# Five Million Yen: Chapter 62

*by* Daniel Harris

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Anatoly Gringovitch sat at a table adjacent to the pool at his hotel. He had eaten breakfast. His two sons were off on an aquarium ecology cruise. After a panic phone call from Ben Clarone, Gringovitch's wife, Francesca, had agreed to help Ben's girlfriend, Monique Swann, shop for a gown for this evening's concert and gala. Francesca scheduled Monique into the same beauty salon where she had an appointment later that day. Clarone had conned Anatoly out of $2500 against future earnings. None of those things were particularly annoying, what was bothering Gringovitch was the English girl sitting two tables away in a sheer cover-up that did little more than enhance the outline of her full bare bust. She was reading a book. Her legs were drawn up with her bare feet on the edge of the seat of her chair. The book was on her knees. When she turned a page her breasts swayed under the thin fabric revealing, from Anatoly's vantage point, a fulsome left nipple.

—Monsieur Gringovitch, would you care for another café espress? The waiter stood behind him also eyeing the girl.

—No, bring me a pastis, please.

—Ice?

—Please.

Normally, Gringovitch didn't drink before noon, but it was going to be a long and solitary day. He considered driving to Nice to visit his Brooklyn neighbor, Gabe Benjamin, who was there on film assignment, but Francesca took their car for her shopping spree. He could take the train, but he didn't want to be tied to a train

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schedule. He took a fountain pen from an inside blazer pocket and began sketching the English girl on the paper placemat.

The waiter returned, but before he reached Gringovitch, he did a quick turnabout and grabbed a handful of placemats from the serving stand.

—One pastis for monsieur. I took the liberty of bringing you some additional placemats.

—Thank you. You didn't have to do that. But these will serve my present purpose.

—I would like one of your drawings, of course, said the waiter.

—So would many people. Maybe you can earn it?

—Certainly, Monsieur Gringovitch.

—Would you call this sketch a portrait, a still life, or a landscape?

The waiter studied the sketch.

—It is not a landscape, though there is a tree. It is not a *nature morte*, he said using the French word for still life, and it isn't a true portrait as the only human features are the left breast and knees. I guess I would call it a *nature morte* drawing.

Gringovitch signed his name in the lower right hand corner and handed the placemat to the waiter.

—Now find out the girl's name.

—I already know it. Olivia Krakenthorpe. She is twenty-eight years old and resides in London. Her room is 1224. Her mother is an MP and her father is a big man in the British government. She is here for the concert this weekend as a guest of the clarinetist, Ben Clarone.

Ben sure gets around, thought Gringovitch. How many are there in his stable of women? Gringovitch was impressed with Ben's taste. He wondered how Monique the airline stewardess would measure up against this example of upper class British breeding and culture?

—How do you know this?

—She has been here with her mother and father since she was in nappies, said the waiter.

—Ah. Wait a moment.

Gringovitch made a fast ink gesture drawing of Olivia reading and signed it with a flourish.

—Give this to her with my compliments.

—My pleasure, Monsieur. Should I tell her your name?

—*Bien sûr*.

Gringovitch watched the waiter. When the waiter mentioned Gringovitch's name and pointed him out, Olivia put her legs down and turned to face him. She smiled, rose from her chair, marked her place in the book with a napkin, slipped into her clogs and walked over to Gringovitch's table. She put the sketch and her book next to Gringovitch's pastis.

—This is a sketch of…me?

Anatoly looked at the drawing. The waiter had done a switch and had given her the sketch depicting only her knees and left breast, not the full body gesture drawing he did of her sitting at her table naked, a ploy to attract her attention and plumb her availability.

—Well, it's more of a *nature morte*, a still life. The angles and volumes are interesting.

—My name is Olivia. I take it you are Anatoly Gringovitch, the American painter on the cusp of fame.

—Quite, as you English would put it. May I offer you a drink?

—I'll take a Campari and soda, thank you.

Anatoly signaled the waiter and ordered another pastis and Olivia's drink.

—This time use Richard 51, said Anatoly. I don't know what pastis you used last time, but it lacked a certain *je ne sais quoi*.

—Yes, Monsieur Gringovitch. And these drinks are on the house.

—Ha! They better be.

—But, of course, monsieur.

—Why were you so rude to him? said Olivia.

—Well, I drew a different sketch of you, but he took that one and gave you the one I gave to him. He owes me.

—I see. Do you always sketch for drinks?

—Hardly, but I do sketch constantly, it's the only realistic art I make. I heard you are a guest of Ben Clarone for the concert this evening.

—Yes. I am a big fan of his group *Pieces of Eight*. I know this concert is different music, but my mother and I heard him play an amazing composition in Darmstadt this summer past. I am keen to hear his performance of *Constellations*.

—Is that where you met Clarone, in Darmstadt?

—No, in Paris a couple of weeks ago, at the Ritz. He offered to put my mother and I on the comp list. Only I made the trip. Mum's not a big fan of contemporary music. Ravel and Prokofiev are about as modern as she tolerates. Besides he is handsome, probably rich and almost a free man.

Gringovitch wondered if Olivia met Clarone before or after Arris pasted Ben in the eye. Anatoly had to hand it to Ben. He had a way of attracting beautiful women.

—Maybe Ben told you, said Gringovitch, but he and I go back to grade school in Chicago. I'm also here as his guest for the world premiere tonight. It should be spectacular. I saw the dress rehearsal. Salvatore Anello's projections are astounding and the music is magical. Hausenstockmann actually escaped his dour Austrian roots and composed a brilliant score. Ben's playing is superb.

—I can't wait. Are you sketching me again? I hope it's not a *nature morte*. It sounds so morbid.

—No, it's a portrait. Here, check it out.

Olivia reached over the table to take the drawing. Her cover-up caught on something exposing her breasts. Anatoly didn't miss it. Olivia nonchalantly adjusted her cover-up over her breasts.

—So sorry, she said turning to the sketch. Hey! You've drawn me nude.

—I guess I neglected the cover-up.

—I don't think you've captured me correctly.

—Now that I've had a preview, I believe you may be right about that.

—If you want to draw me nude, we should go to my room.

—I can do that. Do you have a chaperon?

—Do I, an adult woman, need a chaperon to pose nude for an artist in my own room?

—Just checking.

Anatoly stopped at his room. The maids had managed to make order out of the chaos created by two teenage boys, an artist, and a wife/mother with no housekeeping skills. He grabbed a pad of 16”x20” 400gram paper and a handful of pens and pencils. He also pocketed three Okamoto Japanese condoms from his toiletries bag. He checked to see that the two paintings he brought to sell to Villa Arson were still in the front hallway closet

Gringovitch knocked “shave and a haircut” on the door of 1224. There was no answer. He gave the door three solid raps.

Olivia opened the door leaving it ajar, turned and walked down a short hallway to the sitting room. She was wearing a robe, but her hip movement sent an ancient message.

—Lock the door behind you, she said.

—This is a huge suite for one woman, said Anatoly, checking out her quarters.

—Dad was an investor in this hotel when it was built thirty years ago. We always stay in this three-bedroom suite. It's free, if you don't count investing 200 thousand pounds back when a pound was five U.S. dollars.

—Very nice.

—Where and how do you want me to pose?

—Let me adjust the blinds. We will start with classic standing poses. Then we can move to sitting postures, then prone poses.

Anatoly made several drawings of Olivia standing. For seated poses, he suggested using a big leather chair.

—These first drawings are wonderful, but can't you make something more erotic?

—You mean like Courbet's *L’Origine du monde*?

—More like Picasso's erotic drawings.

—You assume the pose; I'll draw you as you wish.

—I'd be more comfortable if you were less formally attired. It seems so perverted to have you dressed in a blazer, shirt and trousers, while I'm fully exposed. It makes you seem a voyeur.

—Let's do a few sitting poses first. It is rare for me to have a model with such a classical heroic figure. You have exceptional vibrancy and glow to your skin.

Anatoly drew no sketches of Olivia supine, but he did use all three condoms. She enjoyed his ministrations and the power of his loins. Their later couplings were rougher, searching for each other's inner fire. In one encounter, Anatoly was tied to the bed and teased mercilessly by Olivia. It was after two when Anatoly left for his room to clean up and then join Olivia downstairs in the dinning room for a late lunch.

When he arrived at his room, the door was ajar.

—Francesca? There was no answer. He pushed open the door.

His suite was in ruins. Someone had ruthlessly searched his suite. Everything was ransacked, the content of drawers and suitcases were strewn about the rooms. Beds were capsized.

—What the hell?

Anatoly checked the bathroom. Toiletries were spilled onto the floor and into the tub. He couldn't file a complaint with the hotel administration until he washed off the evidence of his recent escapades. Olivia's *l'eau d'amour* covered his face and body. Francesca would be back in two hours to prepare for dinner and the concert. He must shower at once.

Knowing Olivia would luxuriate in the tub after her pleasures, Anatoly could afford to take a long shower. He decided to shave again. He put on a fresh shirt and trousers and donned an expensive Italian cardigan sweater knowing it would be cool soon. He put his old shirt and underwear in the laundry bag for the maid and hung his sport jacket in the hallway closet. His two paintings were gone.

—Now what the hell? said Gringovitch. Who the fuck would steal those paintings? And why? God damnit. Now he had a serious reason for complaint.

He carefully closed the door, locked it and went down to the main reception desk.

—I must talk to the manager. I have a serious breach of security to discuss with him.

—Yes, Monsieur Gringovitch, I will find *her*.

It took an inordinate amount of time for the manager to appear. She guided Anatoly into her office.

—Yes, Monsieur Gringovitch. I trust you are enjoying your stay.

—Hardly. My suite has been ransacked.

—Quoi, Monsieur. Ransacked?

—Yes, ransacked. Robbed. Someone one broke into my room. Two of my paintings are missing. I came immediately here to you to report the theft.

—This is a serious accusation, Monsieur. Are you sure? I see there are two teenage boys in your party.

—They are out on an aquarium cruise. Please, have security and the police come to my room. I will wait here until they arrive.

—Excuse me, said one of the desk clerks, but Anna Turko needs to see you immediately.

—Anna Turko? Ah yes, she's the chambermaid on twelve.

—I think my situation demands your full attention, said Gringovitch.

—I will only be a minute.

The manager left her office.

—When the manager returned her face had turned white.

—Monsieur, could you be so kind as to wait in the lobby. The police will be here in a few minutes. I have another equally serious emergency.

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Detective-Sergeant Claude Mulvihill winced when he saw the murder scene pictures of Isabella Sanitizzare's body.

—This looks like the work of a sick serial murderer, said Mulvihill. They always leave some unique clue at the scene of their crime.

—I checked the INTERPOL files on serial murders, said LaPonti, and there have been three other murders of women where a *préservatif* was found in a body orifice: two in Poland and one in Austria.

— *Préservatif*? said Mulvihill.

—I think you call them rubbers in America, said LaPonti flaunting his knowledge of American slang. There is no person identified with the murders, just a common *modus operandi*.

—That's normal, said Mulvihill. Now is the time for professional detectives to use their forensic skills.

—Yes, now is the time for detective work to begin. There is one other corpse, detective. Fisherman recovered the body of a Russian male this morning. It too has a *préservatif* in the anus. The medical examiner has yet to examine the body. Unfortunately, sea creatures dined on the softer tissue so the corpse is not for viewing by refined sensibilities. The interesting thing is that the victim was garroted. The garrote used was a standard-issue KGB model.

—We don't see that type of murder in New York anymore, said Mulvihill. It was a mafia weapon of choice for internal killings about twenty years ago. Now those guineas are back to making a big mess with guns.

—Here also.

—Shall I take you to lunch and your hotel, Detective-Sergeant Mulvihill?

—That sounds perfect, said Mulvihill. He found the neatness of LaPonti's office offensive and unprofessional. His desk in New York, sat in a room full of desks and active people. The space was a hive of activity, noise and tragedy, a veritable mirror of the streets the room's police protected. Mulvihill's desk had piles of papers, reports, phone messages and scraps of notes from his log. It didn't look like this frog did any work other than worry about dining and

lint on his uniform. There was but a single folder atop LaPonti's desk.

To be continued.