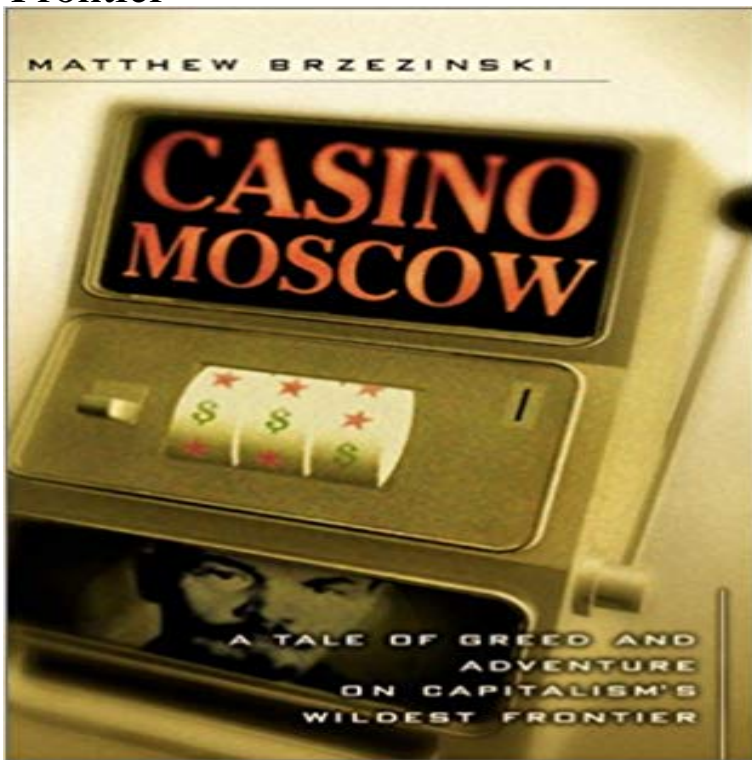


Casino Moscow: A Tale of Greed and Adventure on Capitalism's Wildest Frontier



Having awakened from its communist slumber, Russia in the roaring nineties is a place where everything and everyone is for sale and fortunes can be made and lost overnight. Into this maelstrom steps rookie Wall Street Journal reporter Matthew Brzezinski. Assigned to make sense of the financial markets, he is instantly plunged into the crazed world of Russian capitalism, where corrupt Moscow bankers and American carpetbaggers preside over the greatest boom and bust in international financial history. Brzezinski knows he's in over his head; what he comes to realize is that so is the entire country. The government of Boris Yeltsin is under the thumb of seven powerful men known as the oligarchs, and a crime boss from Chechnya -- even as his homeland is under siege by Russian troops -- has set himself up as one of Moscow's most powerful warlords. Meanwhile, the gap between haves and have-nots is widening into an abyss. Among Moscow's elite, solid-gold bathroom fixtures are de rigueur, while in Vladivostok, the last stop on the Trans-Siberian railway, local citizens must buy water by the pail from Russian mafia chieftains. Brzezinski's irreverent, swashbuckling account captures the greed and desperation of the time. He bribes his way aboard a Russian submarine. He survives a freak radiation spike at Chernobyl and travels four hundred miles on a private plane for lunch with a gorgeous robber baroness. He's set upon by Ukrainian thugs, who leave him tied with electrical cord in a bathtub. Fortified with vodka, he crashes ultranationalist Vladimir Zhirinovskys birthday party. And he visits a camp of Young Pioneers, in which children play an elaborate game to learn the principles of a free market -- with disastrous results that foretell the chaos in store for the Russian economy. Just as Liars Poker shone a torch on investment banking in the eighties, Casino Moscow

paints a lurid, hilarious picture of a capitalist market gone haywire and an era marked by boundless hope and despair.

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