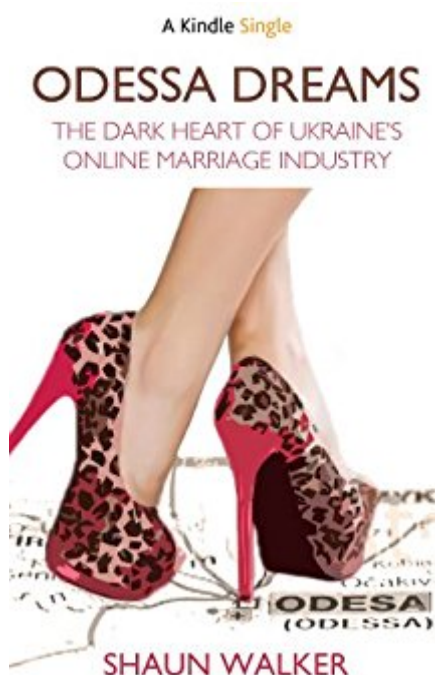


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Odessa Dreams: The Dark Heart Of Ukraine's Online Marriage Industry (Kindle Single)



Synopsis

Is the concept of the "email-order bride" alive and well, updated for the 21st century? That's what journalist Shaun Walker wants to find out when he sets out on a "romance tour" with a group of western men seeking a wife in Ukraine. The men spend a week in the port city of Odessa, hoping to find true love and a Ukrainian bride to bring home. The country has a huge dating and marriage industry, but it quickly becomes apparent that all is not what it seems. Walker uncovers scams and disappointments, wounded hearts and broken lives as he journeys to the very bottom of Odessa's sinister marriage industry. There are many twists and turns to the tale that are as shocking as they are unexpected. *Odessa Dreams* is by turns hilariously funny, poignantly tragic and deeply disturbing. It is a roller coaster journey that will leave the reader feeling uncomfortable for quite some time. Shaun Walker is Moscow Correspondent for *The Guardian*, and previously for *The Independent*. He studied Russian History at Oxford University and has lived in Moscow for a decade.

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Customer Reviews

This guy went looking for the "dark heart" of the bridal industry in Ukraine. I'm not surprised he

found it. Nor do I deny it exists. But, it's not all darkness or it wouldn't still exist. This guy is pretty judgemental, especially of the men, who seek women abroad. He doesn't for a moment even entertain the notion that maybe Western men want more feminine women for a very good reason. I know I could never go back to American women after my many years in Mexico. Having your date actually dress up and try to look sexy for you is something I quite liked. Nor will I justify my position. Of course, there are a lot of sick people out there who do want to force women into sexual slavery, and lots of women in places like Odessa who are looking to scam someone. I neither condone or condemn the idea of "mail order brides." It just seems like another option out there. His value judgements about prostitution are boring as well, and so very American. I guess I see things rather differently as someone who has lived much abroad. I'm also Eastern Orthodox. I know several couples who met in this way that are very happy.

Great work which any man going to Ukraine in search of a wife should read. I did get a girlfriend and I still see her and we enjoy a full relationship, but we decided against marriage, as she did not want children. I think the book is a little bit unfair, because Anastasia, the introductions agency the subject of the book, has a business model that lends itself to fraudsters, albeit, I am sure that the agency does its best to get rid of them. The problem is that it is extremely difficult to get contact information for the women involved, which means that if a woman is leading a man on, it is extremely hard to determine that other than by going to the expense of going to Ukraine and then seeing if one is stood up. Other agencies do not have that same business model. But realistically, unless you are rich - say \$10 million plus - and look younger than your age, it is a fool's errand to go to Ukraine looking to get a wife who is more than 30 years' younger than you. Moreover, the reason that women go to the sites is economic. That does not mean that a successful marriage is out of the question, but anyone who thinks it is a love match should think again. Arranged marriages often work. These marriages often work, because you need a lot of commitment to pull them off. Western women fear these women because they are competition. Western men often idealize these women. The reality is that in Ukraine there is almost no social safety net for women who choose badly in the marriage market. Further, there are next to no legal remedies worth having for a woman who chooses badly in the marriage market. The net result is that if you find a woman who wants you and does not want to rip you off, you generally have someone who is careful, dependable and serious, but who is also cautious.

Back in 1998, when the Russian economy was collapsing, my own private life was falling apart. My

Norwegian partner left me for lady and would not let me see our little boy. I was thoroughly fed up with women in general, but I could not live without one. For a lark, I posted an advert in a printed Russian marriage magazine. I put a nice picture of myself in it and mentioned that I spoke French. I got around 10 letters from all sorts of women who were interested. Only one of them seemed suitable. The lady who later became my wife was visiting a friend of hers who had bought this magazine. She flicked through it and liked my photo. She was especially interested since she knew some French, but no English. This led to me visiting Moscow to meet her and we had a wonderful time there. She managed to get a tourist visa to the UK (very difficult at that time) and took a coach tour across Europe. When she got to London, I picked her and we got married shortly afterwards. We now have 2 lovely daughters and my wife earns more than me. It is a very short book, more like a newspaper article. However, it contains lots of important information for those interested in the Anastasia system. It could save you a fortune and a lot of heartache. My suggestion to men who find themselves in my situation is to do it their own way - without going through these websites. What is wrong with going to Odessa under your own steam and staying there for a few weeks or months? You could even advertise that you are willing to teach spoken English for free. Lots of possibilities exist.

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