

Kidnapped in America

Angileka's Story



A story about fighting back against sexual slavery

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It was 7:45 a.m. on a Sunday morning, when I received the call. She said her name was Angileka, and she gave no last name. Her voice carried a tone of resignation, a sort of finality, as if she was about to make a critical life or death leap, but I couldn't quite get a fix on her state of mind.

Her accent was local, that much I could draw from our short conversation, but otherwise, I admit, she was a complete mystery to me.

"I'd like to meet with you, today, if possible," she asked. I sensed in that very first question, by the way she held onto each word, that she was anticipating rejection.

"Uhh," I hesitated as I tried to clear the sleep-fuzz from my head.

"I mean, I want you to write my story and this is my last day. I simply don't have much time left."

I looked at my watch. "Well – yeah, I guess we could meet up. What time were you thinking?"

"As early as possible."

I sensed a strain in her voice, a sort of desperation and urgency, which she was trying to suppress. It piqued my interest even more.

"Ok, how about 10 a.m.?" I answered, as I stared at my clock, realizing that my plans for a late Sunday sleep-in and a casual, relaxed afternoon were vanquished.

"Can we meet here?"

"Sure."

"Ok – I am at 433 Jefferson, at the Longview Motel. You know it?"

I tried to picture the motel. "Yeah, I know where that is."

"Room 303," she said in a business-like fashion.

"See you then," and I hung up my cell phone.

I sat there for a time, thinking about what had just happened. It's not that people haven't called me for this kind of thing in the past. Besides having authored my own books, I am also a ghostwriter, for hire, and I get some pretty interesting requests – so it wasn't like this was off the charts. Yet, something about her voice, and the tone of her words, haunted me. There was a sultry type of mystique about her, and the underpinning of desperation, which I had never experienced before with a client. And, there was the fact that it had to happen today, which was both compelling and worrisome to me. Was she running from the law, escaping from a bad marriage or abusive relationship, or what?

I looked at my clock and realized that my mental maundering wasn't going to get me any closer to finishing the job, so I dragged my wearing bones from the bed and got ready.

An hour later, I was in my car heading for Starbucks. Starbucks is a sort of a cultural infusion for me. While I proudly stand by the red, white and blue of America, I have to admit that my challenging mind is often offended by a culture which, seemingly as advanced as ours, offers terrible quality of coffee, and amply so through fast-food restaurants on nearly every other corner. Starbucks, besides the fact that it is the one place I can get a variety of good coffees, almost European in quality, to my taste, offers solitude and some quality ambience to sit and detach myself from the world. With that said, and after grabbing two coffees and a couple pastries, I headed off to my rendezvous.

It took me another eighteen minutes to find the place – a two-level motel, with a 60's style décor. It was beat-up, rundown and it looked as if it hadn't been repainted since the day it was built. The area was seedy, with two liquor stores within sight, each with guerilla-style steel bars over the windows, reminding me of war zones I had seen. There were a number of buildings boarded up and abandoned, and on the far corner was a small shop with a typically flashing pink sign, which read, ADULT MOVIES.

I took a deep breath as I pulled into the parking area and placed my car within view of the third floor balcony. What the hell was I getting into? I thought. None of this was boding well in my mind. When I got to the door of room 303, it opened before I even knocked. Angileka stood there, a small smile on her face. She was young, by my best estimates, in her early twenties, with long chestnut brown hair which curled at the tips, and fell below her shoulder level. She had fresh make-up on and was wearing a T-shirt, which had the words DQ on it, assumedly standing for Drama-Queen, unless she worked for Dairy Queen, which somehow, I doubted, by her appearance. She was wearing tight blue Levi jeans and a pair of ankle-high pink socks. She was, indeed, a very beautiful woman and her clothes did not disguise her curves beneath.

Her smile broadened, although I noticed there was tension in her face, and the nervous look in her eyes as she glanced over my shoulder. "Hi..." she reached out her hand, "I'm Angileka."

She led me into the small motel room, which had a bed, one round table and two chairs situated by the window. It was a typical cheesy motel and the furniture looked like every other cheap motel in America. It

was not a place where a normal person, of normal means, would stay, which begged for more answers to my growing sense of concern about why such a beautiful woman would be in such a grimy location.

I put the coffees and pastry down on the table and swung my bag off my shoulder. I am the epitome of the 21st century virtual office. In my bag I always carry a laptop, an iPad, an iPhone, several USB sticks, pens, paper and essentially, everything needed to sit myself down and do my job, wherever and whenever.

"I brought you a coffee and a pastry. I hope you like coffee," I said.

"Very considerate of you." She sipped her coffee. "Oh, that's good. Ethiopian bold, isn't it?"

"Uhh, yeah, in fact it is. You must go to Starbucks a lot, to know that."

She smiled. "In my line of business, we have a lot of late nights and you get to appreciate coffee and coffee houses."

I nodded as I sipped on my own.

"Let's cut to the chase," she said as she folded one leg and foot under her butt. "I found you on the internet. I was looking for a ghostwriter, and your site appealed to me. You looked like someone whom I could trust to write a good story about me."

I nodded while watching her face. As she began to talk, I could see the transformation, subtly, but definitively, as she began to expose her inner-self to me.

"As you can tell," she waved a hand around the room, with almost queen-like refinement "I am not interviewing you from the Hyatt or Regency."

"It's ok," I mumbled, trying to make her feel at ease

"No, it's not. I am a prostitute, and I have been one since I was eighteen," she said, pausing to watch me face for any reactions, "and now, over two years later, I need to tell my story."

My lips hovered over my coffee cup. I should have figured it out myself, just by virtue of this motel. It was located right in the prostitution ring, on the east-side. It was the area that people could go to and find women-for-hire, on any night of the week. She didn't look ashamed or contrite. Her face stayed the same, calm, somewhat reflective, and quite beautiful in fact, but clearly, there was pain under it, which her eyes betrayed.

"I said I needed to do the interview today and that's because Sundays are my only day off. I work every other night."

I flipped my pad open and clicked a pen, and looked at her, inviting her to continue.

"Where do you want me to start?"

"Wherever you want, it's your story," I answered casually, trying to maintain my equanimity in spite of the fact that I felt uneasy about being in a room with a woman who professed to be a member of man's oldest

profession. As I watched her face, I fought back an impulse to be judgmental of her. It wasn't fair to her, and if I was to write her story, I had to take her perspective, regardless of any reflexive mental conditioning, otherwise, to judge people in her line of work.

The story which she unfolded to me, over the next many hours, impacted me in a way which no other singular story had done. Angileka related the details of her life with unadulterated specificity. It was a shockingly detailed account of a young woman, with career dreams, who had been snared in the net of sexual corruption, against her will. In short, her story began at the young age of seventeen. Growing up on the west-side of the city, amidst the upper middle class of America, an honors student, destined for a career in the legal arena, the dichotomies of her life now, made it all the more tragic. Her father was an engineer for a large automotive maker, and her mother was a teacher in a school for special children, and because of their success, Angileka had walked a golden path all her life, not unlike that of many kids growing up in middle class America.

Near the end of her last year in high-school, she became best friends with Naomi, a friendship, which would come to change her life in ways which she could never have predicted. Naomi was of a different background. Because her family was quite poor, Naomi had to work weekends to cover her own expenses as her single-mom could not afford to raise her and her two younger brothers, so she worked at a restaurant on the east-side, making the extra money she needed to also cover the costs of attending a better high-school, one which ultimately became the meeting ground, for her and Angelika.

What drew them together was not any kind of societal bonds, since their backgrounds were so diverse, but rather, Angileka found Naomi's maverick attitude towards life, her casual, cavalier mind-set, to be refreshing and invigorating. While Naomi secretly looked up at Angileka as a brighter star and someone she wanted to be friends to. Angileka had never been challenged in her life, and had everything provided to her, on a widely paved road, whereas Naomi had to fight her way at every step – and in doing so, her aggressive personality traits were manifest, and appealed to Angileka.

One day, half-way through their final year at high-school, Naomi announced to Angileka that she had found a part-time job, working two evenings, mostly weekends, escorting older men to social affairs. She would be making five times what she made at her restaurant job, and still have more time to herself.

"But isn't that a sort of prostitution?" Angileka challenged.

Naomi smiled. "No silly. Prostitution is just spreading your legs for any douchebag that comes along. Escorting is way different. The agency shows us pictures of the client and info about them, and where the client is interested to go, which could be a restaurant or night club, or whatever. We dressed up for the function, escort them, and if they decide afterwards to take it further than that, then it's entirely up to me, and the bonus is that if they want sex, they pay the extra service to me directly– so it's not the same thing at all."

Angileka rolled her eyes. "Sounds like the same thing, just different dressing."

"Whatever, judge me if you want, but I just turned eighteen, so I'm legal, and besides, I have to make money and this could give me the means of networking for an even better career."

Over the next couple months Naomi transitioned - her clothes became trendy, and expensive, she wore flashy and costly jewelry, and her make-up and hair styling was always the cutting edge. One day she launched herself in front of Angileka, after school class, and took her aside. "I know you don't agree with

my life-style, but check this out, and she slipped her an ad, which called for teen models for a European fashion magazine, part-time."

Naomi smiled at her. "You could do that, make extra cash, and it's all above boards – just modeling."

Angileka eyed the ad suspiciously. "This has nothing to do with what you do, escorting me secretly?"

"No silly – it's for real. Just modeling. And besides, you've got a good set – so why waste 'em?" she smiled.

Angileka stared at the ad for a time. She had been looking for some part-time work to make extra money and it was time to stop leeching off her parents now that she had turned eighteen. "I'll check it out," she promised.

The modeling agency turned out to be seemingly legit. Two nights a week, she posed in various outfits, from bikini's to nightgowns, to dresses and pant-suit outfits - all of it aimed at promoting clothing styles to European teens, and, she started making good money on the side, posing for magazines which were published in Germany, France, Belgium, Russia and the Czech Republic. Angileka continued her schooling, while doing the modeling mostly on weekends and the occasional weeknight, and right at the end of her final exams, she received an invitation to attend a club formal, downtown. It was at that formal, where she was introduced to Legan, who headed up a teen-mag empire in four countries, overseas. He was thrilled to finally meet the model whom he had profiled in several of his magazines, and over dinner, he invited her for a drink, afterwards. They went to another club, where she had several drinks with him, and well into that evening she felt a drowsiness coming on, which she assumed was typical to an overdose of alcohol. The drowsiness, however, led to a state of drugged and unconscious stupor, wherein Legan took her to his hotel room, raped her repeatedly, and then, while she was still unconscious, invited three of his male friends over, each of whom similarly sexually abused her throughout the night. When she woke up the next morning, she had a tremendous headache, and she was sore in all the wrong places. She stumbled out of bed, and it was then that she felt the pain and raw ache in her groin, and the dried, caked-on semen of a dozen or more, ejaculations. She could hardly breathe as she realized then, what had happened to her. As her heart raced, she fumbled to get her clothes, and finding the hotel room empty, she left and took a cab home.

Over the next twenty-four hours, Angileka's world was a devastation, the remnants of a battlefield. She felt scared and humiliated, and a depth of degradation which could not be defined by any words. What was worse was the fact that she could not remember any of it. Only the despicable and appalling fact that they had left her, sore, bruised and covered with their scum, which she showered from herself for an hour after returning home. That day, she stayed in her room, putting on her best face for her parents, but refusing to engage in any conversations. No one could ever know of this, and no one would.

On the second day, an envelope arrived in the mail, for her. Her mother handed it to her, with a concerned look on her face, for it seemed that mothers could always sense the subtleties which others could not see. Angileka smiled, and retreated to her room, and promptly opened the envelope, looking and gaping at the photos which poured out, and as the tears pooled in her eyes. Now, for the first time, she saw what they had done to her, that night, images which horrified her and would haunt her for years to come. She cleared the tears from her eyes, and read the unsigned note inside: TELL ANYONE ABOUT THIS AND WE WILL HURT YOU AND YOUR FAMILY.

From there, the story which she described was predictable, but no less shocking. Under threat of harm to her family, Angileka was leveraged into providing escort services for select clientele, which, perforce, included giving sexual services. She was contacted regularly, reminded that they had more pictures and that if she so much as twitched, her little sister would be hurt, to start with. Out of a sense of guilt and

protection for her family, the extortion took hold, and like invisible chains shackling her, she could little more than comply to her new masters. Angileka finally moved from her family's home, to her own apartment on the other side of town, assuring one and all that she was making good money with the modeling.

During her first year, she tried to find a way out of the maze which seemed to engulf her deeper and deeper by the day. But every answer she came up with, simply offered another, impossible threshold to cross. Her handler, some mug that worked for Legan, reminded her repeatedly that he knew everything about her family, and that he would happily stick it to her younger sister, rape her silly and destroy her, if Angileka so much as whispered any of this to police or friends. So it was, that Angileka was forced to live a life in sexual servitude, and even her friend Naomi, who was still working the escort service, would never learn of the depths to which Angileka had been forced to go.

Into her second year, with despair and apathy settling in, Angileka found some sense of solace, or better yet – a disconnection, through the use of cocaine, which was happily provided to her by her handler. She gave in, anything to forget who she was and what her life had become. The drugs “fixed” her, helped her to feel better in spite of the fact that everything about her life was wrong. On her few visits, each year, to family, she tried to cover up the truth of her lifestyle, by pretending that she had applied to law school and was awaiting news of her application. She put on her best face, lied to them repeatedly, and yet, out of sheer love for them she saw no other options.

Nearing the third year of sexual captivity, and drawing herself further and further away from family and friends, she got the news one day when Naomi's mother called her, on her cell. Angileka raced to the morgue and spent twenty minutes crying over the body of her friend, whose face had been savagely beaten, repeatedly. Naomi had been found in a field, abandoned and dead. It was then, as she stood there looking at the defiled body of her friend, that she knew she had only one option; either fight back, or die, and she was not prepared to die.

Curt, her new handler, or pimp as they were usually referred to, would visit her regularly, bringing her a new supply of cocaine, and reminding her, as always, that he held the aces. Fear was the potent factor most used by these handlers. Like herself, other girls in the trade, were held captive by threat of harm to their families, their kids, or to themselves. To help salve the wound, the handlers offered drugs, which was the other leverage used to control the girls. Angileka knew that if she was to beat this system, the first hurdle to overcome was her addiction. Over the next month, she weaned herself, painfully, off the cocaine - taking incrementally less and less doses, and then one day, she went cold-turkey, possibly one of the most excruciating experiences of her life, and only accomplished because she forced herself to remember the image of Naomi's dead and battered body, as the obsession for the drug wracked her system and filled her with agony, as every cell in her body screamed for another fix. When Curt showed up with the next supply of cocaine, Angileka smiled, accepted it modestly as always, but this time, she flushed it down the toilet, after he left her. That had been just two days before she had contacted me, to write her book.

Her experiences engaged me so deeply, that there were times when I could do little more than just stare and watch her talk. Much of time during her narrative, she sat with her chin on her hand, gazing out the window. Although she never got into the sordid details of sexual encounters, she did relate various times when clients had beaten her. Men – or groups of men – who were sadistic creatures and who used her body as nothing more or less than something to satiate their degraded fantasies. She remained calm and composed throughout the day. In fact her equanimity was impressive, considering the story she was relating. But equally impressive was the manner in which she held herself. Despite the nature of her profession over these past years, she had retained a certain dignity about her.

Finally, she stopped, the story was done and she turned her head with a slight smile. “Shocked?”

"Nah, I hear stories like this every day," I joked.

"I'm sure," she said, as she stretched her legs. "Now what?"

"You realize that if I write your story it can cause other complications?"

"I know. I have tried to think of every possible scenario, but in the end, there is only one way for me to be free of all of this." She looked at me with her large brown eyes. "I have to tell the truth. I have to tell it all."

I nodded.

"I admire you."

"Don't. There is nothing admirable about what I've done."

I leaned back in my chair, and my stomach grumbled from hunger. It was nearly six p.m. and we had been going for eight hours, with food.

"We all make mistakes and we all have skeletons in our closets."

She looked at me, her face completely calm and unexpressive. "Let me ask you this question," she started, "now that you know my story, what effect does it have on you?"

"For the most part, it pisses me off."

She took in a deep breath. "Refreshing! I thought you might be running for the hills, by now."

"Takes more than a beautiful woman to scare me off," I smiled. "But seriously, what will you do?"

"I'm walking out of this motel room tonight and never looking back. I'm moving to another city and starting my life over. In fact, I've applied for a job, and hopefully I can do damage control on my career dreams."

"Won't they follow you?"

"They will try."

I canted my head, questioning her with a silent look. "They won't just let you go."

"No, they won't. But I will fight them, and if I die in the process, then at least I died fighting for what I believe in and not some compromised slut working for some low-life bastards."

There wasn't much more I could say.

She leaned forward on her elbows, an imploring look in her face. "I need you to write my story, no matter what happens. I need you to get it out. I want people to know the truth. I need to expose these people and

I'm not afraid of the consequences. I have been dead for over two years now, and since coming up with this plan, I feel alive again." Her eyes were now more pleading than I had seen them before. "Can you do that for me?"

I nodded. "Absolutely."

"Thank you."

"And Curt, is he going to issue an APB on you, when you don't clock-in tomorrow?"

"Oh sure," she said quite flippantly.

"And...?"

"And, well, two can play his game. He has photos of me that he's been extorting me with these past years, but he's about to find out that I have a few choice photos of him having sex with twelve year-old girls, one of his obsessions. In this state that's illegal and usually results in instant, long-term jail sentences. You see, while he was extorting me, I hired a private detectives to dig up some dirt on Curt. And for that matter, I also have a few good photos of Legan and some of his clan, as well, which the authorities will be interested in when it comes to child pornography. So, I've sent those photos to a friend of mine, with instructions that if anything happens to me, they are to be turned over to the local authorities, with all the sordid details."

"You've taken out an insurance policy."

She smiled, and a dangerous one, at that. "We may look like vulnerable little creatures, but when a woman bites, we bite hard!" Her eyes were intent and if it had been Curt, sitting where I was, he would certainly have seen a different side of Angileka, at that moment.

I scribbled some more notes on my pad, as I became more energized and motivated to tell her simple, yet provoking tale, to the world. Finally I looked up at her. She was watching me with a casual distance in her eyes.

"Will you do me a favor? I asked.

She nodded and flicked her eyes.

"If you need any help at all. I mean AT ALL - you call me! And I mean that!"

She smiled. "You sure you want to get mixed up with a gal like me?" she said. "You can bail out of this now, if you like. These people are criminals, very vindictive and low-life types – so they might come after you too."

"I'll take my chances. Besides, a writer isn't worth his salt if he can't stand up and tell the real dope."

She stood up, went to the bed, and rummaged through some papers and came back with an envelope and handed it to me. "There are some CDs in there with pictures of me when I was growing up. Plus some of

the shots when I was doing modeling, back before all of this went to hell in a hand basket. I've dated the CDs and pictures so that you can use them, as you see fit, in the book."

"Thanks."

I stuffed everything into my black portfolio and stood up. She stood there for a moment and then stepped forward and gave me a warm hug. "Thanks for listening. You're the first person that I have told the story to. If I die tomorrow, no one knows the truth, except you."

I squeezed her hand and kissed her lightly on the forehead, an act I would not normally have done for any other client, but with Angileka, I felt closer to her at that instant, than almost anyone else in the world. I handed her my card. "Here, when you're ready, contact me, and I will write the final chapter for you."

She tried to smile but her lip began to quiver and tears pooled in her eyes. She bit down on her lip, holding back the emotion which had mounted inside, as she had related the details of her life to me. I stood silent as a few vagrant tears rolled down her cheek.

"It's ok," I said.

"I don't have the money to pay you now, but I will," she said apologetically as she wiped the tears from her eyes.

"You've paid enough, already. Your story deserves to be told. So don't sweat it."

She smiled, and I left.

A week later, and well into Angileka's story, I decided to go for a drive and ended up passing by the Longview Motel. I stopped at the corner and just stared at room 303 for a time. I wondered to myself how she was doing, had she had made it out, or had they gone after her and was she now lying in some field, beaten and raped, like her friend Naomi? The very thought of someone killing her incited me to finish her book, and many nights passed where I sat up drilling each compelling word, like a Grecian marble statue, into the pages of her story. The months went by, and I had the book completed, including editing every chapter, several times over, except for that last and final chapter, and the most critical one of all. Without it, the story would be incomplete. I had no way of looking her up or tracking her down. Oddly, if not stupidly, I had completely omitted to ask her for her family name. I only knew her as Angileka, and maybe that was better for me and for her, and maybe she intended it to be that way.

When a year had passed, with no word from her, I had reconciled that the book would have to be published without that final chapter, as I had promised her I would get her story out, so I set up an appointment to meet with my publishing agent. As irony would have it, exactly one day before that meeting, and exactly one year since my interview with her, I received a text message early one Sunday morning, which said:

"Meet me at Starbucks, 10 a.m." It was signed Angileka and it gave the street address of the coffee shop.

I jumped out of bed, got ready and was there waiting for her, easily an hour ahead of time.

When she came in, I was shocked. Her hair was no longer a chestnut brown, but a brilliant blond. Her body had filled out, and though no less beautiful, she looked like an entirely different person. She was wearing a

light summer dress, dark sunglasses and nominal make-up, which didn't matter one bit, as her skin looked smooth and lightly tanned, if not perfect.

I stood up and held out my hand, but she came over and wrapped her arms around me and hugged me. She had the subtle scent of perfume and her hair was soft to the touch. She held my hand for a moment and looked me in the eyes.

"Are you ready for the final chapter?"

I laughed out loud. "Am I ready? I've been waiting for this moment for a year!"

I grabbed us coffees and light pastry and we sat down and she related the entire story of her life, in the past year, from the moment when I had last seen her. It was both agonizingly shocking and a relief to hear.

Within hours of my having left the motel, that Sunday, Curt, her "handler", showed up unexpectedly, at her room. Angileka had already packed her meager belongings and was about to make her run, but unfortunately, with the two-hundred and fifty pound drunk pimp standing at her door, she had no choice but to deal with him.

Curt did not hesitate to make his move, and his intentions were clear. He grabbed Angileka and threw her roughly, onto the bed, with the grace of dropping a bag of potatoes to the ground. He began to undo his pants and grope for his underwear when Angileka rolled off the bed, and reached for her purse. The drunken hulk stumbled at her, and as he did, she turned and kneed him in his exposed groin with the full force of her right knee. He dropped to the floor, moaning and then began ranting that he would kill her. As he came off the floor at her, she pulled the .45 from her purse, cocked the trigger and aimed it directly into his face. Curt froze.

The only words she said, before bolting from that room were, "if I ever see you again, I will pull the trigger." She hailed a cab, went to the airport, and before entering the terminal she dropped the gun down a water drain and then flew out under a pseudo name, to another city. From there, she began her new life. She got a job at a local law agency, doing office work, eventually working herself up to secretarial level, while taking night classes on law and jurisprudence. Seven weeks into her new life, she received a letter from her friend, the only one in fact who knew where she was located, not even her family knew of her whereabouts, as yet. Her friend informed her that Curt had been asking around about her, and that he had threatened that he would make a move on her family, next, if she did not come back.

It was then that Angileka started the domino-effect, and called in her insurance policy. She mailed all the photos and details of Curt's under-aged sexual encounters, as well as those of Legan and his mob, to the police and the FBI. She included all the details she could remember about the operation, showing clearly their involvement, not only in extorting young teenage girls, but in supporting an underground prostitution ring and child-porn.

Curt was summarily arrested. Legan and his sordid bunch were rapidly tracked down and arrested as well, in coordination with overseas authorities. The media which ensued revealed that Legan was in fact using his teen-magazines as a cover to recruit unsuspecting young teens in America and other countries, and forcing them into prostitution. If for nothing else, the child-pornography had been enough to indict Legan and all of his cronies. No less than two-hundred and fifty people across and throughout this prostitution ring, from America to the Czech Republic, had been arrested and convicted.

In the ten months following Angileka's break away from her sexual captivity, nearly every person involved in her earlier "life" were in custody or in prison. Because of her actions to expose them, the authorities provided surveillance and protection of her family, back home.

"So as of this point, where does your career stand?"

"Well, my legal classes are still going, and one of the partners of the law firm I work at wants to promote me up to preparing legal briefs and depositions. Once they found out about what I had done, I guess they figured I had a good set of legal teeth and was worth keeping on-board."

"Any men in your life?" I asked with a smile.

"Nosey writer," she smiled while smacking me on the hand. "That's not part of the story, and besides, I'm taking a sabbatical from men, for a while." She paused, "but yeah, I am interested in one guy at the firm."

"And what about your family, what was their reaction?"

Angileka let out a long breath. "That was, in fact, the hardest part of this whole journey, because I deceived them, keeping them in the dark all this time, my father felt betrayed by my secrecy, and my mother, well, she stopped talking to me for a while. But, we're repairing it and in due time I'll be back in the good with them."

"What about the other girls, who were in the prostitution ring?"

Angelika shrugged her shoulders. "No idea. We were kept apart, for obvious reasons. It wasn't like I was working the streets with them. That's old-school now. Prostitution has become far more organized – using the internet and other mediums, agencies set girls up with clients, turn the clients over to the handlers to mediate the transaction, and the girls simply do the deed. I do know this much, that when the ring was busted up, there were hundreds of young girls, like me, in this very tri-state area, who were taken into protective services, counseling and help, to get them back on-track."

"You think they'll follow another road?"

Angileka raised a questioning brow. "Who knows? It's up to the person, but I hope so."

"Well, any way you slice the bread, you helped save a lot of lives."

She smiled with a coy look.

I looked at her for a time, admiring her courage and perseverance. "One last question – would you have pulled that trigger on Curt?"

Angileka's face became solemn, her eyes transitioned from bright to dark, and for a moment she seemed to sink back into the sordid past life, she once lived. After a time, she looked up at me. "Absolutely. I would have killed him in a heartbeat," she said with a look of resolve in her face.

I said nothing, because personally, I would have done the same in her position. She seemed to shake herself from her memories, and as she did, she reached into her small purse and pulled out a check and handed it to me. It was made out to me as payment for my service.

"I don't expect to be paid for this," I said, resisting the check.

She pushed back it toward me. "Take it. It is the very least I can do. Just knowing that you knew my story, and would tell it to the world, was inspiration enough to keep me going all these months. There were many sleepless nights, when I wondered if I would ever wake up alive, or if these people would find me and kill me in my sleep. My only satisfaction, and the only anchor I had to latch onto, was the hope that you would get my book out to the world." Her eyes were shining as she said this, and they brimmed with tears, but not the tears of sadness, but tears of relief.

"Finish the last chapter," she said as she wiped her eyes.

"Don't you want to read it first before I send it to the publisher?"

She shook her head. "No. It's over for me. It's up to you to tell the story. I can't tell it any better than I already have."

She gave me her card, we hugged and she left the coffee shop, like a soft wind blowing through the door.

Three months later, the book was published, and several months after that, it was already on its third reprint and heading for the New York Times best-seller list and I had been contacted by several movie agents who wanted the rights to make it into a movie.

Who would have known that one woman, Angileka, could have, or would have, changed the world as she did, just by having the courage to fight back and to tell her story?

And, as a final note, when I mailed Angileka the first print version of her book, I got a card back in the mails from her. Inside the card, was another check for \$5000 and a letter which read:

"Please take this check to Naomi's mother, with a copy of the book you wrote. Tell her that it is better that she knows the truth about her daughter. Truth is the only thing that can free us. I learned that the hard way. - Angileka."

THE END