

Good Home Wanted

by Claire King

Dima said he knew I was the one as soon as he set eyes on me. I didn't know what to say to that, so I curled under his arm, pushed my face into his hand.

"I'm taking you home," he said. And he did. Noses pressed against the grimy windows of the orphanage to see the muscled guy in black sunglasses throw my one small suitcase into the trunk of his Mercedes Benz.

The first thing we did when we got to his apartment was sex. He led me into the bedroom.

"Lie down, Marina," he said. "Down."

I did my best, tried to please him, and he said, "Good Girl."

Later he walked me around his place. I'd never seen anything like it. Vast windows looking out over the city. The surprising silence of a thousand cars. And it smelled good. Clean. The smell of white paint.

"You can go here," he said, "and here, but this is out of bounds. You don't go here. Understand?"

I nodded.

"Good Girl."

In his fridge he had one piece of meat. He hadn't been expecting me. I cooked it for him and watched him eat.

"Fetch me a beer," he said. "Good Girl."

I could not bring myself to sit on the soft grey leather sofa in my not-clean clothes, so I sat on the parquet at his feet, staring up at my new man, watching him watch the plasma TV. Without taking his eyes off the screen his hand reached down, stroked my hair. Then he patted the sofa next to him.

"Marina! Sit!"

I did as I was told, but when he went to the toilet I slid back down to my place on the floor, hoping he wouldn't notice.

The next day Dima had business to take care of. "Stay here," he said.

I padded around the apartment all day, smelling the white paint, opening cupboards, sitting by the windows and watching Moscow happen in miniature. When the locks click-thunked one after the other later that afternoon I ran to the door to kiss him, like they do in films.

"Marina," he said, pushing my shoulders. "Down." And then, "Good Girl".

I was doing well until the photo frame happened. Dima came in as I was on my hands and knees, sweeping up the broken glass, the duster and spray tossed to the floor.

One look at the mess and he grabbed me by the hair, pushing my face down into the slivers and shards.

"That's BAD," he said.

Glassy splinters glittered right by my eyes. I struggled to get free but he held tighter, pushed harder. Until I wet myself. Then he let go. I turned my head, to see my pee soaking into his Italian shoes.

"Stupid bitch!" His kick sent me reeling.

Dima has called a man to come for me. Says I'm going to work for him. He's going to train me. I sit on the floor by the door and wait to be collected, working my stomach muscles as hard as I can. I'm going to leave him a parting gift in his shoes.

