



# BUSINESS TRIP

S. RANNIKOV

18+

*Shadow Dominion, Book 4*

Stepan Rannikov

**Business trip**

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## **Rannikov S.**

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"Business trip" is a psychological erotic novella that blends seduction, power, and betrayal in the high-stakes world of Moscow's elite. Lyudmila Antonovna, a 48-year-old CEO from Tula, travels to the capital to negotiate a lucrative defense contract—only to be lured into Sakura, an exclusive massage parlor with a hidden agenda. What begins as a gift from her cunning Cypriot rival, Tina Kovedidi, quickly spirals into a web of manipulation, where pleasure becomes a weapon and submission is the ultimate currency. Behind one-way mirrors, Tina orchestrates Lyuda's downfall, using a blend of aphrodisiacs, psychological profiling, and the irresistible skills of her masseurs—Saleh, the Thai master of sensory torment, and Grigoros, her Greek bodyguard with a body carved from marble. As Lyuda's inhibitions dissolve under their hands, she discovers a side of herself she never knew existed: a woman who craves domination, who needs to surrender. But the real game isn't about sex—it's about control.

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# Stepan Rannikov

## Business trip

*"She came for a deal. She stayed for the sin. In Moscow's shadowy salons, power isn't taken—it's massaged out of you."*

### PROLOGUE

It was oil. Or so it seemed at first. A bright amber liquid, thick as honey, with air bubbles suspended inside like insects trapped in ancient resin. It didn't flow so much as ooze—slow, deliberate, intoxicating. The scent was sweet, almost edible, and Lyuda watched, mesmerized, as it dripped from the bottle, inching closer to the valley between her breasts.

*"If only he'd rip this bra and panties off."*

The underwear was the flimsy, disposable kind they give you in massage parlors—paper-thin, the kind that would tear if you so much as looked at it wrong. But it was still in the way.

She wasn't spying on him. Not really. Just peeking through the gap between her cheek and the edge of the sleep mask (the kind they use in salons to lull clients into a state of mild sensory deprivation). From that angle, she could see the masseur's hands—every movement, every stroke, every deliberate manipulation of that oil.

*"Honey. It has to be honey. No, not honey. But close. Not the candied, homemade kind that sticks to the spoon like glue. The kind beekeepers age for years in flat, squat jars with screw-top lids—the kind that glistens like liquid gold, viscous and slow, the kind that clings to your tongue and makes your teeth ache with its sweetness. Store-bought. Fake. Synthetic. But who cared? It was beautiful. The manufacturer knew what they were doing. What pleases the eye pleases the mouth."*

And just like that, Lyuda's mind flickered to *"Nine and a Half Weeks"* or *"Wild Orchid"*—those old films from decades ago. She braced herself, ready to arch the moment that first thick drop slid down her sternum, over her stomach, lower...

Because arching was erotic.

*"God, was it ever."*

A woman's body bending like that—what could be more beautiful? For that amber, red-hot lava to trickle between her breasts, climb the slope of her belly, pool in her navel, then spill over, branching into rivulets, lower still, through the thicket of her pubic hair, over her clitoris, straight between the lips of her vulva.

*"He needs to help it along. Guide the flow. And first—God, first—he needed to get rid of these damn paper panties. And the bra."*

### CHAPTER 1

"So, Tinochka, any plans for tonight in the capital?"

The two women sat in a cozy café, nursing lattes as the day wound down. Both pretended everything was fine. It wasn't.

Lyudmila Antonovna—sole owner and CEO of *"Vision"*, a company specializing in advanced guidance systems—was furious. Tina Kovedidi, that slick Cypriot with the oily eyes of Queen Medea herself, had her claws in deep and refused to let go. The price on the table was insulting. Lyuda had poured years into this project. A third of her forty-eight years, if she was being honest. And now she was supposed to hand it all over to the gun lobby for peanuts. She'd at least like to negotiate with someone who actually wanted her scopes.

*"Not this... bitch."*

"This *is* Moscow, Lyudmila Antonovna," Tina said, swirling her coffee. "Entertainment? Please. There's something for every taste here. I could recommend a few things—if you'd give me some idea of what you're after. A hint, at least."

Lyuda sighed.

"I'm heading back to Tula tomorrow. No time for adventures. And, if she was being honest—my back's killing me from sitting all day."

She rubbed her neck through her blouse, wincing.

"Osteochondrosis?" Tina's voice was smooth, almost sympathetic. "I know the feeling. By the end of the day, my lower back's so stiff I can barely move."

She paused, then reached for her *Birkin* bag.

"Here." She rummaged inside, then pulled out a sleek, light-gray card. "My personal pass to "Sakura" massage parlor. They work miracles there. After a session, I feel like I'm floating—light as a feather, body and soul."

Lyuda's eyes flicked to the bag—enviously. That was a *Birkin*. A real one.

"Oh, Tinochka, that's too much," she said, though she was already reaching for the card.

"No, no—don't think of it as a bribe. Or even a gift." Tina waved a hand. "Business is business. But you do look like you're carrying the weight of the world on your shoulders. And I..." She hesitated, just for effect. "I'd like you to leave this trip feeling lighter."

The card was unlike any Lyuda had seen. Not cardboard—some kind of thick, textured paper, the surface shimmering like the dial of a Grand Seiko watch. Tiny snowflakes, frozen in place, dusted with violet sparkles. Magnetic, almost. A delicate sakura blossom, a phone number, and the digits 0009—all embossed in deep silver.

She didn't want to let go.

"Just call and give them my card number," Tina said. "When are you leaving for Tula?"

"Tomorrow morning. I'll stay at the hotel tonight—I don't like driving in the dark."

"Perfect." Tina's smile was sharp, her million-dollar veneers glinting. "Go tonight. You'll sleep like a baby. I guarantee it."

Medea's eyes gleamed.

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"Good evening. *Sakura Salon*. How may I help you?"

The voice on the phone was warm, smooth—mysterious, even. It wrapped around her like a promise.

"Uh, a friend gave me a card. Recommended your place. I have it here."

"May I have the number, please?"

"Three-zero-nine."

A pause. Then, softer:

"Ah. Your friend is a very valued guest. Almost family." Another beat. "What time would you like to book?"

Lyuda hesitated.

"Is tonight possible? Eight o'clock?"

"Of course." The man's tone was effortless, like a magician pulling a rabbit from a hat. "I'll send you the address now. We'll be waiting."

## CHAPTER 2

Lyuda had only ever had two massages before—once in Turkey, once in Egypt. Both times, the therapists had been women. As she stepped out of the taxi in front of a small, unassuming building tucked away in the backstreets of Kitay-gorod, she prayed this time would be the same.

*"Please, let it be a woman."*

She pressed the intercom.

"Yes?"

"I have an appointment for eight."

The door buzzed open.

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This plumpness. Lyuda couldn't do a damn thing about it. And it wasn't the kind of soft, feminine curves that turned heads. At forty-eight, her body had settled into something compact, barrel-like, with a narrow ass and a back that ached from the weight of osteochondrosis.

Men at work barely glanced at her—even her D-cup breasts, pressed flat against her stomach, didn't hold their attention. Her husband hadn't touched her in nearly two years. No lover. No dates. She was too self-conscious about her body to even try, though every inch of her ached for a man's hands.

"It's the cortisol," her childhood friend Verka had said over smoothies one summer evening.

"Cortisol?" Lyuda had scoffed. "What's that got to do with anything?"

Verka was into all sorts of alternative things—energy work, mysticism, the kind of nonsense that made Lyuda roll her eyes. But she listened anyway.

"You need to release, Lyudka. You're a feminine powerhouse. Always have been. That's why you run your own company. But you bottle everything up—stress, anger, desire. You don't let it out. And where does it go?" Verka had gestured at Lyuda's midsection. "Right there. You're bursting at the seams."

Lyuda had taken a bite of her cake, chewing thoughtfully.

"Try intermittent fasting," Verka had gone on. "It's all the rage now."

Lyuda had just sighed.

"I'll think about it."

But Verka wasn't done.

"Or—better yet—scream. Remember that cartoon, *"Vrungel"*? The Crooked Bandito yelling at De la Voro Gangsterito? *'Mama mia! Cretino! Mate goat, cretino sciamacotto!'* Like that. When those idiots at work drive you up the wall, yell. No swearing—just sound. Your employees already know you're a tyrant. Put a punching bag in your office. Let them laugh. But let it out, Lyudka. Deflate. Or the salt in your spine will never leave."

Lyuda had groaned.

"And my osteochondrosis too, I suppose?"

Verka, slender and effortless, had taken a drag of her cigarette—thin as her wrist—and exhaled, unfazed.

"You're carrying it, Lyudka. Like a yoke. Hunched over, terrified of spilling a single drop from those heavy buckets. Your need for control is crushing you. And suspicion? It's turning you into a coiled spring. And springs break."

She'd remembered that conversation now, sitting in the taxi, staring at the salon's unmarked door.

*"Just please, God, let the masseur be a woman..."*

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"Profiler, Tina Georgievna," said Aram Davidovich, a tall, gaunt man in a tailored black suit. He stood behind his boss, peering over her shoulder through the one-way glass. "Kolmanovsky's man. The one who builds psychological profiles—facial expressions, reflexes, behavior patterns."

"And is he any good?" Tina didn't look away from the glass.

"The best."

She trusted Mardi's judgment. An Assyrian Jew with a shadowy past—former Mossad, gaps in his résumé during Middle Eastern conflicts—he was the perfect head of security for her operations. His connections in Moscow's Cypriot diaspora didn't hurt either. But even the best needed oversight.

"The stakes are high, Aram Davidovich," she said, her voice low. "You answer to me for this profiler. And for the entire operation."

Mardi glanced at her, then back at the glass. He said nothing.

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The room beyond was dim, deliberate. The lighting was calibrated to induce nirvana—soft, diffused, like a dream you never wanted to wake from. The sound was a seamless blend: rain, wind chimes, a warm breeze rustling through leaves. Every detail was in its place.

The massage table was wide, comfortable—designed so a client would forget where they were within minutes. A dispenser released fragrant smoke above Lyudmila Antonovna's head, trapping her in its sweet embrace. Hot towels, wrapped around her from head to toe. Rows of oils, their bottles glinting on low shelves.

And there she lay. Alone. Motionless.

Saleh—that was the name the receptionist had used—had already finished the "warming session," as he called it. He'd kneaded her shoulders, her withers, her lower back, her thighs, her calves, even her feet. His hands were slippery, strong, relentless. Oh, how she'd craved hands like those. The Japanese herbal tea the girl had given her while she filled out the questionnaire had been too pleasant—tart, refreshing, intoxicating.

Now, Lyuda felt... light. Warm. And—God—aroused. Not from anticipation. Not even from shame. The embarrassment of being handled by a man had vanished. Though, as she'd changed in the private room, pulling on the disposable panties and bra, her cheeks had burned with a mix of excitement and humiliation.

But now? Now she was wet. Soaked, as if someone had poured half a bottle of that massage oil straight into her. Her breasts ached, swollen with tension. A tingling spread through her body like fine needles. She couldn't control it. Her thighs, beneath the thick terry towels, pressed together at the knees. Her fingers dug into the damp fabric, gripping it against her sides. She shuddered, writhing slightly, a soft moan escaping her lips.

She was waiting.

For the next session.

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"Why no analysis yet?" Tina's voice was sharp. She didn't take her eyes off the glass.

Mardi didn't flinch.

"It's a special questionnaire. Not your standard client intake." He adjusted his cuffs of his shirt. "Beyond the usual—health, exercise, daily routines, menstrual cycles—it includes hidden questions. Designed to uncover... deviant traits. If you've seen *"The Game"*—Michael Douglas's test for the game? Kolmanovsky's work. He's got dozens of these. His team knows how to ask, how to watch for reactions. Your client was interviewed by one of his specialists today, not Katya. Trained to guide the subject without scaring them off."

Tina's fingers tapped against her thigh.

"And the tea? Ours or Kolmanovsky's?"

"His." Mardi smirked. "More... potent."

She uncrossed her legs, planting her heels firmly on the floor. Both hands rested on her hips, just above the hem of her skirt. The glass was dark, glossy—a mirror to the outside world, a window for her.

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