



VLADISLAV MARKOV

with a story
by **Théo Casciani**

Hey folks,

I'm not used to this kind of place, so I apologize in advance if I'm not exactly following the rules. Truth be told, I just created my account about ten minutes ago and this is my first post. No choice: it's been on my mind for several months now. I thought I was the only one, I thought I was crazy, until I randomly stumbled upon this conversation. I don't know who started it and what you're looking for, but I think I have some things to say. Apparently, we're after the same person.

To introduce myself: my name is Mike, 63 years old, and I live in Staten Island, NY. Since returning from the war in Afghanistan, in other words, since my life was shattered, with lingering anxiety I can't shake, a broken family I mourn every day, dozens of friends killed right before my eyes and a leg blown off by a mine that brings me nothing more than a monthly disability allowance, I had to find a new career to keep making a living.

After bouncing from one temp job to another, I was eventually hired by Katie, a promoter of erotic shows who recruits people with unusual profiles to perform in strip clubs. For the first time in my life, a woman was able to appreciate not only the muscular physique I'd built through hours of training, but also this handicap that, according to her, was part of my charm. Every day, I head to Manhattan to get paid for doing nothing; I just have to let people look at me.

That's how I met Vlad.

True: I'm also on his trail. Would you have time to discuss this over private messages? I'm afraid he might be reading us.

Sure, I'm still not sure how this site works, but you can text me anytime. Cheers

Thanks

Hi there,

I've known Vlad for a long time too. We met as teenagers, at the same place I'm writing to you from now. There are sixty screens and thirty seats in this room. Only one has been empty for the past ten years: his. I don't want to go into detail or compromise my privacy. That said, I'd be okay with answering your questions. Could you just tell me your name?

Best regards, Zak

Let's call me 39E4O4.

Hey, it's Mike again.

I'm bringing this post up again a few weeks later because my previous messages don't seem to have worked. Yet, I'm still looking for Vlad.

I answered 39E4O4 but he disappeared right away. I find this behavior disappointing and disrespectful. People here are just as abusive as they are in real life. So I've decided to speak up, no matter the risks or consequences. I have nothing to lose.

Above are some pictures showing where I worked with Vlad. It was at a seedy pop-up club in Chinatown. Something like 'Management' if I'm not mistaken. For almost two months, I had to go there once a week to stand next to the pole with another guy.

When he found me online, I thought it was just another job and everything would happen as usual: act mean then nice, show off my muscles then my ass, take the insults and the tips. Except this time, nothing was the same. That's what I'd like to figure out.

During those three-hour shifts, none of the usual shit was asked, we didn't have to seduce anyone or take our clothes off. Instead, Vlad brought me a new prosthesis and simply wanted me to perform a series of actions, like scrolling on my phone resting on my titanium foot.

We couldn't even dance because instead of music, they were playing a radio show, some kind of talk program I didn't understand called "OBJECTS IN MIRROR MAY BE CLOSER THAN THEY APPEAR". It sounded like the station you listen to while driving in GTA.

I was trying to keep my composure, but the most unsettling thing was that I couldn't see who was watching me: between the audience and us, Vlad had installed a large mirrored window, like the ones they put in interrogation rooms.

One day, in the elevator, I ran into a customer who didn't seem to recognize me and was swearing to his wife that we were sexy because we looked like zombies. Even at my age, I felt like I didn't understand what people expected of me.

Since then, I haven't heard from Vlad or had any way to contact him. I'd just like to ask him one thing: why?

Thanks for sharing this. I have to say I've had exactly the same experience with 39E4O4. I don't know if he's trying to steal our data or something, but this modus operandi goes against the spirit of this site. Watch out for him. Best regards, Zak

39E4O4... that guy is a real jerk...

Typical Vlad. I'm not surprised. Did he pay you at least?

Yes, of course, that's not the issue; his assistant sent me a contract and some cash. I'm not here to complain, but to understand.



Are you talking about Fish?

Yeah. Do you know him?

Of course?

Prove it.



There's a rumor going around here that Vlad committed suicide.

Are you serious? Who are you?

Tilda, I'm currently working in the gulag of Vlad's town. The same one Solzhenitsyn wrote about in 1973. Our families know each other. It's been so long since he came back that people think he's dead.

You're writing from a gulag?

Yes, I'm sick of being here and the other girls in the camp are so boring. Since those idiots don't know anything about VPNs, I'm killing time by browsing online.

Your story is hard to believe.

AI?

I work for security services, and I assure you that you'd better delete your message if you don't want any trouble.

Looooool, she managed to wake up 39E404!

If I told you about my occupation, I imagine you'd tone down your insults. I'm under no obligation to respond to you, and I demand that you stop now.

PS. I'm not a guy but a woman: please respect me all the more.

Well, what do you do?



I'm an EU immigration officer.

What's his handle?

Can you give us more information about Vlad?

@no.waves

Type: PP
N°: *****A45
Surname: Markov
Given Names: Vladislav **** *
Nationality: RU
Date of Birth: **/**/1993
Sex: Male
Place of Birth: Magadan
Authority: Ambasciata di Russia in Italia

Correct me if I'm wrong, but was Call of Duty the first game you played together?

Indeed, we played it a lot. But my earliest memory of a game with Vlad isn't a digital one. I don't know why, but the first time we went to a mall together, he got the strange idea to make the security guard believe we were two brothers who had lost our parents. We then began tracking down our potential relatives in the stores, in a weird mechanism where we didn't know if we were the hunters or the prey. Anyway, we were alone. Why?

Magadan...

I'm asking you because ever since I arrived at the gulag, I've often been playing CoD. I picture myself defending my friends who've gone to the front lines. I sneak through alleys, fiddling with the joystick to make sure no one's behind me, then I throw a grenade. I love watching everything collapse.

By the way, what I'm about to say is going to sound creepy, and I'm really sorry about that, but I think Vlad is selling pictures of you... Best regards, Zak

And then?

[This message has been removed by moderators for violating our community guidelines. Please review the rules of this website to ensure your future contributions comply with our policies.]

What do you mean?

Is that you?



Ciao,
I don't know how I ended up on this page, I must have definitely spent too much time surfing the Internet. But since I'm here, everything comes together, Italy, name, habits: I can assure you I also met Vlad. But as for me, even though I found him strange, I have to admit that everything went smoothly. I'm a mechanic in the small town of Acilia, between Rome and the airport. My work mainly consists of helping tourists who've broken down on their way back or repairing large vehicles, like the tour buses that run from the Colosseum to the Pantheon. So I was a bit surprised when Vlad showed up one day with a dozen people to ask if he could shoot a video in my garage. He was wearing oversized clothes and a HARD ROCK CAFE VATICAN t-shirt, but he looked friendly. I agreed. I didn't ask him what his project was about: not my business. He was walking around the vehicles, pointing them out to the cameras, until I realized he wanted to film with a car. The scene didn't last very long, maybe an hour or two. I let them do their thing while I changed the tires on a truck, keeping an eye on his dog who was peeing everywhere. Before he left, he handed me an envelope full of cash and shared a couple photos with me. Please find it attached. I don't know if I liked it, but I was intrigued.
Yours truly,
Gianni

Where does it come from?

Is he based in Italy now?

It's online...

No fuckin' idea.

How did you find that?

He says he sells it as a merch. You can find it on his social media. I've known Vlad for a long time now. As I mentioned earlier, we met as teenagers at a small boarding school in Massachusetts. He had just left his country; I had just left mine. While we had many things in common, the passion we shared was above all video games. And not just any ones: first-person shooters. We'd meet here, in the basement of this internet café, playing for hours, advancing along the map with our guns pointed ahead, killing anything that moved, and devising strategies to always come out unscathed and together. Whether we were in bunkers or gulags, on avenues or rooftops, nothing could withstand our aim, and we advanced by combining our points of view. Until the day Vlad left to study hundreds of miles away, at Cornell University and Parsons School of Design, leaving his seat vacant and never giving any news. Best regards, Zak

From the information I can find in our border control records, I can at least confirm that he is still in Europe.

His dog?

Yes, I can't remember his name. Psy or something like that.

Cy! He adopted him when he moved to NY.



Psy would have been a better choice... This guy seems totally insane with his strip club and car fetishes.

What's your problem?

I know this thread has been inactive for many months, but I'm posting here again because I need some info and might be able to provide some in return. I've only met Vlad a few times, but since I'm a writer, I've been asked to profile him for Arcane, a French magazine. Your previous posts have already been very helpful, and I think you might help me unravel the mystery surrounding him. Thank you in advance, and I'm here should you need anything.

Are you a journalist? An art critic?

No: just a writer.

Can you tell us more about your relationship?



Our paths have crossed several times at events, openings and readings, along with mutual friends, in Barcelona, Rome and Paris. The last time was at his studio in Bushwick. After walking through Manhattan at dusk in a strange mix of fascination and disappointment, both thrilled by the energy of those streets and disappointed not to be more captivated by this setting that's sold to us as a kingdom, once I'd dropped off my bags in the room I was staying in, in Brooklyn, just as a new mayor had been elected, sparking a wave of joy on my social media feeds but nothing special in the neighborhood, I made my way through the twilight to meet with Vlad. His work had appealed to me ever since I'd been introduced to him as a Russian artist who could no longer go home to see his family without risking being forced to put on a helmet. I started hanging around his atelier, trying not to get eaten by Cy, his dog who was so cute he couldn't stop barking at me. I glanced at the gory images hanging on the walls and the strip-club paintings drying, including the portrait of Mike, and it wasn't until a while later that I finally noticed another guy in the corner, whom Vlad introduced as his new assistant: Fish. This young dude immediately started telling me his life in a long monologue that brought together Harmony Korine, Bernie Sanders and Moby Dick, from his youth in California with a mother who had chosen to name him that way, to his departure for NY to break into the music industry, following in the footsteps of his buddy Chris Rock, not to mention the day he fainted in the middle of the Tribeca bar where he worked as a waiter, suffering a brain hemorrhage so severe that he spent several months in a coma, after which the doctors decided to remove an entire lobe of his cerebral cortex. As he spoke, he took my hand and pressed it against his skull so I could feel a soft spot beneath his scalp, and as he flashed a big smile and said "that's my place!" with his index finger on his temple, I began to imagine everything that might fill that missing part. Since then, my fascination has only grown, whether I'm remembering his deepfakes of foggy stadiums and hairy robots or believing I'm visiting a Vlad show every time I feel like I'm inside a moving image. Here's an example: I'm writing to you from the Dubai Airport boarding room, and everything around me feels like it's part of his world. I am convinced his work is all about point of view, much like in first-person shooter games actually, and therefore about paranoia: we watch, we are watched. In my opinion, there's no better way to tell his story than by inventing a conspiracy similar to the one we've been nurturing for years on this site. That's why I'm contacting you. Feel free to write to me or reply below if you'd like to participate.



I don't understand a single word of your bullshit. Can you explain what you want?

Have you read 'The Sluts' by Dennis Cooper?

They dare to call his perversions "art"? What the hell!?

I just reread this whole conversation because I was bored as f*** and I don't even know who we were talking about, but honestly, you're all completely crazy. Why are you looking for him? Is this a forensic case? What is he accused of?

Isn't what's above enough for you? Do you think that's normal?

That's exactly what I was saying: you guys are completely C-R-A-Z-Y.

Vlad?

I need your help.
I feel like I'm about to be attacked.
Nothing has happened yet, but the assault is imminent.
The immigration bureau where I work is surrounded by fires.
I know it's coming from Vlad: I can't tell why, but I'm sure of it.
Our offices are located near Córdoba, Andalusia, Southern Spain.
I've tried to call emergency services, but no one is answering.
I've set up chairs to block him when he arrives.
Please, do something to save me.
This may be my last message.
May justice be done.

Do you think we're watching him, or he's watching us?

Let me tell you the truth: you must be pretty naive to think we're delusional. No, we're not, not at all. If your image had been stolen, if you'd been manipulated like that, if you were living without knowing what that person wanted from you and why you were dragged into his fantasy, you'd understand that we're just his characters. The plot is his.

OMGGGGGGGGGGGG

Send us a pic.



Haha, well done Vlad!!

Tilda, you should be banned...

39E404? Are you okay?

Important notice: I've tried to reach Mike and Gianni, but without success. Both have been reported missing since yesterday. Be careful.

What is happening?

Any news?

What about the writer?

[This thread has been archived and is no longer accepting comments. Thank you for your contribution. If you have a related question or would like to continue the conversation, please create a new post in accordance with our guidelines.]



In order of appearance:
Location. Location. Location. (Still), Bernheim, Zurich
Installation view: OBJECTS IN MIRROR MAY BE CLOSER THAN THEY APPEAR, 2025, Management, New York
Fish Witcher
Installation view: Eight Feet Under, 2022, Management, New York
Demmo, 2024
by
Location. Location. Location. (Still), Bernheim, Zurich
Installation view: Zero Advice Given, Management, New York
Installation view: Blood thinner, low-dose aspirin, best painkillers for kids, The Address, Brescia
Installation view: Location. Location. Location., Bernheim, Zurich