

## SEX FOR FRIDGE

Mrs Zhuzhuna had one dream. She very much wanted to find an elderly, rich car-owning lover. He would, by necessity, be married and would provide her with money and presents. They would have a regular meeting place and he would be, to quote Zhuzhuna, hygienic and discrete. This hefty lady of forty-plus couldn't understand why she hadn't found such a man or, more generally, why such men seemed to have disappeared. Such men are few and far between and there is no lack of women both younger and more beautiful than Zhuzhuna. Mme Zhuzhuna drank like a man - she could drink any man under the table. She enjoyed long witty toasts accompanied by poetry. Red-cheeked and fluttering her eyes, she would explain to her drinking companions the meaning of brotherly love, for example, and how siblings can love each other best of all. She liked to converse in the same style about family love and motherly love and about all the subjects that come up as part of the drinking and toasting traditions. She could sing and if there were a piano where they were drinking, she would bang the keys and sing in a shrieking voice, overcome by emotion. If she could get away with it, Zhuzhuna used strong language. She liked eating rich food and had a prodigious appetite about which she'd make apologetic jokes. After which, she'd then tuck in to everything on the table, especially the dishes made with pork. Zhuzhuna liked pork.

Somehow, step by step and almost imperceptibly, between Albert, who had just turned forty, and Zhuzhuna, who was over forty, a very lively conversation developed which Zhuzhuna deliberately directed towards her own indirectly expressed, simple idea. This idea consisted of Zhuzhuna and Albert consuming the vodka and sausage in the fridge, then frolicking in bed together with the climax of events being the remarkable fact that Albert, with a feeling of gratitude, would hand over the fridge free of charge.

To put it briefly, the fridge would be exchanged for sex.

But Albert, like all men, was not very shrewd and couldn't understand what this strange woman was up to. This was partly because he was worrying about an embarrassing possibility. Whilst it was true that the fridge kept things cold and its light came on when the door was opened, he dreaded the moment when the fridge motor would start up. He had no idea what to expect from the woman buyer if she saw it happen. Would she still want to buy this crazy fridge? A fridge which every so often entered into an altercation with the tiled floor around it, jumped out of its brick border and lurched around the room like a mad thing?

Meanwhile, Zhuzhuna was, as they say, gently, gently, bit by bit and step by step, leading the mysterious but sociable conversation towards what she hoped to achieve - the exchange of sex for the fridge. But, she wanted the owner of the fridge to think it was his idea and for him to be the one to suggest such an agreement. And, naturally, to suggest it in a form acceptable to a respectable woman. Finally, after a lot of persuasion from the fridge owner Albert Karbelashvili, and many refusals from her side, she would yield to this naughty and seductive temptation.

If my husband was good for anything would I be here? Mme Zhuzhuna speculated aloud about her husband's worth, all the time wondered at Albert's failure to take the hint and when he would get round to taking the vodka and sausage from the fridge.

Why would I be buying such a rubbish fridge? If my husband were a real man would he have allowed me to come to Eve's Backside to buy this fridge? But no, he only brings creditors to the house. He creeps out of the house early in the morning and comes back at midnight leaving me to deal with them. The other day, I had to take to our fridge to the repairman myself. It was out of order for two weeks and I had to pay for the repairs with my own money. I don't know what to do with him; I don't know what to do with him! Is he a real man? Is he a real man? The hefty woman continually

declared, pacing to and fro as if she were a queen giving orders. And as she did so, she repeatedly accidentally brushed past Albert. And Albert in his turn, as if by accident, lifted his hand in an exploratory way against this woman who was behaving like a snorting brood mare. Then he mustered his courage and suggested punishing her husband a little.

Really, he is not a very serious man, your husband, Albert said dubiously, smiling at her in an appeasing way, and such men deserve what's coming to them. Such men should be made an example of by humiliation and the best way would be his wife's adultery. Yes, adultery! You must be unfaithful to him.

Adultery! Be unfaithful? Zhuzhuna was surprised and raised her innocent eyebrows. She didn't seem to be offended by the suggestion. It was as if it was a surprising idea that had never occurred to her. To be unfaithful! Yes, I would but is it worth it? And with whom? And nowadays men have no ability to appreciate a woman.

Be unfaithful to your husband with me! I will appreciate you! Albert suggested to Zhuzhuna and reached out to her big, wobbly backside.

Hey! Zhuzhuna brushed away his sweaty hands with her strong stubby fingers. How can you appreciate me if you are more of a beggar than my husband? All you have in the world is a fridge and you are selling that!

Well, so what? You can't measure everything with money. He tried to defend himself and with a smile on his big-nosed face, looked down at the place in his trousers, at what cannot not be measured with money but only with a ruler and a compass. Then he looked up and reached out again to Zhuzhuna's big wobbly bottom.

Leave me alone, for heaven's sake darling! Zhuzhuna tried to get rid of his hand. Who needs a penniless man? If only there was a rich old man who could support me properly. Do you know anyone like that? Perhaps you could introduce someone like that to me.

Who can I introduce to you ...? Albert mumbled and fell silent.

The woman was greedily bustling around the fridge. She opened and closed its door, poking her head inside as if she was examining it carefully as a potential purchase. In reality, she was hoping that her host would take the hint and offer her the vodka and sausage. The host, however, didn't take the hint because he wasn't sure that, after partaking of the vodka and sausage, the woman would agree to be unfaithful in order to punish her worthless husband.

This critical situation perhaps would have been solved by the action of the fridge motor but the fridge had no intention of switching on. No one ever had the faintest inkling when this event might take place. It would only switch its motor on when it felt like it, not according to any precise schedule. But, finally, at last, the exploding noise of the motor sounded and the fridge, making a neighing sound, began to shake as if it were having an epileptic fit. It tried to jump out of the brick barrier that surrounded it but couldn't manage to do so on this occasion because Albert had added more bricks as a precautionary measure. Zhuzhuna, shrieked in surprise and threw herself against Albert's chest in terror. Then she pushed him away and expressed her outrage in a shrieking voice.

My God! What is it? She yelled. What was that? She never stopped exclaiming – ooh, aah, eee.

The motor is a little noisy, that's all. Albert calmed her down.

It certainly is! It will drive my neighbours crazy if it starts working at night.

It won't drive them mad. Albert calmed her.

Oooooooh, the woman shrieked.

Eventually the motor switched itself off and the woman calmed down a little. She would occasionally give out an 'ouch' but without the same degree of feeling as previously. She then tried use the noisy motor as a way of reducing the price of the fridge as much as possible. But Albert was determined to dismiss this defect and present the problem as minor and not worth considering. Zhuzhuna was suggesting twenty laris but Albert was demanding at least forty.

Twenty! The woman suddenly shouted and put her foot unexpectedly on the only chair in the kitchen, which wobbled slightly. Having done that she caressed her own plump thigh, making the dress fabric cling and with a devilish twinkle in her eyes repeated in a sweet voice, 'twenty ..' Without disagreeing, Albert lowered his price and mollified and changed his tone, whilst sliding his hand under her thigh. Thirty five, he uttered full of emotion and this time he caressed the bare flesh of her thigh.

Twenty... the woman whispered and nibbled his ear. Okay let it be thirty, Albert acquiesced to the woman with an obedient whisper and moved his hand deeper between her thighs. Zhuzhuna took his feeble hand in her strong hands and began to move it up and down along her thigh as if she were using a sponge in the bath.

Damn it, let's go! Karbelashvili said through gritted teeth, succumbing to his fate. He embraced Mme Zhuzhuna's substantial waist with his frankfurter-like hands and guided the devoted family-woman out of the kitchen into the other room. He attempted to push her onto the bed but because they hadn't agreed upon the price, she refused to move. Help me take it downstairs and load it on the car as well, she asked in a caressing whisper.

Oh, yes, okay, an emotional Albert agreed and then he pushed her back towards the bed.

Let's drink first Zhuzhuna said. She steered Albert back into the kitchen towards the fridge and made him open the fridge door. As there was no table in the flat, Karbelashvili put everything on top of the fridge. He then went into the other room and opened the wardrobe where he kept all his possessions including his groceries. He brought out a half-eaten loaf of stale bread and stained dirty glasses and put them on top of the fridge as well. Then in a sudden gesture, he took everything off again, blew the dust off the top of the fridge and put it all back again. He was still not satisfied and so pulled out a plastic bag which had been stored behind a redundant radiator, moved the food out of the way, put the plastic bag on top of the fridge and laid the food out for the third time.

Come on, he told Zhuzhuna and casually invited her to the fridge for a feast. Zhuzhuna protested mockingly and made some sarcastic comments about having to stand at a fridge in order to partake of a feast. First she asked him to move the food onto the windowsill, but since they had only one chair, which wobbled, Zhuzhuna made another suggestion. On her initiative, they moved the only chair into the living room and put it next to the peeling bedstead. It was good timing because the moment Albert took the vodka and glasses from the fridge, the motor started up again. The once white but now yellowish, almost-alive fridge shook its body with such strength and persistence, that the bread, sausage and mustard were thrown out onto the floor. The vodka and glasses had had a lucky escape from being broken. Zhuzhuna and Albert picked up the groceries and put them on the plastic bag on the wobbly chair together with the vodka and glasses. They sat side by side on the peeling rusty bed. Albert poured *Minimo* vodka.

You forgot salt, Zhuzhuna muttered, with her mouth full of bread and sausage. She pinched Albert very strongly on his backside.

Albert got up and brought some salt. They were drinking vodka, eating and caressing each other. More precisely, Albert was caressing Zhuzhuna whilst she was pinching him as if she wanted to pull off bits of flesh. Occasionally, they had some music from a small cheap radio, which worked on 4

volts. The radio's adaptor was burned out and the batteries were almost flat. This technical hitch prevented the radio from being run from the mains and the batteries could only feed the radio for a very short period. After that you had to switch off the radio to allow the exhausted batteries to recover their strength. Then it was possible to switch the radio on again for a short time. Zhuzhuna could play, or, more precisely, bang the piano, but she couldn't do so here because there was a meal set out on the only chair and the terribly un-tuned piano lacked a key. In any case, Zhuzhuna was not keen to play. She was knocking back the vodka in a manly way and composing a toast, which included quotations from famous poets and some swearing. She cursed her husband with four-letter words - her husband, neighbours, colleagues, bosses, country leaders were all sworn at. She considered everyone to be a personal enemy and named them as the cause of her miserable existence. She considered them criminals. Albert's disposition was pretty similar.

When the vodka began to take effect or, more precisely, when this intoxicating liquid began to flow in Karbelashvili's veins, he pushed his hand into his pocket and said that he would bring another bottle of *Minimo*. Zhuzhuna demurred, reluctant to let him spend money but it was obvious that her own appetite had been stimulated as well.

Can you afford to be so generous? She asked him in a soft voice and slid his hand, as if she was using a sponge in the bath, along her thigh.

Money? No, I don't have money, answered Albert tipsily, stumbling over his words. But you owe me twenty laris and I'll buy the vodka out of that twenty.

Zhuzhuna, unlike Albert, was not in the least tipsy - she only had an increased appetite. She weighed up the situation in no time and didn't agree instantly, because to be honest, it was impossible to buy an old fridge at that price and make a profit.

No, it's not worth it, don't do it, she whispered to him and continued to rub his feeble hand against her thigh. No, you don't need it. Don't do it.

What do you mean? I want to, Albert answered. He was completely lost in pleasant thoughts, thinking himself already rich and consequently omnipotent. Give me the money.

No, I won't give it to you!

Give it to me!

No!

You know it would be great.

No, you're crazy!

Give it to me now!

Okay, but I will give you only ten now, you madman.

Okay, first give me ten. Don't you trust me? Albert was upset.