

## Broken in Bulgaria

I am an English lady who lived in Bulgaria for 18 months which sadly did not turn out as I had hoped.

I was not new to Bulgaria's Black Sea Coast region as for 10 years I had owned an apartment there which I used regularly, even staying there for 6 months at a time on occasion on my own. I felt I knew Bulgaria and the culture well. I had learned to speak enough Bulgarian to get by and was familiar with the Bulgarian way of life.

I knew Bulgarians, in comparison, to the UK, still had a lot of outdated views and prejudices but I had never felt these were directed at British, German or Scandinavian tourists but was well aware of their dislike of Romanians and darker skinned people who were referred to openly as gypsies and niggers.

There also seemed to be some resentment towards Russians who did appear to treat Bulgarians as less superior to them and could be quite demanding!

There were some who resented Americans but most had never met one.

Being English, you are seen as rich and prices for services are inflated accordingly. However I had the opinion that you could always refuse but in the main even the inflated prices were still very reasonable in comparison to the UK so I was happy to pay them.

Bulgarian customer service has always been somewhat lacking although slight improvements are starting to show.

The demeanour of most Bulgarians is a tendency not to be too upbeat which you could perceive as being miserable but apparently it is seen as distasteful to be anything more than ok in public as shows of prowess and boasting about how happy you are and how wonderful your life is like making a personal insult about the life of the others.

I had put this down to all the years of communist rule where to put your head above the parapet was not done as all were equal with individuality going against the communist concept.

In the main I felt safe there and found the Bulgarian people friendly and accepting.

I was aware there was much corruption but I had never experienced the effects of this first hand. To a degree the country is fairly lawless but to me this was refreshing after being used to the rules on rules and red tap in the UK designed to ensure health and safety and political correctness which I am of the opinion are totally over the top and have gone mad in places.

Bulgaria is a beautiful country and relatively unspoilt with a good climate and over 300 days of the year being sunny and the seasons defined. The cost of living is a third of the UK and with 90% of its produce being naturally organic, to live there in a dream home without having to work was a no brainer and so that's what I did!

Never did I ever anticipate just how bad that decision would turn out to be.

Instead of the dream life I had hoped for, my 18 months living in Bulgaria ended up destroying my life!

I had owned an apartment in the same Black Sea Coastal town of Byala for 10 years which was like a home from home to me. With all my personal effects and clothes permanently there, it was no effort at all to even pop over for a long weekend but usually once there a long weekend would result in me staying a few weeks, a month and on one occasion 6 months..

It was on this occasion, 5 years before I moved there, I first met Valeri. It was also on this occasion I first saw the villa I came to buy advertised for sale.

Although I do remember the time I met him, I did not remember it in the detail that I do now!

This was only after he jogged my memory by reciting it in graphic detail at a later date. However it was of no real significance to me at the time.

So insignificant, in fact, that I had even forgotten his name when I came to see him again.

It was of great significance to him however as I would later find out. Even being able to recall with immense detail, what I was wearing, how my hair was styled as well as remembering every word I said, even when I smiled! Claiming that the first time he saw me he knew I was going to be his wife..

At first, I was flattered to have made such an impact. It now clearly was a meeting that triggered an obsession in an already mentally ill man that manifested into a full blown delusion. Now a meeting of high significance by being the catalyst for the horrors yet to come ...

So let me now relay how we met;

Valeri and his friend Georgi were young local lads. I knew them by sight as for as long as I had been there that summer, every evening at the same time they would walk past my apartment building on their way to work at the Tango complex which was practically opposite.

Usually I would be on my balcony at that time and so it was no surprise when they started to wave as they went by which I would acknowledge by waving back. A wave naturally progressed to a hello and then a little small talk if I saw them in the street or on the beach.

The first time I did run into them face to face I do recall thinking how handsome they were, especially Valeri who was not as chatty or outgoing as Georgi but nevertheless had more presence . He hardly spoke at all claiming to not speak English as well as Georgi. I thought that he was a little arrogant and bound to be a player as he was so incredibly handsome, I could imagine he would have many women throwing themselves at him.

To me they were just young lads in their Mid 20's with me 15 years or so older. For that reason alone, I did not see it in anyway other than being friendly from my side and theirs. In fact Valeri did not really give the impression he was being that friendly even.

There was something about him that I could not put my finger on that made me feel a little dubious of him and the forming of an opinion he could be a real bastard with girls. A use and abuse them type which I had come across many times when younger and avoided for self preservation but secretly wanted them to notice me.

Not giving it any more sentiment than a passing thought as it being the way it was with extremely handsome young guys who are the one every girl dreams to be the one he falls in love with. The tall, dark and handsome mysterious man portrayed in the Mills and Boon romantic live happily ever after fantasies as the bad boy who could have any girl but its you he wants.

As time went by I got to know Georgi a little better and had given up making an effort with Valeri as on a few occasions I had been pleasant by asking how he was, he would give a one word answer or not answer at all and walk away..

There was something about him that made me feel uneasy. So uneasy, in fact, that one afternoon I was on the beach at the very end where it was so secluded it was not unusual for you not to see a single person all day. Therefore a place where I felt no worries going topless.

That day however Valeri appeared out of the blue and although I did not engage in conversation and even pretended not to see him as he passed by, he chose a spot less than 50 metres away to get naked and stand full frontal to face me, with a piercing stare so intense it unnerved me but not in a good way.

I was as baffled as you as to my reaction. The most handsome, young and fit man I had ever seen was naked on a secluded beach with me being the one he was exposing himself to but instead of the girl in the Mills and Boon fantasy who had been the one to win the heart, it filled me with an uneasy and unsettling uncomfortability.

So much so I felt the need to pack up and leave the beach.

I decided that I did not like him much and although ran into again over the coming months we never exchanged more than a hello.

Georgi I spoke to more regularly as he would often be on the beach and would stop for a chat as he did with many people.

The villa was slightly out of reach for me at that time however a few years later, I had managed to purchase it. I had seen Georgi and kept in touch but was not to meet Valeri again until after I had made the move to Bulgaria permanent...

In June 2017 my boyfriend of 7 years and I moved to Bulgaria on what we envisaged as a fresh start and the beginning of our dream life together.

The villa I had purchased was everything and more than I, and most people, would ever dream of owning. A luxury 6 bedroom Villa on 3 floors with no expense spared for fittings and furnishings. Set in its own grounds with its own pool, a fitness room, a luxury ensuite with a 2 man bath and double rain shower, even a marble staircase. It had so many unique features that it certainly had the wow factor! A house that would rival the home of any film star in the Hollywood hills. (Except on price of course!)

We felt truly blessed and life could not have been better!

We spent the days in the sun and getting acquainted with our new home and surrounding area as well as our neighbours.

We saw more of Georgi who was always willing to help out with finding us local people for such things as having the internet connected, car repairs, the washing machine fixed and any other general info or advice we needed. Georgi at the time was working on a casual basis doing manual agricultural labour.

Back breaking work starting at 6am for which he was paid 20 -30 lev a day (9 -£13).

Low by our standards but the average wage for unskilled work in Bulgaria.

We needed to do a few minor DIY jobs and changes here and there to put our mark on the place so we hired Georgi. We paid him 50 lev a day (£22).

He was happy and earning twice as much and we were happy to pay £22 a day and not have to do it ourselves!

On a few occasions over the following weeks Valeri would briefly pop in to see Georgi. We would offer him a drink and make him feel welcome but he never stayed long and rarely spoke to me seeming a little uncomfortable around me.

He spoke to Steven when he had something to say and seemed to find it easier to speak when I was not present. Steven and I would laugh about it, putting it down to nothing more than him being more relaxed with Steven and not too sure what to make of a self confident woman who had made her own money and had bought a Villa that was far from reach for even the most successful men in Bulgaria. I was certainly very different to the Bulgarian stereotype of women.

Valeri looked troubled most of the time as if he was in emotional turmoil with a sad look in his eyes of someone who had been deeply hurt in the past.

However within a few months our internet was hacked and all our digital devices infiltrated.

(but I will cover the details of what happened separately later on).

The fear of not knowing who or why someone was hacking into our lives or whether we was in physical danger or would have our bank account emptied or our home fraudulently stolen from us caused us considerable stress and worry. Mainly because of not knowing what they wanted but aware that hackers hacked for some kind of gain. For 3 months it continued and nearly drove us both mad.

To cut a long story short it brought to light the many infidelities on Steven's part and our relationship was thrown into turmoil.

Around this time Valeri started to visit more often. After months of practically saying nothing to me he started to talk to me....

In fact he just turned up one night and come to my room for hours and talked about the laws of attraction and would not get the message that I wanted him to leave even when I pretended to fall asleep....

After that first night Valeri visited and sat for hours intent on speaking to me whether I was asleep or not, he started to come to our home almost on a daily basis and even at ridiculous times in the early hours of the morning he would ring the bell claiming he was just passing and saw a light on!

Needless to say on many occasions we did not answer the door (and turned out the lights which previously we left on) but he would come back anyway within a few hours and as much as ten times a day some days, claiming to be just passing!

He would bring fruit and nuts that he had just picked and even honey. These gifts would be left outside the gate when we did not answer.

We felt a little sorry for him and then would feel guilty about not answering the door as he seemed to have no other friends except Georgi and no place to go. With Steven and I constantly arguing and our relationship in turmoil due to the cheating ,we did accommodate him more than we should have as he was a distraction from

the hell we were going through and gave us a break from arguing.

He was quite an intelligent guy so he was a breath of fresh air to us both and would educate us in a number of subjects including nature, philosophy and Bulgarian history and life these days!

We were pleased that he felt comfortable in our home and thought it very sweet of him to bring fruit and nuts when he clearly had very little himself.

It was also pretty obvious that the guy had issues with paranoia and low self esteem and we had no intention of making him feel worse than he already did so we were happy to let him into our lives.

He seemed harmless enough and just a gentle lost soul. He was relaxed in our home so we told him he was welcome when he constantly asked if it was ok for him to come round and was worried he was in the way!

He would act a little strange at times and would suffer from paranoid delusions at times. I suspected he could be schizophrenic as he displayed many traits that I had seen before due to having a schizophrenic brother.

As an example, on one occasion he came running in and looked frightened to death and then very relieved to see that I was home and safe!

The story was that he had heard my voice over the microphone as he had passed a

house where some 'young bad boys' lived were having a party. He was worried that I had been tricked into going there and I was in danger as they were not nice people and wanted to hurt me.

On another occasion he thought I was talking to him through the towns Tanoy system warning him that he needed to be careful. It took a lot of convincing by both Steven and I that I had not left the home that evening and had no reason to warn him and no idea that the town had a tanoy system let alone know where or who I would approach to use this facility.

Our internet was still being hacked but Valeri was somewhat reassuring to us by saying that it was probably just the police wanting to get to know who we were and that it was fairly common practice in Bulgaria.

In fact although he advised us not to call the police about the hacking, when we subsequently did, he translated for us but the police did not take it seriously. The police were of the opinion that if nothing had been taken then there was no crime and it was probably in our head as this did not happen in Byala and told us to get a good nights sleep as they left laughing!

Valeri also told us that he had always admired our home and for many years had often walked past and wondered what it would be like to go inside.

It said it was his dream home and on some days before we lived there, he had walked past 10 times a day sometimes, just daydreaming about how it would be to be so rich and have a home like that!

We were flattered and also glad we had made him welcome!

Most of the time Steven would be downstairs and I was upstairs so Valeri would flit between the two of us. Spending a few hours with Steve and a few hours talking to me!

He was aware just how upset and hurt I was so it was good to be able to talk to someone who seemed to understand and was compassionate about how I felt. I would cry and he would say reassuring things such as Steven and I were not compatible. He thought Steven was sorry and he was surprised that Steven had done those things as he had the perfect girl and how although it hurts it was better that I knew the truth! Etc. etc.

Valeri appeared to spend more time with me than Steven.

Steven did not seem concerned by this but I had a slight reservation about it.

Valeri would come to the house and say hello to Steve then seek me out and spend hours in my company.

He would come when Steven was not in which to me seemed a little planned especially when Steve said once that he would see Valeri sitting on the bench at the end of our road when he left and then within minutes of Steven leaving he would arrive at the house but seemingly unaware that Steven had gone out!

There were a few times that instead of go to the front door, he would just come up

the external staircase at the back of the villa that led to the other floors and come straight to the 2nd floor where I was.

The door to the master suite was usually open but on the times it was not he would bang on the door for me to let him in rather than knock the front door.

Steven was not even aware he was there on occasion and if he came upstairs and Valeri was there, he did not seem concerned about it.

When I did mention to Steve that I was a little concerned about it and that I hoped Valeri was not getting the wrong idea, he just laughed and said he doubted that as Valeri was a young good looking boy and that he had said to Steve in the past he thought I was 50! There was no way Valeri had any feelings of that kind for me!

Steven put it down to me being easy to talk to and not phased by his weirdness so therefore Valeri being able to talk about things to me more that I had an interest in which Steven was not particularly interested or knowledgeable in at all.

In fact Steven seemed pleased that he didn't have to deal with him so much and was happy for me to take him off his hands!

As I still had concerns I took every opportunity to make the point and letting it be known to Valeri that I saw him as a friend as well as stating that I would not be interested in having another relationship for a very long time as a precautionary measure, just in case!

I knew I had not given him the wrong impression or led him on in any way as I was utterly destroyed by Steven's infidelities so once I had clarified the situation, I felt that even if he had developed a crush, I had made sure that he would not act on it! With our lives still being intruded by a hacker who had infiltrated all our devices we were relatively cut off from the outside world. We changed our internet, got new phones but it was useless and within no time at all, the intruder was back in our lives, controlling access to everything digital.

Steven became more and more paranoid under the strain and would search the house for bugs and smashed up the alarm system which constantly was going off warning of an intruder. Also strange things started to happen in the villa such as doors being open when we were sure they were locked. Items being moved and found in odd places. The toilets started being blocked, the car wouldn't start, some things just appeared to have broken without warning.

We were not sure if it was coincidental or not but due to our constant stress of the hacker, who had even sent us video of our bedroom which implied we were being watched, we felt certain that these things were not coincidental and that someone was entering our home.

When we managed to contact anyone in the UK and spoke to them about what was happening, it was met with disbelief.

In the end my family thought I was mentally ill and Steven's family thought I was behind it as a way of punishing him for his infidelities.

The wedge between us grew bigger and bigger.

I couldn't forgive him and just carry on after the revelations of his infidelities and was

depressed and had lost the will to do anything but stay in bed and cry.

Steven and I were at each others throats so we decided it would be a good idea for him to move into the apartment for a while to give us some space.

Due to the fear of not knowing whether the internet hacker was capable of harming us or if he was entering our home and watching us, we agreed that Georgi and Valeri would spend more time at the villa with me to ensure I was safe.

They were a god send and I felt safe to have them around.

Valeri was there more than Georgi and I felt sure he had developed a crush on me as he would say he had not ever felt so comfortable with anyone and I was the first person he had met that got him.

I did not feel any special bond between us in a romantic way and although we did get on I had many friendships with men that were just the same and did tell him that as well as letting him know that I thought he would meet many more people he connected with if he were to venture outside of the small town of Bulgaria..

There were times I had hoped he was not there and I was alone but if I suggested that he would say he did not want to leave me alone in the home and would stay even when I went to bed which sometimes I did just to have some space.

I had started to suspect that Valeri could be the hacker as he would say things that had been similar in opinion and the style of the hacker but to be fair, at that time I was looking at everyone as a possible suspect. There was nothing concrete in what he said but it would set off warning bells within me.

One day Steven came in the morning and Valeri was there.

I felt Steven and I needed to talk but when I said to Valeri that Steven and I wanted to talk in private, he did not get the hint and even when I asked him to leave so we

could have some privacy, he was reluctant and I had to ask him to leave quite forcibly in the end before he eventually left..

I told Steven of my suspicions about Valeri being the possible hacker but I had nothing tangible in which to sustain my suspicions.

Sadly by this time Steven was starting to believe his mothers poison that I was behind it all so was not interested in the reasons for me suspecting that it may be Valeri.

That day ended in another huge argument between Steven and I and him leaving on bad terms after things had got out of hand and we had fought physically.

That was the last time I would see him as the next day unbeknown to me, he left Bulgaria and returned to the UK....

After the horrendous argument with Steven, I was upset and angry and did not wish him to return to the villa that evening, nor did I wish to see anyone so I locked all the doors. I wanted to be alone and I felt safe in my home despite the hacker as I knew I had checked every door and window to make sure they were all closed and locked. I locked the doors to the bedrooms too and unplugged the internet and switched off all the devises such as TVs and computers and retired to the master suite. I had a relaxing aromatherapy bath and read for a while and gathered my thoughts. The doorbell rang and I could see it was Valeri so I ignored it.

It was a pleasant change to be alone and I felt relatively safe and slept well.

The next morning I did not wake until 11.00am..

It was a beautiful sunny day so I got dressed and opened the door from the master suite and was going to the roof terrace to sit for a while.

However as I made my way up the stairs, Valeri was there on the roof terrace... it was a shock to me as I did not expect to see him there so I ran back into the villa and locked the door.

He came to the door and I asked him what he was doing there and asked him to leave which I thought he had.

Within 10 mins or so I heard foots on the staircase inside and I was horrified when I got to the top of the stairs to see Valeri making his way upstairs.

I freaked out and screamed at him, wanting to know how he had got in. He claimed the backdoor was unlocked! I was certain though that I had locked it the night before!

I asked him to leave and told him he had frightened me!

He seemed a little surprised by my actions and after some hesitation he did leave.

I ran to the backdoor and locked it again.

I went back upstairs and when I looked out of the window, I saw him sitting in the garden.

I opened the window and screamed at him to leave again and said that I wanted to be alone and I felt uncomfortable to firstly see him on my roof terrace and then in my home. He seemed somewhat bewildered and even hurt that I was acting that way.

The neighbour opposite came out and spoke to him and he finally left.

I ran downstairs and made sure the gate was bolted and then locked myself in the

house.

Within minutes the police arrived as it appeared the neighbour had called them after hearing me shouting.

The police spoke only basic English but they told me they had been called as I had an intruder. I told them who it was and that I wondered if he was the hacker as I didn't understand how he had got in when I was sure the door was locked. They asked where Steven was and said they would speak to Valeri.

They said they would go to the apartment to get Steven too as at that time I had no idea he had already left for England.

An hour or so later they returned to tell me they could not find him.

They said they would drive by every 30 mins or so and to stay inside.

I thought that Steven would finally show up and that Valeri would be questioned about how he got in and the hacking...

However Valeri was not questioned as later that evening he came to the house again but I refused to let him in.

I found out that night that Steven was back in the UK and I was now there alone....