

A man wearing a green hoodie is shown in profile, looking down. The background is a dark, atmospheric cityscape at night, with a digital or futuristic overlay of light patterns and textures. The overall mood is mysterious and high-tech.

**M.M. LOGAR**

# **KTORDO**

Short SF story

KTORDO

I lived through it all. The economic collapse, hyperinflation, food shortages, pacification war, and the Covid-187 killer virus pandemic.

Yeah, it was a rough ride, but what a ride. It made me appreciate life, set a few goals, and live one day at a time.

I day dreamed a bit more as I looked through the window of the vac train. The happiest period of my life was the poorest. I still live in the same flat that I used to live in with my parents. They worked at the algae farms, so we were never hungry. Often there was no power, sometimes no water, and the five-minute hot shower, I now take every morning, was a dream. I had a single toy and all the love of my parents. That's all I needed. I never felt alone, I never doubted their words, I never feared. It was all so simple then.

Blok 45 district slums is where I grew up and decided to stay, although my current position allows me to live in the green core district. Most of the people in Blok 45 slums have been living in it for generations. I save a lot by living there. It's rent-free, apart from the utility bills. I invested in the heavy breach-resistant door security system, and I have a big gun. A licensed solver is a position of power, and I came to it thanks to a single man who saw something in me when I was a punk, Doc Harley.

Doc called me to ask for a favor, and when Doc calls, I always answer. He wanted me to go to Moscow and resolve a family issue. It's what solvers do, but traveling all the way to Moscow meant that local solvers didn't want to get involved.

The vac train stopped. I was in Moscow. I went off and approached the tented dezobarriere, a leftover from the pandemic days. A huge sign said "Работает кондиционер, дверь закрой". The customs officer inside the tent was not happy to be woken from the half slumber. His initial idea to do his job and question me stopped after I presented my solver credentials. He just waved telling me to pass.

Soon after I was at the address, Doc gave me. It was a huge mansion with the robosecurity logo hanging at the gate. I rang the interphone.

The autonomous one-seater picked me up and drove me to the entrance of the mansion. I noticed cameras everywhere. Security was top-notch and robotized, if I pulled my gun I would probably be instantly killed.

The great door opened as I arrived. A woman stood at the door waiting for me. She was almost perfect in every way, surely a product of plastic surgery. Her face was blank, expressionless, and heavily botoxed. Her eyes moved like a fury, she was measuring me.

"You are the solver?" She asked with a heavy Russian accent.

"Yes mam, I am. Ktordo, licensed solver at your service." I replied.

I believe she tried to smirk but her facial muscles were not able to comply.

"Russian solvers are bigger. Follow me."

That wasn't the first time someone commented on my appearance. People expect solvers to be big guys, which I am not. Glasses add to my looking smart look but remove the tough guy presence everyone expects from a solver. She catwalked as if she was on the runway, doing a fashion show.

"Alyosha," she yelled, "your solver is here."

We went to the large living room. Everything was exaggerated, from marble floors to the golden details on the walls.

A big guy approached me and shook my hand.

"Mr. Ktorido, I am pleased to meet you." He said. "Doc told me great things about you. I am Alyosha, you already met my wife Katya."

I smiled. We sat in the lounge area. The man in front of me was not just any man, he was one of the oligarchs that governed what was left of Russia. It was clear why none of the local solvers wanted to touch the case if they didn't have to.

Alyosha snapped his fingers and a humanoid robot approached. He was standing on a display stand looking like a greek marble statue. De lux, custom skin.

The first robots were designed so that you can run away from them or overpower them. Today they are designed to kill humans and fulfill their every desire if one can afford them. Alyosha certainly can, and it seemed that no expense was spared.

"How may I help sir?" The robot inquired.

"Bring me my usual and anything Mr. Ktorido desires."

"Just a glass of water," I said.

"Will that be all?" Asked the robot looking at Alyosha.

"Tell Anastasia to join us."

"Yes, sir."

The drinks were on the table when a most beautiful young couple entered the room. Our small talk paused and Alyosha stood up to greet the guests. He took the girl's hand and kissed her.

"This is my heart and my soul, my daughter Anastasia."

She just waved to acknowledge me.

"What is this about father?" She asked, deliberately sounding bored.

Her father was an extremely powerful and wealthy man, and yet he was so tiny and humble standing beside her.

"Anastasia, this...this is someone I called to help us overcome what we talked about."

"Father!" She pulled away from him defensively. "There is nothing to overcome, we are in love, and I would like you to stay out of it."

Alyosha moved away from her, returning to the seat.

He looked at me, his voice drowned in sorrow.

"There," he pointed, "that is not a person. That is a robot. She is in love with it."

I was stunned but managed to hide it. I jumped up and approached the robot circling him.

"I have not seen this model. Remarkable, there is no way to distinguish it from a person."

"Friend bot, latest generation. Custom built to my daughter's specifications. Unfortunately, she unlocked the pleasure functions without my permission." Alyosha whispered.

Katya was silent until that moment. "I don't see what the problem is. She is a girl going through a faze. Did you really have to involve a Solver in a family matter?"

The whole thing became clear to me. Powerful man, demanding wife and daughter. Low socializing index, loneliness, a touch of depression et voila, robotic fetish was born. No local solver would like to work on this case, but I doubt Alyosha even bothered to contact any of them. That's why he called Doc.

"I'll take your case." I said. "But, before I start I want you to agree to certain terms and conditions."

Alyosha nodded. "Let's hear them."

"Who is the legal owner of the robot in question?" I asked.

"I am." He answered.

Anastasia made a disagreeing gesture. With every second I felt more sorry for Alyosha.

I thought sent the documents.

"I've just sent you three documents I need you to sign. The standard non disclosure agreement, the no liability agreement, and the transfer of ownership for the duration of 15 minutes."

Alyosha stared at me blankly. He received the documents and was reading them on the digi-lenses. I continued.

"The NDA will protect you, no liability protects me as you waive the right to seek recompense or take legal action in the event of a harmful event. The third contract makes me the owner of the robot during the questioning."

"Why is transfer of ownership needed?"

"Security reasons, also as the owner I can do diagnostic checks and access memory banks."

"Signed, signed, and...signed."

As Alyosha spoke I received the signed documents. I emptied the glass of water and stood up.

"Where can I talk to the robot in private?"

"His name is Piotr." Protested Anastasia.

"Use my study." Alyosha pointed to the room.

I closed the door. We were alone in the room.

"Piotr, you understand you are my property for the next 15 minutes."

"Yes." He answered.

I was making sure that the house AI security understood that. Piotr was mine, and in the next 15 minutes I can do with it whatever I want, without triggering local defence protocols.

"Tell me then, what is the relationship between you and Miss Anastasia?"

"We are in lo..."

I pulled my gun and emptied the clip in his chest. I made sure his AI chip and memory core were beyond repair.

Living room door opened. They were all there, shocked at first. I ignored Anastasia's screams when they started.

"Problem is solved." I said, looking at Alyosha.

I was prepared for what was coming.

Storm of insults was following me as I was moving to the exit door. Alyosha was threatening me with courts, other solvers, murder. His wife insisted that he shoot me right there on the spot.

I was out in the yard and Alyosha closed the door after us.

"Thank you." He whispered. "I will recommend you further. Now go."

I returned to the safety of Blok 45 where only humans love and kill each other.