

Autobiographical novel full of drama and intrigue with hints of humour and sensuality. Intelligent, thoughtful and compassionate. Meet Marina Ray – the woman with guts to buck the system.

*The Price of Red Roses: A Memoir of Love, Betrayals, and Counselling to Commit Murder* describes real events that happened to the author. Marina Ray's story will invite you to taste the hardship of immigration and the enduring heartache of being separated from one's motherland and loved ones. You will delve into the glittering lives of millionaires, reel from unprecedented human baseness and greed, and tread the unsettling inner corridors of Canada's jails. You will also encounter great love.

Most of the events described in this book took place in Toronto, Canada, spanning three decades, starting in 1990. The author also returns to fragments of her life behind the Iron Curtain in communist-ruled USSR. Her heart ever grieving her abandoned homeland, Marina Ray offers a unique perspective on the collapse of a brutal regime, and the incredible political and socioeconomic changes that rapidly catapulted the communist empire into modern Russia.

Tragic and funny stories intertwine with vivid characters – some are angels in human form and others have lost their souls in the idol worship of gold. All names mentioned in this book are real. All events described, from minor to tragic, are true; they are supported by police reports among other corroborating documents. To verify the reality of the events described, simply type the author's name into any search engine, such as Google.

### **Dedication**

First, this book is dedicated to my best friend, the last hussar on the planet, Alexei Pokrovski. Without his participation in my life I would not be alive, and this book would not have been written. This book is also dedicated to all my true friends who did not turn away from me in times of hardship. I would like to express my special gratitude to members of Happy Tails Rescue organization: Judianne Keep, Carol Thorpe, Maggie Blanchard, Dave Moberly, and others. These people helped me to not lose faith in kindness, honesty, and unselfishness.

This book is intended for lawyers who have forgotten that they have a license and obligation to defend clients, not to shamelessly plunder them.

This book is also intended for those police officers who have forgotten that their duty is to serve and protect, not to manipulate and provoke people who happen to be in the most difficult situations of their lives and whose mental wellbeing could be altered by such tremendous stress. This book is for those police officers whose negligence and desire to curry favor at any cost destroy people, and sometimes take lives.

Marina Ray

### **Prologue**

I was standing behind a closed, heavy metal door with a small rectangular window. I could see through the dull security glass to a modest common area with round metal tables and matching stools screwed

to the concrete floor. Grey paint covered everything: the floor, walls, doors, and “furniture.” An old television hung on a wall. The common area was secured by another thick, heavy door with a bigger window, also with unbreakable glass, preventing any chance of escape. Behind that door was an area for guards, then another door, a corridor, door, and so on. You would have to go through all those doors to get out. Freedom was somewhere very far from my cell.

I was locked in a small room, the same grey – coloured paint peeling off mortared walls. The only “decoration” in the cell was the graffiti left by previous occupants. The cell’s “furnishings” consisted of two narrow metal beds with a table between them, a smaller version of the tables in the common area. The table in the cell was also screwed to the concrete floor. A metal toilet and sink completed the necessities. There was no privacy to use the toilet; it was located at the corner of the cell without any partition. I had to sleep on the metal bed with a thin plastic mattress and the same kind of pillow. Worn, greyish – coloured sheets and a blanket covered with pilling became my bedlinens for an unforeseeable future. A person charged by the police has to face a very lengthy process to go through this meat grinder of a judicial system. For serious charges it can take years for them to decide if you are guilty or not.

My cellmate happened to be a slightly crazy woman born in Jamaica, a shoplifter. Helen had the unbearable habit of talking to me – and to herself – in broken English with a terrible accent that “swallowed” half of the phrase. Helen had some kind of hearing problem and spoke extremely loud. She talked nonstop and when she tried to explain something to me and I could not understand her, it made her mad.

“You must find a good lawyer.”

Finally, I got what she was trying to say. I thought, *I know that, please be quiet!* But stopping her stream of conversation seemed like an impossible task. On top of that, rap music (which I cannot bear) blared down the area at an intolerable volume and drummed on my tightly strung nerves. My crazy cellmate tried to speak over it, basically screaming.

I did not cry out loud. I stood silently, but tears ran like a waterfall down my swollen face. More than anything, I wanted quiet. It was torture! Thoughts feverishly assaulted me: *I fled the communist regime in the USSR to Canada to be here? And the charge is so serious! Why did the police not ask anything about Victor Sokolovski? Did he report me to the police? Where are my dogs? What will happen to them? My house just sold, closing in three weeks – what will happen to all my stuff? No, I cannot survive this. I have to kill myself. How to do it here? No, I cannot. If I commit suicide by law half of the money will go to that bastard, my so-called husband. Money, it is pure evil.*

Finally guards turned off the music and switched the lights down to a nauseating yellow, which would stay on all night. I remained standing and looked through the small, dull window, not able to lay down on that dreadful bed. Suddenly, a sound interrupted long – awaited quietness, and very loud laughter swept through air. More and more, louder and louder. I understood that the guards were joking and entertaining themselves. It was Christmas time, and they were in a holiday mood.

*Now I know what hell looks like!* I thought. The word, hell, pulsating, stuck in my head. *Hell, hell, hell, I am in hell – this is hell. Hell, I know your face . . .*

## Excerpts from Chapter One

“Can you cut our dog’s fur? It is very overgrown,” my friend Galina once asked me.

“Sure, no problem.” I could make any kind of dress, and it seemed to me like it would not be a big deal to cut a dog’s hair. Armed with my dressmaker’s scissors and a large brush, I arrived at my friend’s house.

The puppy, not suspecting anything, greeted me with joyful barking and jumping, he’d never in his life had a haircut before. Afraid to start with the head, I decided to practice on his behind. The puppy, like all kids, was restless, and from the sound of the chattering scissors he started to vehemently break out from my hands. To the best of my ability I was cutting chunks of fur from his back and sides. It was impossible to admire my work, the puppy refused to stay still, but it became apparent that the haircut was not nice. Some parts, cut too short, very much resembled lichens, surrounded by various lengths of tufts of fur sticking out. The puppy’s body became small, with a disproportionately large head covered by long, matted fur. *Poodles must have a tuft on their head*, came to my mind and I brushed all the fur from his head upright, preparing to trim it. At that very moment, the poor puppy desperately howled, twitched his body, and I snapped off fur on his head very close to his skin. The puppy emitted another wild howl. Breaking out of my hands with his frantic movement, he rummaged around the room. Looking at my unhappy “client,” I realized that my creation was a totally new hairstyle for poodles: the body covered by different length tufts, a bald head and a wide, long beard, resembling a shovel. Dear friends, do not try to save money on your pets!

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Our business slowly grew and we were looking for new wholesale fabric, specializing in drapery and upholstery products. Once we went to a meeting with a sales representative of a large company. Elena and I did not lose our Russian custom of dressing nicely, I was wearing an elegant, red, tight – fitting jersey dress, embellished by designer jewelry. On my feet were black shoes with high heels. I assembled my blond hair in an elaborate hairdo and overall, I looked spectacular. A tall and extremely handsome man with broad shoulders and a fit physique greeted us with a wide, dazzling white smile. My heart suddenly jumped in my chest and a warm wave ran through my body. At that precise moment I felt young, beautiful, and desirable.

Carlo joked and I happily laughed, which was new for me, with bell – like laughter. After that, we were standing silently for some time, looking at each other. Carlo’s parents were immigrants from Italy and he personified the standard of handsomeness for a Mediterranean man. He looked very much like actor Andy Garcia when he was in his early forties.

The next day Carlo called me without any reason and we did not know what to say to each other; we were both married. I could not stop thinking about him and in a few days I had to go to his workplace to buy fabric for a customer. I was wearing a maxi dress with a deep décolleté, my long, blond hair covered my shoulders. Carlo happened to be in his office and saw me through glass, he invited me in. I was

sitting in his office, chatting, smiling and laughing, not realizing that one strap of my dress had fallen down, exposing a naked shoulder and part of a breast. Later on, Carlo admitted that it was very erotic. He proposed a date and we met the next day, I could hardly wait for the appointed time. It seemed to me that the clock's arms did not move at all.

Carlo was waiting for me not far from the apartment building where I lived. I was walking toward him, clicking my high heels while the warm, pleasant wind played with my hair and the wide skirt of the colourful light silk summer dress I wore. My slim waist was emphasized with a white belt, and I wore a matching colour sandals. Carlo was waiting for me by the library, he leaned on a wall, rays of sunshine lighting him and everything around him. I approached Carlo and for some time we stood silently, looking into each other's eyes and admiring the moment. The whole scene was like from a Blockbuster movie. Finally, we got into his car.

"Where do you want to go?" he asked me.

"I want to make love to you today," I answered and hearing that, Carlo hit a curb and did it frequently on our way to the hotel.

Later on I was lying across the bed on my stomach and Carlo, on his knees in front of me and was stroking my hair and face, and he said, "You are so beautiful."