



CHAPTER SEVEN
René Gives Way

“Hey, Irene! What do you think? You were in and out of the room like a yo-yo and I’m sure you heard every word.”

“I couldn’t help hearing every word, you were speaking so loud! I’m not saying anything except to point out that we’ve recently received a couple of final demands for payment. Your son has just been fired from his third job, while your daughter is afraid that her handsome, young husband might be attracted to somebody else and she’s trying to please him by wearing expensive clothes and cosmetics. Then there’s that hundred thousand forints that we borrowed from my mother to be paid back two weeks later. Three years have gone by and she still hasn’t seen that money.”

“Didn’t we borrow it two years ago to be repaid three weeks later.”

“Well, what’s the difference? We still owe her the money and it’s about time we gave it back to her. She was dropping hints about it the last time we saw her and I felt so uncomfortable. I didn’t know what to say to her.”

“What you are trying to say is that I should take any assignment that comes my way if I don’t want us to end up living in cardboard boxes under a bridge somewhere.”

“What a sharp mind you have, sweetie! You’re exaggerating a bit, of course, but if we can’t pay our bills, we will lose the flat, and then you can go and live under the bridge on your own.”

“But I might be able to get a bridging loan.”

“With your wit you should be on television and then at least you’d leave me in peace!”

“You’re not just saying that because you’re my wife, are you? Do you really think I have talent?”

“Can you just stop trying to be funny for a second?”

“I’ll try. Right, I’m being serious now. One solution to our money troubles would be for you to get a job.”

“Me? Why should I want to get a job, I’m not a slave? I’ve enough to do at home with the washing and ironing and cooking, and cleaning up after you.”





“Well, that can be changed. First of all, don’t do so much washing. Then, in the future we’ll all wear drip-dry clothes, so you won’t need to do any ironing. There’ll be no dining out for us then and we’ll get your mother to come here and do the cleaning. She’s always complaining about how boring it is being retired, so we’ll give her something to occupy herself with.”

“Stop playing games, René! Because once I start you’ll be laughing on the other side of your face.”

“All right, Irene, put the sweeping-brush down. Have a drink of water, that will calm you down! Let’s discuss this like two intelligent adults.”

“I would do, René, if you were an intelligent grown-up. Now listen, there’s nothing to discuss. You are going to call that guy right now and you are going to tell him that you will take the job. And, of course, you are going to ask for a little something in advance for your expenses. That hundred thousand dollars is worth twenty million forints at the moment. So he should give you an advance of at least one hundred thousand forints, no problem. Come on, give him a call!”

“Quiet! I’m ringing him now!”

“Hello, Kovács speaking.”

“Hello, Mr. Kovács, it’s René Gate.”

“Ah, Mr. Gate, what can I do for you? Do we know one another?”

“Have you forgotten already? You were talking to me here in my flat less than an hour ago. You know, the investigation.”

“Oh, yes, of course! I’m sorry, I couldn’t quite make out your name. I didn’t expect you to call so quickly. Does that mean you will take the job?”

“Yes, I will. But I have a modest request.”

“How much do you want and what is the number of your bank account?”

“I’d like an advance of one hundred thousand forints for some urgent expenditure. I’ll give you the number of my bank account, now.”



“Didn’t I do well, Irene?”

“He coughed up the money so easily that you could have got two hundred thousand out of him, but, of course, you were too stupid to





think of that. What are you waiting for? Call him now while you can catch him.”

“Give me a bit of peace!”

“I beg your pardon?!”

“I said ‘I don’t think he’ll be pleased’.”

“Never mind about that! Go on, give him a ring.”

“I’m ringing him now. Just keep quiet, will you, I can’t think straight with you jabbering in my ear! Hello, is that Mr. Kovács?”

“Yes, it is. By the way, I’ve just transferred two hundred thousand forints into your account. Is that why you rang?”

“Yes it is, and thank you. But how did you know that I wanted to ask for another hundred thousand? You haven’t bugged my house, have you?”

“Of course I haven’t, Mr. Gate. What do you take me for? It’s just that I know what people are like and, in particular, I know what women are like. Anyway, I won’t keep you any longer. It’s time to get to work, Mr. Gate, we haven’t much time. Get in touch as soon as you have anything worth telling me. I’ll be seeing you.”

“Yes, see you, and thanks once again.”

CHAPTER EIGHT

Now What Are You Going to Do?

“**H**ey, Irene! I’m looking at my computer screen and I can see that Mr. Kovács transferred the money into my account this morning. I’ll transfer part of it to our joint account. I’ll need the rest for petrol and other expenses.”

“That’s agreed then. Put one hundred and eighty thousand in our account and then you can go on a spree with the other twenty thousand.”

“The only way I could go on a spree with that amount of money, would be if I bought a cheap baseball bat and mugged some rich businessman. But I won’t argue with you because I always come off second best. All our rows end up with me admitting that I am to blame for everything. My biggest mistake was to keep chasing after you until finally you got me to marry you.”

“René, I want that money in our account now! I have to pay a few bills and go shopping. There is not a thing to eat at home.”

