name. And if I don't want to tell them, they react like "Ah, okay, it's your job." Obviously. So what if he knows my real name? What would it change? Once I heard one guy telling his friend:

"You can say anything, I think it's a fucking hard job." I really wanted to stop him and talk about it, but he was already about to leave the club. He is right. We're constantly interacting with people using our private zone. Not like a waitress who takes the order, serves the customer and leaves the table. We let any drunk, ignorant, drugged person enter our comfort zone. It's so easy to collect all the negative energies, emotional rubbish from them. We have to deal with rejection, more than one time a night, and we have to participate in mind games. It easily can lead us into burn out, alcohol and/or drug abuse.

If you don't make money, men are your enemies because they don't pay. If you make money, your colleagues are your enemies because of jealousy. And the management also can give you hard time. Usually when the club is not so busy, they drive the girls crazy sending them to customers. "You have to go to every client! You came here to work, not just to sit!" Which is true, but let me decide who I want to work with. I often don't see the point of going over to the table if I already know the guy won't pay. But still, they want me to go that guy in the corner who fell asleep in the middle of my stage show. Pointless.

I really feel sometimes I work in psychiatry. The only difference is there the doctor or the nurse is in a superior position, here I am equal with customers or even inferior sometimes. That makes me think who is the patient here, me or them?

Others are telling me during these years that I have become a man hater. I don't think so. I make money out of them, how can I hate them? Men pay my bills, my rent, my travels. I don't hate them. I just don't always understand them. These days it's so popular to blame men for everything, so I thought I would write a book on this subject. I was judged by others for doing this job. What about men who come to these clubs? Does anybody judge them? Everyone who's judging me is ignoring the fact that these clubs and my job will exist whilst there are men who are interested in paying money for erotic fantasies. Until men stop going to strip clubs this world needs strippers. We just take advantage of them. I can play the sweet innocent girl, the classy intelligent lady or the kinky one with dominatrix fantasies. It depends on my customer's demand. The whole club business is like a huge stage play, the only difference is that I walk amongst the actors and the theatricals. I wish I could be the director though!

The strip clubs are capitalist fantasylands. Dancing is about flirting and fantasy, it's not about sex. Some people who have never been in a strip club before think all clubs look like brothels and all dancers are peroxide blondes with DD size breast implants and no morals. There is always a question about stripping objectifying women. That dancers and hostess girls are more pure objects of sexual infatuation and men don't think about sharing a personal relationship with them. Maybe one point of the view is true. But it's only one side of the coin. Customers see my personality when I sit and talk to them. I work with my personality. I don't feel objectified and I've never been forced to do anything I didn't want to. I went into situations because I was drunk, curious, or simply just stupid. The fact that I make mistakes doesn't mean I am a bad person, or just an object. It only means I am a human being. And I make lots of mistakes because I'm impatient or I'm acting in a hurry. But these are my personal lessons.

Lots of books start with the writers clarifying themselves as to why are they so good in their profession, why you must carry on reading their book and follow their advice (to buy more of their books, of course) Well, I must say I'm not good at my profession. Indeed I'm telling you in the beginning of the book I am an awful stripper. I often don't care about the stage performance, especially when there are not many customers in the club. What do you think, when I put bigger effort into my stage show? When there are customers who watch me with shining eyes or when there is one single customer who doesn't seem to enjoy himself? In the latest option I don't see the point to make a full body workout on the stage. I'm lazy and I don't do all the tricks on the pole yet I can move sexy. And if the customer is not satisfied with my dance style, I tell him next time he should go to a circus where he not only can see beautiful aerial artists but clapping seals too. I'm very picky with my customers, if I feel he has bad energy or bad breath, I don't force him to spend time with me or buy me a drink. I know some girls wouldn't mind even kissing him if his pocket is full with money. In some clubs I had problems with the management because of this attitude. Also I can be very moody with the staff too, in return they often don't like me. For example when I am not kissing asses. Or as it happened in Germany, the customer poured his drink on the floor. I told the barmaid but she just shrugged her shoulders so I grabbed the paper towel from the bar and started to wipe off the floor. The boss and the barmaid looked at me like I have an obsession for cleaning but meanwhile I was thinking why am I the only one who sees the danger of the slippery floor when drunk girls wearing extra high heels (including myself) and I don't want anybody to fall. Probably you think I did the right thing, but trust me, this kind of behaviour is not always welcome in clubs.

During work I meet lots of different people. Kind or less kind to my heart. But when I finish my contract and I have to leave the place I take only the good memories with me. The bad ones I try to leave behind. If anybody did anything bad to me I don't want to carry the anger with me back home or to the next place. It took me a while to learn to let it go, but makes my life much easier. We never live in the present. Maybe the next place with different clients will be better. The next day. Or the next life, who knows? We always plan ahead, so we live in the future not in the present. I'm lucky and thankful enough that often a stranger comes to my life offering some help when I needed. I learned to trust and give credit sometimes to a total stranger. I learned to face problems and that at the end somehow everything will be all right. I learned that all those difficult times are only challenges and the show must go on. As it always does.

I was thinking a lot if I should write a book to men or women. But men are interested in what a stripper thinks about them while women want to know why a bunch of men go to such a places like strip clubs after work. Women and men who never been to a strip club before often wonder why alcohol makes an ordinary man want to wear a stripper's bras on his head, jump on stage and start stripping himself. I want to show a mirror to men to see how badly they can behave even when with a stripper there is no necessity to cheat or lie. Better not to think what they do at home in their relationships. At the same time to show women how their men, husband, boyfriend, dad or son behaves when he comes in such a place as a titibar. Funny thing I noticed, men look at other men, they check each other's reactions and behaviour in clubs even when they go there to see girls in the first place.

I've never read other dancers books. I don't even know if there are any on the market. I can talk only about my own stories. First of all, I don't want to write a psychological case study book here about my typical customers. I don't have a PHD in psychology although I had made studies at college

based on psychology. But I have open eyes - and open ears - and years of experience working with men. I've met men from different countries, from different cultures. I think it makes me trustworthy in this field. The book is just an opinion of a stripper on how she sees men and relationships these days. I ask you not to take it too seriously. I'm not saying I know men. They still can fool me around. Sometimes I know they play a game and I go into the situation out of curiosity. I want to see what is their next step for wider experiments. What other lessons they can teach me. But I cannot take them - or most of them - seriously any more. If I do, after these experiences I would be one bitter and disappointed woman.

"Mirror, mirror on the wall. I ask you where are the great men on Earth. What??? There are none?! You must be joking!" This mirror represents the mind of a woman. If she never met a great man, in her head she says he doesn't exist. I'd like to show a mirror and hope men will see themselves through a woman's eyes. Maybe I can help them to find the true themselves and see clearly through the labyrinth of the modern relationships. I'm not saying the responsibility is only with men. But I see only this side as I rarely date girls. And about dating, I'm considering to continue my studies in this field as a dating coach or relationship counsellor based on my previous experiences if I quit dancing. This is the time when I can show I'm more than a stripper. Or at least a wise one. It's not an oxymoron. I had a manager who always told me to use my brain and I did and still do. Not only the brain but my eyes too. I became open and sensitive to find out the hidden motivations of others. I can read people easily and I believe I'm a good judge of characters, although I still can fall easily into the trap of judgement.

Not so long ago I met a guy in Denmark. He was wearing one of those stylish dark glasses and his face radiated some intelligence. After a short introduction, I asked him what he did for living.

"I sell books" he answered. My eyes immediately started to shine.

"Really? Books are my favourite subject lately!"

"Ah, do you read?" and he gave me a cynical smile. Books and reading are strictly forbidden for strippers??? I didn't know about it.

"Errrr actually I write. Or at least I'm trying to." The guy gave me a totally different look. I explained to him a few things about this book and he was nodding in acknowledgement.

"I can imagine, it would be 200 pages of moaning about men!" He laughed. "But if you can manage to stay honest and hard core, your book will be a great success."

I don't know what he meant by being hard core, but for sure I'm honest through every single line. I think the Creator gave me a double portion of cynicism and a dash of sense of humour to write this book, but these are not sugar coated stories. I write down everything as it happened. People always love to talk about me and my life secretly behind my back, especially when their own life is quite boring, now go ahead, I give you all the dirty details! Just imagine, you pass the door of a strip club surrounded by huge neon colour lights and at the door bigger bodyguards than the neon signals. Standing outside you wish to take a peek what's going on behind the curtains. You hear the music and a woman is wantonly laughing inside somewhere close to the entrance. You always wanted to know what is in this club. Well, here, in this book I open those curtains for you. Through these years I made my money taking off my clothes. This time I make my soul naked peeling off all these layers of secrets.

Thank you to all my clients, friends, boyfriends, sugardaddies, managers, bosses, pimps who taught me about the spirit of the male existence. Without them I wouldn't have these bitter-sweet stories to share and they all unwillingly cooperated in the birth of this book.

Mirror, mirror on the wall, where are the good men after all?

Dilemmas of Prince Charming

On a rainy afternoon the Frog was sitting in the middle of a puddle front of a strip club hesitating if he should go in or not.

“If I go in, I'm sure, I will find a nice girl who would kiss me for a couple of bucks. But what happens after she has kissed me? I would become Prince Charming. And what happens to me if I become a Prince? I will have a sword. What for? To kill. What do I need to fight with? The Dragon. WHAT? THE DRAGON? People will expect me to kill a DRAGON? Hmm.. but I will have the most beautiful white horse in the world. Everyone will envy me. And my horse will be the fastest, to escape quickly from the battle fields. Escape...is this noble? Is it graceful from a Prince? Or I have to fight with thousands of brave solders instead?” The Frog was scratching his head. “Then my people will want me to save the Princess of the neighbourhood Kingdom. I have to remove the evil-looking Fairy Godmother. I need to fight with the Western Witch, the Big Bad Wolf and the seven headed Dragon. Um, you know what? It's too much for me. I'm happy with my Life in the puddle and just being a Frog!”

And he disappeared in to the grass.

Well, well. That's such a big dilemma for a poor frog; taking responsibility, taking risks, take care of other people's needs and supporting them. Familiar? This is the path we all need to walk on and become an adult. A Boy has to become a Man. These days there is no need to fight with dragons, but symbolically we need to go through all those battles just like the Prince in the fairy tales when he completes his big journey in to the unknown. The dragon can represent our boss, the man with the electricity bill or the woman behind a counter in the shopping centre. Or our mother-in-law, who can be the most dangerous fire-spitting type of dragon - you're required to have special skills and a special armour to protect yourself from her. In real life we don't have the choice the frog has. We have only one way, and this is to grow up.

I think we all agree: something is definitely wrong with dating these days. There are lots of traps in modern relationships and something is definitely wrong with the picture of Prince Charming. Once we were a little girl and grew up listening to fairy tales and other sweet bedtime stories before we got a good night kiss from our mum or dad and we fell asleep. Since then we dream about the moment when the Prince one day will ride up in to our life and take us with him to the sunset. We wait for that moment when he gives us his hand and - because he's so strong - easily lifts us up and seats us behind him on his white horse. His shoulders are wide and protective. He's self-confident and we know we can trust him, and he has the sweetest smile and fire in his eyes that gives us a cold shiver in the spine cord. He doesn't need to have the perfect smile made by an exclusive dentist. His horse doesn't need to be the youngest or the tallest. Not even the fastest. His riding gear doesn't need to be labelled by a high end designer. They are all false details. So what do we expect from him? Just like in the old ages he needs to be there for us and fight for us. Because we, women want to feel loved by him. This is the key for him to feel being wanted by us. Unfortunately the reality is not that dreamy. Some man can give us cold shivers but for all different reasons.

If you read the book 50 Shades of Grey, have you ever thought about what is the common feature in old style picture of Prince Charming and our modernised Prince Charming who makes all the woman melt just by reading the book, aka Mr. Grey? They both know what they want and they both want their ladies who trust them, no doubt. The old style Prince Charming gives a hand to his lady and lifts her up on the horseback, riding away with her on the horizon into the sunset. He wants her and she trusts him. She doesn't ask "Where will we live?" or "How will we pay our bills?" She just simply trusts him that with him everything will be okay. Mr. Grey also wants his Princess - okay, in a different contest, sometimes locked up and tied up in the basement of his castle - but he's not afraid to make any movement to get her, and Mr. Grey asks Ana in the book several times "Do you trust me?" And she does. She's ready to be blindfolded and do whatever he asks her to do. I'm sure you have seen those funny cartoons too about how the Stone Age guy gets his woman; when he wants her, he just hits her with a shillelagh and takes her in his cave. When she wakes up, she stays with him, no questions, no counter-moves.

And that's what we women miss from the guys today. They want us to make the moves, taking the first steps, approach them, seduce them (forget about to propose to them because then they just jump on the horse and you will never see them again!) Do you know the saying, the cat kept in the house rarely goes out to catch a mouse? Our men became more lazy. We spoiled them, we made them lazy. Well, today they don't need to hunt for a living, anybody can hunt a pizza in the grocery store on the corner. But these days he has to fight with his inner demons, and those fights are more dangerous. Even in dating they don't need to hunt any more. The situation is like that nowadays: the hunter puts his arrows and bow and decides to go to the nearest forest - I mean to a bar - to hunt a nice deer for dinner (or anything he fancies). He opens the door, and the deer instead of running away, start to scream: "Shoot me! Shoot me!" My dear Swiss friend, who was my customer before we became friends, told me this story. He went to a bar with his friend to have a few drinks. They didn't want to get girls, they just wanted to have a normal male talk after work on an average Friday night. It was not a strip club just a normal bar in Geneva. In a very short time a beautiful girl went over to their table. They were talking for five minutes when the girl suddenly asked him "Are we going to fuck tonight or what?" He was shocked. Of course, he didn't want to. He didn't feel excitement or satisfaction as he didn't feel that he earned this beautiful woman. His friend didn't hesitate that much and he took advantage of her offer.