

**“Kasia from Honey Street”**  
**A novel in the thriller mode set in contemporary Poland**

**Graham Pope**

**Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the  
degree of Masters of English (Creative Writing) in the Faculty  
of Humanities, Development & Social Sciences**

**University of KwaZulu-Natal.**



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*I affirm that this manuscript is my own work and that all acknowledgments have been properly made.*

Signed: .....



Date: 15 June 2007 .....

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Graham Pope

## Chapter 1

A little girl traced the outline of the passing scenery with her finger onto the windowpane. Her hand moved quicker and quicker, window painting each scene before it passed from view. *Komisarz* Pawel Klusek was less than captivated by the spectacle. It irritated him that Zajac had summoned him to Krakow. He turned and looked out of the window. Horses ploughing, a very old man digging in a field, a railway worker urinating against a fence turning to look as the train passed. The railwayman wore an oily green woollen cap and smiled showing large yellow teeth. More children, a line of them walking across the land coming closer into view, the oldest of the three grabbing at her brother's dawdling arm and stomping off with him. They receded, perpendicular to the train, and were gone as it cut through a small hill.

Klusek yawned and felt dozy. The clack of the wheels on the track was punctuated by the clicking of a woman's tongue. A nagging thing that irritated him more than the jilt of the train, as it swayed from side to side. She was a thin lady, who did this as she marked a student paper. Engrossed, she flipped through the pages and then flipped back. She made notes on the script, using the little table by the window to press on. To him she pretended too much, with her exclamations and fierce scribbling, exaggerating the importance of what she was doing.

He rested his head against the protruding corner of the headrest. He once watched a young man sleep with his head against the vibrating window of a PKS bus as it chugged through the Swietokrzyskie Mountains. He had been amazed that the vibrations did not wake the youth. Klusek dozed and awoke later as the train slowed, approaching Koslow.

A man in a blue suit rose and nodded goodbye to everyone in the compartment, rigid as if to attention. He wore a "Herbalife" button. When he alighted from the train he went and stood near the little brick station house. He checked his watch, as if he was in a hurry, as if someone was meant to be there to meet him. Klusek sensed it was all for show.

The train was now passing through the outskirts of Krakow. Klusek got to his feet and



stepped into the corridor. Opening the window a little, he lit a cigarette. The man in the blue suit was familiar to him, connected with the memory of something unpleasant. But Klusek could not place him. He finished the cigarette and shut the window against the icy wind, wondering when spring would really begin.

Klusek left the train and walked through the pedestrian subway with its vendors. Here he bought a packet of cigarettes and then made his way up through the corner of the park. He turned left past the theatre and walked down Szpitalna Street, all the way to the edge of the small square, the Maly Rynek. There he turned right and made his way to the Rynek Glowny, the main square.

He found the Café Ras and sat just inside, hard against the window. He ordered a pint of Zywiec beer. He checked his wristwatch, it had just gone one thirty. The meeting was for one thirty and there was no sign of Zbigniew.

Klusek wiped condensation from the windowpane to make more of the square visible. He looked to see as much as he could, the market building, the horses that draw carriages, tucking into their nosebags. The Justus patrols in elongated golf carts, nothing more than mafia. He wiped, looking, his hand moving quicker and quicker to catch each scene before condensation misted it over. He tried to see the tower of the Church of Saint Mary. At two o'clock the bugler would open the shutter and play across the city, but from where he sat he could not clearly make it out.

Mayor Zbigniew Zajac walked with confident strides across Rynek Glowny. He had long ago stared Klusek down. He no longer needed to prove who was the more powerful of the two, having won that struggle when the two of them represented very different sides. It was Klusek who sat in the front seat of the motorcar, arm slung behind the driver, head turned back to interrogate, all those years ago. Klusek who was threatening to arrest all the Solidarity leaders in lower Malapolska if they did not back down from their demands that the Lenin Foundry be closed.

In Zbigniew's mind, Klusek was symbolic of the ugliness of Krakow at that time, ugliness both literal and moral.

"If you do that Klusek, I will take every worker in Krakow out on strike." Zbigniew used "I", and not, "we" when he said this. Zbigniew was the leader of Solidarity for Krakow.

Against the ethos of Solidarnosc - the team spirit – he acted unilaterally. How else was he to act after being forced into the back of the policeman's Lada between two low class ZOMOS thugs?

"Do not take them out on strike. I will see what I can do," Klusek said.

But now Zbigniew had a special favour to ask of the man. He entered Ras and looked around. Klusek was small in stature and at first he did not notice him sitting there, so very near the window, obscured by the door. He joined him and ordered a Zywiec beer. He smiled at the policeman. Out of habit Klusek checked his watch. It was half an hour since he himself sat down and Zbigniew's lack of punctuality annoyed him. They said nothing as the bugler played the Hejnal and the notes drifted out to the first of the four corners of Krakow, towards Wawel Castle and Kazimierz City. They sat in silence, listening to the notes. They waited as the bugler played to another part of the city, towards the train station and the Hotel Polonia. Now it was their turn. Zbigniew wiped the window using the right sleeve of his woollen jacket. He looked up as the wooden shutters at the top of the Church opened, so that one could make out a filigree of brass. The notes began to float down across Rynek Główny.

Zbigniew was worried. He lit a cigarette. Usually he never smoked, except occasionally a pipe. But that was different. That was status or something men of his station did. It was not really smoking. Cigarettes were a nervous condition. He looked at Klusek.

"It's thanks to you I never completely gave this up."

Klusek smiled, he had heard this excuse before. Zbigniew quit smoking for three years and then started again with the pressure put on Solidarity by the SB, Security. The worry of expecting to be arrested at any time caused him to return to that vice, or so he always said.

"We have a problem."

"Yes, what problem do you have?" Klusek knew the Mayor's rhetoric from old.

Zbigniew drained his beer and paused for a while, wiping the froth from the hair on his face.

"You know about this girl who has gone missing from Starachowice?"

"Yes, I have been informed. Katarzyna Baran is her name, but *Inspektor* Maciek Skora is handling the case."

“Yes I know.” Zbigniew turned as the waitress asked them if they wanted more drinks. He ordered vodka instead of beer and turned back to Klusek before she left the table.

“Would you like some barscht with that?”

“No, I’m fine for now.”

“Look, this thing is very bad, Klusek. The problem is complicated for us. I have read Maciec’s initial report, thanks to my acquaintance with your boss, Dyka. He doesn’t seem to have any ideas.”

“He is a methodical investigator,” Klusek said.

“That is possibly the problem, Pawel. Believe me, I am not trying to tell the police how to do their job, but I need someone with brains who can help me out and your boss has agreed with me. We need someone who can find this girl and quickly.”

Klusek looked the mayor squarely in the face.

“What is your particular interest in this?”

Zbigniew sighed.

“The missing girl, Kasia Baran, is a student in my College. As you are aware, our funding comes from the European Union, Germany to be specific. Representatives are coming for our first graduation. Her being missing looks very bad, especially having it in all the newspapers like it is.” Zbigniew lowered his voice. “There are those who could exploit this against us.”

“I see.”

“Dammit! Klusek, don’t be so dense. We are joining the European Union soon. Do you know how damaging this is for our image?” Zbigniew said this with his shoulders hunched. His face was tilted forward, the full effect heightened by his munificent grey beard. “I really need you to get to the bottom of it.”

Klusek felt the man’s need and enjoyed the measure of power it gave him.

“I’ll look into it.”

“It’s very important.”

“I will have to confirm all of this with Dyka first. You know that?”

“Of course I do, just get to the bottom of it.”

They drank in silence and after a while, Zbigniew summoned the waitress to order bigoz for them both. He, at least, needed something homely and filling to settle his nerves. His

mobile phone rang and he turned away from Klusek to take the call. He cupped his hand over the mouthpiece.

“Dublin,” he said to Klusek. Zbigniew spoke in English, and Klusek, who understood the language perfectly, looked out of the window.

Would Poland really be better off when it was part of the European Union? Certainly it was a vision for Poland. But then it was a vision that belonged to some people more than others.

Zbigniew ended the call, but immediately the phone rang again.

“Germany,” he said, and then answered the telephone. Klusek looked out of the window once more. But now he was looking away from something. He was somewhat embarrassed by this flaunting of technology and the chumminess of pan European networking. Mostly, though, he was looking away from the infantile expression on Zbigniew’s face. It reminded him of the look that former minister of Security, Kiszczak, always had on his face. It reminded him also of the look on the face of the man wearing the blue suit.

The train had been travelling through a forest comprised mostly of Baltic Pine. The scene mesmerised him. The wooden forester’s lookout towers, dwarfed by the line of trees, made him wonder how effective they would really be against a fire, being a wooden thing against a wooden thing on fire. That was when the man in the blue suit entered the compartment. He greeted everyone in an odd formal manner before sitting down. The way a young boy would have greeted a room full of adult men.

The waitress placed his plate of bigoz on the table before him. Zbigniew was still speaking on the telephone. Klusek noticed that the waitress had overly large hands. That was not unique because many Polish women have big hands. But hers reminded him of hands that were once much nearer to his face, large hands that he pushed away without a second thought. Those big hands would always seem larger than life within the space of the pleading they helped to deliver.

She was a beautiful young woman, barely a woman. She was tall and blonde, narrow waist, small breasts, blushing and pretty face. Her hands, those big hands, had pleaded with him. He remembered her hands and her beautiful blue eyes. He remembered those things about her and knew every day afterwards that he would stop the enemy, to stop the

need for this ever to happen to a lovely young Polish woman again. But to do that it was inevitable that he would have to destroy this one in front of him now. This vulnerable and beautiful young enemy who tried to act appropriately, even in terms of the stress of interrogation. Even as they did subtle, undetectable, yet painful things to her body after working with her mind had produced no results. Klusek doubted whether she knew anything of value anyway. At least, doubted she knew the value of what she knew.

She was an extraordinarily fine-looking young woman. Even her legs, thought Klusek, were slim but with that muscular tissue that he himself found very attractive in the opposite-sex. She was a virgin and the younger officers reacted differently to this. She overly excited them sexually, and he was too slow to notice what was coming over them.

"I'm sorry, I'm so sorry," she said as she urinated on herself. Self consciously, she wiped the tears and saliva from her face with the underside of her arm as she spoke to the young men, as if she had dressed up for a party and they wanted to dance with her. Klusek noticed delicate, downy hairs on her forearms.

"I am Ola. I don't know your names?" She winced with pain. They taunted her form. Told her how desirable she was. Any one of them would have asked her out under normal circumstances, but not today. She felt her body being stretched and parts of it almost dislocating, but the procedure always stopped before any real physical damage was enacted. And even if a dislocation occurred, it could always be set again. She tried to keep control but instead she wet herself again.

They understood more and more the joke of a beautiful girl being nothing more than flesh around waste product just above where you fuck her. They liked it because they had lust in their nostrils. She had sensed this in them but Klusek had not. He left the room against the rules to take a call from Minister Kiszczak himself.

"Please let me tidy myself," she said. "Please, don't let me be filthy," she cried out.

"Please let me make myself look pretty." He heard her say these things as he walked out of the door. At the time he thought nothing of it.

They washed her with a hosepipe. She made a mewling sound as they raped her, as blood poured down the inside of her thighs. It was whilst they did this that Klusek returned to the room.

Even then, the young officers had to be physically pulled off her. The girl had fainted.

Klusek ordered them from the room. This rape was now his responsibility because she was in his custody. Poland was changing, this kind of thing was no longer acceptable and there would be hell to pay.

Again from somewhere deep inside of her came that mewling sound.

He broke her neck as she struggled, having begun to regain consciousness. Afterwards, he paid no particular attention to her lifeless form. Her eyes remained open. Her body lay naked. Later, he weighted her down and threw her into *Zalew* Lubianka, a lake on the outskirts of Starachowice.

Minister Kiszczak discretely praised him for his actions. Klusek's orders were that there must be no trace of this investigation.

"The girl would have been locked up for good, anyway, so perhaps this way was better," Kiszczak said. "As long as you covered your tracks?"

"Yes," Klusek said.

"Good!" Kiszczak winked, "we know what happened to those three who killed Father Popieluszko." Kiszczak twisted his mouth. "Still, what happened is very unfortunate." "You have dealt with the officers concerned?"

"They have been disciplined."

"If any of this came out," Kiszczak smiled, "the assassination of Popieluszko would pale by comparison. It would be very damaging to the SB."

Klusek's role in Department IV, Churches and Religious Organisations, was temporary and he remembered how he looked forward to returning to his duties back with Department I, Foreign Intelligence. Returning to Berlin would keep his wife, Mira, out of his hair.

He never did return. In spite of how much Kiszczak had reassured him over the affair he received a sideways transfer into Studies Bureau, Combating Organised Opposition. Klusek disliked that infantile look on Kiszczak's face. He disliked it now just as much on Zbigniew's face.

## Chapter 2

Piotrek entered Hotel Alef and was taken to a time known only to him through anecdotes narrated by his grandparents. Selfish tales some of them too, like the one told by his maternal grandmother who lived during the war years in Mazuria.

In the winter of 1943 she was alone with four children on their little farm. Her husband had been forced by the Nazis to work on the docks in East Prussia. Three groups fought in the surrounding forests, Polish partisans, Red Army soldiers, and the Germans. Without asking her permission, the partisans took all the food they found on her farm and slaughtered any live chickens or pigs. The Red Army soldiers did the same, but at least they shared the food with her and her children. The Nazis, and some of these were camp guards, would always ask politely if she had anything for them to eat. One officer even gave her a violin as payment for a pig and some pickled cucumbers he took for his men.

Piotrek inherited the violin after her death. It bore the name 'Grynbaum' inscribed on the fingerboard and that was why he decided to give it to his Jewish friend, Isaac.

He carried the fable of the violin with him as he approached Isaac who was sitting behind the reception counter.

"Eggs yes; no bacon, no pork, no Palestinians, this is a Jewish hotel. I can give you eggs and cold meat, like chicken and beef." Isaac replaced the telephone receiver.

"Hello Isaac!" Piotrek extended his arms as he approached his friend.

"Piotrek, you have arrived." They kissed three times on the cheek.

"*Jac lechi? Jac lechi?* It's good to see you."

"*Dobrze, dobrze,*" Piotrek said.

Isaac Kalaman led the way through into the large dining room. They sat on two comfortable wing-backed chairs near a sizeable and beautifully tiled heating stove.

"Is this original?" Piotrek indicated the brazier in the shape of a castle tower, its tiles glazed in hues of brown, green and pink. Each patterned with a leafy bud attached to a creeper that flowered, as one's eye ran upwards, into bloom.

"No, it's a very expensive copy."

"I've brought a present for you." Piotrek removed the violin from its case and handed it across the table to his friend.

"It's beautiful." Isaac examined the instrument as Piotrek related the tale of the violin to him. "I think," Isaac rose from his chair, "I will place it over here in a glass case." He stood near an upright piano and indicated a patch of wall next to an antique map that depicted the Kaziemierz beside ancient Jerusalem. Isaac then returned to his chair, carefully inserted the violin back into its case, and placed it on the table. "It is a wonderful gift, Piotrek. *Dziekuje bardzo!*"

"*Prosze bardzo!*" Piotrek said.

"How are your mother and father?" Isaac asked.

"They are fine. They have bought the community block flat we grew up in, in Kielce."

"Good, good. And that pretty little sister of yours?"

"Ilona," Piotrek refreshed Isaac's memory. "She is good too, married and living in Warszawa."

"Ah!" Isaac looked slightly sad. "What does she do in Warszawa?"

"She works for Ikea."

"You're in Wachock, aren't you?"

"Yes, at the monastery there."

"I still can't believe you actually became a monk." Isaac grinned. "But then you always were a bit queer in that way."

The first time they met, Isaac had declared emphatically: "I am not a Jew. Don't you know there are no Jews left in Poland?"

"Why is that?" Piotrek eyed him with a slight amount of suspicion.

"Because of the pogrom, here in Kielce," Isaac said.

"I've never heard of it." Piotrek's family did not speak of the Kielce pogrom.

Isaac then told of how young Henryck Blaszyk had run away to the village of Bielaki. The boy's family stayed in Bielaki during the war and only very recently moved back to Kielce. He was homesick for the place he now thought of as home. When Henryck returned to Kielce three days later he told a tale that a man had kidnapped him and held him in a cellar along with another boy. That they escaped before the man murdered them. After further questioning the boy revealed that the kidnapper was a Jew.

The rumour spread that Jews were kidnapping and murdering Polish children. The



townspeople of Kielce killed thirty-nine Jews and two Poles that day. The two Poles tried to help the Jews.

According to Isaac, the rest of the Jews in Poland left because of the massacre.

“So you see I can’t be a Jew because there are no Jews left in Poland.”

“That’s a lie.”

“No, it isn’t. I really am not a Jew and I can prove it.”

“Prove it then.”

Isaac began to unzip his flies.

“Aaagh no, okay, I believe you,” Piotrek said.

Isaac added later, whilst biting into a large red apple and the juice of it running down the sides of his mouth: “I really am the biggest gossip in Kielce. I am famous for starting rumours and telling tales. Do you think I would spread tittle-tattle like I do? If I knew what rumour did to my own people - if I was a Jew, that is.”

At the time Piotrek did not really believe Isaac, who then changed the conversation to the lewd level that would make up most of their childhood banter. Such as gossiping about *pani* Gatch who was married to the baker on *ulica* Czarnowska, she was young and pretty and he was old enough to be her father, etcetera.

Isaac’s mother used the story of Henryck Blaszyk as a fable to illustrate the moral consequences of lying. She demonised Henryck to mythical proportions. But it was the image of that boy looking through tear filled eyes at the diffuse blur of his father that became indelibly impressed upon the mind of young Isaac.

He would imagine Henryck’s father as the man fingered his belt.

“Tell me where you have been or I will beat the living daylights out of you.” Curious neighbours drifted towards the spectacle. A man spoke up. Isaac pictured him kneeling before the child.

“Tell him, Henryck. Tell your father where you have been.” He had blue eyes, this man, and they pierced into Henryck’s face. “Tell us what happened, Henryck?” he asked in a quiet voice.

Henryck began to lie: “A man, here in Kielce,” the boy added, so as not to get into trouble for going to Bielaki without his parent’s permission, “asked me to deliver a parcel to a

house. When I got there I was put in a cellar. There was another boy there. We escaped together.” Henryck began to feel he was the hero of his own tale.

“Who was this man Henryck?”

“I don’t know.”

“What did he look like?”

“I don’t know.”

The kneeling man stood up and two grey shapes stepped forward. Isaac always visualised them as tall dark shadows, without faces.

“Was this man a Gypsy or a Jew?”

“He did not speak Polish properly. I think he must have been a Jew.”

As an adult, Isaac came to understand the Jew image that would have been in their minds. He would be the stereotype who gesticulated wildly because he could not speak Polish properly. These comic gesticulations and the *beriberi* of his speech would form a cartoon villain in their imaginations. Something that was not quite real, and not quite human.

“Hey!” Isaac’s face brightened up. “Have you heard the latest Wachock joke?” Here it comes, thought Piotrek. It irritated him that he lived in one of those towns that the rest of the country made jokes about. But then he did not really live in Wachock, rather within the rule of its very ancient monastery. “Why do people in Wachock dance with their shoes off?”

“I don’t know.”

“So they can hear the music that’s being played in Starachowice.” Isaac laughed loudly at his own telling of the joke and Piotrek, who had heard it before, politely joined him.

“Come, I have kept us the best table for breakfast,” Isaac said.

The table was large and round, made of a dark burnished red wood that Piotrek took to be mahogany. He sat facing a tall window that showed the roofs of the buildings on the other side of the courtyard. Very plain but very old window facades stared back into the quadrangle. Window mouldings, ornate lintels and parapets were features of the outward looking side that faced the street. Pigeons fluttered on both sides above verdigris gutters and down pipes. Here the outlook was not so pretty, this was where the dirty washing was hung, thought Piotrek. This was where in old times the people who serviced such houses did the real work.

Piotrek contemplated the vast size of this window. It was at least twelve feet tall and seven feet wide. Perhaps it had been designed for the whim of the original owner? The plaster of the buildings around the inner courtyard was streaked with dark grey, where water had run down in the same places over many years. In some patches it was black as pitch where centuries of soot joined timeless damp.

"I've told them to bring us omelettes made with forest mushrooms for breakfast," Isaac said.

It struck Piotrek that the way Isaac took command of the place, the way he spoke of the hotel in relation to himself with a certainty, meant that Isaac was more than just the manager, he was very much Hotel Alef.

"So, what new things have you discovered about our patron saint?" Isaac asked.

"There is evidence of a very old shrine somewhere in the Swietokrzyskie Mountains."

"Oh, really," Isaac said.

"The historical proof is quite compelling," Piotrek said. "My paper is a discussion of a Polish text we have discovered written by a certain Jaroslaw of Gniezno, just after the death of Adalbert, although a much later copy. I am comparing it to Latin texts, notably those of Bruno of Querfurt and Marcus See of Gniezno. There is a lost shrine erected to Adalbert in the Swietokrzyskie Mountains that is almost a thousand years old, this text speaks about it."

Isaac changed the subject.

"So, what do you think of my hotel?"

"It is very well preserved."

"We can thank the Nazi SS for that. They did not destroy Kaziemierz City because they wanted it to remain as a museum of disappeared races. Just the people had to go. They didn't want a zoo you see. But you know this."

"It was a terrible time," Piotrek said.

A door in the courtyard opened and they watched a kitchen porter scrape vegetable peelings from a chopping board into a bin.

"Would you like more coffee?" Isaac asked.

"Yes, thank you."

"Ana? Ana?" No one appeared. "ANA?" Isaac shouted. "That is the problem with hiring

these girls from the farm. This one's from east Poland, although I suspect she really comes from the Ukraine. Do you know to English speakers Ana is spelled A-N-N-A," he said this just as the girl appeared at his side.

"No I didn't," Piotrek replied.

"*Diwa Kawa, TERAZ prosze!*" Isaac ordered. "Still she is nice to look at, isn't she? Our Anana," Isaac said smacking the girl on the bottom as she scurried towards the kitchen.

They ate their omelettes made with orange forest mushrooms, fragrant of woodland loam. The sun rose above the roofs and shone through the glass of the courtyard window, uneven now and slightly opaque with age. The warmth of it hit them, and the room glowed amber as it reflected off the polished patina of the mahogany furniture. It filled Piotrek with an inconceivable sense of peace. One could not bear leaving such a place and he began to understand the sense of permanence this house must have held for its former Jewish inhabitants.

"This is a beautiful room, Isaac, so solid and permanent."

"The Jews never had it as good as they did in this part of Europe before the Nazis. In a way," he said and laughed, "I am a curator, like you. I am a curator of that time."

Piotrek equated Hotel Alef with the Romanesque monastery, its pink marble walls and copper roof. It also exuded an overwhelming sense of permanence.

Later, after they pushed their plates away and sipped fresh coffee, Piotrek broached the subject that brought him there.

"You were involved with setting up the memorial to the Jews massacred in Kielce?"

"Yes, ironic isn't it? I used to go on about it as a kid, for attention, but then as an adult it became important. It wasn't easy, getting them to declare the place a monument. Well, why should they want to? It was Poles killing Jews and it happened eighteen months after the war ended. It took us six years, democratic time, to get them to do it."

"What changed to make it mean so much to you? It didn't before, did it? Least, I never thought you took it so seriously."

"No, of course I didn't. It was Uncle Singer. You remember Uncle Singer Kalaman?"

"Yes, of course I do, funny old boy."

"That's the one. Well, he was there you know, at *ul. Planty* when it all happened."

Isaac's Uncle Singer had been standing outside the Jewish house that summer morning of the 4th of July 1946 when Walenty Blaszyk and his son Henryck walked by.

"Is this the house the man took you to?" Walenty pointed at the white building on Planty.

In that moment Singer was paying no attention to these two. He was enjoying the sunshine. Dazedly he was staring at the slow passage of a butterfly making its way up a set of crumbling garden steps beneath the hot July sun.

Walenty dragged his son closer to get a better look.

"Yes, this is the house," the boy replied.

Singer took a gold watch from his pocket. It was eight-fifteen. The watch was all that was left really. He looked up and smiled at the two. A father and son out walking together, it was a good day. But he did not see the tight grip the man had had on the boy's arm, now released. The child rubbed the appendage, hurt and angry. Singer smiled at them.

"That is the man who took me," Henryck said, pointing at Singer. He felt good. He wanted to hurt someone right now, wanted his father to beat the man up. He had seen Walenty beat up people before.

"Who, that man there who is standing outside?" Walenty asked.

"Yes, him, he was the one. He put me in the cellar."

The watch glittered on its chain in the sunlight. Soon he would have more sunshine than he knew what to do with in Israel, thought Singer. He no longer cared for snow and winter. He thirsted for sunshine as much as he had thirsted for water in the cattle-cars.

They had stopped near Czeszochowa. The ones near the ventilation openings collected jewellery from the others inside. Singer kept the gold watch from them. They then dangled these trinkets through the shafts in a hopelessly titillating way.

"*Wada, wada, wada*" they all cried. The people outside took their jewellery, and then pelted the cattle car with snowballs.

"There's your water Jews. Ha! Ha! Ha!" No, Singer no longer cared much for winter.

Within the hour, young Henryck and his father returned accompanied by a squad of policemen who believed the boy's story. The police arrested Isaac's great uncle, Singer Kalaman, who was still standing outside. Curious residents began to ask the police what

was going on.

“Jews kidnapped and held this boy in their cellar. We are going to look for murdered Polish children in the Jewish House.” People began to congregate in front of the house.

After Singer Kalaman was taken away, two more police units, then the political police and the army arrived. The pogrom began when the soldiers and police entered the building to confiscate weapons.

After the police took the weapons away, the crowd broke into the house. The police started shooting at the Jews. They killed one and wounded several others. Jews, men, women, and children, were forced into a line. Soldiers and civilians, men and women, hit them repeatedly. The scene then escalated into what has come to be known as the Massacre in Kielce. Thirty-nine Jews and two Poles murdered by the people of Kielce. Isaac’s great-uncle survived, however, safe in his cell at the police station.

The sun had risen further and the dining room burned a mellow orange in its beams. Piotrek looked at Isaac, carefully weighing something up. Finally it was Isaac who broke the silence.

“Piotrek, is there something on your mind?”

“I have information that I think may be important to you.”

“Yes?”

“It might have something to do with Ola.”

“I see.”

“You know that cousin of mine, Sylwester?”

“The bastard who used to work for Bezpieka?”

“Yes him.”

“Go on.”

“He told me about something he had been involved in. Here in Krakow in the mid 1980s.”

Isaac said nothing.

“He told me the name of a young woman he says he and a group of fellow officers raped. Then he said something quite strange.”

“What did he say?” Isaac asked.

“That he knew her from school and that she will never tell anyone about it. He seemed almost to gloat for a bit. Isaac, I got the distinct impression that they might have killed her. Her name was Alekszandra. I’m sorry!”

“Ola?”

“Yes.”

“Did he say anything else?”

“Only that Hospice had something to do with it.”

Isaac leant forward.

“Hospice. Ola worked for Hospice.” Isaac was silent for a while.

Piotrek broke the silence.

“I believe it was the right thing to tell you. I’m sorry the news is painful to bear.”

That the commiseration was lightly cloaked in the language used by religious types, annoyed Isaac.

“What does Sylwester do now?” Isaac asked.

“He sells herbal products, door to door.”

“Where?”

“In Koslow.”

After delivering his lecture the next morning at the Jagiellonian University, Piotrek left the auditorium and descended the stairs to the courtyard where refreshments were served. An elderly professor stepped from behind one of the ornate gothic arches that form a colonnade around the square and approached him.

“That was most interesting,” the man said as he sipped tea from a cup. “I am a professor of Polish Philology in Warszawa.” He dipped a biscuit into his tea and nibbled at it. “Do you think there might be a similarity in style and tradition between the Jaroslaw text from Gniezno and the Kazania Świętokrzyskie, the Sermons of the Holy Cross?”

“It would be hard to determine, we Benedictines have a tradition that is common to all in the order, throughout history,” Piotrek replied.

“True, true, but I was wondering more in terms of that which is in the text, within the language used, common things between the two manuscripts that are uncommon to the writings of other Benedictines.”

Piotrek looked at him.

“That is a very clever idea.”

“I wanted to ask you,” the professor said, “if I might visit your abbey and have a look at the manuscript, the Jaroslaw of Gniezno document. I have done substantial work on the Kazania Świętokrzyskie already.”

“Yes, I think that can be arranged.”

Piotrek took down his details. They chatted for a while longer and then Piotrek spoke.

“What I am really interested in is the shrine to Saint Adalbert that from the Jaroslaw text might be somewhere in the Holy Cross Mountains.”

The philologist stroked his beard and Piotrek knew he had made a mistake telling the man this.

“Of course archaeology is not my area really,” he said. “However, the notion is intriguing and would go a long way to prove the authenticity of the text.” The man looked at Piotrek. “That would be my reason for looking for it,” he said.

Piotrek said nothing. His reason for wanting to initiate a search for the shrine had to do with what he believed the nature of the Jaroslaw community to have been – a Polish Christian group with little or no ties to Rome. It was important for Piotrek to show that communities such as these spread Christianity in Poland as far back as this, without outside direction. Finding the shrine would validate their existence. It was, he felt, a point of national pride.

They spoke some more in general terms and a little later the professor excused himself and left.

Piotrek stood deep in thought for a while. Of course he had referred to the Kazania Świętokrzyskie as evidence that such manuscripts in Polish existed that far back. The Kazania were the earliest known examples of Polish prose, and dated from the end of the 13th century. They were discovered in the Holy Cross Mountains. If a link could be proven between the two Polish texts then it would strengthen the validity of the newly discovered Jaroslaw of Gniezno text.



### Chapter 3

The person who coached Klusek's superior officer, *Komisarz Dyka*, on dealing with the press was a big woman with a large head of firmly fixed bleached blonde hair. She intimidated him to a certain degree, something about her eyes. If he knew what it was about the eyes then perhaps he would have felt less intimidated, for the eyes create no expression on their own. It is the muscles around the eyes that do. This woman, with the aide of carefully painted make-up, especially eye shadow and mascara, was an adept at creating those intense communicative expressions. Like the one that he averted his gaze from now.

"Black shoes, dark blue socks, dark blue suit, and..."

"I have a new white shirt from the UK?"

"No, *Komisarz Dyka*, not a white shirt. The camera will automatically focus on that, being the brightest part of you as it reflects the most light, and this will cause your face to be out of focus. You will look weak. I think a light blue shirt, not too light, and as for the tie, red is strong which is good and blue will get people on your side, which is also good. Let's leave the tie for now."

The woman took a sheaf of papers from her briefcase and passed them to Dyka. "I have anticipated a list of questions that the press might ask and I would like you to go through them."

Dyka took the inventory from her and began to read.

"I have also prepared answers for these questions and here are your SSP's – remember, Short, Special and Positive responses, one for each generic type of negative question. Golden Rules, repeat after me: Never begin an answer to a negative question with a negative answer because that equals two negatives."

"Never begin an answer to a negative question with a negative response," Dyka said.

"Why *pan Dyka*?"

"Because it makes a double negative," he said.

"Very good. Now remember, begin your answer with a positive. I have prepared them here for you. Next expand on the idea and only respond to the negative. Then enlarge the idea and end on a positive. People remember first and last things for longer and will forget

the negative in the middle sooner. Also keep your responses short, but if they do edit it, the media, it will be from the bottom upwards. Your first SSP will not be edited out. Now, be careful of barrel-roll questions.”

“Barrel-roll?”

“That’s when reporters ask more than one question at a time. They want to trip you up and get you to answer something not really related that puts the police force in a bad light. That is why I did not think it a good idea that you meet the press, being such a senior officer. But never mind. We will do just fine.”

“Those questions?” Dyka asked.

“Yes, answer only one, the easiest one. Golden rule number two is what?”

“Yes?”

“We are treating this as a crisis so only be concerned with the missing girl – wish there was another way for you to say that – and her very worried parents. That gives you an advantage.”

“How do you mean?”

“Well, it means you won’t have to answer any awkward questions that don’t have her or her parents at heart.”

“I see.”

“Golden rule number three?”

“Ah! I remember this one, only use positive language.”

“In this situation avoid ‘just’, ‘try’, ‘maybe’, and ‘can’t’.” Be careful of ‘but’, as it will negate what you said before it, therefore, instead of using ‘but’ use ‘and’. How do you feel?”

“I feel good.” Dyka did not really feel so sure of himself.

“We will go with the blue tie,” she said. “Being unsure and wearing a powerful red tie would come across as out of place. Remember, the press conference is in three hours and you have plenty of time. I will get your outfit ready for you. Now, *pan* Dyka, you must go over all of the possible questions and answers.” The woman left Dyka’s office.

The telephone on his desk rang.

“*Tak!*”

“*Komisarz* Dyka, *Komisarz* Klusek is here.”

“*Dobrze*, tell him to come in.”

For Klusek it seemed that ding, ding, ding was Dyka's internal rhythm. Slower paced, ding...ding...ding, when he is inactive and faster paced, ding-a-ding-a-ding, when he is active. His mouth remains slightly open. Flaccid tongue forward, settling above his lower lip. When the man begins to pant his top lip curls upwards, exposing two small front teeth. Dyka dabbed at the sweat on his brow and then wiped over the white, wispy, hair on his bald head with the same white handkerchief. He is here then he is there, pretending ubiquity. Assessing, appraising, then, without giving a lead to his next action, he is off to evaluate something else. As the man grows more excited his internal rhythm intensifies, ding...ding...ding, becomes, ding-a-ding-a-ding, becomes dingdingding.

“I have spoken with Zajac.” Dingdingding - Dyka's rhythm was in top gear at the outset. Klusek had every intention of playing the man for all this might be worth.

“I do not really see why Zbigniew should be interfering in our matters, do you?” Klusek said this pretending that he was distracted by Dyka's latest desk toy. It was a Guinea Scale and had probably been given to him on his recent trip to the United Kingdom. The gift was unusually generous, thought Klusek.

“A Guinea Scale and it is original, too,” Klusek said.

“Yes, of course it is original.”

“It is early nineteenth century, maybe even late eighteenth century. You know, it might have been owned by a Jewish money lender,” Klusek said.

Dyka's sense of the historical value of the thing waned on his face.

In the usual course of events, Klusek would state his case. Dyka would pretend to listen, Klusek would persist, and Dyka would grow more emphatic. Finally, when Dyka had nothing more to say, his tongue, like, a pink and fleshy lava flow, would slope forward into its position of its final permanence. Then he would give his assent to Klusek's bargain. Today, there would be no such assent. It was Klusek who needed to be convinced. But there was also no bargain involved for Klusek, not really. Still, he wanted Dyka to sweat it out.

“You have spoken with *pan* Zajac and he has filled you in on the real need to resolve this, um...issue?” Ding...ding...ding. The man's rhythm had slowed - this was not good.

“Yes, the mayor of Krakow needs to resolve this problem.”

Dyka glowered at him.

"This is a matter that must be remedied because it affects the image of Poland as a whole. I hope you are aware of that?" Ding-a-ding went Dyka's rhythm.

Klusek sat forward and linked his fingers together in a kind of cathedral arch. He looked straight into Dyka's face. The other tried to hold the stare but broke and directed his eyes away.

"I do not understand why you must put two detectives on this case and so much of our efforts into finding this one girl, when we have a pile of dockets that require our more immediate attention."

Dyka looked away from Klusek, out of the window for a while, then back into the room.

"I think it's time for a drink," Dyka said, as he retrieved a bottle of vodka and two large glasses from a cupboard behind him. He poured out generous amounts of the alcohol. Then he held the screw top in his hand, showed it to Klusek and threw it in the rubbish bin.

"*Na zdrowie!*" he said. Klusek was not impressed by cheap tricks like this, pretending a resolution with a drink when the thing was as yet undecided.

"*Na zdrowie!*" Klusek said, and drank whilst Dyka immediately poured another glass each. They drank this too.

"I hope you realise you need to be on board with this?" Dyka poured even more vodka cure for Klusek, who took it and drank.

The fourth, Klusek refused. And as Dyka had already poured his own tumbler full, he was obliged to down it without company.

"I beg your pardon, *pan* Dyka, but I am at a loss. *Inspektor* Maciek Skora is already heading enquiries. Quite frankly, if Mayor Zajac did not ask for our help, then this police inquiry would be handled no differently than any of our other cases. Why must we drop everything to find Zbigniew's girl?"

Dyka became impatient.

"You will investigate this case."

"With respect *pan* Dyka, this is Maciek's case," Klusek said.

Instead of the tongue, lava flowing and sloping forward, Dyka's top lip arched, much higher than usual, into a kind of snarl. The glass slammed onto the desk.

"Then I am giving you an order. You will conduct police enquiries into this case. You

will find this girl, Pawel, and God help you if you don't."

Klusek now accepted another glass of vodka. He changed the subject purposefully back to the scale.

"Do you know why they needed to weigh their sovereigns?"

"What?"

"The guinea scale," Klusek tipped its balance with his forefinger. "Do you know why they needed to weigh their money?"

"How would I know? To count them, I suppose?"

"No, *pan* Dyka, so they could be sure of the amount of gold that each sovereign still contained. Gold is soft and when used as currency, coins wear thin. The value of a guinea was in its weight of gold intrinsically, not in its coinage. I thought you would like to know that. *Na zdrowie!*"

"*Na zdrowie!*" Dyka said. Although, he stayed uncertain of the real meaning in what Klusek said. The man always made him feel maudlin.

"Here is the case file," Dyka said passing the folder to Klusek. "Go over it. There is a press conference in two hours. I want you to be there."

Back in his own office, Klusek opened the folder. He read Maciek's report, starting with his interview of the girl's parents.

That Friday morning they had found that she was not in the house. Her motorcar was parked in the driveway. They assumed she had gone to the shops although they did find it strange that she had not let them know beforehand. By that evening they grew very worried when she was still not back and they had not heard from her. They telephoned around to her friends, but nobody knew of her whereabouts. They then contacted the police and were told they could not officially report her as being missing until twenty-four hours had elapsed. They reported her missing the next morning.

In examining the room where she slept, Maciek could find nothing that gave any clue as to why the girl left, or where she might have gone.

The question Maciek did not ask, thought Klusek, was whether the Barans noticed anything different or peculiar in their daughter's behaviour lately.

Maciek did, however, ask about her boyfriend. It seemed there was a young man, but he

passed away.

Maciek placed “missing” notices in the local paper, the *Starachowice Gazeta*, and put up posters all around town. His men questioned shopkeepers in the centre of Starachowice, and shops on Miodowa and the nearby Albert supermarket, where she went to buy food. They also questioned the small shop owners in their *sklepowa*. Nothing! No one had seen her.

That was when Maciek began searching the surrounding woodlands and the land around the lakes. Klusek noted that he started with the marsh and grassland around Lake Pasternik, quite far from where she lived. So Maciek thinks it is a drugs or gang related thing, thought Klusek. A year earlier, the badly beaten body of a teenager was found beside Lake Pasternik. Gangs and drugs were suspected, but the kids who did it were never found.

As a result of Maciek using the local media, the story made national news. The town of Starachowice had recently been embroiled in a scandal that involved its SDL town council and a car theft syndicate that was tipped of by the SDL Polish Deputy Interior Minister, Zbigniew Sobotka, of a police raid on their headquarters. The minister, Sobotka, and police chief, General Antoni Kowalczyk, subsequently resigned. Starachowice achieved notoriety as being the most corrupt town in all of Poland. Subsequently, anything to do with the police and that town was fair game to the media. That was why a case that would normally elicit only local interest was making national headlines.

“Starachowice,” Klusek hissed the word to himself. How he hated that town. It took his mother from him when he was so very young. It was also the place that hid that other girl.

A few hours later at the press conference, *Komisarz Dyka*, dressed in a dark blue suit and a striped blue tie, took the lectern.

The journalists came straight onto the attack: “*Komisarz Dyka*, do you think that the police service’s inability to locate one missing girl is because the force has been weakened by the Sobotka scandal? What are your views on the scandal? Do you think corruption is still present in the force and what will you do about it?”

“We, the Kielce police, care deeply about Kasia Baran and her family.”

Klusek observed Dyka using prompt cards on the lectern, out of view to the press.

“We are doing everything in our power to find her and have committed more resources and expertise. *Komisarz* Pawel Klusek will be in charge of the investigation,” he said and Klusek nodded at the assembled crowd. “It is true that up until now it seems that there has been little success, but we are confident that with more resources and expertise, a breakthrough will be imminent. The Kielce police serve the Barans and all the people of Swietokrzyskie in our full capacity. It is because we care that we will find her.”

The journalists scrambled to ask more questions.

“How soon do you think you will find her?”

“Do you suspect foul play?”

“*Komisarz* Klusek is in charge of the investigation. You may direct your questions to him.” Dyka then stepped down.

Klusek had not expected this. He walked up to the very recently vacated lectern.

“*Komisarz* Klusek, do you suspect drugs or gang violence?”

“It would be premature...”

“What will you do that will be different to how the case has been handled?”

“I cannot tell you as it might compromise the investigation. Now you must excuse me, thank you.” Klusek left the lectern.

“Will you be searching the lakes in Starachowice?”

A chill went through Klusek. He turned to face the reporter.

“I cannot give details of what I plan to do at this stage.” He left the room ignoring further questions being asked of him.

Klusek spent the remainder of the afternoon and a very late night studying the police docket and formulating a strategy. The first thing he needed to do was to check on how Maciek was progressing, then he wanted to visit Kasia’s home. Maciek’s report said very little about her domestic situation. He needed to interview the Barans for himself.

The next morning, Klusek stepped from his bath. Amazing how Mira always needed him most when he was least disposed to give. He unlocked the bathroom door and then began his toilette. She would come in now whilst he was shaving. In her mind he was a captive audience. He filled the basin with three fingers of hot water and placed the soap into it. He left it for a while and then removed it. He rubbed it between his hands. It was a new brand

of soap and had the same odour as the air freshener atop the toilet cistern. A vaguely purple smell he associated with Mira's mother and the irritation of fluffy toilet seat covers that cause the lid to attempt bifurcation of the penis when lifted up from the seat. He raised lathered hands to his face.

"Pawel, did you hear me?"

"No, Mira," he lied.

"Well! What do you think?"

He rubbed the soap onto his face, down his cheeks in a sweeping motion, under his chin onto his neck and then delicately beneath his nostrils, and round his mouth.

"About what?" he asked. Picking up the razor and tapping it vigorously under the water onto the bottom of the basin. He shook it in short, quick shifts from side to side to dislodge old residue. He removed it from the water and flicked it twice against the side of the basin. It made a spitting sound.

"She needs to get rid of those cats. The child is obviously allergic to cats, maybe even asthmatic. Those cats are everywhere. When you go into her flat they sit on the top of the sofa above your head. They sleep where you want to sit. They stalk you. You saw it for yourself. Now she is talking about taking those cats with them to England."

Of course they stalk you woman, cats are attracted to those most afraid of them, he thought. But what he said was. "I know, I know."

"You know what?"

Her voice rose in tempo and he refrained from applying the razor to the skin below his left sideburn, to avoid being distracted and cutting himself. She stood close behind making him feel ill at ease.

"But what can we do? It's her house, her baby, and her cats. Besides, Krzysztof is a sensible guy," he said.

"You must talk to her, Pawel. She must get rid of those cats. One day they will smother that child. Then its death will be your guilt."

"Of course, Mira, I will talk to her."

She left the bathroom. Klusek washed the now dried lather off his face and began the procedure again. Would he tell his daughter about her mother's persistent neuroses? Probably he would not. He lathered again and shaved. Then he rinsed his face and wiped



it dry. He brushed his teeth, paying particular attention to a rear molar wedged close to the back of his jaw. It irritated him because he felt that he could never clean it properly. He left the bathroom and immediately returned to it because he thought he had not pulled the plug chain to let the water out of the bath. The bath was empty.

Klusek left the house without eating breakfast and took the Warsaw road out of Kielce until he reached the Skarzysko Kaminiera turnoff where he turned right. He drove along the 42 through forested land all the way to the town of Skarzysko Kaminiera and then through farmland as he continued towards Wachock and Starachowice. Thick frost covered the countryside, where green grass was appearing from under the thaw. To his left the Kaminiera River and its surrounding wetlands became visible. Lake Pasternik came into view and beyond it the town of Starachowice. He noted a few old-timers hunched over their fishing rods as he motored past the lake. He continued along until he reached Statoi and then glided onto Wyszynskiego that took him to the farthest outskirts of the town to the east. He turned into Długa and drove until the forest appeared to his right. At the turnoff to Krancowa, the road that led to the pork processing plant where Kasia's father worked, he pulled up when he came upon a group of policemen milling around their vehicles. He noted that there was an Outside Broadcast van from the one of the regional television stations, Studio Telewizji Kablowej, parked on the other side of the road.

Klusek found *Inspektor* Maciek Skora with a dog team in the forest about a kilometre from the road talking to a well-dressed middle-aged man.

Maciek excused himself and steered Klusek aside.

"Anything to report?" Klusek asked.

"Not a trace." Maciek turned and introduced the stranger.

"This is *pan* Baran, Kasia's father." Klusek shook his hand. "*Komisarz* Klusek is heading the investigation.

So, Dyka had spoken to Maciek already, thought Klusek.

"I would like to speak with you and your wife when it is convenient," Klusek said.

"It would be better to speak to my wife, she is at home now," the man said. "She is closer to our daughter than I am. I will stay here and look for Kasia." It was obvious that he thought more interviews with the police would be a waste of time, and Klusek left it at that.

Klusek drew Maciek to one side and pulled out a map of the town.

“Which areas have you covered?”

Maciek took out a pencil and began to mark the chart.

“We began our search nearest her house, here around Miodowa, the suburb of Wanacja. Then we expanded the search out to *Os. Poludnie*, *Os. Lubianka*, Hoholowka, Kolonijki, and *Os. Trzech Krzyzy*, we found nothing. We have searched all the parks, starting with Miejski, the main one, of course.”

It was the “of course” that caught Klusek’s attention. Miejski was the farthest park from where Kasia lived. But he said nothing. “We have done a brief search with dogs in the forests around the lakes, *Zalew Pasternik*, *Zalew Lubianka*, and *Zalew Paichy* and the wetlands along the Kamienna River, again nothing. Now we are probing the surrounding forests in all directions, towards Wachock, Brody, Pawlow, and here.”

It was a pony show on Klusek’s behalf, but he made an attempt to demonstrate that he was considering the situation. Maciek would buy into his directives. He was someone Klusek termed a boy scout, always rushing into challenges.

“Focus your search more,” Klusek, indicated on the map, “here, this area around *Zalew Paichy*, close to the girl’s home.” He looked at Maciek. “Dammit! It’s closer to where she lives. We need to start concentrating the search. It makes more sense, unless we get more manpower.” Klusek spat onto the ground. He shrugged and returned to his motorcar.

He drove back along *ul. Krancowa* and then skirted the town. He crossed the main road and drove up Miodowa. He stopped outside the complex where the Barans lived.

A stout woman in her middle forties let Klusek in the front door. She led him to a small dining room table.

“Would you like some tea or coffee?”

“A little water, please, if you do not mind, *pani* Baran.”

“That is fine.”

“I spoke briefly with your husband, he said you would be here, said I should talk with you.”

“Yes, he is with the search party. If he wasn’t doing something active like that at a time like now, he would be going out of his mind.”

"I see." Klusek made a mental note of everything he observed in the house. He wondered if some of the items, not the unsophisticated regional Polish stuff, but the sophisticated pieces, came from a dealer in antiques that the family might know personally. Otherwise, everything about the house and its furnishings seemed to match what he already knew about the Barans. They were a middle-class family. The husband was a senior manager at Constar, the pork processing plant on the outskirts of Starachowice. It was a good company, a good Polish concern.

"*Pani*, I need to check a few details. Is that okay with you?"

"Yes, anything, if it will help to find her."

"In your statement you said that you realised she was missing on the morning of the tenth of April, exactly four days ago?"

"Yes, we found her room empty but she had taken nothing with her, and her little car was still in the driveway. We thought she might have gone to the shops, but when we didn't hear from her for a whole day, we became worried and telephoned the police. They could do nothing until she was missing for twenty-four hours." The woman began to sob in an inosculate way. It was that it was barely audible that played on Klusek's nerves.

"*Tak, pani Baran. Bardzo mi przykro*, but that is the procedure." Klusek moved to sit beside her. "*Przykro mi, przykro mi*," he offered her water that he poured from the pitcher into a little tumbler. He noticed that the pitcher was very old, an antique, and wondered about that too.

The woman composed herself with a steeling of her features so discordant with the insides that Klusek wondered at the fluttering that must be going on beneath the stout woman's breasts. He wondered in a morbid and vague kind of way at that line of tension between a person's interior disposition and their exterior countenance. Manipulate that line and you will get to the relevant information, the truth you want.

"*Przepraszam pani*, may I look at Katarszina's bedroom now?" The woman looked at him as if he committed irreverence. Then she averted her gaze down into the palms of her hands. Klusek looked away and his eyes rested on a framed butterfly hanging on the wall behind. Its wings spread outwards were black with two cobalt blue eyes in the centre of each. It was an exotic butterfly that Klusek could not identify. She placed her hands flat on the table. Klusek noticed a cavity between palms and tabletop. Arthritis, he thought.

“*Proszę pani?*” Klusek insisted.

“Yes...yes of course.” The small hope expressed by that cavity, mounded by palms over the flat table, lost conviction. She wrung her hands one through the other. Then she rose and led the way up the narrow staircase.

Kasia’s room was the first at the top of the stairs and was separated by the upstairs bathroom from the main bedroom. Klusek’s immediate impression was that it looked like a room for visitors, a room that a hostess did not really try to make homely or even a part of the same house.

“*Pani*, has her room always been like this?”

“No it hasn’t.” The woman sat on the bed. “This room used to be filled with the most exquisite lace, given to her by my mother. Her grandmother taught her how to do the finest lacework. Kasia even used to collect antique lace when she could afford it. The truth of it is in the effort put into it, she always used to say. I know what she meant, *pan* Klusek. I just did not know how to show her that I knew.”

The woman began to sob again and Klusek let her get it out of her system. She dried her eyes, finally, and continued. “When she went to university the lace went, but the ornaments stayed. She also had a lot of ornaments, you know. Pretty things, old some of them too. I don’t know what she did with it all, with any of it. She got rid of everything, except for the bronze ballerina, but it’s not here now. Which is very strange because I know it was here the day before she left. I remember dusting it. It stood on that shelf above her bed. A beautiful thing, it pirouetted and its arms moved.”

“You think she took it with her?”

“She must have. I have looked everywhere for it. It’s nowhere in this house.” Klusek made a note in his pocketbook.

“*Pani* Baran, do you have any photographs of this object?”

“Yes, I think that there is one of her holding it. It was a graduation present given to her by our neighbour’s daughter, Gosia. I will look through the photograph albums.” But, before she left the room she spoke further.

“After the accident Kasia took down most of her decorations, replaced even her new bedding with these old blankets that you see here. I thought it had something to do with her going to College, you know, how being a student changes young people. But now, I just

don't know anymore."

Klusek understood that she needed to explain that the bareness of the girl's room was no oversight on her behalf.

"Before you leave, *pani*, you said she had an accident. Tell me about this accident?"

"It was a motorcar collision in Mostki. She was taking that route to Kielce. She shouldn't have, not during winter. I told her, take the 42 through Skarzysko and go on the freeway, but she said it would be all right because her friend Emilian was with her, and he never drove very fast anyway.

"Her boyfriend?" Klusek asked.

"Yes, I suppose he was."

"Please, continue."

"They were going to visit the forest, near Kielce. I can't think why, it was the middle of winter. As it turned out, her friend did drive too fast. You know the saying, 'available young men always drive too fast'. He died in the accident. She suffered a severe concussion and was in hospital for three weeks."

"Which hospital was she taken to?"

"The main one here in Starachowice, Szpital Miejski on *ulicia* Radomska."

"Do you know who her doctor was?"

"Yes, it was surgeon Borowiec."

"*Pani*, may I have a list of all her friends as well?"

"Yes, I have it downstairs. I gave it to *Inspektor* Maciek Skora already."

"I would like it anyway. *Pani*, now were there any other people that she was friendly with, can you think?"

"Well, there was the English teacher, Alan and his girlfriend Justina, she is a Polish girl. Kasia used to attend the English language school, here, before she went to Krakow. But that was before this teacher, Alan, taught there. In fact it was the two of them that helped her when she had her motorcar accident. That's where she met them. There is Malgorzata, Gosia, who lives next door. Kasia doesn't see much of her friends anymore. I don't know too much about people she knows at university, she never speaks about them."

Klusek wrote these details into a small notebook.

"Thank you, *pani* Baran. Off-hand, Is there anything else you can think of that might

help us?"

"I don't know, but I will try." Klusek handed her his card.

"If you do, please call me."

She sighed.

"Yes, if I think of anything, I will let you know. I have tried so hard, but," she shook her head, "nothing."

"*Przepraszam pani*," Klusek looked at the woman, "but might I spend a little time here on my own?"

"I suppose..."

"I will leave everything exactly as she left it."

"Yes, that will be fine, I think. I will look for the photograph, the one where she is holding the little figurine. And oh!" she said as she held her hand to her head.

"And the list of her friends, *prosze pani*," Klusek said.

"Yes, of course, the list." The woman returned downstairs.

Klusek sat on the bed trying to gain a sense of the person who inhabited this space. The walls were bare, yet he could see the marks where blue-tack once affixed posters. When his own daughter had been a teenager her room was full of posters, so-called musicians who played heavy metal music. When she was young, his daughter's room was pink and filled with the things girls collect, small ornaments, keepsakes, placed neatly on shelves. A lot of those were banished as she grew older, but this girl's room?

The sense of a young woman was something he did not feel at all. Where was the ever-lingering odour of deodorant, nail varnish, Cutex? Where was the girl's make-up? He was not looking for expensive products, anything even. The Barans were not poor people. This was a modest, but very middle class home. Kasia lived here in this space, but for Klusek there was no feeling that she possessed it.

He opened the bedroom cupboard. Inside were clothes, typical for a student, but all with a very slight coating of mildew. Her shoes and boots too, some of the nicer pairs even, covered with the same. In the back corner of the cupboard was a sealed brown cardboard box. He took the penknife that he kept on his key ring and cut it open. The contents were what looked like going-out clothes; short skirts, almost see through blouses, sexy tops that girls wore to a party. These were fairly new, he thought. Why would she have packed

them away in a box?

*Pani* Baran interrupted him with the list of her friends. He could see by her expression that she was upset he had opened the box of clothing. Yet, she said nothing. She held the small and slightly crumpled hope out towards him along with a photograph. It showed a pretty and smiling girl holding a bronze ballerina carefully in both hands. The girl in the photograph held it next to her cheek. Klusek examined the figurine. The bronze dancer stood on the tip of her toe on a stage, the other leg raised, one arm horizontal to her body and the other above her head beneath a pointed canopy. Thus she pirouetted when the lever was manipulated. Klusek traced the extended forefinger of the girl in the picture to determine where the lever was located.

"It is a Wiener Bronze," the girl's mother said, "quite collectable."

Klusek placed the photograph into his pocket notebook.

"*Pani* Baran," he said. "Tell me about your daughter?"

"I'll show you."

The woman stepped into the passage. Klusek followed her. She opened a linen cupboard. She took out an old shoebox and pushed the door to. Back in the room they sat on the bed. She opened the box and removed piles of photographs in their sleeves.

"This is my *Kasia*, *pan* Klusek. She was the best young ballerina in the Swietokrzyskie region." She showed Klusek photograph after photograph depicting the girl at different ages. Klusek sat in silence letting her speak. "She won many trophies for her dancing. We used to display them on the sideboard, but when she went to university she protested and made us pack them away. We had hoped..."

"Yes *pani*?"

"We hoped that she would have gone to dance college in Warsaw. But she wouldn't, even though she was offered a scholarship there. It is very hard to get into, you know. But no, she wanted to go to Krakow."

"I understand, *pani*. I also have a daughter. They can disappoint.... But anything you can tell me..."

"If it will help to find my little *tancerz*," she said.

When they returned downstairs, the woman went to the sideboard and removed a small printed card bearing the image of the Madonna and Child. She handed this to Klusek.

“Trust in them, *Komisarz*, to find her.”

Superstition, thought Klusek. But he placed the small icon carefully in his wallet.

After leaving the Barans', Klusek parked his car at Statoil, where Miodowa joins the main road. He looked out across Starachowice. Which way? He thought. What he needed was some indication of the direction she might have gone off in. Nobody had seen her walking. Anyway if she were going far then she would have taken her car, surely.

Wherever she was, he did not think she was still on any of the roads. Her photo was in all the local newspapers and on flyers that were being distributed. The police had shown photocopies of her image to thousands of people now and a police hotline had been set up to answer calls concerning her whereabouts. The local television station repeatedly broadcast a picture of her and a request for information. Where are you, Kasia, he thought?



## Chapter 4

Alan had first met Justina in a small bar in *Plac Szczepanski*, a street about a hundred metres off the main square, the *Rynek Główny* in Krakow. He was drinking with Tom before his friend returned to Skarzysko to teach a private student that afternoon.

There was an impressionist style mural on the wall, where they sat on rickety little oak chairs over a table that was not yet cleared of the remains of coffee and tea left by the previous patrons.

There was an inner courtyard that was draped with what looked like camouflage netting. It seemed to be a student hangout, even though most students drank in the bars in Kaziemierz to avoid the tourists.

Justina was wearing a white blouse with blue patterned flowers on it. Alan noticed an old ornate brooch that she wore higher on her shoulder rather than nearer the slope of her breast. This made her seem formal rather than glamorous. Shoulder length red hair precisely coffered inwards at the ends rested on a crisp white jacket, part of a matching suit.

She looked perfect, in fact too perfect and at first he was not drawn to her as she sat primly on her chair and sipped a glass of wine in a seemingly incurious way. At the time he did not realise that she was waiting for people, not once did she glance in the direction of the door to which her back was turned.

Later when her friends joined her, there was a young boy of about six with them who tried to ride his new bicycle in the bar. Alan stopped him from falling. It was an instinct, a reaction without thought or intent, which produced an invitation for him to join them at their table.

Today, looking from his window Alan sees a patch of sunlight. In it stands a red brick house. But last winter after the first falls, white snow had glistened on its roof. The snow was so very white that it looked faux. A row of conifers sagged, laden with dollops of snow that the landlady decorated with coloured lights over Christmas. A ubiquitous plastic bag blew past the face of the house and an equally ever-present scurrying dog made off down the road towards the intersection by the petrol station. He remembered the dog because he did not rate its chances of survival very high. Indeed that next day, as he walked to the bus stop beside the petrol station, he came across its stiff little body laid out

on the side of the road. It remained there frozen for a few days until someone employed by the council disposed of it.

That day he had been waiting for Iwona, who taught him Polish every Friday from twelve o'clock to one thirty in the afternoon. It was unusual because she was late. Iwona was never late.

He was standing near the little gate that he had just unlocked and was staring down the road in the direction from which he expected her to come. An icy wind blew from the south and he turned his head away so that it would not blow into his hood. He stuffed bare hands into thick pockets and stamped his feet to keep the circulation going.

By twelve thirty that afternoon Iwona was still not there. He locked the gate and was about to return to his flat when a long red coat and a pair of ruby brown boots with pointed toes, caught his attention. Although he was not able to see her face he knew immediately that it was Justina by the particular way she stepped along the icy path. He could always recognise the individual motion of her walk even from afar. He looked towards her at first not knowing how to react. She stopped and he knew she was feeling equally ill at ease. This reassured him.

He raised his hand in acknowledgment before she could disappear down a side-path, one of many that dissect the blocks of flats in this area. Presently, she came over. He unlocked the gate again and stepped out onto the pavement. They embraced, but it was a deliberate hug.

"Whom are you waiting for?" she asked.

"Oh, only Iwona," he answered. "She's teaching me Polish now." There was a dig in the way he said this because Justina used to be his Polish teacher - Polish teacher and lover - before she went off with Tom.

"How is Tom?" he asked.

"I haven't seen him for a while." There was defensiveness in the way she said this.

"I'm sorry." He did not mean it. He apologised because she was unhappy.

"He just stopped calling, no explanations, nothing, no *blah blah blah*."

This was a joke between them. When he first started teaching Justina, English, whenever she could not think of how to say something, she would shake her head from side to side and say, '*blah blah blah*.' They both smiled.

“Have you heard from him? Do you know how he is?”

“I don’t know, Justina. I haven’t heard from Tom since you and he got together, and not since then either.” There was a bite in the way he said this and he immediately regretted it.

“Oh!” She looked sad.

“I’m sorry.” He turned away, and then turned back. He asked her to come in for some tea. She hesitated,

“I don’t know if that’s a good idea.”

“Come on,” he insisted.

They walked up the stairs past the landlord and his wife, who came out to see who was with him. They lived in the apartment below.

“*Czesc!*” they called out with inquisitive expressions on their faces. He nodded cordially, but said nothing.

“They will wonder what I’m doing back here,” said Justina, who was half hidden behind him as they walked upstairs.

“Let them,” he said as he unlocked the door. They entered the flat and he put the kettle on.

“*Kawa?*” he offered.

“*Herbata, prosze,*” she said. He made the tea and sat opposite her on a dining room chair.

“Tell me about Tom?” He really wanted to know about him. They were good friends before things changed.

“There is nothing to tell, we were together and now we are not.”

“But there must be a reason why?” She tried to sip her tea, but it was too hot. So instead, she blew into the cup.

“*Blah blah blah!*” Justina also said this when she wanted to avoid an awkward question.

“Forget the tea.” He fetched a bottle of Metropolitan Vodka from the cupboard. He also mixed some strawberry cordial for her. He poured a glass each and they drank. Her face screwed up and he gave her the sweet cordial to kill the severity of the vodka.

By four o’clock it was dark outside. Alan lit a few candles. They drank vodka, silently enjoying the warmth of the thing. He watched her illuminated in the flickering light of the candle, wondered after exposed downy geometry. But for just a little while longer, his

need to find out what happened between her and Tom took precedence over reopening their intimacy. He needed to know that he was not going to be in for the recognizable high jump again. They finished the bottle and he held Justina in his arms.

“What really happened with you and Tom?” he asked after a little while. But she did not reply. Later he carried her to the bed and lay next to her. At some point his hand rested lightly between her thighs. She did not complain.

The next morning when they awoke he made her breakfast.

He did not want the night before to be faded by the pale morning.

“I’m going to Krakow for the long weekend; I’m leaving on Thursday afternoon. Would you like to come with me?”

“Yes, but are you sure it’s okay after everything?”

Say enough to leave enough to be said. He always tried to live by this motto. Saying nothing also works.

“Yes, I want you to come.”

“Then I will.” She smiled.

After she was gone, however, it bothered him how easy it was for their old love to be rekindled.

It was on that trip to Krakow that they helped Kasia, who had been in a motorcar accident.

They had turned off the road leading to Skarzysko and headed towards Mostki and Suchedniow. He liked the more scenic route and was in no particular hurry. He checked the speedometer and was only doing about forty. He braked to round a corner. In front of them a little orange Fiat 125 did the same, except something was wrong. The back of the car began to slide to the left, across the centre of the road. Ahead there was a blind rise and a brand new Renault saloon belted over the top of it and collided with the side of the little Fiat. Alan slammed on the brakes and brought the car to a stop.

The boy driving the orange Fiat was dead. He ran to the passenger side and managed to force open the door. The girl, whose name was Kasia, as they were later to learn, was unconscious but alive. Leaving Justina to watch over her, he returned to their car to get his

mobile so that Justina could telephone for an ambulance. It came after about twenty minutes and took the girl to hospital.

Later, when visiting her in hospital, Justina had insisted they take her flowers. They were surprised to see Tom there. And now, a policeman from Kielce, a *Komisarz* Klusek, wanted to interview him about Kasia. He needed to speak with Justina. But she would only be home from work at five and as always her mobile phone was not switched on.

He checked his watch; it was three-thirty. He threw on an overcoat and walked down the stairs of the apartment and out of the building. He noted that the horse that was ploughing the land surrounding the newly built red brick house across the road was now tethered beside an old wooden shed. He walked across the patch of grass, of the lightest shade of green, and out of the cast iron front gate, bordered on each side by a row of tall conifers. He turned right onto 6-go Wrzesnia and then a few metres beyond to the corner, to the little pub where he planned to meet with his friend, Jan, the poet from Itza.

Since hearing of the disappearance of Kasia, Alan had been trying to imagine where she might be. Although imagination is necessary where the setting is so very grey and so very green, descriptions of forests and concrete community blocks serve no purpose except as background. The human drama is where the colour is. The colour that is lost gloves appearing from the snow are the real flowers impregnated with the odour of little hands in all their sticky daily routine. The colour of people travelling by bus or train, the colour of a married woman grocery shopping with her children, the colour of men having a drink too many, early in the day, the colour of a young virgin. Alan did not know what went on behind closed doors in Polish homes. He was an outsider to the intricacies of these dramas.

"Perhaps this Kasia has run off with an Englishman - God forbid, a German," Jan the poet from Itza shrugged his shoulders at Alan. "Who knows?"

"She didn't strike me as the type."

"But you said yourself she was fucking this other English teacher. And how old was she when she was doing that?"

"I don't know that for certain. There was something innocent about her," Alan said.

"Innocent my arse, she only looked innocent because she was so young, and of course,

pretty. Those are the ones you can trust the least, the innocent looking sluts. Give me a bitch that looks like a bitch and I know what I'm getting.

"I have this student Bozena, early thirties, she looks like a tart, her skirts are always a little too short and she plasters her face with make-up. But, she is happily married with children and plays the violin for a living. Get to know her and she is truly naïve."

"Then she is the exception that proves the rule. Now, are you having another?"

"No, I'm meeting this policeman and then I've got to teach, just one class."

"Alan," the poet said, narrowing his eyes and lowering his voice.

"Yes, Jan."

"Be careful what you say to this policeman. He is a *Komisarz*, in your language a Superintendent, not one of those jack-booted monkeys you see directing traffic."

Jan had not been helpful at all, thought Alan.

Klusek had no particular reason for interviewing the foreigners first, apart from an inherent suspicion of them. He did not like these people living in Poland. He rang the doorbell and heard its buzz above him in the interior of the building. There was no reply. He rang again, leaning on the thing this time.

"Hang on!" called a man behind him, who opened the wrought-iron gate that led into the garden.

"Mr. Hicks?" Klusek said.

"Yes!" Alan replied.

"I am *Komisarz* Pawel Klusek of the Kielce police." He showed the man his badge.

Alan unlocked the door and led the way up the stairs.

"I have to be at work at three o'clock, so I only have half an hour."

Klusek made no reply as he followed him upstairs.

"Please sit down." Alan indicated a choice between a settee and a black iron frame chair. Klusek chose the settee. "Would you like some tea?"

"Yes, thank you."

"How do you take it?"

"The German way, with milk no sugar, please."

The man brought two cups of tea over and handed one to Klusek.

"I am investigating the disappearance of the young woman, Katarzyna Baran. We are interviewing everyone who knew her. Really we are trying to find anything that might help us find her."

"Yes, of course, I understand. But I haven't seen her for some time."

"How did you come to meet her? I believe it wasn't that long ago."

"No it wasn't. Justina, my girlfriend, and I helped her when she was in a motorcar accident. It was at the time of the first real snow falls. Prime Minister Miller had just given his speech about feeding the ducks over winter. Afterwards, well, we were acquainted for a while, but lately we haven't seen anything of her."

"I have ascertained that she was in hospital for two weeks."

"Yes, about that long."

"Tell me about the accident?"

Alan related the events of that day to him.

"After a few days we visited her."

"I see."

"We became sort of friends."

"You say she stopped calling. Do you know why?"

"No, I don't."

"Did you notice anything different about her behaviour?"

"Some say she changed."

"How?" he asked.

"They say she became quite reclusive."

"Who told you she became a recluse?"

"What do you mean?"

"You said she stopped calling, so somebody else must have told you about her change in behaviour."

"Oh, I see. Well... her friends... I suppose."

Klusek was becoming impatient.

"Which friends?" he asked.

"Come to think of it, it was one of my students. Let me think. Of course, it was Gosia, an upper-level student of mine. She mentioned something about how strange Kasia became

after the accident, but she would say no more. Her family live close to the Barans, you know.”

“Can I have her full name, please?”

“Malgorzata Dabrowski,” Alan said.

Klusek wrote the name into his pocketbook.

“And her address?”

“I’m not sure, but I think she lives in the same complex as the Barans.”

“Thank you.”

“When was the last time you saw her?”

“Over a month ago,” Alan said.

“I see, and you haven’t heard from her since?”

“No.”

“Not even by telephone?”

“No, nothing at all,” he said.

“You, or your girlfriend, did not try to contact her?”

“No, I have been quite busy. As for Justina, I don’t know, you’d have to ask her yourself. Anyway, I don’t see how this is helpful. I haven’t seen her, or heard from her, or been in contact with her for a month at least.”

“So you have no idea what might have brought about this strange behaviour besides the accident?”

“No, I don’t.”

Klusek thought for a while. There was something this man was not telling him. He prepared to take his leave.

“If you think of anything else that might help, you will inform me?”

“Yes.”

“Here is my card.” He handed Alan the card and descended the stairs. “Oh! I will need to speak to your girlfriend, Justina...?”

“Schmallenberg,” Alan said.

“How can I contact her?”

Alan gave Klusek her mobile phone number.

After the policeman left, Alan threw language books and marked tests into his haversack,



slung it on his shoulder and hurriedly locked the door. He walked out the front gate and down to the stop street. There he turned right and headed down 6-go Wrzesnia to the bus stop where he took the number 11 bus to work. It turned left past the petrol station and entered the town of Starachowice, skirting *Zalew Pasternik*. It passed through the railway crossing, where he waited ten minutes for an engine to make its way through on towards Skarzysko.

Out of curiosity, Iwona opened the small refrigerator. There was a litre of fresh milk. On the counter beside the sink were teabags, coffee and sugar, the *pensionat* catered for foreign guests, as they were the only people who put sugar in their tea. Out of season, the mountain town of Zakopane was quite reasonably priced; Iwona thought when she booked in.

Her small room, one of two attic rooms had a view of Gerlach Peak and she looked forward to walks in the spruce woodlands that the tourism brochure, opened before her, said reaches an altitude of 6300 feet. She doubted if she would venture as high as the alpine level above that for she felt quite content with hiking in the woodlands and enjoying the mountain air.

She would take the occasional meal at one of the restaurants along the main thoroughfare, but, for the most part she would eat breakfast and lunch at the *pensionat*, and dinner she could buy from the grocery store she had seen at the fork of the road leading to the main thoroughfare in the centre of the town.

Iwona was careful not to tell anyone of her plans to come here. She requested her leave that was due and taken a week all for herself. She told no one where she was going, not her colleagues at work, not her father who was at home in the flat they shared.

She picked up her toiletry bag and a change of clothing and stepped into the little bathroom. She undressed and took a shower. Unfortunately, the water was not hot enough and what she envisioned as being a long luxurious rinse became a somewhat quicker scramble to clean and get out before the hot water disappeared altogether. When she went downstairs a little later she stopped at reception to complain about the lack of hot water. A party made up of two couples were in a row with the owner's wife over a discrepancy concerning their bill. Iwona stepped into the dining area, a converted basement, and sat at

a table beneath the slit of a window. From this subterranean place, she stared up through the shrubs that grew on the outside at a grey sky, forcing her mind to turn away from the voices, now much raised, that came from the reception area. Iwona wished she had brought the book she was reading downstairs with her.

After a while the owner's very young wife came into the dining area. As it was three in the afternoon, the woman offered Iwona tea, which Iwona accepted. When she brought the beverage over, Iwona mentioned the lack of hot water in her room. The owner's wife promised to speak to her husband about the problem. This was not the kind of answer she expected. Surely the woman could adjust the heat settings herself? However, she kept her own counsel and thanked her anyway.

She finished the tea and as the threat of rain seemed to have passed, decided to walk into the town. She stepped out of the grounds of the *pensionat* and noted that there was a Swiss restaurant across the gravel road. Perhaps she would stop there one evening for dinner. It certainly was convenient. She walked along the gravel road past houses, three and four stories high, all with dormer windows in their attics. This architecture was typical of the southern highlands of Poland, she thought. Then she turned and walked along the pavement beside the tarred road and into the centre of Zakopane.

She eschewed the restaurants serving foreign cuisine, for she was not in the mood for anything exotic, and stopped at a typically Polish one filled with rough-hewn heavy timber tables and benches. A friendly waitress came over and asked her what she would like. As it was now almost five o'clock, she ordered pork stuffed with cheese and a glass of red wine. Iwona despised beer.

Had she been right to come here without telling Tom? What was it that prompted her decision? This was what was on her mind. The fact that he aspired to be a small time farmer, she felt that was part of it. The photograph of that girl was disturbing. She came across it quite by accident whilst tidying Tom's bedroom. She recognised the girl in it. It was Kasia Baran, who was a former student of hers at Gymnasium. She had left Tom's cottage and not seen him since. Or was there more to her reason? Something about him that she could not quite put her finger on, something that she very much did not like. Not a dislike of him, but of something about him, a dislike she had not felt when she first got to know him.

She finished her meal and ordered another glass of wine and then coffee. She paid the bill and walked back to the *pensionat*.

The other attic room across the landing was unoccupied, according to the owner's wife. This made Iwona quite happy. She walked up the long and narrow stairs to her room at the top. She opened the sleeper couch that was to be her bed and made it up with sheets, pillows and a thick duvet from the linen cupboard. Then she moved the table with the lamp on it closer so that she would be able to use the light to read. She pulled the window blinds shut and after doing her toilette got into bed. She found her bookmark and began to read. Before turning out the light she removed her rings and arranged them neatly on the table beside her.

## Chapter 5

I am unworthy and incapable of writing the life of a man so deserving of our imitation and all our veneration, and I would never have attempted it, were it not for the eager desire of the clergy of Gniezno and the unanimous request of the bishops. (Marcus XX)

Piotrek read and re-read the passage written by Marcus See of Gniezno. Such a modest disclaimer, coming from an ordinary priest, might be convincing; penned by the See of Gniezno, it rang false to him.

It was the recently discovered Polish texts by Jaroslaw, also of Gniezno, that inspired Piotrek to question the historical accuracy of the Latin manuscript.

The Slavonic text was written in the tradition of Methodius and Cyril by a descendent of these Polish missionaries. They did not hold with the abolishment of the Slavonic liturgy by the papacy after the death of Methodius and continued on with their work in Poland.

The Jaroslaw manuscript purported that Adalbert came into contact with this group when he journeyed north to do missionary work. It spoke of a shrine in the Swietokrzyskie Mountains that these early followers erected after his death.

The Holy Cross Mountains, thought Piotrek, was a place where the most ancient of Polish manuscripts were discovered, the Kazania Swietokrzyskie being the oldest. It made sense that Jaroslaw's 'Legenda Adalbert' should come from the Holy Cross. But what truly excited him was the idea of finding an actual shrine in those mountains. Something tangible belonging to a very early and authentically Polish group of Christians would give invaluable insight into the nature and quality of Polish Christianity. It would help scholars to better understand the development of Christianity in Poland and all that was uniquely Polish about it.

Piotrek placed the copy of the Marcus document on the table beside his bed with mild disdain.

The image that constantly ignited Piotrek's imagination was of the effigy of Adalbert that Jaroslaw described in the Legenda Adalbert. Here he depicted the Saint, carved in marble,

with both arms outstretched. This was an unusual rendering for a saint and although Piotrek was unsure of the reason why they represented him this way, the very uniqueness of it he found enigmatic. He felt there was something distinctly communal in this portrayal that was in keeping with the character of the Jaroslaw community. Piotrek's imagination returned again and again to this image with a sense of elation. As if it were the prize that motivated him.

There was a knock at the door and he stood to open it.

"Your dinner sir," the night porter said as he deposited the tray onto the little table. He whipped off the lid of the tureen, "Bonito Polonaise with vegetables, sir," he said.

"Thank you," Piotrek said and gave him a few zlotys.

Piotrek sat at the table and tried to continue reading as he ate, but his mind kept wandering. Earlier he drank a glass of wine with Isaac. They chatted about many things, but avoided the subject of Ola or the confession by Piotrek's cousin, Sylwester. That seemed to have become an unspoken rule between them now.

Tomorrow he would be returning to Wachock. He had enjoyed his stay at Alef, but looked forward to getting back to the priory. He missed the regularity of everything when he was away.

After supper, he set his alarm clock for six the next morning as he was taking the seven o'clock train back to Wachock. He stood up to close the curtains. Down in the street below, three young people, remnants of the student juvenalia that rocked the Stare Miasto that day, made their way from one bar to the next. Their costumes, a little worse for wear, still discernable: a bumblebee, a fairy, and the grim reaper.

Isaac had driven out to Koslow and staked out the building where Sylwester lived. As luck would have it, he did not have to wait very long before Sylwester and another man emerged from the block of flats carrying boxes. Isaac recognised the larger of the two as being Sylwester, unmistakably the same bully from the school playground all those years ago. They packed the boxes into the boot of a motorcar.

Isaac continued to watch Sylwester and the stranger through his rear view mirror. He was parked so that this gave him a good view of the entrance to the building.

"That seems correct, *dziekuje*, its fine," he heard the man say as he walked around the

new car, admiring each part of it, stroking the panels before getting inside. “You’ve filled the boxes properly?” he called to Sylwester.

“Yes,” said Sylwester, who wore a blue polyester suit with big plastic buttons, before the man drove off in his new Skoda Octavia.

“I have,” Isaac heard him call out, but the driver did not wait for his answer.

Isaac watched Sylwester walk to the shop and then back to the flat carrying groceries and beer. He watched the lights go on and from where he stood could see the man moving about through the second floor window. Much later, Isaac watched the lights in the flat go out. Then he drove back to Krakow to the hotel.

He warmed a plate of food left in his apartment by room service and began to eat. A cold wind blew in through the open window and he rose to shut it. He paused there and looked down at the empty street below him as rain began to fall, soft at first and then harder, finally in a torrent. Filling the gutters to overflowing, it poured down onto the ground. He slammed the shutter. He tried to direct his thoughts to the duties that would occupy him the next day, but he was too distracted.

Finally, he slumped onto the couch, letting his mind wander back. He tried to visualise his cousin, Ola, attempted to remember things that time had caused him to forget. Her pink dress blew in the wind. Over it she wore a thin grey jersey. This was a long time ago. There was a look of concern on her face brought on by some shadow, a dark cloud.

“Every cloud has a silver lining,” his Uncle Singer had said. He said this to Ola. Isaac was present, at the time, but did not understand. He was not part of the conversation. He was too young.

Then he recalled the way his uncle would speak endlessly about the massacre, convinced that it was a conspiracy. And in Isaac’s mind his face grew larger, he talked louder, always with that look of absolute certainty. The look now terrified him with its consequences. Isaac opened his eyes. He needed to speak with his cousin, Joanna.

After a fitful sleep, Isaac woke up early the next morning. He packed a small bag and called the night manager.

“Szczepon, I have to leave for Warsaw.... Yes, cancel my appointments and if you could

stick around until I get back.... It will probably be quite late.”

The drive to Warsaw, though long, was uneventful, and by ten that morning he was turning into the car park at Warsaw International Airport.

He entered the main terminal building and scanned the LOT counters that were on the left. He spotted Joanna, and waved. Then he sat at the airport café and ordered a cup of coffee. A little later Joanna joined him.

“I only have five minutes,” she said as she sat down. “What brings you to Warsaw?”

“Oh, this and that, you know.”

“It’s good to see you, Isaac,” she said and squeezed his hand. “But really, why are you here?”

“I need to talk to you about Ola.”

“Ola! Why?”

“Some new information has come to light.”

“Well, what do you want to know?”

“When she disappeared, what were her interests, who was she involved with? You were older, maybe she told you things.”

“She didn’t. I know she worked for Hospice. That was illegal then. But the only dodgy person she was involved with was our great uncle Singer.”

“Uncle Singer, but he was harmless, surely?”

“You think so?”

“Well, don’t you?”

“Isaac, you must remember how he was.”

“I know he used to go on a lot.”

“The man was obsessed, unreasonable at times. I wouldn’t have put anything past him, including using Ola in some way, some dangerous way. Look, I have to get back.” She held forefinger and thumb to her ear, “Call me. Let me know what this is all about.”

Isaac left the airport irritated with his cousin. She was always in a rush. But she did cement the doubts he was beginning to have. He was not so sure he could trust his memories of that time, what he remembered of Singer Kalaman and his cousin Ola. Was his memory of them in some way superficial? Did he regard his uncle’s obsession in a quixotic way, when indeed it had the potential for far more serious consequences? He was

frightened by Singer's obsessive way as a child, perhaps as an adult it should still be frightening. Was the thought that occurred to him last night, about Ola and his uncle, closer to the truth than he would like to admit?

Ola's mother and father occupied the same flat in Kielce that they had when she was alive. Isaac did not visit them very often, but on his way back from Warsaw he stopped there. His aunt let him in.

"Who is it?" his uncle called from the sitting room.

"It's young Isaac come to visit us," she called. "You have been naughty staying away for so long," she said, wagging her finger in his face, she kissed him on his cheeks.

"Come, sit." She led him into the sitting room, where his uncle rose to greet him. "I will just put the kettle on, and I have some honey cakes," she said.

Isaac's uncle beckoned him to sit down.

"I have some news about Ola," Isaac said quietly to his uncle whilst his aunt was still in the kitchen.

"Ola," he said and turned his body more towards Isaac who sat in a chair to the left of him. "Have you found something out?"

"I think so. I need to ask you some questions."

"What have you found out, Isaac?"

"The name of a man who might know something about her disappearance."

He digested this information without visible emotion. This surprised Isaac.

"What information do you need?"

"I know that Ola was involved with Hospice when she went missing. Was there anything else or anyone else she was caught up with that would cause the SB, Bezpieka, to arrest her?"

"No, she was a quiet girl. She spent a lot of her free time with Uncle Singer, your great uncle, Singer Kalaman. But then so did you, although not your other cousin Joanna, as I recall. I don't think Joanna liked Singer very much."

"Look, how much do you know of what Uncle Singer was involved with?"

"The Kielce Pogrom. He was there, you know. He worked on his, so called, investigation of the thing. He had ties with Israel too and was in trouble over that on more



than a few occasions, but that couldn't have been the reason for Ola's disappearance. Otherwise he would be missing too. No it had something to do with Hospice. Hospice was banned back then. That was enough."

"I am not so sure about that," Isaac's aunt said as she placed the tray down and took a seat across from her husband. "After Ola disappeared, Singer could not look me in the eye, not properly, if you know what I mean. I always felt he wasn't telling us something. That he was keeping something from us. It was only a feeling, but a strong feeling."

"That is nonsense, woman, and I won't hear it. I won't hear it." Her husband rose to his feet. "Singer was my blood family and I will not believe he put Ola in any danger. Never!" The man left the room to return only when Isaac was leaving, so that he could say goodbye to him. Isaac finished a whole plate of the delicious honey cakes whilst he spoke with his aunt.

When Isaac got back to the hotel he began to strategise in earnest. What he needed was a way into the world of the security services of that time and not just through the Bezpieka files that the IPN, the Instytut Pamięcy Narodowej, had inherited.

The IPN was set up in 2000 to take over the archives of the communist security apparatus from the then security services. Prior to this, those files that were not destroyed by the Communists were accessible only on a limited basis-and in some cases not even to victims, researchers or journalists.

The post-Communist party still exerted great influence, and naturally, was not interested in revealing the truth about the recent past. Likewise, a great deal of activists of the pre-1989 political opposition decided that the archives, if opened, would reveal that many of them collaborated with the security apparatus.

However, the past kept resurfacing with attacks on well-known people by accusing them of having been agents in the security services. Without proper access to Bezpieka archives it was very difficult to prove or disprove these allegations. It was necessary to establish a special institution that would both study and promulgate knowledge of the communist security service.

As Isaac represented the work his uncle did to set up a memorial in Kielce to the pogrom in 1996, he was asked to be involved with the IPN when it was inaugurated in 2000.

But what Isaac needed was a contact person who was there at the time, someone senior and in the know who could fill him in on the context. He needed to find out more about the background before he made his next move with Sylwester. He picked up the telephone.

"Yes, his name is Professor Wladyslaw Szszesiak and he works at the University in Wroclaw. No, I don't know his number." He replaced the receiver.

A little later the receptionist telephoned him back with the number. He placed the call.

"*Halo,*" the voice said from the other end.

"Professor Szszesiak?"

"*Tak!*"

"My name is Isaac Kalamán. I was connected with the IPN."

"Yes, Isaac, I remember who you are."

"I would like to meet with you. I have a favour to ask."

"Certainly, when did you have in mind?"

"I was hoping soon, tomorrow?"

"About what time?"

"Say twelve, or twelve-thirty. I can come to the university."

The professor checked his diary.

"Twelve-thirty will be fine," he said. "I'm in room 206 in the Humanities Building."

"Tomorrow then, at twelve-thirty," Isaac said.

"*Dobrze. Do widzenia!*"

"*Do widzenia!*"

Isaac met with the historian at the appointed time in his office and came straight to the point.

"In 1984 my cousin, Alekszandra Kalamán, disappeared in Kraków. I have a lead concerning what might have happened to her, but it's not much to go on. I need someone who was in the know back then who can help me with information."

The academic thought for a while and then answered.

"Yes, there is a man, Wodek Miztal. He has helped me with quite a lot of my own researches. He was very high ranking back then. He is old and a bit cranky now, but still,

I will see if he will be willing to meet with you.”

“Thank you professor,” Isaac said and added. “Anytime you are in Krakow, you must stay at my hotel.”

“That is very kind of you, *dziekuje*. Have you had lunch?”

“No, I haven’t.”

“The cafeteria here is not bad, if you would like to join me,” the professor said.

The two men left the office and Isaac followed the professor down to the refectory.

“The thing about Wodek is that he is unpredictable,” the professor said whilst they ate. “He is a bit of a character, an original, if you know what I mean. He will help you if he likes you. Otherwise, he will string you along for the hell of it.”

After meeting with the English teacher, Klusek stopped for lunch at the tiny pub next to *Zalew* Pasternik where he ordered beer and a minestrone soup. Although the weather was cold, he sat outside and stared out over the lake. As he dipped his bread into the soup and ate, a wave of nostalgia swept over him. He was taken back to the time when he and Mira were newly married. The State had provided a small apartment for them complete with new furniture, made of a very shiny veneer and fabric of a scratchy but strong synthetic cloth. They even had a television. Feeling quite cosmopolitan, they had eaten marinara pasta and sipped on German wine from the PEWEX shop. They felt thoroughly modern. They felt as if they belonged to the future.

The mewling sound made by the young woman haunted him again.

When did that future die for him? Was it when he realised communism was everywhere. That it had become old and everywhere around him were the ruins of its relentless pursuit of modernity. That it created no longer newness but rather a functional cheapness in its environment. Bad furniture, badly constructed concrete community blocks, infantile expressions on the faces of adult men. Or was it when he began to be haunted by the sounds of pain made by its victims?

Strangely as the years, post-epoch, wore on, he felt an ever-growing nostalgia for those times. He remembered the bad things, but nevertheless longed for those days. The time before he and Mira grew estranged in the bedroom. The time before his attempts at charm and panache became stale to her.

Or was it always like that? Was the newness of their relationship always only a novelty rather than something truly new? Was what he remembered as being so wonderful, in reality merely nostalgia for the past? Was nostalgia the enemy of memory?

The waitress brought his soup and buttered rolls to the table. Klusek forced himself to concentrate on the inquiry before him. It seemed so impossible. Firstly, he could think of no motive for the girl going missing. She left on foot, yet nobody saw her. The only thing he did have was an empty room with most of her belongings packed away in the cupboard, a bed and a crucifix on the wall. And the missing bronze ballerina, did it mean anything? Klusek removed the photo of Kasia holding the little bronze dancer. Again he traced over the place where the lever was manipulated with his finger.

It seemed there was no contact with her friends for some time and her boyfriend was dead, if he was her boyfriend. Klusek believed he was. She was involved in a motorcar accident some months before, and Klusek wondered if the girl's withdrawal from her friends was due to this accident. He made a telephone call to the local hospital, Szpital Miejski, and made an appointment to see Surgeon Borowiec, who had treated her.

Klusek's thoughts then turned to the English teacher he had just questioned. There was something about him that he did not like. He had seemed glib. Could this have been because he was attempting to cover over something? Perhaps, yes, he felt strongly that the man was not telling him everything. Or maybe he, Klusek, was being prejudiced towards him. Still, he would like to find out more about the man. Find out more about his English friends, too.

Klusek paid for his meal. He then drove up Radomska, through the train crossing and past the bus station, empty save for Radio taxicabs. He continued up through the Special Economic Zone, where he passed STAR Trucks on the left. His mother had worked in that factory and he and his brother had spent their preschool years in the factory crèche. He skirted the main part of the town, then the sports grounds to the right and finally he entered the hospital grounds. He parked his car and went into the building.

"Yes, *pan* Klusek, it is possible that her head injuries could have brought about a change in her personality." He was seated across from the surgeon, Borowiec. "However, in such cases the family would notice such a phenomenon and bring it to our attention."

“But they might not necessarily attribute the change in personality to the head injury.”

“Yes, I understand that. The outlook of many people changes after a near death experience. Or due to grief. I believe she lost a friend in the accident. That can change a person. But those kinds of changes are to be expected. Not an overnight and complete change of character.”

“Ah, but that is the point, *pan* Borowiec, the change was extreme, yet gradual.” The surgeon sat back in his chair and stroked his long bushy moustache.

“You know, *pan* Klusek, it is unfortunate, but we haven’t the capacity to meet our demands. It is not always possible to provide the kind of long term post-operative care that is warranted in some cases. We followed normal procedures with the patient. That was all we could do.”

“So it is possible that this change in her personality might have been due to her head injury?”

The surgeon shrugged his shoulders.

“Anything is possible. But it doesn’t mean that it is so.”

“It is possible, yes or no?”

”Yes, it is possible.”

Right! Now I’m getting somewhere, thought Klusek as he drove back home to Kielce. He passed through Wachock and as he did every time he passed through the town that is the butt of all jokes, he craned his neck to see a glimpse of the monastery. Looking for patches of aged pink stone or copper roof, being Wachock’s only redeeming quality. But from this road it was enough only to be a glimmer of faint hope.

Instead of continuing through Skarzysko, the shorter route to the main road, he took the Mostki and Suchedniow turnoff. He knew the route well and travelled on it by bus many times as a young child with his mother and younger brother. The landscape here along the roadside was characterised by cottages, each with its own few acres and small clusters of houses. This was before one reaches the lake with its restaurant and beer garden. Further along the shore there are a dozen or so wooden chalets. But this lake was not the sunbathing mecca that Sandomeirsz is for it has no wide sandy beaches.

Klusek reached a particularly sharp bend and pulled the car to the side of the road. He

reached into the cubbyhole and removed a file that contained the police report of the fatal accident that Kasia was involved in. He read the report again, examining the police photographs. Yes, this looked like the spot. He got out of the car and walked towards a small cottage that stood apart from a row of houses, a wooden shack really, with an enclosed front porch. He knocked on the door and waited. Presently a very old gypsy woman, wearing a scarf and skirt, opened the door.

“*Dzien dobry*,” he said. “I am *Komisarz* Pawel Klusek of the Kielce police.” He showed the woman his identification. “May I ask you some questions about an accident that happened here a few months ago?”

The woman assented yet did not ask him inside.

“Yes, I remember that accident, it happened in the morning. There was a small orange car, a Fiat, and one of those big fancy foreign things. A boy died, a girl was injured. A man, foreigner by the sound of him, with a Polish woman helped them. I did not go outside.”

“*Pani*, have you seen this young woman here after the accident?”

“Oh! Yes, I have. She put those flowers beneath the cross. Over there.” The woman pointed to a small iron cross with coloured lanterns and a jar of flowers beneath it that Klusek had not noticed.

“When was the last time you saw her there?”

“It was a while ago, but I cannot say for certain. Was she the girl, the girl injured in the accident? I did not get a look at them. I did not leave the house.”

“Yes, she was.” Klusek turned to leave and then stopped. “*Pani*, if you remember having seen this girl anytime within the last week contact me, here is my card.” He walked down the wooden steps towards the road.

“*Komisarz* Klusek, wait!” The old woman called to him. He stopped and walked back.

“There was a girl. She came past here very early Friday morning, a week ago. She paused by the cross. But I do not think it was the same girl. The other one was pretty and wore nice clothing, this one was poorly dressed and looked dirty. No, it couldn’t have been the same one.” The old woman turned and was about to walk back to her house when Klusek stopped her.

“*Pani*, it is important that you give me a description of what this girl was wearing. Please

tell me exactly what she was wearing.” Klusek stepped closer to the front door. “Might I come inside?” The old woman gave her consent and he entered the dingy cottage. There was no fire inside and it was cold.

“I haven’t lit the stove yet,” the old woman apologised as she sat at the kitchen table. Klusek sat across from her and took out his notebook.

“The girl wore a white dress, but it looked old and dirty. Over it she wore a grey, or black, polar fleece jacket, I remember it had holes in it. I am a poor woman *Komisarz*, but no child of mine would go about dressed like that.” She shook her head. “You know, *Komisarz*, she did not have any shoes on her feet. She was barefoot.”

Klusek made a note of this detail.

“*Pani*, try to remember if she was carrying anything?”

A look of uncertainty came over the woman’s face. She shook her head.

“I am sorry, I cannot remember.”

Klusek left her house and walked across the road to the little cross. From the plaque he read the name, Emilian Ostrowski, and the dates 21 June 1983 to 15 December 2003.

Klusek walked the hundred yards or so towards the five houses further along the road. At the first of these he stepped through a verge of long grass and entered the garden by a rusty iron and wire mesh gate. The gate had a semblance of ornate cast iron curls welded atop it. These were newly painted and out of place with the rusted gate and dilapidated wooden fence. He walked across more long grass as he approached the double storey red brick house, a solitary lime tree growing in front of it and beside it a weather beaten wooden barn. A movement in an upstairs window caught his notice. He descended a flight of stairs to basement level to reach the front door. Klusek knocked loudly on it. Presently an elderly man opened the door. Klusek showed him his identification and was shown inside.

Everywhere were piled old newspapers and other ephemera. The man cleared papers from a settee and Klusek coughed from the dust as he slapped a cushion. The old man took a seat opposite.

“I am looking for a young woman whom I believe passed along this road last Friday morning,” Klusek said as he gave the photograph of Kasia to the old man who looked at it and then shook his head. Klusek took his leave.

The next dwelling, another redbrick double storey, looked like it was converted into two

apartments. There was a prim aluminium picket fence around it and a well-kept garden. Spring flowers growing in planters were coming into bloom on the first floor balcony and Klusek surmised that whoever occupied that apartment spent their days at home because the balcony above was bare.

Klusek rang the doorbell and waited. From inside he heard the yapping of a small dog and then the scraping and turning of a key in the keyhole. A woman of about sixty opened the door.

“*Przepraszam pani*, I am *Komisarz* Pawel Klusek of the Kielce police. I am looking for a young woman who is missing from Starachowice.”

“Yes, I have heard about her,” she said.

Klusek showed her Kasia’s photograph.

“I think she walked by here early last Friday morning?” he said.

The woman shook her head.

“I’m sorry I did not see her.”

Klusek put the photograph back into his pocket notebook.

“*Pani*, who else lives here?”

“I live with my husband. He is at work.”

“And who lives in the apartment upstairs?”

“My son and daughter in law, they are at work. They are expecting a child soon.” The woman smiled.

“Our grandson was born six months ago,” Klusek said. “Will this be your first grandchild?”

“Yes,” she replied.

“*Pani*, it is important you ask them if they saw this young woman last Friday,” Klusek said, as he handed her a police flyer bearing Kasia’s photograph and gave her his card.

“Yes I will, when they get back.”

“Well, *dziekuje*,” Klusek said as he left the woman.

As he was closing the gate he looked back at the house. For a moment he daydreamed. What if he bought a house like this in the country? His daughter and son in law could bring their grandson and come and live with them. For a second the idyll of it all made him feel a little carried away, but then reality struck and saddened him. It would be impossible



because Mira would constantly interfere in their lives. He turned away from the gate and walked to the next house wishing he could find some way to keep his daughter and her husband from leaving Poland.

The next house, a white single storey with a black tiled roof had no one at home. The same was true for the yellow house with pale blue shutters that stood beside that.

Then Klusek came to a double storey redbrick cottage that was half hidden behind an unruly gooseberry hedge. He entered the property through a little wooden gate, somewhat overgrown and obscured and found himself in a savage garden filled with tall grasses and wild flowers. After making his way through this he climbed a flight of stairs to a balcony, the balustrade of which was draped with flowering creepers. Beside the front door was a little brass bell that he rang. Sooner than its tintinnabulation ceased the door opened and before him stood an attractive woman whom he took to be in her late thirties or early forties. She smiled at him.

"I am *Komisarz* Pawel Klusek..."

"Yes I know. The woman in number fourteen just telephoned to tell me about you." She pointed at the house converted into apartments.

Klusek entered a room he took to be an artist's studio. A canvas, the beginnings of a painting rested on an easel on which was clipped a small photograph. Beside that a table with tubes of oil paint, brushes, and a knife and palette. On the walls hung completed works, mostly what looked like local scenes.

"I am Jadwiga Orkidsz," she extended her hand and he shook it. "I am from Warszawa, but work mostly from here. It's the light. Swietokrzyskie has the best light in Poland."

Klusek sat on a small wicker chair.

"Would you like a drink?" she asked.

"I shouldn't really."

"I have beer."

"All right, why not, I will have a beer."

She left the room and from where he sat, Klusek examined the paintings on the walls. An old man and his wife digging in a field beneath a foreboding black sky. A ray of golden sunlight contrasting against the dark grey of the sky and bathing them and their patch of ground so that the seedlings they planted looked bright green, almost luminescent. Then

there was a winter scene in a town with a line of young school children being led by their teacher, each wearing brightly coloured padded coats of blues, reds, pinks and yellows, and vibrant polar fleece hats of varied humorous designs. Some shaped like medieval jesters hats with bells, others conical, some mimicking traditional and historical hats and caps of different professions, and then those that combined the shapes of animals; rabbits, roosters and teddy bears. There was a triptych depicting Monte Christi. The central panel being the priests at the altar at one of the stages, the other two showing altar boys and young communicants, girls wearing white dresses with garlands of flowers in their hair, kneeling and genuflecting in the road. The last panel showed townspeople, young and old, in their Sunday best, also kneeling and crossing themselves before the priests at the altar. Then there were various rural scenes depicting cottages and barns, lakes and forest through the seasons from impossibly green summer to golden sunny autumn, stark white and grey winter and the newness of spring. There was Wachock monastery, in its Romanesque simplicity, with pink granite walls and a bronze roof made gold in the light of autumn.

The woman returned and gave him a can of Lech Warka, and then she opened one for herself.

“Now what do you want to know?”

Klusek handed her the photograph.

“This is the young woman who is missing.”

She took the picture and examined it.

“Beautiful and lost, I thought at the time.”

“Have you seen her?”

“Yes, but it was about two weeks ago, that was before she went missing.” The woman stood up and unclipped the photograph from the top of the canvas. “I took this photograph of her without her knowing.”

Klusek looked at the image in the photograph of a young woman placing a jar of flowers before the roadside cross. She had curled a lock of hair behind her ear and Klusek could see tears on her cheeks. It was definitely Kasia Baran.

“”Beautiful and lost, I thought at the time.” The woman said. “I felt like an intruder when I took that photograph. I had my camera and a long lens. I photographed her anyway. She did not know that I had.”

"You are doing a painting of her?" Klusek asked.

"Yes."

Klusek felt comfortable with this woman, at ease within this artist's space. The kind of room and company he was not used to. He finished his beer.

"I will need to borrow your photograph of Kasia."

"Oh! I suppose it is okay. I can work on something else for the moment. But you have to promise to return it."

He smiled and stood to leave. She did the same and her housecoat opened a little to reveal a very shapely pair of legs. She caught Klusek looking and smiled at him.

"You will bring it back and then you can visit with me again."

"I will bring it back," he said as he stepped out of the front door. "*Do widzenia!*"

"*Do widzenia,*" she waved.

There was nobody at home in the last of the houses that made up that cluster. It was a pretentious looking modern place, painted dark beige, with a high fence around it. Bourgeois, thought Klusek, or is it 'Nuevo Riche', as 'bourgeois' was now unfashionable because it was a derisive term during communist times.

Klusek returned to his car and read his notes. The gipsy lady definitely saw a young woman stop at the roadside cross that Friday morning. Both the gipsy and the artist, Jadwiga, saw Kasia at the roadside cross before. But that would only have been natural, thought Klusek. Although, at least it was proof that she did visit the place. It must have been Kasia whom the gipsy woman saw stopping there last Friday. Who else could it be? A drab looking, shabbily dressed young woman with an unkempt appearance. It made sense. All of Kasia's good clothes, shoes, make-up, everything was packed away in boxes and certainly, by the mildewed state of them, had not been worn for some time. But did she continue this way? Where would she have gone from here? Or did she turn back? Still puzzling over this, he started his vehicle and continued along the road towards his home in Kielce.

When he arrived there he found the flat empty and no sign of Mira.

He still kept a photograph of Lenin on the sitting room wall. Mira constantly placed it in the drawer when there were visitors. It was in the drawer now. He took it out and placed it

on top of the display cabinet. In the kitchen there were unwashed teacups, saucers and side-plates in the sink. He washed them and then cut himself a slice of bread which he buttered and ate with salami and pickled cucumbers.

The telephone rang and he answered it. It was Mira, who was at Galleria Centre with her friends and would only be back in an hour or so. He replaced the receiver. How Mira had changed. He married her because she was so like his own mother. She turned out to be nothing like her. His mother, a factory worker, cared for him and his brother as best she could. There were always pickles in her cupboard. The only pickles Mira ever kept were now bought from Albert, Champion or Tesco.

What he respected the most about his mother was that she never used to complain about anything, never complained about the Party. She always remained loyal to it. He still remained loyal to it. But he was beginning to question his loyalty to that past. Those who represented the Party for him seemed to have moved on quite happily. Should he still be loyal to them? He stood up and hung the photograph of Lenin back on the wall, making sure it was straight.

Then he picked up the small photograph of his mother that stood in a frame on top of the sideboard. He remembered the powder she wore and the rouge that pinched her cheeks so that he always thought of her and ripe red apples in the same way. He recalled that musty scent of her perspiration and inexpensive perfume that surrounded him when he was in her arms. How he longed for that miasma when she left him.

His mother died in a factory accident at STAR Trucks in Starachowice when he was only seven years old. There was no town in Poland that Klusek hated more than Starachowice.

## Chapter 6

In the distance there is a dark green rim of trees. This is a forest of Baltic pine, European Oak, Ash, Spruce and Beech. Underneath these trees the ground cover is verdant with moss and luscious green grass. One can find Juniper bushes and even small Acacias near the edges, or in the clearings of these forests that stretch over a large part of Poland. It is only to the west, heading towards Wachock and Skarzysko that the forest does not completely surround Starachowice.

A few wealthier houses form delicate rectangular shapes in the distance. There is also a meat-processing plant to the right of the houses. In his mid-view Alan can see two churches. The taller and larger is in the centre of his view, with its black spire and white roof and tower. It is a newly built church. The smaller and older church is nearer and to the left of his vision. Everywhere there are outcrops of square Communist era concrete blocks of flats. They are called Community Blocks, and their grey concrete is bare to the world and shows its irregular shades of this same colour. In-between all are houses, some new and large, others square and uninteresting, some no more than dilapidated wooden shacks. All are spewing smoke of varying shades of plumage from their chimneys. Some are as yellow as sulphur, and quite alarming.

Later, Alan will visit the pub downstairs, of which his little road has two. There he will pass at least two dogs sitting and patiently waiting outside for their imbibing owners. Inside, Ludwig, the balding owner, will attempt to improve his Polish whilst he sips large pints of Polish beer. He will meet again with Jan whom he first met sitting in the little bar overlooking Itza's tiny cobbled square. On that day, the poet was tirading against the bad reconstruction of the tower of Itza castle. The builders had used cement instead of lime mortar to lay the old stones.

"It is for the tourists." The poet dismissed the monstrosity with a flick of his wrist. His voice boomed in the pub and a few heads looked up, and then, because they were used to his outbursts, returned to their own bar lit patches.

When Alan came in, Jan noticed that he was upset.

"Woman trouble?" he asked.

"Yes," Alan answered.

Alan had taken Justina out to Pod Sosnami, a local restaurant in the town, the night before. She insisted on going Dutch, paying her side of the bill, when they went out now. He found this attempt to not be parsimonious just a little hypocritical.

"I'm sure Tom paid for you when he took you out," he said, as she was fumbling in her purse for loose zloty coins.

"What the hell do you mean by that?"

"What I mean, is that you girls are Poland's biggest export right now, aren't you?"

"Damn it! That's unfair. You, of all people, should know how unfair that is?"

"Yes, I do, but you're all worth a hell of a lot more than throwing yourselves at foreign guys."

"I know, I think I've learned that one." He did not say anymore. After all, he was foreign himself.

After he told all of this to Jan, he asked.

"Do you think I was unfair to her?"

"Now Alan, only you can answer that question."

Jan purposefully changed the topic of conversation.

"How did your interview with the policeman go?"

"He is a clever man," Alan said.

"Naturally."

"Tom, the teacher from Skarzysko, knows Kasia. I did not tell the *Komisarz* that, but he was there visiting her at the hospital when Justina insisted we take her flowers," Alan said.

"Why did you keep this from the police?"

"I don't know. After last night I wish I hadn't, but I don't want to cause trouble for him."

Jan looked at Alan.

"Be careful," he said. Then after a pause he spoke again. "Tell me about Tom. I don't think I've met him?"

"He has been here longer than I have. He's a public school boy. He is also an avid photographer. In fact he is very good at photography."

"Yes, now that I recall, I think I have met him. He exhibits his photographs?"

"Quite successfully," Alan said.

I have met him,” Jan slapped his thigh, “at an exhibition of his work in the ballroom at Zamkova Palace.”

“He is disappointed with the values and pace of life in the United Kingdom,” Alan said, “and plans to stay permanently in Poland. I hear he has bought a property, a small farm, somewhere in Suchedniow.”

“What is he like as a person?”

“He is an erudite man. He is a Polophile. He loves everything Polish.

“Aah, especially the women?”

“Yes, he is very successful with women. Leastways, he certainly has had a lot of them.”

“Including your Justina?”

“Including her, the bastard,” Alan said.

“You don’t like Tom very much, do you?”

“I don’t feel anything for him, either way.”

“You English are so full of shit. You have just referred to him as a bastard.”

After Alan had left, Jan sat in thought for a while. So, Alan has managed to find himself involved in a small adventure: a missing girl, the intrigue surrounding this other Englishman, Tom. He has even withheld information from the police. Jan turned to the young, married woman sitting at the bar.

“A fool destroys himself by trying to find adventure in a world that no longer believes in God. Both are romantic notions. That is why Alan is really here in Poland. He is not such a fool after all.” The poet downed his drink and ordered another. “You cannot disbelieve in God in Poland, because there is no disbelief in God in Poland. Poles are romantic dreamers by nature. There is adventure where there is romance, or God. It is that which attracts Alan to Poland.”

After work that evening, Alan asked Krzysztof his taxi driver to stop at the supermarket near the centre of the town. He bought Zywiec beer, bacon, eggs, and ‘Tost’ bread.

At home there was no sign of Justina. She must be at her mother’s, he thought. He opened a beer and turned on the television: the new member states joining the EU, the Pope, Adolf Hitler and Stalin seemed to be the only options. He switched it off again and streamed BBC 4 through his laptop computer. He cut the bacon into slices and fried three

of these and two eggs as he listened to a re-broadcast of "Classic Comedies." He popped two slices of the toasting bread into the toaster and waited. Then he buttered the toast, put the eggs and bacon on top of these and sat down to eat.

Just then Justina opened the door to the flat.

"Hello," he said.

She did not reply.

"Have you been at your mother's?"

"Yes!" she said.

"I tried to call you today. A policeman, a *Komisarz* Klusek, came to see me about Kasia Baran."

"About Kasia?"

"Yes."

"But what do you know about Kasia?"

"Very little and that is what I tried to tell him. He wants to see you as well."

"Me, but I know as much as you do. He is a *Komisarz*?"

"Yes."

"That is a high rank for such a case," she said as she went into the bedroom.

"Would you like some bacon and eggs," he called after her, but she did not reply.

She returned shortly wearing her pyjamas.

"What was that you said?"

"I asked if you wanted some bacon and eggs."

"Well seeing that you did not cook any for me, I suppose I don't."

"I can make some now," he said.

"It is fine, I will make something for myself, later," she said as she sat down.

"Look, Justina, I am sorry about the row last night."

She did not reply.

He changed the subject.

"How is your mother?"

"Fine!" she replied curtly.

Alan continued to eat his food, but its flavour was lost.

"Look can you turn that radio down, it's too bloody loud," she said.



He stood and muted the sound on the laptop.

“You know what your problem is, Alan. You try so hard to understand Poland and everything Polish but you don’t bother to understand me. I’m a woman just like any other woman. What is so bloody difficult about that?”

Alan felt cut to the quick.

“Now you are being unfair. I try to understand so that I can fit in.”

“Fit in with what? Everybody is different. People are not the same. I don’t know what you are looking for. It was the same thing the first time round. But then I tried to please you. It is impossible. I am not authentic enough for you. Or I am so typically this way or that way to you. But I am not a part of your preconceived ideas. Don’t generalise about me. Don’t think you know everything about me because you so cleverly, so you think, observe how it is here. You constantly ask that presumptuous arse-hole Jan about Polish life the whole time, and him wanking you around because it amuses him. He laughs at you, Alan. You make him feel big. You don’t understand anything. You don’t understand me. You think everything is so-called Polish Reality, but you don’t even really understand what that means. How can you? So you take what you think it means and apply it to everyone and everything, including me.”

Alan was silent for a while and then he spoke.

“Justina, I am sorry. I didn’t know that is how you felt.”

“Well, if you paid more attention maybe you would. Just live your life, Alan, live without knowing the answers to everything. Without thinking you know the answers. Life is uncertain.”

Alan went and sat on the couch next to her. He put his arm around her shoulders.

“I’m sorry,” he whispered into her ear. “I really am sorry.”

Later as they held each other after coitus, Alan told Justina that he did not tell the policeman that they had seen Tom visiting Kasia at the hospital.

“But why?” she asked.

“I don’t know. I didn’t want to cause him any trouble.”

Justina turned on her side away from him.

“You won’t speak of it to him, will you?” he asked.

“Dammit, Alan, why didn’t you tell him?”

“I don’t know. I really don’t know.”

“It could be seen as withholding information from the police. That is serious,” she said.

“We can just say it slipped our minds. That it wasn’t important.”

“Well, I will have to now, won’t I,” she said as she switched off her bedside lamp and closed her eyes.

## Chapter 7

The next morning Klusek met with Dyka.

“*Komisarz* Dyka.”

“*Komisarz* Klusek.”

“I have a witness who saw a young woman stop at the roadside cross of Emilian Ostrowski, the young man who died in the car accident. She is an old gypsy woman who saw the girl early on that Friday morning when Kasia vanished.”

“Did she positively identify the girl as Kasia?”

“No, she couldn’t be sure, but it seems to match.”

“Match what?”

“The clothes she wore were shabby and the girl’s appearance was unkempt. This seems to fit descriptions of Kasia before she disappeared. Also the gypsy woman and another woman Jadwiga Orkidsz saw the girl at the roadside cross of Emilian before last Friday. *Pani* Orkidsz took a photograph of her. It means she used to go there on her own and quite soon before she disappeared.”

Dyka sat in silence for a moment.

“You will need to give me more than that, at least a positive identification for the Friday morning. If I stop the search in Starachowice and relocate it to Mostki, how will I justify this move? No, no, you need to bring me a positive identification from someone who saw her that morning on that road.”

After leaving the police station, Klusek took the route to Starachowice that went through Suchedniow, towards Mostki. He stopped at each roadside sklep along the way to show the shopkeepers the photograph of the missing girl and to ask them if they had seen her. He described the dirty white dress and the dark polar fleece jacket, the lack of shoes on her feet. That she was seen walking early that particular Friday morning from the direction of Wachock. Thus far, most had shrugged and smiled at him.

“This place is full of young women,” was their inevitable reply as they returned to whatever occupied them behind their counters.

By midday, Klusek had systematically worked his way through all the roadside shops and small bars from the Suchedniow turnoff to where the road met the main road running

through from Skarzysko to Wachock and Starachowice. He had knocked on the doors of houses situated next to the road, but their inhabitants, so far, were able to tell him nothing. With annoyance he considered trying the small farms, where the dwellings were set back from the road, near the edge of the forest. Whilst he was deciding on this course of action a farmer riding an ox-cart came up the road from the Wachock turnoff. He hailed the farmer who pulled over to the side of the road.

“Czesc!”

“Czesc!” The man smiled in reply. Klusek showed his identification to him.

“Do you sell produce at the market in Starachowice?”

“Yes,” he replied, “every Wednesday and once every fortnight on Fridays.”

“Was there a market last Friday?”

“Yes, there was.”

“Were you there?”

“Yes, I never miss a market.”

“You travel early in the morning on those days?”

“Yes, very early.”

“Last Friday when you were on your way there, did you see this young woman? She was wearing a white dress with a grey or black jacket”

The man took the photograph and looked hard at it.

“I remember seeing a young woman dressed like that. I thought it strange because she wore no shoes on her feet.” Yes, thought Klusek. “But I am not sure if it was this young woman here in the photograph. This woman is very pretty and the other was quite plain looking.”

“Did you see her face?”

“No, not really, her hair covered her face.”

“Where exactly did you see her?”

“I’m not exactly sure, but I think it was about two or three miles further along that way.”

“Towards Bodzentyn?”

“Yes, unless she was heading for Suchedniow, I don’t know.”

“Tell me, *pan*...”

“Jakubowicz, Zenex Jakubowicz.”

“Did the woman have anything in her hands?”

“Yes she was carrying something, something gold coloured. I couldn’t see what it was, but the sun caught it as I approached her and it shone a little. Then the sun was gone and I thought no more of it. She averted her eyes and turned her head as she passed me and I did the same out of respect.”

“Zenex, I need to take down your details.”

“I understand. She is the missing girl, isn’t she? She’s the one who is missing from Starachowice?”

“The girl in the photograph, yes she is.” Klusek copied down the farmer’s name, address and mobile phone number.

“One more thing, can you show me exactly where you saw her?”

“I will try. Here, climb up onto the wagon. I go so slowly it will be impossible to follow me in your motorcar. If you don’t mind walking back.” Klusek climbed onto the seat beside the farmer.

“I don’t mind walking back.”

Later Klusek arrived at Bank Slaski in Starachowice, where Justina worked, just in time for his meeting with her. He asked for her at Enquiries. After a few moments she came into the foyer area and led him through a pair of wooden swing doors and up a flight of stairs to the first floor where the tellers were.

“We can use this office here,” she said, “it is vacant.”

Klusek went inside and she arranged two chairs beside the window.

Once settled, Klusek asked her about the circumstances surrounding how she came to meet Kasia.

“It was on the main road in Mostki. She and her boyfriend were ahead of us. Their car skidded on some ice going around a bend and spun out of control. Another vehicle came over the rise and crashed into them. We stopped to help, but the boy was dead. Alan, my boyfriend telephoned for an ambulance and we stayed until it came and took Kasia to hospital.”

“You saw her in the hospital, later?”

“Yes.”

“I believe she visited with you a few times after that?”

“Yes, we sort of became friends, but recently we haven’t seen anything of her.”

“Did you think that strange?” he asked.

“No, people move on.”

There was defensiveness about the young woman’s manner that Klusek did not understand.

“*Pani*, are you feeling uneasy?”

“No, well, the police make me nervous, that is all.”

Klusek nodded and then smiled.

“Can you think of any reason why Kasia Baran would have gone missing? Problems she was having. People she might have been associated with who might have done her harm.”

“What kind of people?”

“A bad crowd, drugs, that kind of thing.”

“No, I can think of nothing like that, but then I didn’t know her very well.”

“That is precisely the problem,” Klusek said, “not many people in Starachowice did know her well. In fact her mother could only name a very small handful of people that she was still friends with. You and Alan were amongst them.”

“Oh,” Justina was taken aback, “I did not know that.” The thought filled her with sadness.

“But maybe the accident had something to do with that? Might her disappearance have something to do with her solitude?”

“It is possible *pani* Schmallenberg, but where she has got to is still a complete mystery. I need to find her and any piece of information, no matter how seemingly insignificant, might help.”

Justina felt the blood rising to her cheeks. Damn Alan and his silly sense of loyalty.

“Is there something you want to tell me?” Klusek said.

“No, no, it is nothing.”

“Well, thank you *pani* Schmallenberg for your cooperation and if you think of anything else, here is my card.”

When Piotrek returned to the abbey, Bartok the doorkeeper gave him a message that the young woman, Kasia, called to see him.

“When was this?” Piotrek asked. He had seen Kasia the previous Wednesday and Bartok, being old, often got things muddled.

“It was on Thursday, I am sure of it. You were definitely away at the time.”

Piotrek carried his bags up to his room. Odd, he thought, why did she come back so soon after their last meeting?

Piotrek’s cell contained a bed with a wooden cross above the headboard. On the wall beside it was a print of Bert Hardy’s photograph of two boys in the poor Gorbals district of Glasgow taken in 1948. Beside the bed, facing the tiny window, were a small desk and a chair. The room contained another, more comfortable, chair and a small side table on which were neatly placed a kettle and two cups and saucers, along with tea and coffee. Cupboards were built into the wall beside the door to the room and this was where Piotrek kept his clothing, books, and other belongings. The furnishings in the cell were modern and quite comfortable although the building itself was ancient, dating from the thirteenth century.

Piotrek taught a biblical studies class to high school children at Gymnasium on Szkolna. Kasia attended this class whilst doing matura, her final year. It was during one of these lessons that he told them about the shrine to Saint Adalbert. He read the description of it from the text of Jaroslaw of Gniezno.

Twelve strong, as was befitting, set out. Two were stonemasons who had prepared the site beforehand. We carried three slings between us. None, not even the old amongst the group, were spared this labour. In the first sling were the small stone blocks. In the second was the stone lintel. In the third, the alabaster image of Adalbert, with both his arms outstretched. This was commissioned in Bohemia and brought to Gniezno by the faithful Marcus.

Thus we proceeded up the Mountain at a slow pace, at times winching the slings by means of pulleys and ropes up sheer cliff-faces.

Upon reaching the site, we rested whilst the masons did final preparation to the alcove they had fashioned into the ledge. Foundation grooves had been

made into the base of the outcropping in the centre and at either side of the alcove. Into these would be sunk the base of the effigy and the first of the stone blocks. Further work ensued to ensure a proper fit.

The likeness in place, the masons proceeded to fashion the blocks into place on either side of the effigy against the prepared walls of the alcove. They worked diligently for a long while at this, until each block fitted perfectly and moved not at all. Finally, the lintel was affixed to the topmost of the stone blocks and yet again much fine chipping away was needed to countersink it into a groove at the top of the recess.

By late noon the work was completed and the site cleaned. We held a simple ceremony to consecrate the shrine. (Jaroslaw III)

“But why would they have built a shrine to Adalbert?” asked one of the students.

“It seemed that he had a great impact on this group,” Piotrek answered.

“So he spent quite a bit of time with them?”

“Yes, according to Jaroslaw. Some of the members of this group even journeyed north to the Baltic with Adalbert.”

Kasia raised her hand.

“What was it about Adalbert that attracted them to him so much?” she asked.

“I think, and this is only my opinion, it was because he had broken ranks with the Church hierarchy. If you look again at this description of the shrine two things stand out that hint at the character of this group.” Piotrek read from the text: ‘Twelve strong, as was befitting, set out.’ These people stuck closely to the literal message of the Bible. I believe they organised themselves very much in accordance with the model found in the Acts of the Apostles. The second example I want to cite is: ‘We held a simple ceremony to consecrate the shrine.’ This was deliberately stated. Jaroslaw is making a point concerning the nature of the spirituality of this group. ‘A simple ceremony,’ and he gives no details. Theirs was an uncluttered kind of faith. The Jaroslaw text has many examples of this nature that point to the simple pragmatism of these early Polish believers.”

“And Adalbert was this kind of pragmatist?” Kasia asked.

“Adalbert was a pragmatist and a romantic, I believe,” Piotrek said.



“Aah, so he was very Polish, then,” Kasia said.

Piotrek smiled.

“Here is a man born of the Bohemian nobility who was Bishop of Prague. He became critical of the superficial attitude of his fellow countrymen. He broke away from the very privileged class he was born into to lead the ascetic life of a monk. The Pope ordered him back to Prague but eventually, sickened by the political infighting between the nobles, the Czech King and the Slavnik princess, he left once and for all to convert the pagans in the Baltic. What happened that changed his view of his own faith?”

“Perhaps he suffered a spiritual awakening.”

“Interesting choice of words, Kasia,” Piotrek said. “Yes, I think you are right. What else could explain his actions? There is no doubt in my mind that what he did was romantic, yet he did it in a very practical way. Because he was held in such high regard by the Jaroslaw group tells us that he had a lot in common with them. What we can learn from their writings can give us valuable insights into Adalbert at this time.”

“It is all pieces of a puzzle that fit together to show us more of the picture,” Kasia said.

“Yes,” Piotrek said. “Historical inquiry is exactly like that.”

Piotrek loved teaching these classes. They always filled him with a spirit of elation. But that lesson was one of those that would always stand out for him as one of his most successful. All the elements came together perfectly.

After class, Kasia approached him and asked if she might visit him at the priory in Wachock.

“Yes, certainly,” he said.

A little later she visited him, accompanied by her friend, Emilian. They wanted to know more about the shrine to Saint Adalbert. Particularly, where it might be and what it would look like now, after over a millennium.

“It would have been built in a difficult place to get to,” Piotrek said. “The journey to it would have been arduous to test the conviction of the pilgrims. Jaroslaw speaks of it being in a high place, the highest in the Holy Cross.”

“Lysica,” Kasia said.

“It is possible,” Piotrek said. “But would they have known Lysica was the tallest mountain over a millennium ago? Although it has been accurately measured and we know

it is, it doesn't necessarily appear to be so, does it? The incline is fairly gentle, until the last ascent to the summit, which is quite steep."

"I see what you mean," Kasia said.

"Also," Piotrek said, "it would have been likely that the shrine would have overlooked places where people lived, rather than vast tracts of forest. This is an educated guess on my part, but the kind of community that built the shrine would have been more concerned with the notion of changing the hearts of people, instead of the concept of a vast land to Christianise."

Kasia then produced a sketch she had done of what she thought the shrine looked like. Piotrek was impressed by the authenticity of detail in keeping with the Jaroslaw description. The quality of expression exuded by the Saint was remarkable too. It was a beautiful and sensitive rendering.

"What do you think the shrine would look like now?" Emilian asked. "Would it be overgrown?"

"Maybe," said Piotrek, "or very badly weathered and barely discernible from the surrounding rock face, if it was built on a ledge."

"You think it was built on a ledge or against a cliff?" Kasia asked quickly.

"Yes, I do," Piotrek said.

Piotrek saw them on one other occasion, and then not again until Kasia came to visit him that last Wednesday. It was before ninth hour and Piotrek was working in the old scriptorium, what they now referred to as the study hall, when Bartok shuffled in to tell him that there was a visitor.

He came into the hallway and seeing Kasia, greeted her. He led her through to a more comfortable sitting area where they sat down. Then she told him about the motorcar accident she was involved in and the loss of her friend, Emilian. He listened patiently, sensing that more than anything else she needed a friend to talk to.

"You see, after Emilian there was nothing," she said. "Only death. But then I began to see that there was a purpose in that loss, a purpose in this horrible suffering. Now it is just a matter of beginning and that beginning is such a welcoming thing."

Piotrek, though quite lost as to the meaning of what she was saying, let her talk on

anyway.

“It is such a welcoming place, Piotrek, that I must find.”

“Spiritual realisations are like that,” Piotrek said. “You must go on to the end. See the change that God is working in you through to its conclusion.”

“Yes, so you agree, I must follow this path?”

“Certainly,” Piotrek said. “There is only one path worth following.”

“I know that when I find it he will be there with his arms outstretched waiting for me. Then I will shout from the Mountain the message of suffering.”

“When you find that place,” said Piotrek, “you will find peace.”

“Yes peace,” she said and her eyes shone in the dim light of the reception area.

Very soon the first bell for none rang and Piotrek rose.

“I am sorry,” he said, “that is our meal call and I am doing the reading for this week.”

Kasia stood up and seemed to want to ask something, but Piotrek sensed she felt shy.

“You will visit again?” he asked. “Then we can continue our talk.”

“I would like to,” she answered.

He saw her out of the front door just as the second bell for none rang.

The next morning at breakfast, the Abbot asked Piotrek how the lecture had gone.

“Very well,” Piotrek replied.

“And your schedule for today and tomorrow?”

“A philologist from Warsaw will be visiting tomorrow. He is interested in the Jaroslaw text from a linguistic angle. Otherwise, just the school,” Piotrek said.

“The school,” he said. “The abbot’s crosier is turned inward, not outward,” the Abbot reminded Piotrek, with a wink. He was not being serious and in truth supported these outreach initiatives.

At twelve sharp the philologist arrived and Piotrek and he occupied the study room. Copies of the Jaroslaw text and the Kazania Swietokrzyskie were spread out on the table before them.

“This is very interesting,” the philologist said. “From a cursory examination I can already detect points of similarity in this document and the Kazania Swietokrzyskie.

Nothing conclusive, but the style is in some ways typical of written Slavic from the thirteenth century. In fact, it ties with notions we have of the oral development of the Slavic languages. I would have to examine it in more detail, though.”

“It is my hope,” Piotrek said, “to show the uniquely Polish elements of the Jaroslaw community, and I think the starting point will be to show that this identity was defined by the language that they used. From there I want to historically trace how this has influenced Christianity in Poland through the centuries. Discover what is unique to our way of believing.”

“Yes, I understand that,” the philologist said. “That is why I would like to examine this text with great care from a purely philological and linguistic angle.”

After the philologist left, Piotrek wandered into the sitting area. He picked up the daily newspaper and sat down in a comfortable armchair. He unfolded the paper and was taken aback by the photograph and headlines on the front page. The girl, Kasia, was missing.

Michal, the secretary, entered the room and Piotrek showed him the headline.

“How long has this story been in the papers?”

“About three days now. Didn’t you know?”

“No, I didn’t. I’ve been a bit out of touch with local news.”

“It just made the national newspapers too.” He coughed. “She is the same one that visited here?”

“Yes, she is.”

“I thought so. She was here looking for you last week Wednesday...”

“I saw her last Wednesday.”

“Then it must have been Thursday, because you had already left. Bartok the doorkeeper told me and I left a note for you in the book.”

“He gave me the message when I came in last night,” Piotrek said.

“Yes.... I hope they find her soon. Well, I must be getting along.” Michal left the room.”

Thursday, thought Piotrek, and she went missing on Friday. Did it mean anything?

He thought long and hard about that last encounter, and not without a touch of guilt. Was there anything about what they discussed that would have given her reason to call on him

that Thursday, anything that might possibly hint at her disappearance? There was something unusual about her that last time they met. What was it? Was there a kind of urgency, perhaps, about her? No, it was something else that he could not put his finger on.

Kasia had walked a long way and was almost there. Below she could see the green hills streaking away in hues of dark and light. Above, the sky smudged grey on white. Why was she feeling so drowsy? It did not make any sense to her. She only had a little way to go now. She looked at her hand and then realised that she had dropped the bronze effigy of the ballerina, the one that pirouetted when you manipulated a lever at its base. Earlier, somewhere, she could not tell where, she had lost the curtained canopy that the dancer stood underneath. It, too, was in bronze, and must have broken off somewhere far below.

She remembered stepping higher onto a small ledge, feeling the wind upon her, and told herself to be careful as she took another step forward. Then she turned and looked down over the valley, feeling satisfied that she had come so far. Now, she would rest for a while on the little ledge, she thought to herself, before turning to find a nice place to sit down.

But as she lowered her body down, her foot slipped, yet she regained her balance. The ballerina fell from the front pocket of her tunic. She reached to catch it as it slipped into a small crevice landing upright. She fell forwards over it on the ledge.

She awoke a little later with renewed desperation. She remembered that Eve of St. Andrew's. For every young Polish woman, on the Eve of St Andrew's, will enter her room and shut the door behind her. She will turn off the lights and light two candles, placing one on each side of her mirror. Kasia, that last Saint Andrew's Eve, had hoped, as do all young Polish women whilst performing this ritual, that she would see the face of her life-long love. They run the risk that they might see death, or the devil dressed much like a German. As Kasia stared into that mirror, a terrifying nothingness stared back at her above the upturned face of the bronze dancer on the dresser.

## Chapter 8

Isaac sat, balancing a notebook on his knees. The room was dark and stuffy because the windows were tightly shut, the curtains drawn. A dim bedside lamp, crude, rectangular and made of wood, with a tatty yellow chiffon shade provided the only illumination. It caused the face of the man propped up in the bed appear to be more jaundiced than it already was. It cast yellow light on nicotine stained fingers as they fumbled beneath it for sweets or cigarettes and overshadows of grey onto adjoining and opposite walls.

Beside Wodek was an ashtray stuffed with cigarette butts. Next to that were piled opened packets of peppermints and butterscotch sweets. His wife, Marisha, fussed around, fluffing the pillows.

“Don’t do that! The woman always does that, then I can never get comfortable again.” She ignored him.

“Would you like something to eat, *pan* Kalaman?”

“No thank you, I ate before I came.”

She left the bedroom for the kitchen.

“Don’t blame you – all her food tastes the same.” He called to the kitchen. “What are we having anyway?” There was no reply. “Woman’s as deaf as a post.” He called again. “If it’s eggs? You know I don’t like them snotty.” Wodek fumbled for the pack of cigarettes amongst the packets of sweets. “Cigarette?” He offered the pack to Isaac.

“No thank you, I don’t smoke.”

“Well, suit yourself.”

Isaac noted disapproval in his voice. There was a pause whilst he lit a Sobieski. Isaac could hear Marisha, preparing food in the kitchen.

“Do me a favour – can you shut the door? The woman wants to kill me with the draft.”

Isaac closed the bedroom door. Wodek began to cough, spitting phlegm into a ruby red handkerchief. The coughing did not abate until Marisha re-entered and placed a tray of food onto Wodek’s lap.

“Don’t do that – take it off. I need to sit up more.”

“Stop fussing, Wodek. Just give me a minute.” The old lady took the tray and placed it on the dressing table. Then she helped Wodek sit up higher in the bed. She began to fluff

his pillows but stopped before he complained again. Then she sat down on a worn, orange boudoir chair with tarnished golden tassels. She balanced her plate of food on her lap and began to sprinkle pepper over her food in a liberal way and sneezed.

"I don't understand why you put pepper on your food. It always makes you sneeze."

"Yes, Wodek, you always say that."

Isaac sipped on a cup of tea.

"Thank you for agreeing to see me."

Wodek looked at Isaac with a quizzical expression, an expression from the past, perhaps used in more sinister circumstances, thought Isaac.

The ash of his cigarette formed a long curve, like the fingernail of a Chinese mystic. Surprisingly, the ash did not fall. Wodek did not touch his food.

"So! What is it that you want to know?"

Isaac placed his cup of tea carefully onto the floor, beside his chair.

"I need information concerning the SB..."

"Bezpiecentwo!"

"Well, Bezpieka, then."

"When?"

"Around January 1985."

The old man rubbed his mouth and at the same time craned to place the smoked cigarette, ash still intact, into the ashtray. He paused twice to realign himself in completing this manoeuvre, and the ash only fell as the cigarette was safely placed into the tray.

"I suppose the information you need is not in the files the IPN has inherited?"

"No."

"Destroyed by that sell-out Czeslaw Kiszczak?"

"Yes."

"Last good thing he ever did, the-arse-for-sale!"

The old man spat these last words out with a vehemence that caused his false teeth to need dextrous readjustment. Then he smiled in a dubious kind of way. Isaac did not know if the smile was because of what he said about Kiszczak, or because of the indelicacy of his perambulating dentures. "Jaruzelski's golden boy, he was. Still, he did have balls, once upon a time. Showed them when he put down the Wujek coal miners strike in eighty-one.

Not even a patch on Moczar, though. Now he was Bezpieka. He was *pan* Bezpieka, even more than Stanislaw Radkiewicz.”

“I was hoping you could tell me about Bezpieka activities in Krakow in eighty-five concerning Hospice?”

Apoplexy rose visibly on Wodek’s face.

“Let me enlighten you, nobody cared about Hospice. The Catholic Church, Solidarnosc, The Lenin Foundry, Radio Liberty, Radio Free Europe, NATO, were our problem. That was enough of a problem believe me. In fact, proved too big a problem for us, as history has borne out. Anyway, Kiszczak destroyed all those files in 1989 and was still destroying them in 1990. I know, because I was making sure anything signed by me was destroyed as well. You want to pick my memory, or some other old sod’s memory, then remember that we’re old, and forgetting at a rate faster than babies are learning things. Now, if you want to talk to me about Hospice, you’d better have a bloody good reason, because it was the kind of threat that mattered very little. I cannot recall any action ever being taken in that area. If we did, then pork-intel, that is Department VI, concerned with farming, would have been making jokes about us for a change.”

“Look! It involves the disappearance and probable murder of my cousin, Alexszandra Kalaman. She was only nineteen then.”

Wodek drew a deep breath.

“I am sorry! Continue.”

“I have a name,” said Isaac, “Sylwester Gorzynska. He would have been a junior officer, and I need to know which department he worked in.”

Wodek took a softer line.

“I will see what I can do,” he said.

As Isaac returned to his car, a tram came around the corner and passed him by. The building where Wodek and his wife lived was old and black with grime. In the building opposite on the second floor was an Antiques shop. Isaac crossed the road and pushed open the door. He ascended the stairs, around the elbow landing and then up again. He went through the door and a bell tinkled above his head. He knew the shop well and bought items from there for the hotel. The young sales assistant, the owner’s daughter, greeted him and he made his way into an adjoining room. Here, on a large table, were neat piles of old



posters. Isaac spent the next fifteen minutes looking through them. One in particular caught his attention. It depicted the Lenin Foundry and how it was poisoning Krakow. It was a Solidarity poster and he was sure there was one just like it amongst his Uncle Singer's belongings. If he remembered correctly these were packed away in a trunk, somewhere in the storage basement of the hotel.

Singer Kalaman never did make it to Israel. Instead he remained in Kielce, quite near *ul. Planty*. Each day he would walk past the old governor's palace on Zamkova and up the cobbled lane past the bishop's stables to the bishop's palace, which rightfully stood on higher ground than the governor's residence. But he was not going there, rather to the chapel to run his fingers over the ancient carved granite grammar beside the chapel door.

"When a thing is written in stone, then it means something," he would tell Isaac.

Singer Kalaman died before the white house on *ul. Planty* was declared a monument. Isaac went to the ceremony in his stead, huddled with two thousand others beneath umbrellas before it. The Rabbi from New York said something about the heavens weeping on the occasion. It annoyed Isaac that foreigners could not speak about Poland without making some reference to the weather. Beside him stood a holocaust survivor who wore concentration camp garb and held a sign declaring: "Kielce The Polish Roman Catholics' Shame." Some youngsters kicked a football around in the park behind the crowd. Isaac forgave them.

Singer, having had no children and thus no grandchildren of his own, had spent a lot of time with Isaac and his older cousin Ola. Ola was his favourite.

Isaac remembered, as they grew older, how she and his uncle shared confidences, secrets that he was not party to. And he began to wonder. Certainly Singer was always in trouble with the authorities over the Kielce thing. For many years it was illegal even to mention the massacre.

Singer had a favourite saying that Isaac remembered.

"It is not that free speech does not exist, it does because people speak a little more softly." But the Kielce massacre was unpopular with average Poles as well as the State.

He wondered about that poster that was in the antiques shop. He was almost positive there was one just like it amongst his uncle's possessions.

On his orders, Slawek deposited the large steel trunk in the entrance hall of his private apartments in Alef. It contained Singer Kalaman's belongings. Later, when he returned, he almost tripped over the thing whilst fumbling for the light switch. He cursed Slawek for not having placed it in a less obtrusive place. He examined the dusty trunk. The hasp and staple were padlocked and he did not remember seeing a key for it.

"Shit!"

He needed a bolt cutter. Maybe there was one down in the basement.

"*Tak, pan Kalaman,*" the new receptionist answered in an especially flirty tone. Mmff, thought Isaac, she doesn't know that her boss is a mean bastard. Maybe I will be nice to her for just a little while.

"Martha, tell Slawek the handyman to come up here."

"Certainly sir, I will go find him now."

"*Dziekuje,*" he added, "*bardzo.*" He would be nice to her for a while longer. She buzzed him ten minutes later, the drunkard Slawek had skived off somewhere on a supposed errand.

Why is it that a boiling pot off centre stage is a symbol of peril? Is it because of Jeremiah's menacing vision of the boiling cauldron portending imminent danger, which appears in many gloomy woodcuts? Surely it should mean something good, like we are going to eat soon. Or is it the utter opacity of the cast iron and the monstrous gurgle of contents unknown that have produced this sign of fear. The real fear being that whatever is bubbling away in there might boil over. And we don't know exactly what is in there. Isaac looked at the large black steel trunk. Am I about to 'stir the pot', he thought.

Isaac spent an anxious hour going over the hotel books, waiting for Slawek, who did not return. Finally, he went from his rooms leaving the black steel trunk where it was pulled into the passage. He went downstairs. He knew it was pointless to look for the tool himself because the handyman kept the keys to this locked kingdom in a thick knot on his belt that jangled his self-importance. He sent the receptionist to the back-alley sklep where he knew the locals congregated to drink easy wine.

Thus it was a little later that Slawek tottered before the trunk he had just forced open.

"Thank you, you can go now." Isaac indicated the door through which the man was reluctant to leave. Then Isaac knelt before the chest and flipped the hasp from its staple.

Inside he found the poster; it was the same one. He also found dusty and yellowed folders piled on top of each other. Beginning with the one marked, '1946', he removed a sheaf of papers. He began to read a vivid account written by his uncle Singer of the Kielce Massacre.

The sun was still shining three days later when Singer Kalamán was released from the police station. He squinted at the brightness of it and began to walk towards the house on Planty. For three days he had had no news of the outside. Whilst under arrest he was interrogated by the Polish police and then by a Major Spilotey, a Russian advisor to Polish Security. Singer took him for what he was, a Smert Shpionam, or Smersh commander.

Singer had believed that the capacity to feel bewildered would never return, but there is a difference between being persecuted for race and being falsely accused of something as base as the kidnapping and murdering of children. How? It was inconceivable that he could have done these things merely from a logistical point of view. Murder children in a house full of people, and as he explained to the Polish police, people who were strangers to him.

"But you are all Jews, together?"

"Yes, and you are all Poles, does that make conspirators of you too?"

The policeman hit him hard in the face.

"I'm asking the questions," he said.

"Do you know this boy?" He showed Singer a photograph of a child of about ten years old."

"No, I do not know this boy."

"You have never seen him before in your life?"

"No, I have not."

"Liar! He pointed you out to his father on the morning of the fourth of July, outside the house on Planty."

A boy and his father, yes there was a boy walking with his father the morning he was arrested. But he could not tell if it was this boy. What did it all mean?

"I do not know this boy, or his father."

The Russian was not very interested in the details of the case. He asked Singer questions

about his family background and associations current and also during the war.

"You say your mother was Edyta Kalaman and your father Ignacy Kalaman?"

"Yes."

"Your mother's maiden name was...?"

"Paderewski."

You were born in Kielce?"

"No, I am from Kaziemierz Dolny."

"A very pretty town. I have visited the place. You say your father was a tailor. Which shop belonged to your father?"

"The haberdashery on *ulica* Teatrzeskiego"

"I see."

And later:

"Do you have any possessions that might verify who you really are?"

"Yes, a gold watch that belonged to my late father."

"How did you manage to hide it from the Nazis?"

"With great difficulty. There is an inscription in the watch with my father's initials."

Singer pointed out the inscription. Then the man asked about his activities during the war.

"Were you ever in contact with members of the Armia Krajowa, the Polish Home Army, or AK?"

"No."

"Do you or have you in the past had any contact with the Polish Underground State?"

"No."

"Are you a member of the National Party or the Polish Peasants Party?"

"No."

These questions were asked over and over again in different ways and in different forms so that after a long while, Singer felt his responses becoming automatic. That was when the Russian stopped and changed the subject.

"How do you feel about the Red Army still being in Poland?"

The question took Singer aback. Nonetheless, he smiled.

"We Poles are noted for our hospitality."

The Russian laughed loudly, slapping his knee. Then he left the room, never to be seen

again by Singer. Singer was very careful, especially with the Russian. He knew, as most did, that the Russians were in Poland to stay.

Singer had heard rumours of Jews being attacked and killed in Rzeszow by civilians. He knew too of the thousands of Poles already incarcerated by the Russian NKVD and by the Polish MBP, Bezpieka. It would be an easy thing for any of them to kill him whilst he was being held for questioning. Murdered for something he was not, that would be truly tragic. But what that was, a child murderer, a pervert, or an anti-communist agitator, all eluded him. Nevertheless, he knew that killing was an easy thing for many because of the war. Watching someone being killed and doing nothing about it was second nature for many. How true his thoughts were he discovered as he reached the house on Planty.

It was Ewa Szuchman he saw first.

"Singer, Singer, what have you done?"

"Nothing, I have done nothing," he said as she hustled him into the kitchen of a neighbouring house that belonged to Estera Proszowska, a friendly lady who visited with Ewa.

"The police and soldiers, they came into the house. They went up to the second floor and began shooting us and stealing our stuff."

"What! When?"

"After the police took you away. Then a crowd of people came into the house and I could hear shooting from outside as well. I hid, Singer, I hid like I did before in the big cupboard in the pantry. Then I came here, to Estera's. Poor Estera, she went out to try and help us. They killed her. She wasn't Jewish and they still killed her. The police and soldiers formed all into a line on the stairs. While they were in this line everyone, soldiers and people from the crowd beat them with everything they could. The soldiers then marched them out and the beatings continued outside. Nothing was done to stop the crowd. So many are dead, Singer, over forty are dead. We buried them yesterday in the Jewish cemetery. Beata, I don't know her family name, who lives a few doors down, her baby in her arms, I watched them drag her out of her house and beat her and the child to death. I have never seen anything like it, not even in the camps."

A man who Singer knew as Albert Grynbaum came into the kitchen and sat at the table.

"The Proszowskas have kindly let us stay here. They have extended the courtesy to you.

The wife, *pani* Estera was murdered too.” The man sat down and looked at Singer. There was something reserved, even suspicious in his gaze. “They were like beasts, like animals, I have never seen anything like it.” He shook his head. “Never! A group of thugs coming down the street ran over Abraham, the cook from Szeszen. I have never seen anything like it – how they beat him.” Albert stood and fetched a glass of water. “Would you like some water?”

“Yes, please.”

“And you?” He indicated Ewa.

“No, not right now.” He placed the glass before Singer and sipped from his own slowly. Singer knew that the man was suspicious of him. After all, not even he knew why he was arrested. The man looked long and hard at Singer, finally he turned his gaze to Ewa, yet spoke to Singer.

“We cannot return to the house. The police have sealed it up. They say, pending an investigation.”

“We cannot enter the house?”

“No.”

“Not even to get our things.”

“What things?” Albert shrugged. “Everything has been taken.”

“We who are left are leaving for Austria as soon as we can and then to Israel. We are not going to wait for proper permits.” Ewa said and Singer noticed the dark frown that appeared momentarily on Albert’s face. It was obvious he was annoyed that Ewa volunteered this information to Singer.

Perhaps it was sheer bloody mindedness, and certainly Isaac knew how bloody-minded his great uncle could be. Or perhaps, as he began to see now, it could have been that look of suspicion in Albert Grynbaum’s eyes that forced Singer to remain in Kielce when everyone else left after the massacre. For most it was the final straw. But for Singer it became his life’s work to expose the truth, to establish his own innocence.

## Chapter 9

Klusek stood beside the road. Zenex, the farmer, was certain that this was where he passed the girl. There were no houses right next to the road and only a few small farms tucked back nearer to the edge of the forest. Klusek made off in the direction of the nearest of these. A man, bent double, stood in furrowed field. He wore a blue shirt and dark blue pants. His left arm was tucked in close to his body, his right arm reaching down to plant into the earth.

Klusek stepped into the ploughed field, its soil hues of purple, red, slate blue, grey and dabbed with bright, almost transparent, green foliage. The dabs formed the beginnings of lines further away, nearer the middle of the field where the farmer was planting.

A little way across from the man, a telephone pole, an ashen stick in the middle of the field, drew a line to another off behind and to the left, standing in a sunbathed field of pasture where, gold, yellow and lime green, new grass began to wave in the wind.

Behind the farmer, a grey plastered cottage with bare brick sides nestled amidst a clump of trees. And where the field ended and the trees began there was the blur of white dandelions blowing in the wind.

Klusek looked above the thicket of oily green trees to a sky all-vague purple, mauve and lilac – a sky of old ash and white flake smudged by a child's crude thumb against the palest of blue. Surely, he thought, the bats would be leaving the Rai Cave soon.

The farmer was too absorbed in his sowing to notice the policeman until he was quite close.

*"Dzien dobry!"* Klusek called.

*"Dzien dobry, Jac lechi,"* the man replied.

*"Dobrze,"* said Klusek extending his hand. The farmer offered him his wrist, as his right hand was dirty.

"It seems spring is finally here," Klusek said.

"Don't be fooled, there is still more bad weather to come, but then that will be the last of it."

Klusek removed his identification and the photograph of the missing girl.

"Have you seen this young woman pass by here?"

The farmer studied the photograph for some time.

“About a week ago, there was a girl, she could have been this one, but she was badly dressed and I was too far away to see her face properly. She had the same build and hair.”

“When did you see that girl?”

“It was last Friday, early in the morning. She passed by going that way.” He pointed in the direction of Bodzentyn and the Suchedniow turnoff.

“Was she carrying anything?”

“She may have been, but I couldn’t see.”

Klusek thanked the farmer after jotting down his details and returned to his motorcar. Where was Kasia going to and why?

Back in Kielce, Klusek met with Dyka.

“*Komisarz* Klusek!”

“*Komisarz* Dyka!”

“I have two other witnesses who saw a badly dressed young woman, early on the Friday morning in question heading towards either Suchedniow or Bodzentyn. I strongly recommend that we now move our search to the Mostki area, spreading out towards both Suchedniow and Bodzentyn.”

“Have these people positively identified the person as Kasia?” Dyka asked.

“Not positively, but one says the girl was of the same build and appearance. The other believes she was carrying something gold and shiny – the only thing missing from Kasia’s room was a bronze figurine of a ballet dancer.”

“Again you bring me nothing. You want me to authorise this based on something glittering carried by an anonymous young woman. Klusek let me remind you of your own lesson concerning my Guinea Scale. Intrinsically, your theory carries no weight. Tomorrow morning I want you in Krakow interviewing her lecturers and fellow students, understand?”

“Yes,” Klusek said.



The Kielce pogrom took place just as the result of the referendum of June 1946 was made public. The communists falsified the results and the West was looking on.

Anti-communist groups wanted Western intervention on behalf of the Polish people.

Discrediting the Polish Nation in this way would cause the West to mistrust Polish society and ignore their worsening political plight, a consequence that would suit Russia and the Polish communists very well.

Politics as usual in Poland, thought Isaac, and he got up to make a cup of tea. Whilst the kettle was boiling he went and stood near the window. Outside the weather was inclement. He made his tea and sat down again with the manuscripts.

The leaders of the anti-communist Polish Peasant Party, Stefan Korbonski and Stanislaw Mikolajczyk, were the first to put forward a provocation theory. They pointed to the two mysterious neighbours of Henryck Blaszyk who suggested to the boy that the 'man' was either a Gypsy or a Jew. They believed these two were part of a conspiracy to instigate the pogrom.

Singer had evidence concerning a Major Sobczynski head of the political police in Kielce at the time of the massacre that also placed him at the scene of anti-Jewish incidents in Rzeszow. Singer also had the name of a young man who was Sobczynski's aide at that time, Jurgen Krenzen. Isaac wrote down the name.

With this was written a strange reference that sparked a childhood memory, but Isaac could not put his finger on it. It read: 'K – 2/10 happy'. And it was whilst he was wondering about this that the telephone rang. It was Wodek.

"Kalamán, I have something on your Sylwester Gorzyska. Meet me in an hour's time at my place." Wodek hung up the phone.

As Isaac was placing the folder back, a piece of paper fluttered from it onto the floor. He picked it up and turned it over to reveal a pattern of infinitesimal, small curls of vine, leaf and flower. He felt a surge of excitement. It was very much the kind of thing Ola would have written. Could it be her micro handwriting composed in the shape of a flower? It took him a while, but he soon made sense of it.

She spoke of how she feared for Singer. That she felt something bad was going to happen to him. She wrote of how she felt trapped in his obsession. Tears came to Isaac's eyes. He wiped them and wondered how the page came to be in Singer's possession.

Wondered also about how dangerous the obsessions of others can be for those under their sway, like Ola.

Wodek sat on a large brown art-deco couch. A colourful crochet blanket covered his knees.

"Sylwester Gorzyska," said Wodek, "was a subaltern in Department IV of the SB. Department IV dealt with churches and religious organisations."

"Religion," Isaac said. "Would they have anything to do with suppressing the Kielce massacre?"

"Yes," said Wodek, "they would have."

"And Hospice?"

"Possibly. This was after the restructuring of the service. After 1985 that would have come under Studies Bureau, combating organised opposition. However Studies Bureau worked through the other departments, and also ran their own operations. So quite conceivably the operation might have been run through Department IV, churches and religious organisations. Understand, Isaac, the SB always perceived the Catholic Church to be the biggest threat to communism. Most opposition worked in conjunction with the church. Department IV of the SB was a very powerful entity."

Isaac took a while to digest this information.

"Would Department IV have had anything to do with suppressing knowledge of the Kielce pogrom?"

"Oh yes, certainly they would have, and did," Wodek said.

"As far as murder?"

Wodek shook his head.

"Not in 1985. Look Isaac, times were changing then, especially in Department IV following the arrest and conviction of three of its operatives for murdering the opposition priest, Father Jerzy Popieluszko. Their trials and lengthy sentences sent shockwaves through the whole of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the MSW. That was when they set up the Functionaries Protection Unit to combat and eliminate attitudes and behaviours that could be seriously detrimental to the interest of the MSW. Murdering opponents was no longer a viable option. But what does the Kielce pogrom have to do with this?"

“My great-uncle, Singer Kalaman, was the man who was arrested for kidnapping Henryck Blaszyk outside the house on Planty.”

“Singer Kalaman was your uncle,” Wodek said and whistled. “But how does your cousin come into the story?”

“They were very close, I think Uncle Singer asked her to do something for him that got her into trouble.”

“And she worked for Hospice and you think what she did was in some way connected to Hospice?”

“Yes,” Isaac said.

“Nevertheless,” said Wodek, “none of these issues would have caused an operative to literally risk his neck by committing murder, not then.”

“Unless the stakes were higher?”

“There is always that,” Wodek said. “But that supposes Ola found out something that could cause serious harm to someone. Is that likely?”

“To cover up that she was raped?” Isaac asked.

“By junior officers? That is a consideration. Such an event would have bad consequences for Department IV. But, on its own, I don’t think it was enough of a reason.”

They sat in silence for a while thinking. Then Isaac spoke.

“I have another name, Jurgen Krenzen. I came across it amongst my uncle’s papers.”

“Jurgen Krenzen,” Wodek said. “That is strange, very strange.”

“Do you know of Jurgen Krenzen?” Isaac asked.

Wodek removed a half-jack of whisky from down the side of the sofa.

“Would you fetch us two tumblers from the kitchen?” Isaac did as he was asked and the old man leant forward and poured them each a few fingers. Then he replaced the cap. “*Na zdrowie!*”

“*Na zdrowie!*”

“Krenzen, a Pole from Silesia - Wroclaw, I think - German ancestry of course. Dead for a long time, now. But the thing about Krenzen was that he was Department I, foreign intelligence. He was upper echelon; a controller based in Berlin.” Wodek took another sip of whisky. “Stranger still, in 1985, Jurgen Krenzen was no longer operative. I know because I was at his retirement party in early’ eighty-four, if memory serves me correctly.

Would you like another drink?"

"Thank you."

"Say when."

"That is fine."

Wodek replaced the cap on the bottle.

"Are you not having another?" Isaac asked.

"No, my constitution is not what it used to be. Anyway, Marisha doesn't like me getting *kat*." He said this with the motion of the stiff right hand abutting the side of his neck.

Isaac smiled.

"I know a man, Oskar, who worked for Department I, espionage, he might be able to help you. He is old like me, but a little more able bodied."

"Oskar who?"

"First things first, I will have to set it up, if he is willing to speak to you, that is."

"I see."

Maybe I will have a little more whisky, after all, before Marisha gets back from the shops."

Isaac finished his drink with Wodek and then left the old man. He strolled along Poselska. Instead of turning down Grodska, the direction of the Alef, he continued a little way further along Poselska to a bar that he frequented there.

He bought a beer and then sat at one of the little tables, each made into a kind of booth by the use of rattan room dividers. He was lost in thought as two men sat uninvited at the table with him. He recognised the older of the two as a man who worked for the local council. The other was much younger, in his early twenties, and from his physique and manner Isaac deduced that he was some kind of security person. The older man spoke.

"Would you like another beer?"

"Why not."

The man motioned for a waitress and ordered a round. He came to the point quickly.

"There are people, important people who are not very happy with your, shall we say, investigation."

"Who is not happy?"

The man ignored the question.

“Let’s just say people who could have a negative effect on the liquor license of your hotel, for example.”

“Are you threatening me?”

“No, not at all, *pan* Kalamán. But these are people who would rather not be dragged into events from the past. Now, I know what you are doing is personal, but what they are offering is personal too. These are people who could be good friends to you and your business. Make life very easy for you in this city. Say, if you wanted to open a club, as we know very well you have been trying to do, well, you could have the premises you want to rent, and your licenses all smoothly organised in a relatively short space of time. What do you say?”

“What do I say? I say fuck you!”

The younger man interjected.

“You don’t have to be so rude.”

“I say fuck you too, then.”

The older man indicated to the younger and they stood to leave.

“I am sorry we could not come to an agreement, *pan* Kalamán. It is unfortunate.” He looked Isaac up and down. “Very unfortunate.”

Isaac was mad as hell. It was textbook Bezpieka tactics that the men had used. The ‘uninvited guest’ approach, where the intended mark is off-guard, intimidated and rattled by the ease with which he can be approached. In itself it is a show of power. We can find you anywhere. We are a ubiquitous threat to you. That goes without saying, so you had better listen to us.

Isaac felt very vulnerable later as he walked home down Grodska to where it joined with Podzamcze beside Wawel castle. At the intersection with Dietla, he checked carefully for stray vehicles because ‘accidents do happen’. Then he walked briskly down Krakowska to the hotel, the whole time with gooseflesh standing up on his neck. At the hotel he felt safer and in his locked apartment, drank a few shots of vodka before passing out for the night.

He slept fitfully and in a dream he kept seeing the word ‘happy’, then Singer Kalamán was talking. It was a memory from the past. His uncle led him and his cousin, Ola, who was a few years older than Isaac, down a street in the Stare Miasto in Krakow. “Remember this street,” his uncle said to Ola. “This is happy street.” For a long while after, the

incident stuck in Isaac's mind because he could never make any sense of it. This he was conscious of in the dream.

When he awoke Isaac thought he knew what the cryptic reference meant. 'Happy Street' must be *ul. Tomasza*. He had been there since, recognised it, and knew it well. When his uncle took him there as a youth he remembered that that was where the LOT office was. He remembered staring through the window at a model aeroplane that hung there. He wanted to play with that aeroplane. The LOT office was still in the same place. But what could 2/10 mean? Could it be an address? If it was, then it might mean flat two of number ten Tomasza, which would place it near the Dunajewskiego end. That made sense because the LOT office was down that end. But, if it was an address then who lived there? And what did the 'K' stand for? Could it be 'K' for Krenzen?

Isaac remembered how his uncle Singer had picked a few leaves of scented verbena from a pot growing on his tiny balcony. This was just before Ola had disappeared. It was summer and he wore only his sleeping shorts and a T-Shirt. He rubbed the hardy leaves between his fingers until their scent was satisfactorily revealed. He cupped his hands, bearing leaves before his nostrils, and half tripped as he stepped from the balcony into the living room. The young Isaac, observing him, thought that he had not seen the old man so happy in such a very long time. Looking back with hindsight, the reason for his happiness might have been that he was near to discovering the truth.

## Chapter 10

Klusek sat in the little office provided by the College. He was given a choice of offices to use but chose this one with its single skylight window, dun coloured walls and simple furniture, a desk, two chairs and a locked cupboard.

Klusek looked at the list before him and ticked off a name as the young woman left the room. One after the other, Klusek spoke to bright and eager faced young students. The picture of Kasia that he gained from them was one of a dedicated student who was a bit 'different' and who liked to have a good time. She was someone who seemed to get on well with most people.

"Yes, she was a bit strange, but nothing too out there," said the full figured girl who wore jeans and a denim jacket.

"She was moody, sometimes talkative, at other times she would talk to no one," said a chubby young man with straight hair down to his shoulders.

One girl mentioned that Kasia had crazy ideas about things, but when pressed by Klusek, would only say, "Oh, you know, about life and stuff."

Her lecturers, who he interviewed last, were even less helpful.

Another bright-faced girl, looking slightly nervous, entered. Klusek indicated for her to be seated. "You are Ana Pacek?"

"Yes."

"I believe you were a fellow student of, Kasia Baran?"

"Yes, we took the same majors. Psychology and Religion."

"I see. Would you say you and her were friends?"

"For a short while, yes we were."

"But you are no longer friends?"

"Well, she changed."

"After her accident?"

"No, really she changed before then."

Klusek looked up at the girl.

"When did she change and how exactly did she change?"

“She changed when she became friends with an English teacher from Skarzysko.”

“What is the name of this English teacher?”

“Thomas Carter.”

“Continue.”

“Well, you see Kasia was very young when she first came to university, only seventeen. Then she started hanging out with this guy Mariush, but they were just friends. Mariush introduced Kasia to Tom. Tom was a lot older than her. Look, Kasia was a normal girl before she started going out with him. Then she became different. We used to attend chapel together. Then she stopped. Her views on many things seemed to change overnight, but I was never convinced that this came from her. She seemed to be echoing the views of someone else.”

Klusek, thought for a moment.

“And you think that this someone else was this person, Tom?”

“Yes.”

“You think they were involved, sexually?”

“I cannot say for certain, but you know a girl can tell when a friend loses her virginity. Anyway, she left him when she met Emilian. With Emilian she was her normal self again. But then he died in that accident. Look! I know she was seeing Tom again.”

“How do you know?”

“Oh, nothing factual or definite, but her behaviour changed. She became weird like she was before when she was with him.”

“What do you mean by weird?”

“Just weird, not herself. Like she was trying to be someone else.”

“This Tom, he is the one who teaches English in Skarzysko?”

“Yes, for Global.”

When the girl left, Klusek shook his head. Still, I suppose, he thought, one can be thankful that the future of Poland is in the hands of such fertile young imaginations.

The last of the students could tell nothing of value to Klusek and he felt annoyed with Dyka, a junior officer could have conducted these interviews. He packed his Dictaphone and each labelled cassette into his briefcase. A junior officer would transcribe those cassettes. He briefly glanced over his notes. Nothing, he thought, before also placing the



notebook into the case.

His mobile phone rang.

"Klusek!" The voice on the other end was at one time a familiar one.

"Wojciech here. I need to see you."

"Yes, General, when?"

"It is urgent, Klusek. I am at the Spa in Wielicka, the salt mine. Just ask for me, they know who I am. I will expect you in half an hour's time"

"Give me an hour." Klusek wanted his lunch.

"One hour, then."

Klusek knew the rumour that General Wojciech Piotrowski spent much of his life at the subterranean spa. Still, he could afford it, thought Klusek. Whatever it was must be important. General Piotrowski was not someone who wasted time on trivialities.

Klusek descended into the subterranean hallway of the old mine. The rise in air pressure caused his ears to pop. He walked past the carved pillars, lintels, and porticos of the tourist shops and headed for the spa.

General Wojciech Piotrowski lay on a table. A white towel covered his backside. A sturdy young woman massaged his back.

"Klusek, join me for a massage?"

"No thank you general, I cannot stay very long."

The general turned to the young woman.

"Leave us." She gave him a final hard squeeze that caused him to wince and left the room. The general wrapped the towel around his waist and motioned Klusek to sit with him at a comfortable suite of chairs at the far end of the room.

"I got an interesting call from old Wodek the other day. He was asking questions about Alekszandra Kalaman."

"Did he say why?"

"It seems her cousin, a certain Isaac Kalaman, has come across information that she was raped and murdered."

"There were three of them in that room when I took the call from Kiszczak."

"Yes, we have thought of that. One is dead. One lives in the United States. Which

means only one is still here.”

“I saw him, Sylwester, but I cannot remember his last name. Saw him on the train the last time I came here. He got off at Koslow.”

“We have been following him and Kalaman. I even ordered my men to try and buy Kalaman off. He is a relatively wealthy man, though, owns a hotel here in Krakow. He would not be bought. He is also too well connected for, well, you know. He is looking for her killer, Klusek. He is also looking for the reason why. If he finds that out he finds all of us out and we are all sunk. If he finds you then he will find us too, after all we conspired to cover up her murder. We will forfeit all the credibility that has taken years to build up. Saloni, our candidate will lose the election for mayor of the city when Zajac retires.”

“What are we going to do?”

“You, Klusek, are going to do nothing and say nothing. Do you follow?”

“Yes.”

“Good. We will keep a close eye on Kalaman and Wodek. Sylwester is a ridiculous man according to my men, something of a joke. He goes around dressed in the same blue suit, as if it were a uniform. But he lost his uniform a long time ago when he took it off on that day. Nothing can protect him now.”

“And what about Wodek, surely he won’t say anything?”

“We tried to speak to him too. He did not take too kindly to that. It was a bad move that I did not authorise. One of my guys approached him of his own accord. It pissed the old boy off. So we don’t know what he will do. Remember he is also on good terms with Oskar, Oskar Zymanski. We will keep an eye on them and do whatever is necessary to stop this.” The general looked hard at Klusek. “Is there anything you can think of that might be a problem for us.”

“No, nothing.”

“Good.”

As Klusek ascended the stairway that led out of the main hall, he felt light headed and leant heavily against the railing. A feeling of nausea overcame him. If the general knew that the lake where he had hidden Alekszandra Kalaman’s body would be searched if Kasia were not found soon, he would have Klusek murdered.

Klusek returned to his motorcar and began the long journey back to Kielce. Along the

way his mobile telephone rang.

"Halo?"

It was Justina Schmallerberg.

"I need to speak with you, it might be important."

"I can meet you this evening, at say seven o'clock. Should I come to your apartment?"

"No! It will be better if we meet somewhere else. There is a restaurant, Corso, on *ul. Marsatka Pitsuskiego* 33."

"Right, seven o'clock, then."

Klusek checked his wristwatch, it had just gone three thirty, and he placed a call through to *Inspektor Maciek Skora*.

"Maciek, Klusek here. I will be in Starachowice at around six-thirty. Where are you at the moment?" The woodland around *Zalew Lubianka*, you say. What about *Zalew Piachy*?" Klusek asked. "You have finished your search immediately around Piachy? Wait for me at Lubianka.... Yes, okay, at the entrance to the lake where Potudniowa meets with Zytunia."

Damn, thought Klusek, Maciek's search was moving very quickly. Klusek put his foot down as he drove north along the dual lane freeway that connected Krakow to Kielce and Warsaw beyond that.

Klusek was passing through Kielce by six o'clock and reached Starachowice by twenty past six. The 42 became Kielecka and at the far end of *Zalew Pasternik* he turned right into Moniuszki away from *Zalew Pasternik* and climbed a steep hill. At the top he crossed over 6-go Wrzesnia and continued to the end of the road where it formed a T-junction with Potudniowa. Here he turned left and continued past Lubianka and Letnia, both short roads leading to the lake, until he came to the intersection of Potudniowa, Zytunia and the lake. He parked his car and made his way through grass and acacia trees to where a group of policeman stood with Alsatian police dogs. He noticed Maciek standing away to the left under a tree on the bank of the lake. He walked over to him.

"Found anything?"

Maciek shook his head.

"A few dead gophers and a startled wild pig, that is all." Maciek drew a breath and asked, "*Komisarz*?"

“Yes,” Klusek said.

“I have split my men up between this part of the forest around Lubianka and the southern tip of *Zalew Piachy* to the east of here, they are working the search towards each other through all the forest inside of the Lubianka River. Both lakes are of equal distance to Miodowa, where the girl lives, and this is the most substantial area of forest closest to there. If she is in the woods somewhere, this is the most likely place. Otherwise, I think someone would have seen her out walking.”

“That makes sense,” Klusek said. “Continue searching that area and also the forest surrounding this lake to the south and west.”

“Yes sir.”

Klusek glanced at his watch.

“I have an appointment in the town at seven o’clock.”

Klusek left the lake and drove up Zytunia, all the way to 6-go Wrzesnia where he turned left and then after a little way right into Moniuszki. He drove down the hill until it crossed with the 42, or Kielecka as it was named here. The road became Radomska and he passed the end of *Zalew Pasternik*, past the restaurant by the lake where he lunched the previous day. The railway crossing was clear and he passed the bus station and then turned right into Pitsudskiego, past the grocery store, as the road wound up a bend to Corso on his right. He parked the car at the side of the road and went inside.

After announcing himself to the front of house manager at the counter, the man led him through a wooden partition into the restaurant proper. A private place, thought Klusek, as he took in the décor of the restaurant, each table enclosed within a wooden booth with red padded benches. A fire blazed in a large anthracite heater and a few tables stood in an open area in front of this. Justina was not there. He looked in all the booths on each side and then stepped to the right where more booths were located along a small passageway. He found Justina sitting in the last one, the opposite side of the passage from the window.

“*Dobry wieczor, pani Schmallenberg,*” said Klusek as he sat across from her.

“*Dobry wieczor,*” she said.

A waitress placed a menu before him.

“I will have a beer,” he said, before she left. “A Zywiec.” He did not offer anything to Justina, as there was a full glass of wine before her.

"Now, *pani* Schmallenberg, what is it you wanted to speak to me about?"

Justina cleared her throat.

"It is probably nothing, and I don't know why he didn't mention it to you. It...it's just that it puts me in an awkward situation."

"*Pani*, please take a deep breath and start at the beginning. Who is he and what did he not mention?"

"Alan, he did not tell you that we saw Tom, Thomas Carter, the English teacher from Skarzysko, at the hospital when we took flowers to give to Kasia. It surprised us because we did not understand why he would have known her. Also, well he seemed to know her quite intimately, if you know what I mean?"

"I know what you mean."

"It's probably nothing, and I really don't know why Alan didn't mention it to you. He also asked me not to tell you, but I had to. You said anything, however small, might be important. I had to say something."

Klusek nodded his head and smiled at her.

"Thank you, you have done well."

"Will we get into trouble?"

"No, I think we will just let it be."

"*Dziekuje Komisarz Klusek, Dziekuje bardzo.*"

Klusek sipped on his beer that the waitress placed before him whilst they had been in conversation.

"Tell me, *pani*," he said, "I would like to talk to this Tom, the English teacher from Skarzysko. Whereabouts in Skarzysko does he live?"

"Oh! He doesn't live in Skarzysko. He has moved from there. He bought a small farm in Suchedniow. He now lives in Suchedniow."

"Suchedniow." Klusek mouthed the word. Could this be the missing piece to the puzzle? Was this the reason why Kasia continued along the road after stopping at the roadside-cross?

"I don't quite know how to say this," Justina said.

"I am listening," Klusek said, to prompt her.

"I went with Tom for a while. He is a nice guy. It is just that, well, he has some quirks."

"I don't understand?"

"Must I spell it out, *Komisarz*?"

"I am afraid so."

"In the bedroom. Tom is a little kinky. He likes to be theatrical. He likes to recreate scenes from old photographs in his possession. He also likes to recreate poses from paintings. Some of those involve death, or dying, or the expectancy of dying. He likes that kind of control over women."

"Is he a sadist?"

"I wouldn't go as far as that, but I would say he doesn't mind it. He doesn't mind it at all."

Yes, thought Klusek, after Justina left and he was tucking into a beef stroganoff, it is time I paid a visit to this Tom Carter.

"You know, after our discussion, I had second thoughts about setting you up with Oskar. Until later, that is," Wodek said. Isaac looked up at the old man with mild surprise. He thought it a certainty that Wodek would try and arrange the meeting.

"What happened later?"

"Well, for one thing my boy, you got drunk."

"Is it that obvious?"

"Oh, yes, it always is."

"Well, I was paid an interesting visit from Saloni's lacky and his sidekick muscle."

"Aah! Yes, they visited me here too, I thought they may try you next."

"But how did they know?"

"I'm afraid that's my fault. I might have let something slip to a friend who told a friend. You know how it goes."

"I see."

"No you don't really, because if they didn't send their errand boys here last night I would not have changed my mind again. I would not have felt the need to put them in their place. So you see, it was fortuitous for you that they did. Imagine, they tried to warn me off. Me! Bugger them. They are all respectable businessmen or politicians now. But they played the wrong card. The person behind Saloni running for mayor is a former Department IV

General, Wojciech Piotrowski, one of Jaruselski's generals.

"General Wojciech Piotrowski," said Isaac, "and he lives in?"

"Here in Krakow," Wodek said.

Isaac made a note of this.

"He's a good Catholic now, by the way. Marisha goes to the same Church as him and his wife. But I cannot fathom the link between Department IV, churches, and Department I, foreign intelligence. Possibly they ran the same agent, I don't know. Information was sometimes selectively shared between WSW and General Staff Directorate II through Bureau "C", the operational files bureau. This was so that different units didn't recruit the same agents. That could be a possible explanation. The other explanation could be that the two units, Foreign Intelligence and Religious Affairs, were working together. If it involved the interrogation and unfortunate demise of a hostile, then probably there was a fuck up or they were trying to plug a leak. What doesn't make sense to me is that at that time, the mid 1980s, Krenzen was non-operational. If he was involved, then whatever operation it was probably had to do with Foreign Intelligence. And probably took place some time before then. Therefore, they were probably trying to plug a leak."

"I follow."

"Be careful, because if they were trying to plug a leak on a sensitive operation, a year or more after it was over, having it come out now may still be embarrassing for the parties concerned. Embarrassing beyond the implications of the murder of the young woman. Though that on its own would be reason enough if they were complicit in covering it up. This would explain the visit of our nocturnal friends."

"Do you have any idea where I should go from here?"

"As of yet, I have not been able to get in touch with my contact, who I think can help you. But I vaguely remember some operation around that time involving the two departments. But I never knew the details. If, whatever they were up to involved both Department I and Department IV, then scratch around in the files you have access to and look for anyone transferred from espionage to churches and religious organisations at around that time. If those files even still exist. This probably would have been for a short period of time. They would have used someone good and of fairly high rank, a major or even a colonel. That is all I can suggest for now."

Isaac nodded.

“I will do that.”

“And I will continue trying to reach Oskar.”

“Oh, before I leave,” said Isaac, “I don’t know if it means anything, but I have an address, Flat two of number ten *ul. Tomascza* in Krakow.” Isaac passed a copy of this to Wodek.

“I will look into it,” the old man said.

Wodek had said look in the IPN files for anyone who had been transferred from espionage to churches and religious organisations at around that time, but Isaac had a better idea. That evening he journeyed again to Koslow and left his car in the parking lot of the train station.

Sylwester Gorzynska left the train and walked out of the station and down the road towards the community block flat where Isaac knew he lived. The man stopped at a small pub about fifty metres from the block of flats. Isaac paused, and then entered the bar. He ordered a beer and sat at a small table in the corner. The television was switched on to a local soccer game and he pretended to be interested in it. The man downed his first beer and then ordered another. Isaac waited for him to finish the second and then stood and approached the bar. He ordered a second beer and lingered.

“Good game.” He indicated the television. The bartender nodded and the other man agreed, although Isaac knew he was not really watching. Isaac asked the bartender for pretzels and sat down at the counter. He took a few and then pushed the plate towards the other man.

“*Dziekuje!*” The man took a handful.

This is the kind of opportunity his boss always talks about, thought Sylwester, when he says be a salesman. You are ‘always a salesman,’ never off-duty.

“I’m Sylwester,” he extended his hand.

“Adam,” Isaac lied, and shook the man’s hand. Good, he thought, he does not recognise me.

“I haven’t seen you here before?”

“I’ve just moved here from Lodz,” Isaac lied again.

“You work in Krakow?”



“Yes.”

The other man took a deep breath. His expression became comical with a superior pinch of ‘let me enlighten you’. Here comes the pitch, thought Isaac.

“I used to have a job sweating for a boss. Now, I work for myself.”

Isaac nodded.

“You have your own business?”

“Yes, my own business.” The man ordered a round. “*Jedna Lech, jedna Tyskie, prosze?*”

“*Dziekuje.*” Isaac noted this break in conversation with interest. Sylwester probably thought it created dramatic suspense, when in reality it was a distraction.

“What do you do?”

The man placed his thumb beneath the ‘Herbalife’ button.

“I am an entrepreneur,” he said, and then launched into extolling the virtues of the products and how for a small initial outlay one could make the kind of returns that would allow one to be independent.

“But isn’t it a pyramid scheme?” Isaac asked. He did not want to seem too eager.

“No. Not at all.” Sylwester showed him diagrams that he removed from his briefcase, of the selling structure and also copies of studies verifying the quality of the products. Isaac also looked at well-thumbed copies of letters written by Bob from Florida and Jenny from Kentucky about how their lives were changed.

Much later in the evening, when Sylwester was very drunk, Isaac, who was nursing the same beer for over an hour and was relatively sober, began to talk about how things used to be. He spoke of his military service and intimated that he used to be with the SB, though he was vague on specific details. He dropped names too, lied and said he was under Wodek’s overall command. From the files held by the IPN he picked the name of a Captain Radek Smiebodna who was with Studies Bureau, combating organised opposition. Isaac had studied Smiebodna’s profile and now spoke about him to Sylwester.

“He was my commanding officer. A good man, Smiebodna, a strict man, didn’t tolerate nonsense. Couple of the guys almost killed a prisoner one time, a Solidarity shop steward from the steel works in Lodz. Did Smiebodna discipline them.” Isaac chuckled. “But that was where it ended. He didn’t take the incident higher up the chain of command. Didn’t

jeopardise those men's careers."

It did not take long for Sylwester to open up too.

"Wish I could say the same about our commanders. There was one. Well, he was a temporary commander. A real stickler too, took all his orders from the top. Bastard ended my career as a policeman."

"Who was that?" This was the information Isaac wanted.

"Klusek, Major Pawel Klusek."

"I have heard of him. What was the incident?"

"There was this girl," Sylwester said. "Pretty thing she was. We boys got a bit carried away. What did Klusek expect? He ordered her clothes be removed for the interrogation. We thought it was expected, you know. Used different methods, did Major Pawel Klusek."

"What happened to the girl?" Isaac asked.

"I don't know. Never saw her again after that."

"I see," Isaac said.

Later when Isaac left the bar feeling disgusted with the company he had kept and returned to his car, he noticed a black car that started shortly after he started his. It followed him all the way back to Krakow.

Sylwester left the pub much later and staggered along the road to his community block. He only became aware of them when he stepped into the stiff, outstretched arm of the larger of the two. A hand invisible to him, somewhere down towards the murk of the wet and oily pavement, flashed something in the light. He understood it was in motion. But he did not understand why that flash was there. The other hand grabbed his hair and he felt the friction of something very sharp cutting into his throat. He tried to protest, but instead his ears heard only a gurgling sound. Then, down he fell towards that wet, oily piece of tarmac, now exposed to the light by the large man stepping back, so that it reflected rainbow colours in oily murk. The two men waited in the shadows for a while and then walked off, back in the direction of the pub.

Isaac parked his car outside the hotel and as he was gathering his briefcase from the boot he noticed the same car parked a few hundred metres away. Its lights were on bright and its engine was revving. Isaac tried to look through the windscreen but because of the brightness of the lights could not make anything out. With a screeching of tyres the car

shot forward straight towards him. He stood transfixed, staring at it with disbelief, until at the last moment the motorcar swerved back onto the road proper and then disappeared around a corner. Afterwards there was no doubt in Isaac's mind that this display was for the purpose of intimidating him, to scare him off.

## Chapter 11

The next morning whilst he was shaving, Mira knocked and entered the bathroom.

"They will be leaving for England sooner than they thought. Krzysztof has a firm job offer in Manchester. That was Ana who telephoned whilst you were in the bath."

Klusek stopped shaving.

"When will they be leaving?"

"She says in two weeks time. Two weeks, Pawel, what is two weeks?" Mira began to cry and Klusek wiped his face and placed an arm around her.

"It will be okay. England is not that far. We will still see them."

She pulled away.

"No Pawel, you know how it is. They will visit a lot at first, but as time goes on, less and less." Mira left the bathroom.

Klusek splashed water on his face and then lathered soap. He finished shaving.

Dammit, he thought, did she not think it cut him up too that his child and grandchild were leaving. That his grandson would not grow up in Poland.

At the briefing with Dyka, Klusek related his suspicions surrounding Thomas Carter, the Englishman living in Suchedniow. He told Dyka about the student in Krakow who alerted him to the man, and about what Justina said.

Maciek then outlined how the search was going in the woods near Miodowa where Kasia lived.

"Klusek," said Dyka, "find out as much as you can about this Englishman, Thomas Carter, but tread lightly because we don't want any incidents. You will also continue to co-ordinate *Inspektor Skora's* investigation."

Klusek nodded, "I will be interviewing the man this morning."

"Now," said Dyka, "I have some pressing news that is disconcerting. Last night a Romany businessman who lives in Starachowice was beaten up by a group of skinhead thugs. His injuries were very bad. I visited him in hospital."

A tense silence came over Klusek and Maciek as they listened to Dyka.

"They knocked him to the ground and kicked him senseless. He sustained broken ribs, both his lungs are punctured and his jawbone is smashed. These things happen, I know. But the viciousness of this attack." Dyka shook his head from side to side. "They doused him with petrol, but stopped before setting him alight."

"My goodness," Maciek said.

Both he and Klusek were visibly shocked.

"I managed to get a statement of sorts from him. The young punks who did this kept repeating, 'Where is she? Where is Kasia?' Things might be turning ugly in that town and that is why it is imperative that we find Kasia Baran, and quickly."

As they were about to leave, Maciek turned to Dyka, "*Komisarz* Dyka?"

"*Tak?*"

"If we cannot find her in the woods, I think we should send divers into the lakes, when they have thawed out more, when spring comes. Some of my men have heard rumours from the Starachowice boys about a girl in the lake."

"Rumours, Maciek?"

"There have been reports?"

"Maciek, there are always rumours of young women in lakes. I am not going to have you chasing the Rusalki of myth and legend, or any other old wives' tales for that matter. Not yet, anyway. Finish looking in the woodlands, then we can think about the lakes."

Klusek breathed a sigh of relief.

The little cottage where Tom lived was on a sloping piece of land of about ten acres. It sat quite close to the road and Klusek noticed that the walls were recently insulated and coated. This must have been done before winter. The house was not painted yet. Probably by the time the insulation was applied it was too cold already for painting. The paint would have just frozen without drying properly and flaked off. Klusek noted a barn in the field behind the house and a mound of hay covered with a tarpaulin. The rear of the property bordered on a natural forest of spruce, ash and pine. Klusek knocked on the front door. There was no reply. He knocked again. Nothing! He walked round the back of the house and into the field towards the barn. When he was about halfway there, a man appeared from inside and walked towards him.

"I am looking for Thomas Carter."

"Yes, that's me."

"I am *Komisarz* Pawel Klusek of the Kielce police. I would like to ask you some questions concerning Katarszina Baran. I believe you know her?"

"Yes, I do. Won't you please come inside the house?" The man led Klusek towards the little cottage, stopping by an outside tap first, to wash his hands. "I was very sorry to hear that Kasia was missing. Especially that it has been for so long."

They entered the house and Klusek was ushered to a small settee.

"I'm sure she is all right, though."

"We hope so. But why do you say that?"

"I suppose because Kasia was always someone who could take care of herself." This information seemed to jar with what Kasia's fellow student had said.

The man customarily went to put the kettle on and Klusek picked up an album that sat on a coffee table in front of him. It was full of old photographs.

"These are very interesting," he called out to the man in the kitchen.

"What's that?"

"These old photographs."

The man appeared in the doorway.

"Oh, yes, I collect old photographs, old cameras too," he indicated a shelf filled with the black and brown shapes of old Kodax box brownies, a Coronet concertina camera, that was very old. He even had a Russian Zenit that Klusek was quite familiar with.

"Do you take photographs, yourself?"

"Yes, I develop too, the old fashioned way. Don't like this digital nonsense. I have a small darkroom set up in the barn."

Klusek nosed amongst the photograph albums and found some containing new photographs. He flipped through these, but found no photographs of Kasia Baran.

A little while later, Klusek was finishing his coffee. Tom was trying to light a cigarette but his lighter would not work.

"Here, use mine." Klusek handed him the flat chrome lighter that Mira gave to him for a Christmas present.

"Thanks!"

“So you admit you were intimate with the young woman?”

“Yes before, and then again for a time after she came out of hospital, but it all ended quite soon afterwards. Not immediately, but she seemed to drift away. That is the only way I can describe it.

“Mister Carter, excuse me for asking, but did it not bother you that you are so much older than the girl. She would have been what, seventeen, eighteen at the time?”

“Well, it wasn’t my intention. At first our relationship was more of a friendship.”

“But what can you, a man of how old,” Klusek checked his open notebook, “thirty five, have in common with a girl of seventeen?”

At first Tom did not answer. His mind returned to the first time he saw Kasia. That summer day when Mariush, his student and classmate of hers from university, brought her round to the flat he had occupied then in Skarzysko. She was wearing a yellow wide brimmed hat and a simple white dress. He remembered her blue eyes, intelligent and interested. Interested only in him, he thought at the time. But most of all he remembered the deliberate way she spoke in a deep melodic voice, not wasting words. He remembered how he felt the first time he saw her and the *Komisarz*’s ignorant words angered him.

“We shared a lot in common, *Komisarz* Klusek.”

The anger the man displayed surprised Klusek.

“Do you have any photographs of Kasia?” Klusek asked. “It might help us with our search.

“No,” the man said. Suspicion rose further in Klusek. The man takes photographs, yet takes none of Kasia. In the photograph albums he rifled earlier there were even photographs of Alan and Justina from Starachowice, yet nothing of Kasia. He was supposedly intimate with her. Klusek thought it would be better to watch this one from a distance. If Tom was covering his tracks, chances were that there were more tracks to cover. Klusek did not want to alert Tom that he was suspicious of him.

“Well, I won’t take up any more of your time.” Klusek rose to leave.

“No, it’s been no trouble at all. It’s just that, well, I am worried about her, you know.” The man bit his lip. “If I hear from her, I will let you know.”

“Thank you, Mister Carter.” The policeman left.

Thomas remembered how halcyon it was at the beginning with Kasia. How they met alone later. A chance meeting in Planty, the park in Kielce, eating ice cream together and then looking at the exhibition in Zamkova palace. Then they drank coffee and ate peroggi in the Russian bar in the basement of the palace. The whole while they talked and talked and soon he was telling her all about himself. Then, because it was late and she had missed the last bus to Starachowice, he drove her home.

The first time he began to photograph her was when they visited Tokarnia Open Air museum. Kasia liked to pose and he recorded each place, each moment in black and white; the manor house, the windmill, and the ancient well that they tossed their grosche into for good luck.

Later, Kasia would dress up in very old, even antique clothing that he would buy in Krakow or Warsaw. She would imitate the poses of actresses from years gone by, modelling for him the old photographs in his collection. Slowly they moved to the more erotic subject matter, also of many years before. Women removing frilly underwear or combing long hair, standing naked, facing away from the camera; he remembered particularly how she turned her head to one side.

Then Erte, - they came across a book in an Antiquarian bookshop in the Stare Miasto in Krakow. The book depicted the stylised drawings done by the fashion illustrator and designer of theatrical costume Romain De Tiroff, or Erte as he called himself, of his human alphabet. Images of people depicted as neutered forms. The human made into a silhouette, inseparable from the clothing worn. Language reduced to simple letters, nothing more. Presenting the human being as cipher. They both got the gist of it. They both wanted to try it out.

They rigged a makeshift studio in an old disused warehouse in Skarzysko. The building was said to be part of a manufacturing plant that made tin plates and cups for the army. In reality it used to be a munitions factory that made bullets for Kalashnikov's.

They began with the letter 'A', a complicated pose that involved leaning against a mirror. Then the letter 'B' and so on, but Kasia was not happy with the results.

"There is too much life, too much expression." She flung the prints to the floor. After a while, she picked them up again and studied them for a long time. Then she spoke.

"I am too alive, too youthful. I am too coquettish." And she seemed to Tom at the time



far too disappointed.

Tom was against it from the beginning, but she insisted. It was the letter 'K' that she wanted to focus on. Here the cipher involved a woman in erotic white underwear, her waist bound by pearls. Her arms stretched up at a 45-degree angle and her legs out at to the same degree to form the letter "K". However, Erte's woman had a grimace on her face. Kasia wanted to portray her, as she would have been later, after she was dead.

"No, I don't like it at all," he said. To him, Kasia was pure love and youth and life. He was in love with the lyricism of these things about her. To think of her in a way that involved death would evoke lusts in him that would destroy these feelings, forever. Others he fantasised like that about, but not Kasia.

"But we can do it with ropes and pulleys that you can remove when you enlarge and then print the photograph."

"Yes, but you're asking me to drug you. I won't do it."

"Nothing serious, just sleeping tablets – they're quite safe. I'll be in the harness already and when I am asleep the effect will be that I am dead. It's the pallor we need to achieve - a believable lifelessness. It will be the effect of me without life. I will become as close to achieving the silhouette as I possibly can. I will become as inanimate as the make-up and the clothing. It's important to me."

"But why not recreate the letter 'D'," he said. "D" with its blue sleeping woman covered in silver signs of the cosmos, entwined against a bow with a string of pearls that formed the stem. With a curved fingernail of white lace, like a sliver of the moon, that made up the curvature of the letter 'D'. "D" a perfect cipher, he thought, for non-existence.

"No, I want to do the letter 'K'."

"Why? Why is it so important? Dammit, Kasia, it's becoming an obsession with you."

"I want to know what it looks like, Tom, when it is me. I want to see myself as Emilian looked in his open coffin, dressed up and plastered with make-up."

And he had relented. Unfortunately, he was left with the conflict of being sexually attracted to the idea of being able to control and manipulate Kasia in such a state, as if she were a puppet. This lust overtook his more pure feelings towards her. He regretted this.

They rigged the harness. An upright beam that would secure a rope tied around the top of her waist. The rope would be obscured by strings of fake pearls. Blackened rope tied to

her wrists was looped through a pulley suspended from a ceiling beam. This would enable Tom to winch her arms up to a 45-degree angle. A black background would make most of the rope invisible and he could later touch up where it was fastened around her wrists. In a similar way her ankles were secured by white straps that were riveted into the cast iron floor, this would stop her legs from rolling to the side. Then she put on the clothing; the white silk, fingerless gloves that came up to just below her elbows, the pearl choker around her long neck, the white silk stockings, and the make-up; red nail-polish, red lip-stick, dark grey eye-shadow, and black mascara. Once in the harness, she swallowed the pills. She passed out. Worried at first, he listened to her breathing. It was shallow but regular. Then he hoisted her up and positioned her. He began to photograph. He used three spools. He was not going to repeat this.

“Right,” said Klusek when he returned to his men who had gathered out of sight of the cottage. “Sergeant, I know the bastard has something to do with it. He knew the girl, he takes photographs as a hobby, but there is not a single photograph of her. If that isn’t peculiar, I don’t know what is?”

“No, that doesn’t make any sense,” said the sergeant, shaking his head.

“I want a man posted in the woods at the back of his property with a camera. If you see anything suspicious photograph it. I want a man hidden so that he has a clear view of the front of the property. I also want an unmarked car on this road, keep it concealed, but so that you have quick access to the road if you need to follow him. When he goes somewhere, tail him. Right, sergeant, you are in charge.”

“Yes sir.”

“Don’t look so sad, at least you can earn overtime.”

The sergeant smiled, “Yes sir.”

“Oh, and if you need food, there is a *sklep* about a kilometre back towards Mostki. Send one of the men on foot and don’t use the car.”

“I will do that, sir.”

“Good.”

Klusek returned to Starachowice, where he joined Maciek near *Zalew Lubianka*. He wanted to keep a close watch on developments there.

## Chapter 12

It was almost six o'clock and Constable Adamkiewicz had long since finished his flask of coffee and was down to his last cigarette. It was another forty minutes before he would be relieved of his post. He stood up from where he lay in the undergrowth beneath the trees at the edge of the forest and stretched his legs. He stepped back from where he was lying and relieved himself. He looked towards the house. There was movement. The Englishman left the house and was walking up towards the barn. Adamkiewicz dropped under cover and readied his camera. He watched through the viewfinder as he entered the barn. This Englishman, Tom, spent a lot of time in that barn, thought constable Adamkiewicz, and relaxed; it would be a while before the man reappeared. But it was only a few minutes later when the barn door opened. The Englishman was carrying what looked like a parcel tucked under his arm. He shut the door and then picked up a spade. He looked around cautiously and began to walk up towards the forest. Constable Adamkiewicz began to photograph him.

Early the next morning, Klusek looked at the prints that constable Adamkiewicz and the sergeant placed before him.

"So he buried this parcel at the edge of his property, near the forest."

"Yes sir."

"Right! Adamkiewicz, who is out there, right now?"

"Podlecki."

"Good! You get back to him." The constable was not pleased. "If the Englishman even looks like he wants to dig these up, you show yourselves. Scare him off. Understand?"

"Yes Sir!"

"I need to see a magistrate about a warrant."

Klusek drove to the Magistrate court.

"So he buried something on his own land, that is not a crime." The judge was sceptical of Klusek's request.

"It is suspicious, sir, and I think gives us probable cause to search the property."

The magistrate consented, but would only give Klusek a warrant to search the man's land, not his house or barn.

From his motorcar, Klusek radioed the station. "I need more men at this address. Tell them to bring a shovel... Yes, a shovel. I'll meet them there, out."

The extra men arrived about twenty minutes after Klusek.

"Right, you lot come with me." He opened the gate and knocked on the front door even though he knew the man was not there. He was following procedure.

"Okay, come on, up the back. They walked up past the barn towards the top end of the property. Constables Adamkiewicz and Podlecki stepped out from the tree line to meet them.

"He buried it over there," he pointed towards the farthest corner of the plot.

"This way," Klusek called as Adamkiewicz led them to a patch of ground where it was obvious that the soil was recently disturbed.

"Here," Klusek pointed, "start digging."

Klusek stood over the constable as very quickly he began to unearth a stack of photographic paper, neatly tied with a ribbon.

"Here, give them to me." Klusek put on a pair of gloves. He carefully undid the ribbon.

"They're photographs," the constable said, looking over the *Komisarz's* shoulder.

"Of course they are. What did you think they would be?"

"Is that her?" the sergeant asked as Klusek passed the photos into his also gloved hands.

"Yes," said Klusek, "that's her all right. That's Kasia Baran." He turned to the sergeant. "Take these to Forensics, see if they can find a print on there that matches the ones on here." Klusek removed the chrome lighter from his pocket that was sealed in a small plastic zip-lock bag. "An afterthought," he replied, to the man's questioning look. "As soon as you know, either way, I want to know, and bring me copies of those photographs. Understand?"

"Yes sir. Where will you be, sir?"

"I will be here."

The constable left and Klusek walked to his motorcar to speak to Dyka.

Less than an hour later the sergeant returned with the forensic report and copies of the

photographs, as Klusek requested. The fingerprints on the photographs matched those on the lighter. Klusek turned to the sergeant, "those were the only fingerprints on them?"

"Yes," the sergeant said.

"There were no others?"

"No."

Klusek smiled.

"I think I've got you now," he said. "I need to get back to the court for a warrant to search the house and barn. Sergeant, call Maciek and tell him to group his men here. I will contact him with the details as soon as I get authorisation."

When Klusek returned to the court he met with the same judge, who was less than helpful.

The man looked at the photographs.

"You want to search his home. Trample through the house of an Englishman, no less, and a respectable member of our community, based on such circumstantial evidence. *Komisarz Klusek*, you don't even have a body."

"Sir, this is a photograph of the missing girl, *Katarszina Baran*, look at her, she looks dead."

"Appearances are hardly conclusive. And anyway you obtained his fingerprints under rather dubious circumstances."

"It was without intention on my behalf."

"Yes, that may be so, but how will a jury see it?"

"Look! I have a photograph of the missing girl with his prints on it. In the photograph there is clearly something lifeless about the way the girl appears. Photographs which this man deliberately tried to conceal. Further, your honour, and this is the clincher. If she was alive after these prints were made, why were her fingerprints not on them? Surely, she would have been interested to look at them, for whatever reason possessed her to pose in such a way. No, I believe she did not look at them because she was unable to, or worse, that she was already dead. I need to search his house before he tries to get rid of any more evidence."

The judge shook his head.

"*Komisarz Klusek*, I cannot let you do that. I am sorry, but the answer is no. Now please

leave.”

Klusek left the man’s chambers and the courthouse. He placed a call through to Zbigniew.

“Klusek, here. I am having a problem with a local magistrate. We have photographs of the girl, Kasia. In them she does not look in good shape. Thomas Carter, an Englishman, was seen by one of my men burying them on his property. Look, Zbigniew, the thing is that only his fingerprints are on those photographs, and no one else’s. That is very suggestive to me. Earlier, when I interviewed him, there were no photographs of Kasia anywhere, yet I have ascertained that he knew her intimately. Yes, an Englishman, Thomas Carter, who lives in Suchedniow.... Justice Haba is a friend of yours. Good! .... I will do that. *Do widzenia.*”

On Zbigniew’s advice, Klusek found a little restaurant nearby the courthouse and ordered an early lunch. It was one of his favourite restaurants in Kielce and served Hungarian food in an old worldly way, crisp white napkins, real silver cutlery and real china. The waiters were properly schooled in their art and left one alone, except when you appeared to need one then they would be beside you with unobtrusive alacrity. Here, Klusek always felt unhurried and able to think at his leisure.

He ordered Goulash and a bottle of Spanish Roca and lit a cigarette. Perhaps this was the break he needed. If only Zbigniew could get the justice to issue the warrant. Otherwise, how soon before Dyka gives the order to send divers into the lakes? He’d start with Lubianka too, because of the rumours. Klusek wiped the sweat from his brow. Then what? Surely they would find the girl, the other girl from all those years before.

About an hour later, Zbigniew telephoned him back.

“You have your warrant,” Zbigniew said over the telephone.

“Thank you,” Klusek said. He returned to the courthouse and picked it up from Justice Haba’s clerk. Back in his motorcar he radioed to Maciek.

“I want a full team at this address. Wait for me, I’ll be about twenty minutes. No! I want all of them. I’ll explain when I get there.” Klusek activated his police light and sped along onto the Warsaw highway. Then he turned onto the road leading to Suchedniow.

When he arrived at Thomas Carter’s farm, Maciek and his team waited by the front gate.

“Is he here?” Klusek asked.

“No!”

“Break it down.” Klusek indicated the front door.

“What exactly are we looking for,” Maciek asked.

“Kasia Baran’s body and anything at all belonging to her.”

“But, they knew each other?”

“Just get anything you can. Use one of the dogs in the house. One of you dog handler’s come with me. The rest of you, I want you to search every inch of this property.

Understand?”

“Yes Sir!”

“Now spread out.”

The barn was a rickety old thing that leant to one side.

“Do you think she is in here?” the young constable asked.

“No, of course she’s not in here. He wouldn’t be stupid enough to hide the body in a barn. She’s buried somewhere around here, though. I’ll bet.”

“The forest up there?” the constable said.

“Possibly, but what we need is anything to incriminate him further.” Klusek pushed the door open. The close smell of humus filled their nostrils. Klusek switched on his torch. However, once inside and accustomed to the dim light through old and disjoined planks, switched it off again. “Somewhere in here he has set up a photographic darkroom.”

“That might be it.” The constable pointed to a newly built lean-to structure against the far wall. It was coated with black melthoid used for roofing.

“Yes!”

They approached the structure. There was a light switch by the door. Klusek pressed it and opened the door.

The room was bathed in a murky green pea soup light. Directly in front of them was an antiquated Leica enlarger with a bulbous black head. To the right of this were three deep trays containing fluid. There was no ventilation in the room and the pungency of the chemicals burned their nostrils and lungs. Klusek opened the cupboards. He pulled out the small plastic developing tank and unscrewed the lid. It was empty. He opened the drawer but it only contained boxes of new photographic paper. He slammed the drawer shut.

“Shit!”

"Bring the dog in here, search this barn for anything belonging to the girl."

Klusek walked to the house.

"Found anything?" Klusek asked, stepping inside.

"Yes, womens clothing."

"Good, if they're Kasia's then the Barans should be able to identify them."

"I want every part of this farm thoroughly gone over. Tear that barn to pieces. I don't think she's there but do it anyway. And search every inch of this house."

"*Bacznosc! Bacznosc!*" The call came from the barn. Klusek ran towards the structure, as a policeman appeared carrying items of clothing. Klusek recognized these as being the stockings and gloves Kasia wore in the photographs.

"Where did you find these?" Klusek asked.

"The dog did. Stuffed in an old paint tin."

Klusek placed them in a bag for forensics. Then he made another call to Zbigniew. After hanging-up he walked back to the house.

"Maciek," he called.

"Yes," the other replied, stepping into the doorway.

"I need you to pick up an arrest warrant for me from Kielce from Justice Haba. It is all arranged. Then bring it to the police station in Skarzysko," Klusek said.

"Where are you going?"

"To bring Thomas Carter in for questioning. He is about to leave the English School where he works." Klusek walked a few paces towards the barn and shouted for the Sergeant. The man appeared. "Come," said Klusek, "we are going to pay a visit on *pan* Carter."

Zbigniew requested that Klusek apprehend Carter in a discrete way, much to the chagrin of the Sergeant, who was all for storming into the language school. Thus they waited near the entrance until eventually he came out. Unfortunately there were two young students with him.

"Wait!" Klusek said.

The man chatted to the students for a few minutes and then they walked off and he turned to go in another direction.

"Now," Klusek said as he got out of the car. "Mister Carter, you know who I am,"



Klusek said, showing him his identification. "This is Sergeant Krasinski. Will you accompany us to police headquarters in Skarzysko for questioning?"

"What? What are you doing? Are you arresting me?"

"Just questioning, please," Krasinski said.

At the police station in Skarzysko, Klusek left Thomas Carter in the interview room with strict instructions that he was to be given no liquid refreshment whatsoever. Klusek waited for Maciek, who arrived after half an hour with the warrant. He took it with him into the room where Carter was and with Maciek he formally arrested the man on suspicion of murdering Kasia Baran.

"But this is outrageous," said Tom, seated at the interview table.

"We have photographs that you took of a young woman who is missing." Klusek slid copies of the prints across the table. "She does not look very alive in those." Klusek leant towards the man. He raised his voice. "We also have the items of clothing – found hidden in your barn – that she wore in those very same photographs."

The room was bare save for the table and three chairs. Besides their voices, it was silent except for the whirr of the tape recorder.

"Look, you don't understand! Those photographs were staged."

"They look very real to me."

"It was fetish of hers. An obsession. She wanted to see how she would look when she was dead."

"Come now Mister Carter. Do you think we are stupid? Tell me this, why were those photographs buried on your land, if they are so innocent? Why bury them at all?" Tom covered his face with his hands.

"I panicked. With her being missing and then you visiting me. I panicked."

"Aah! You panicked after I visited you. Then how come there were no photographs of her in your house when I did visit you?"

"I hid them. I thought someone from the police would call. I was scared. Like I said, I panicked." He looked at the policeman who nodded his head.

"I believe you did panic. You murdered her and photographed her dead body. Why was that, Mister Carter? A keepsake? A memento? You know, to use as a way of reliving the experience?" The policeman was now grinning at him.

"No! That's sick."

"It is. But we are both adults. I understand how it is. Tell me."

"No! No! No!" Tom's jaw became set, defiant.

Klusek changed tack.

"But what I cannot understand is that if this whole thing was a staged whim on the part of Kasia, then where are her fingerprints? They are not on the photographs."

"She never touched them. She looked at one of them once. She took that one. Only once, but she refused to touch or look at the others. She never looked at them or spoke of them again."

"We did not find this photograph amongst her possessions," Klusek said.

"She must have destroyed it."

"I don't think Kasia ever saw those photographs," Klusek said.

"But she did. She did. She just took the one. She didn't look at the others. They seemed to repulse her."

"That is all very convenient." Klusek offered Tom a cigarette. "Why didn't you just burn them? Why bury them?"

"I couldn't bring myself to burn any of them. Not even those," he nodded his head at the prints, "as much as I hated them."

Klusek lit a cigarette for him. He inhaled long and then exhaled. He looked at the man and then passed the cigarette to him.

"We have the costume she wore. It is with forensics right now. I am confident they will find something. Come clean, Mister Carter. Polish justice is more lenient to those who own up early. All you have to do is tell us where you buried her. It is so simple. Think about it." At this point Klusek left the room.

"Should I go in?" Maciek asked.

"No," said Klusek, "let him sweat for a few hours. We have to break him. This case needs a confession."

"Just leave him like that?"

"Yes, no contact, no refreshment of any sort. We can blame it on an oversight if he complains. I know his type. He's the kind that needs reassurance. Leave him alone and he'll give us anything we want for that assurance."

## Chapter 13

“So what is Polish Reality?” Alan asked, turning to look at Jan. Justina’s declaration that the poet laughed at him behind his back still smarted. He watched the man’s face, carefully looking for traces of condescension.

“To despise what is wrong with Poland because we cannot bear to see what we love being fucked up. That is what we mean by the phrase Polish reality. When we say that and shake our heads. We aren’t shaking our heads at Poland but at each other.” Jan glanced in an enquiring way at Alan. He was looking for a more personal motivation for the question because Alan’s tone was somewhat contemptuous.

“If you ask me, it’s jealousy and selfishness that has mucked this place up.” Alan’s observation was deliberately derisive.

Jan chose to ignore this.

“But don’t you see, jealousy because of a strong sense of ownership of the place, jealousy because of being proud of our country and Nation. One cannot be proud of something one does not own. One cannot love what one owns without being jealous over it.”

“I see what you mean.” Alan began to warm again to his friend. Perhaps Jan was supercilious, patronising and often downright demeaning, but then he was like that to everyone.

“There are two Polands. The real one and the one of every Pole’s imagination.”

“Now, Alan how very profound. That has been my contention all along. The Poland of imagination is the far stronger. It needed to be because for so much of our history Poland was reduced to something we could only imagine. For 123 years up until 1918 Poland was partitioned and ruled by Austria and Russia. Even the Duchy of Warsaw, as it was known, was controlled by Napoleon. Poland existed only in its people. This made us an uncompromising lot as far as what we believe Poland to be. It also made us both pragmatic and romantic in regaining our Fatherland. Think of the name of our National Anthem —“Jeszcze Polska nie Zginęła” (“Poland Has Not Yet Perished”). Why do you think it is called that? From 1918 to 1939 we are a nation again, but then Germany invades, and after winning the war we lose our Fatherland and become a Poland Russified by the Soviet

Union. But the real question, Alan, is what do we all imagine Poland to be? The trick in understanding that, with such a fiercely patriotic, uncompromising, pragmatic and also romantic lot such as us, is to begin to understand that every single person imagines a Poland quite different in some way. But it does not stop there because we are a pragmatic bunch, after all. Justina, for example, she imagines something quite unlike say, the missing girl, Kasia.” Jan smiled. “Although I think Justina would prefer to pretend that she does not believe in a Poland of the imagination at all.”

They drank in silence for a while.

“I think,” said Jan, “if we knew the answer to that, it might give you an insight into your missing girl, Kasia.”

“What is that?” Alan asked.

“What is in the imagination of Kasia,” Jan said. “It will allow us to predict the practical steps she will take to realise what she envisions.”

“You don’t suspect foul play?” Alan asked, surprised.

“No!” Jan shook his head. “You mentioned a foreigner. This is Poland, the foreigner is king.”

Alan smiled. For much of Poland’s history its kings were foreigners. The foreigner was king, but this did not mean he wasn’t also despised.

Justina entered the bar and glowered at Jan.

“Alan, I need to speak with you,” Justina said.

“Sure, have a seat,” Alan said.

“In private, please,” she said.

“Okay, let’s sit outside. Please excuse us Jan.”

“Of course,” Jan said, with a smile on his face.

Alan led the way out to the tables on the veranda.

Justina shook her head at him.

“What?” he asked.

“How can you spend so much time with that windbag. No wonder you have the ideas in your head that you do.”

“What ideas?”

“You know what I mean. Anyway, that is not what I want to talk to you about.” Justina

took a deep breath. "I spoke to *Komisarz* Klusek. I told him that we saw Tom at the hospital when we went to visit Kasia."

"Bloody hell!" Alan said. "That's landed me in the shit!"

"No, it is okay, it's all sorted out. He is not going to do anything to you. Alan, I had to tell him. You see, he said that anything, however seemingly trivial, might help. Also..."

"What?"

"There was that about Tom, stuff I haven't told you, about his imagination, dark things that he liked to do that made me uncomfortable. What I am going to tell you might have a bearing on what may have become of Kasia. But before I do, I would like to have a drink."

Throughout the night, Klusek and Maciek took turns interrogating the prisoner. By morning their level of frustration was high.

"I don't think he's going to change his story," Maciek said.

"Oh, he will. Maybe not tonight," Klusek checked his watch and corrected himself, "this morning. But, eventually he will, they always do."

"Should we get some sleep," Maciek said, pulling open the blinds to reveal a grey and pale dawn breaking over the dreary buildings of the Skarzysko rynek.

"I think that is a good idea," Klusek said, stifling a yawn. "Tell the boys to put him in a cell and give him some tea or coffee."

Klusek gathered his things and went to the washroom to freshen up. Then he left a message with the desk sergeant that no one was to speak with the prisoner until he returned later that day.

On leaving the building, he was too slow to notice the outside broadcast unit from Studio Telewizji Kablwej parked beneath one of the trees that lined the avenue. Before he knew it, a camera was being shoved in his face and a reporter was asking about the man they had arrested.

"Is he a foreigner?" she asked.

Damn, thought Klusek.

"Will you confirm that the man's name is Thomas Carter and that he is an English teacher here in Skarzysko?"

Klusek sighed.

"We have arrested a man. His name is Thomas Carter. Yes, he is an Englishman who teaches English language here in Skarzysko. I am sure you know all of this already."

The reporter smiled.

"I cannot say any more at present. We will be holding a press conference later." Klusek waved and got quickly into his motorcar.

He drove along the 42 to Starachowice. It became Kielecka and then, as he passed the eastern side of Pasternik, it became Aleja Wyzwolenia. At Statiol he turned right and drove up Miodowa and on past the shops, until he came to the Barans complex.

Kasia's father opened the door.

They sat around the diningroom table.

"We have arrested a man. A Thomas Carter from Skarzysko."

"And Kasia?" *pani* Baran asked.

"We have not found her yet, but I feel confident we will find her soon."

*Pan* Baran spoke.

"This Carter, what does he have to do with Kasia's disappearance?"

"We have found evidence, photographs, that incriminate him."

"What kind of photographs?" *pan* Baran pressed him.

Klusek took a deep breath.

"I think that you, and *pani* Baran need to prepare yourself for your daughter not coming back. I am sorry."

*Pani* Baran broke down sobbing loudly. In a futile gesture to stem the flood of tears her husband placed his arm around her. He looked at Klusek.

"What was in the photographs? You have not told us."

Klusek looked at the man, but his gaze caused him to look down and away. He described the contents of the pictures.

*Pani* Baran sobbed and sobbed.

Much later Klusek returned to an empty flat and threw off his clothing. He showered and then lay down on his bed. Very soon he was asleep.

## Chapter 14

With Tom it was all about the notion of things, thought Iwona. The notion of an idyllic life, the small farm he had bought in Suchedniow – and where did she fit into all of his imaginings? Was she to be his notion of the perfect wife? And what of those photographs? Quickly she forced her mind away from further thoughts on the meaning of those photographs.

After breakfast, Iwona decided she would go for a walk. The sky was clear with only a few feathery clouds, high up. She consulted the tourist guide and selected a trail that led to a small lake in the foothills of the mountains. Then she packed a snack of sandwiches and a flask of tea.

The highlight of Iwona's morning was when she saw the wildcat. She happened upon it after walking for about an hour, and at first she was a little afraid of the creature. Then a sense of curious awe came upon her and she went down on her haunches and observed the animal for some time before it slunk away.

The lake was lovely and she dipped her feet into the icy cold water. Then she ate her packed lunch of sandwiches and drank tea that she poured from the flask. After that she spread out a little rug and lying down on it, dozed. Iwona remained like that, drifting in and out of a pleasant slumber until she fell asleep completely. After about an hour her eyes opened. Something was wrong. She rose up on one elbow with a start, for the sky was now a foreboding blue black. Quickly she gathered her things and made off down the path with haste back to the road and the *pensionat*.

Isaac looked at the mind-map he had drawn. Singer and Kasia and then next to their names, Kielce pogrom. In another bubble was written Klusek and Piotrowski and a question mark. Between the two bubbles was written the name, Jurgen Krenzen. Somehow, Krenzen was the link between the two. He was in some way the reason why Kasia was arrested. Isaac needed to find out as much as he could about Jurgen Krenzen. He telephoned the historian in Wroclaw. He needed to search the IPN records.

“One of my doctoral students, Edyta Listek. Her area of specialisation is SB activities

against the Church. She is in Warsaw at the National Archive. I will set it up for you to meet her there,” he said.

In Warsaw, Isaac met the young woman at the National Archive.

“*Dzien Dobry*,” she said. “My area of specialisation is SB activities against the Church.”

The young woman led Isaac down into the building.

“These archives are protected against fire,” she said. “When you hear the alarm sounding, you have thirty seconds to get out of the room otherwise the doors will seal you in. Carbon di-oxide is automatically pumped in to suffocate the fire. If you are still inside, it’s tickets for you.”

Isaac acknowledged that he understood with a nod.

After a long walk past rows and rows of shelves she finally came to a stop. The shelves contained boxes of files.

“There are over 80 kilometres of files here,” she said.

“We have grouped them into years and also areas of activity. You are looking for Department IV activities from 1985?”

“Yes, but it is a little more complicated than that,” Isaac said.

“It always is,” the young woman said.

“I have four names. Jurgen Krenzen who worked for Department I, espionage. I know he was a controller stationed in Berlin. He retired at the beginning of 1984. Then there is a Major Pawel Klusek. I think he was transferred from another department, possibly espionage, to Department IV, churches and religious organisations. There is a general Wojciech Piotrowski...”

“Piotrowski,” she said. “He is easy. He is still active today in behind the scenes politics in Krakow – ‘The Network’. Piotrowski was Department IV and later he headed Studies Bureau. But the truth about Piotrowski is slightly different.” After a long walk past rows and rows of shelves, she eventually stopped and took down a brown box. She opened it and removed a green file. “That is Piotrowski. We don’t have a lot, but there is enough to give us a picture of him.”

Isaac opened the file and looked at the photograph of a convivial looking man stuck to a typewritten page.



“That was him in the 1970s. Don’t be fooled by the way he looks. General Wojciech Piotrowski was particularly ruthless. Rumour has it, within knowledgeable circles, that he still is quite brutal.”

Isaac began to read the file.

“I see he headed something called Group ‘D’ from 1973. What is group ‘D’?”

“Group ‘D’ was the department within the department that was Department IV. Do you want the long or the short version?”

“The long version, if you don’t mind,” he said.

“From 1949 on the Catholic Church was defined as the main institutional opponent, but this was Poland and the Church was central to being Polish. The SB had to tread carefully. So what they did was set up an agent network of so called ‘patriot priests’ to infiltrate the Church. They also collected compromising materials, genuine or forged, on individual priests. They employed a process of intimidation through unannounced ‘cautionary’ conversations on a mass scale.”

“The ‘uninvited guest’ approach?”

“Yes, you are aware of that tactic.”

“All too well,” Isaac said, remembering the nocturnal visit at the bar on Poselska.

“During the Stalinist era, show trials and mass arrests were the norm. Starting small with the arrest and sentencing of four priests in Katowice in 1949, they gained in momentum and in 1953 Bezpieka held its largest show trial that included the arrest of hundreds of priests, monks and nuns. This trial was orchestrated by Bezpieka from beginning to end and culminated in the arrest of the Primate Stefan Wyszyński in September 1953. You must understand that the policy employed by Bezpieka against the Church was one of internal disintegration that resulted in critical mass. After Wyszyński’s arrest the bishops who were not arrested along with him declared their loyalty to the State. Bezpieka activity eased off for a few years but then Department IV prepared lists containing pairs of bishops who were to be divided by means of various operational combinations. This was meant to cause division amongst the hierarchy. The most sophisticated actions were directed against Primate Wyszyński who was under constant surveillance. Bezpieka encouraged other bishops to challenge his position in the Episcopate.

During Gomułka’s time...”

“Who?” Isaac asked.

“Gomulka, he headed Bezpieka after the Stalinist era, 1956 to 1970. During his time, the aim was to limit the Church’s role in society. Crosses were removed from classrooms, religion was no longer taught in schools. There were also ‘spontaneous’ protests organised against the Episcopate of the Federal Republic of Germany who offered reconciliation for the war and finally, a struggle against the Church’s celebration of the Millennium of Poland’s baptism, 1966 to 1967.

And now we get to where General Wojciech Piotrowski enters the scene.

Edward Gierek took over Bezpieka after Gomulka and tried to normalise Bezpieka relations with the Church. However, he did not want to resign from many tried and tested methods of fighting against the Church. So he decided to keep them more secret and set up Independent Group ‘D’, the ‘D’ standing for ‘disintegration’. General Piotrowski was appointed to head Independent Group ‘D’ from its inception in 1973.”

“And Group ‘D’ was involved in illegal activities?” Isaac asked.

“Yes, for the most part fairly harmless stuff such as publishing periodicals, *Ancora*, *Samobrona Wiary* and *Nowa Droga*, aimed at dividing and attacking the authority of the bishops. They also employed more classical SB methods, such as spreading false rumours. You must remember the one about Cardinal Karol Wojtyla buying his doctoral dissertation?”

“Yes, I do, it caused quite a scandal.”

“And sending anonymous letters based on information obtained by agents and through illegal surveillance. They were also behind securing three papal visits to Poland in 1979, 1983 and 1987. Under Piotrowski, Independent Group ‘D’, developed a culture that became less and less accountable. For example in 1978, during the pilgrimages to Jasna Gora, 43 of their agents who participated planted pornographic materials on other participants, as well as leaflets informing of conflicts within the Church. They also served hallucinogenic drugs to some priests and opposition activists. It all got really out of hand in October 1984 with the kidnapping and murder of the opposition priest, Father Jerzy Popieluszko. The agents who perpetrated this crime were arrested, tried and given long sentences. But those behind it, those who ordered his assassination, never came to trial or were even held accountable.”

"You think that Wojciech Piotrowski was behind that?"

"Yes, and worse, there is evidence that there was a secret group within Independent Group 'D' that was made up of officers transferred, at times, from other departments. We have discovered references to a so called 'Action Group' with no fixed members, except for its upper hierarchy, and who carried out old style Bezpieka activities. Highly illegal and often extremely violent."

"I wonder," said Isaac, "if this Major Pawel Klusek was ever assigned to 'Action Group'?"

"He wouldn't have been assigned to it officially, but we have records of agents temporarily assigned to Department IV without official reasons given. Those we suspect worked temporarily within Independent Group 'D', and possibly 'Action Group.'"

"How would you know if they were with 'Action Group'?"

"We don't, but if the agent in question is of a highly specialised type or of a high rank and is transferred from say Department I, espionage, then one might assume it to be so. Of course, we cannot go on record and say that, but it would be a valid assumption to make, informally."

"Edyta," Isaac said, "I need to know if Major Pawel Klusek received a transfer like this. A junior officer, Sylwester Gorzynska, was a subordinate of his at that time, if that helps at all."

"Wait! Let me make a note of these names." She removed a diary from her bag and jotted them down.

"Anything else," she asked.

"Well, I also need to find out everything I can about a Jurgen Krenzen, he was with Department I, an upper-echelon-controller who ran agents out of Berlin. He retired at the beginning of 1984."

"I will look for you," she said.

"I will make it worth your while, lunch perhaps?"

She smiled.

"Lunch, then, but I will need at least until tomorrow," she said.

"Lunch, tomorrow, then."

Isaac left the dry and claustrophobic atmosphere of the archives and walked to the front

exit. Once outside, he placed a call through to Wodek.

Wodek informed him that he had managed to set up a meeting with his contact at six the following evening. Isaac was instructed to wait near the railings that overlooked the Vistula on the Wawel complex.

“I’ll wear something recognisable, that red jacket I wore the last time I met with you,” Isaac said.

“You do that,” Wodek said. He chuckled as he put down the telephone.

## Chapter 15

Klusek awoke suddenly and in a sweat. The mewling sound had increased and increased in volume in his dream, until it was all there was. He gasped and sat up in bed. His body was drenched in sweat. He got out of bed and went into the bathroom where he splashed water onto his face. He filled a glass with water and drank that. He stepped into the living room and through the open curtains could see that all was in the grip of a torrential downpour. The wind blew, howling against the windowpane, and swathes of falling rain splashed down on everything. Klusek dressed warmly and was about to leave the flat when Mira came in carrying a plant in a ceramic pot.

“Oh, hello, you are home,” she said, kissing him on the cheek. “Silly girl!”

“Who,” he asked.

“That daughter of ours. Have I taught her nothing? She gave me Laburnum as a present. Laburnum means forsaken. I did not want to hurt her feelings, so I accepted it. But you never give Laburnum, nor White Cherry, Lavender, Witch hazel and certainly not Oleander.”

“Why not?” Klusek asked.

“Because White Cherry means deception, Lavender means distrust, Witch Hazel a spell and Oleander, danger.

“So what should you give?” Klusek asked in a teasing way.

Irritated now, Mira answered, “Hawthorn for hope, Magnolia for nature, Myrtle and Peach Blossom for love.”

“I will remember that the next time I buy you flowers,” Klusek said as he went out of the door. He picked up a daily newspaper and in his car read the article of the arrest of Carter. It seemed their facts were straight.

Then he drove slowly out to Skarzysko, and though still feeling unsettled by the nightmare and the memory of the mewling sound from the girl, he was confident that today would bring a confession from Carter.

Jan, the poet, read the newspaper article with interest. He wondered what great sin the

English teaching photographer from Suchedniow had committed. Photographs involving the girl, artistic, he thought, but twisted. Twisted in what way? What crude lust did Tom impose upon his art form? What work was reduced to an idea? Death was certainly the idea. And the work involved the girl. He would wait and hopefully find out more about those photographs as the case progressed. This was important, thought Jan. Ideas make works. Works should never be reduced to ideas. That was why he despised the constant critical analysis of his own poetry. Reducing the beauty of it into the ideas that made it, then those ideas discussed and argued over. But, to do that to your own creation, to force an idea over and above the art of your own work, that truly was a sin.

Over breakfast Justina read and, in parts, translated the newspaper article for Alan.

"Bloody hell!" exclaimed Alan.

"Bloody hell, is right," she said.

"It does not say exactly what these photographs looked like?"

"No, only that they were taken of the girl and that they incriminated."

Alan whistled. "Shit, they must have been pretty perverse."

Justina looked at him.

"I feel it could have been me," she said. "You know, the things I told you about him. The things he liked to do to me."

Jealous anger rose in Alan. Was she so stupid that she thought he wanted to be reminded of all that?

"Yes," he said in a cold tone, "it could have been you."

Isaac stayed the night in Warsaw at hotel of an acquaintance. After a very late and leisurely breakfast, he was relaxing in the lounge with a sport's magazine when his mobile rang. It was Edyta, the researcher from the National Archive.

"I have found out all I am able to," she said. "Meet me here in half an hour. Come down to the archive."

"That is good for me," he said.

Hurriedly he checked out of the hotel and made his way to the Archive.

"I could find nothing on file about Pawel Klusek," Edyta said, "except that he left Department I at the beginning of December, 1984. He re-appears in March 1985, assigned to Studies Bureau, combating organised opposition. Three months are missing from his record. Without question they have been removed, one can tell."

"And Jurgen Krenzen?" Isaac asked.

"Jurgen Krenzen was boarded, he was dying of cancer."

"Cancer," said Klusek, "that could explain the connexion with Hospice. Maybe Ola was seeing him when she worked as a volunteer for Hospice?"

"That is quite possible."

"I found something else concerning Krenzen. It was a directive to Department I ordering the cessation of something called Purple Orchis; Minister of the Interior, Kiszczak, signed the command himself. What I came across was a copy of the directive that was sent to Jurgen Krenzen. Here is the interesting part. It was sent to Rome, not Berlin where he was normally stationed. I cross-referenced and a copy was also sent to General Wojciech Piotrowski. A clerk in Kiszczak's office misfiled these copies of the originals, we tagged it as such, you see, and that is probably why they survived."

"So operation Purple Orchis must have involved both Group D, probably Action Group, and Department I, espionage?"

"Yes," she said. "The junior officer, Sylwester Gorzynska, was a regular in Department IV, churches and religious organisations."

"Would he have been with Group D?"

"It is possible he was. I can keep checking. Sometimes anomalies in their case records, large chunks missing from them can indicate this. Unfortunately, it is not always possible to know for certain."

"Thank you, Edyta," Isaac said. He looked at his watch. It was already after two o'clock. He excused himself.

"I have to leave, I have an appointment in Krakow at six," he said.

"What about lunch?" she asked.

"Next time I'm in Warsaw, I promise," he said, and gave her a big smile.

Isaac stared at the Vistula River, flat as glass. He leant against the railing. Wawel

complex rose behind him. A man's voice spoke.

"Are you Isaac?"

Isaac turned.

"Yes, I'm Isaac Kalaman."

He extended his hand. The man shook it,

"I am Oskar", he said and stood beside Isaac, against the rail. "Cold, for this late in the year."

"Yes," Isaac agreed.

"You want to know about Jurgen Krenzen?"

"Yes."

"Wodek has given me some details. Tell me what you know and I will try to fill in the gaps."

"In January 1985 my cousin, Alekszandra Kalaman, disappeared without a trace from here in Krakow. At the time, she was doing voluntary work for Hospice. A week ago, my friend Piotrek, a monastic from Wachock, visited me and told me he had information concerning Ola. This information he got from his relative, Sylwester, who used to work for the SB, here in Krakow, around that time. He spoke of a rape he participated in, of a girl called Alekszandra, who was involved with Hospice. He then hinted to Piotrek that the girl was dead, possibly murdered. He told me where Sylwester lived and I followed him and then made contact. He drinks a lot and I managed to get out of him that he worked under a man by the name of Klusek, Major Pawel Klusek, for a short period of time. But, I could find nothing out about Klusek in the files. I could also find very little on Jurgen Krenzen except that he was a controller for Department I, stationed in Berlin. What we did manage to find was a directive to both Krenzen and General Wojciech Piotrowski, who headed Group D, ordering the cessation of an action called Purple Orchis. Krenzen was in Rome at the time. However, that order was the only thing we could find that ties Krenzen and Piotrowski together. I think that Action Group, run by Piotrowski, was involved with Department I in that operation. What ties Klusek in is what Sylwester told me, but that is all I have so far.

"You are lucky to have found anything about Action Group, those files would have been destroyed by Piotrowski and anything from the Ministry side by Kiszczak himself."



"The references we found had been misfiled."

"I see," Oskar said as he scratched his chin. "Major Pawel Klusek was lent from foreign intelligence to churches and religious organisations. It seems your cousin cared for Krenzen, whilst he was dying of cancer. Biblical really, one of our own dying of cancer, here in Krakow, with all the fuss being made about the carcinogenic effects the Lenin Foundry was having on the city at that time."

"Krenzen was living on *ul. Tomasca*, then?"

"Yes! Well, routine surveillance picked up that your cousin was passing information on to Lukas Mazowiecka, a friend of your uncle's, no doubt. It was known that he was a hostile, of a bit more dangerous variety than Singer Kalaman. We suspected him of being a spy for the West. What was your uncle after?"

"I think he set Ola up to fish information out of Krenzen, about the Kielce massacre. Krenzen was Sobczynski's aide in 1946. Uncle Singer believed Sobczynski orchestrated the pogrom."

"Krenzen was Sobczynski's aide? That is news to me. Anyway, Klusek arrested your cousin and after that she disappeared. None of us, to this day, has any idea what happened to her. We were understandably jittery at the time, I'll tell you, after the trial of the murderers of Father Jerzy Popieluszko. But it was all hushed up and that was the end of it."

"So you think this man Klusek killed my cousin."

"I cannot say for certain, but he was the last person to be seen with her."

"Is it true that she was raped?"

"Yes, but I don't think Klusek had any part in that. He was not the type."

"Do you know what operation Purple Orchis was?" Isaac asked.

"Yes, but I cannot tell you just yet. Give me a little time and I will. However, you must understand that if I divulge information to you about operation Purple Orchis, I would need your word that you will keep quiet about it for a little while."

"How come?"

"I have my reasons," the man said, rubbing thumb and forefinger together.

Isaac digested this information. Still it was better than nothing.

"Agreed," Isaac said. "Where can I find this man, Pawel Klusek?"

"Oh, that's easy," Oskar opened the newspaper that was tucked under his arm. He

showed Isaac a picture of a man on the front page beneath a header that read, "Still No Missing Girl." Oskar smiled at Isaac and handed him the newspaper.

"One last question, will you go on record with this?"

Oskar did not reply immediately.

"Probably. However, your best bet will be to go to the papers."

"If I do will you back me up?"

He nodded his head.

"Yes, I think I will. But, nothing will change unless you find her body and the odds of that are slim. You'd pretty much have to get Klusek to confess."

Before Isaac left, Oskar stayed him with a touch on his arm.

"One other thing."

"Yes," Isaac said.

"You might want to talk with Lukas Mazowiecka, he is here in Krakow. He turned informer after his arrest. He is the one who named Ola as an enemy agent." Oskar gave Isaac a piece of paper with the man's name and address on it. "They say he has found religion, or at least is now a member of Alcoholics Anonymous. He is very open to making amends for those he has hurt in the past. You should pay him a visit. *Do widzenia!*"

"Czesc," Isaac said, as the man walked off.

## Chapter 16

The second time Kasia and her boyfriend, Emilian visited, Piotrek sensed something quite different in Kasia. It was a similar feeling to the one he felt the last time when she visited on her own, he could not recall what it was. He knew it was something about her manner. But could not think what it was about that.

"Really, Adalbert was a rebel," Kasia said.

"How do you mean?" Piotrek asked. He would not have characterised Adalbert in this way.

"He turned his back on his own family and friends, his own people, his own life, and even the Pope. He came north. That makes him a rebel – *marginal*, as the French would call him."

"But he wasn't rebelling against something, so much as coming here to do something," Piotrek said.

"No, I did not think he was a rebel without a cause, like James Dean," Kasia said.

"I suppose if you put it like that," Piotrek said. "Why is it important, though?"

"No reason," Kasia said.

Piotrek sensed she was being cagey. He did not press her further.

Yes, he thought, there was definitely something in her manner that was beginning to reveal itself then. Something he was uncomfortable with. Then the feeling came back to him. It was as though Kasia was manipulating him. Using him for some other purpose, as if she had a vested interest in these conversations. That they were not entirely innocent, that there was a motive behind what she saying and doing.

At the time he shut out this feeling because there was no logical reason for it that he could see. Also it was absurd. How could someone as young as Kasia be manipulating him? Now he was beginning to feel the foolishness of this deduction. His own arrogance led him to mistrust his gut instinct. But he still had no idea of her motives behind the questions she asked. He just knew that it was not all on the level.

"I don't think I can imagine Saint Adalbert wearing a leather jacket and riding a motorbike," Emilian said.

"Of course you can't," Kasia replied. "You have no imagination. Jesus was a rebel. Priests have made him into a pet God."

Piotrek thought he should say something, but could think of nothing. He consoled himself with a wise head and a still tongue.

"At least Adalbert knew who he was when he died, rather than what he should be. To know that you have to be a rebel," Kasia said. "He became who he was meant to be. He fulfilled his destiny."

The philologist from Warsaw telephoned Piotrek.

"It is very interesting," he said. "It would appear that there are two authors of this text, and that these two parts were written at an earlier and a later time. I noted this in the language forms. But what I think will interest you, is that the earlier segments of the text uses language far more coloured by absolutes. There is an all or nothing thread through their use of images. Piotrek, I think this earlier group would have been of the kind that is messianic, waiting for the return. They would have willingly given their lives for their belief, and possibly even sought martyrdom."

Piotrek became excited.

"You have noted these older parts of the text?" he asked.

"Yes, I have."

"Will you e-mail this information to me?"

"Certainly."

After he had ended the call, Piotrek opened a word document in his laptop and typed the words: 'tribulation', 'messianic' and 'martyrdom'.

The feeling that something was wrong did not leave Iwona as she hurriedly made her way back to the *pensionat*. She got there just before the full force of the storm broke. Hot, and feeling grubby from walking so fast, she took a shower and immediately regretted it. Yet again, the water was still not hot enough. That is it! She thought as she dressed, it is time for a showdown with the owners of this place.

After voicing strongly her complaint to the owner and his wife, Iwona went down to the basement dining area to have lunch. Still feeling that something was wrong, she picked up

the newspaper from where the occupants of the table, a young couple from Warsaw, left it after finishing their meal. Then she knew that there was something in the atmosphere that was troubling her, for Iwona was superstitious by nature.

“No, this is not right,” she said to herself, as she read the front-page article about the missing girl, Kasia. “It was impossible,” she said again, “Tom could not have done this. The time when he took those photographs was, well, all wrong.”

Iwona rose from the table without eating. She would go to Kielce as soon as she could.

“But I will not have stayed the whole week,” Iwona said to the landlady who was directing her two half naked brats away from the heating stove.

“But you booked for a week, you will have to pay for the whole week.”

“Not if I don’t stay for the whole week.”

The woman was impossible and Iwona returned upstairs to her room. From her mobile phone she telephoned the PKS office and changed her bus ticket to the following morning. She telephoned the Zakopane Information Bureau and ascertained that all she would have to pay the owners of the *pensionat* was a small cancellation fee.

The bus journey from Zakopane to Krakow took two and a half hours. In Krakow she had a cup of tea and a slice of cake at the Hotel Polonia whilst she waited forty minutes for the next bus to Kielce.

Outside the PKS station in Kielce, Iwona got into the back seat of a taxi.

“*Dzien dobry!* Police Headquarters, *prosze.*”

At the police station she waited patiently, until she was directed to the *Komisarz*’s office.

Lukas Mazowiecka was quite willing to meet with Isaac. Isaac felt apprehensive about seeing him.

The man suggested they get together at a restaurant operated by students that was situated a few lanes back from the main square in Krakow. For some reason, that Isaac could not fathom, the restaurant specialized in Georgian cuisine. He ordered lamb with goat’s cheese

and Mazowiecka ordered the same.

"It is their best dish," Mazowiecka said.

Isaac ordered fruit juice in deference to his guest's problem with alcohol.

In spite of all, Isaac began to warm to the man with his bushy and untidy beard, his large nose and bright blue eyes. There was something effusive about his manner that Isaac liked.

Mazowiecka took a cigarette from the pack placed on the table and offered one to Isaac.

"I don't smoke," Isaac said.

He then lit a cigarette for himself and Isaac noticed that his hands trembled.

"It was routine letter box surveillance, that is how they caught me," Mazowiecka said.

Isaac knew that during those times letterboxes were randomly placed under surveillance.

"Your uncle asked me to help out. He was old and couldn't leave Kielce permanently.

Stupid of me, but I used letter boxes to send information to him."

"But then why wasn't he also arrested?"

Mazowiecka looked surprised.

"Oh! But he was. They released him after a few days questioning. Didn't you know?"

"No, I did not," Isaac said.

"He led me to believe that he was released because of his close ties with Israel. I thought otherwise when I realised that your young cousin, Ola, was not coming back. I think he didn't want the reasons for her disappearance to come out either. His own family would blame him."

Isaac, who had formed a quite different understanding by now of who his uncle was to his naive childhood memories, knew that the guilt Singer felt from Planty would have caused him to remain silent.

"So my uncle knew what happened to Ola all along?"

"Yes, I believe he did. He had to. He couldn't take responsibility for it. He couldn't take responsibility for the Kielce pogrom, yet felt he was to blame for it his whole life. Think about it, Isaac, he spent his whole life trying to show his innocence in the pogrom and it results in the disappearance, the death – he knew she was dead – of his own great niece. He would want to keep that silent."

"So he convinced Bezpieka of this?"

"Yes, and he kept silent."

The Georgian lamb with goats cheese arrived accompanied by healthy Polish sized portions of chips and salad. In silence they began to eat their food. Neither were very hungry by now.

“How do I know I can believe what you are saying?” Isaac asked.

Mazowiecka slowly nodded his head. He put down his knife and fork.

“You can believe what you know about him.”

“Look! Don’t give me this touchy feely crap.”

“Isaac, Isaac, I still have to tell you why I am to blame for Ola’s disappearance.” Tears formed in the corners of his eyes. “Once you hear that, then decide whether you believe what I have told you about your great uncle.”

“Speak.”

“My interest was in Krenzen. There was an operation called Purple Orchis that a lower echelon operative for the West, an informer who worked as a clerk in the MSW, passed on to us. We knew scant details about it, but needed more. Unfortunately, our clerk was arrested and the information dried up. We knew that Purple Orchis involved Pope John Paul II, and that it was a smear campaign, but that is all we knew. We also knew that Krenzen and Piotrowski were key figures in the conspiracy. When your great uncle became involved with Krenzen through your cousin Ola, it provided the perfect cover for our operation. I positioned myself to be a conduit between her and your uncle in Kielce. I was hoping to steer her relationship with Krenzen to uncover more about Purple Orchis. The risk was minimal, I thought. In fact, they weren’t even watching Krenzen anymore. Then I was arrested because I used a letterbox that they watched to send information to both your Uncle Singer and my controller in Warszawa. Klusek was brought in to head the investigation. It is no excuse Isaac, but in a moment of weakness I gave Ola to him because I truly believed they would waste their time with her and let her go. She knew nothing about Purple Orchis. Things did not turn out like that and I am so very sorry.”

Isaac pushed his plate of food away.

“I thought you would have given Ola up because of the terror you felt during interrogation. Now, I see it was a premeditated and calculated step on your behalf. I don’t know if I can forgive that.”

Lukas Mazowiecka matched Isaac’s passion.

"We had no choice. After the murder of Father Jerzy Popiuleszku we had Bezpieka on the run. Uncovering Purple Orchis might just have sealed their fate permanently. At least it would have exposed clandestine cells like Group D and shown that the MSW had not really changed. It was the prelude to the *Autumn of the People*, Isaac. Without this, that might not have happened."

"And my cousin would still be alive."

"Yes, and I am so very sorry that I caused her death," said Mazowiecka, "and I ask for your and your family's forgiveness."

Isaac looked at that broken exterior of a man, through which two tear filled blue eyes stared at him. The tears did nothing to detract from the frankness of that gaze. In his heart he knew there was no choice, he would forgive him.

Iwona had begun to grow impatient with the policeman. He did not seem to want to believe her story.

"*Komisarz* Klusek, I am telling you. I removed that photograph from Tom's house. According to what the media says, this was a week before Katarzyna Baran disappeared." Iwona sat straight backed, head tilted to one side in an enquiring manner. Klusek found it disconcerting.

He looked at the photograph that she had placed on the desk before him.

"Why did you take the photograph from his house?"

"It disturbed me. I wanted to show it to one of my colleagues, ask her what she made of it. I never did, though."

"You are willing to sign an affidavit with effect to this?"

"Yes, that is why I am here."

Klusek leant back in his chair. He was overcome with a feeling that fate was weightier than the sum of his efforts to avert it. He looked at the woman, whom he could see was very sure of her facts.

"Why did the photograph disturb you?"

Iwona, thought for a while.

"It is simple, really." She said. "The girl in the photograph looked like she was dead. But of course she can't have been if she was alive after I found it. If the girl in the



photograph really is Kasia Baran?"

"Yes, she is, we have ascertained that."

"There it is then, *Komisarz*."

The woman rose to take her leave and Klusek ushered her from the room. He was so certain he had his man. It was inevitable now that the lakes would be searched.

"Dammit Klusek, this does not look good. Does not look good at all. People are saying we can't do our job and want to blame foreigners for our problems. Look at that," he slammed a copy of The Warsaw Voice onto the table, "the English feel victimised. Not to mention the concerns by the British Embassy in Warsaw. Hell, do you know how big British investment is in this country? We will have to issue an official apology and a reassurance. I will probably have to do that."

"I really thought we had our man, all the evidence pointed..."

"What evidence? Supposition, speculation, yes, but evidence," he shook his head, "no, not real evidence, circumstantial at best, not real proof. You didn't even have a body and you wanted to make a murderer of someone based on bloody pictures, pictures, Klusek. Are you mad?"

"It seemed to fit," Klusek said.

"No, you wanted him fitted up for this and now it's blown up in your face. Just get out."

"Yes, *pan Dyka*."

"Wait!" Dyka relented somewhat. "Look, it's a fuck up. Fuck ups happen to the best of us, but this is the kind of fuck up I would understand if it were made by Maciek, not someone as experienced as you. Get back to Starachowice, keep looking for the girl there."

"But *pan Dyka*, even though Carter has been cleared, there is still compelling evidence that she was last seen on the Suchedniow and Bodzentyn road."

"Klusek, follow whatever leads you have, but for pity's sake leave the foreigners alone and don't go arresting anyone without coming to me first."

Klusek left Dyka's office knowing that under normal circumstances he would never have blundered an arrest like this. He had needed to keep attention away from *Zalew Lubianka* at all costs. Besides, he really thought Carter was guilty. In fact, still thought he might be.

Jan read of the release of Tom Carter and scanned the article for further details of what was in the photographs. 'Theatrical poses of a degrading nature,' was all the papers would say. However, it did mention that it was Kasia and not Tom who was behind the design of the damning celluloid. Jan gleaned enough from this to wonder what more the pictures were meant to signify. Tom was still a fool, to his mind, he paid the price for subjugating art to an idea, but he wondered what Kasia was trying to capture.

He looked up as Alan and Justina entered the bar. He hailed them and they came over to join him.

"What are you having," he asked them.

"You are buying?" Justina asked. Alan nudged her with his elbow.

"Yes, it is on me."

They ordered drinks and when these came, Justina insisted they sit at one of the tables outside. Soon the conversation turned to Tom's release.

"I am quite relieved," Justina blurted out, causing Alan to turn red in the face. "Well, to have known someone who could have been a murderer is a terrible thing, I mean," she said.

Later when Alan went to the bar to get another round of drinks, Jan asked her.

"Why did Alan really come to Poland?"

"To bury his pain in a place of pain," she said.

"Tell me," Jan said.

"Before he came here Alan was engaged to a woman. They had a child together. One day she upped and left him. Afterwards, he came here. That is all he has told me."

## Chapter 17

Magda Skalka kept the most beautiful garden in Starachowice. In spring it was a blaze of flowers. Incorruptible roses of blood red, delicate pink, pale lilac and mauve, cinnamon yellow and fragile white, along with hyacinths, crocuses and bright red, yellow, white and purple tulips. There were irises with sweet honey scented lemon flowers and others with deep bluish-purple blooms and orange blazes. There were narcissus, bearing yellow hoop trumpets, and scilla with pale blue flowers. Juniper conifers of all shapes and sizes, conical, bulbous and even star shaped, with leaves from sulphurous yellow to bronze to bluish grey, steel blue, to green. Mourning cypress and timeless fir stood side-by-side and white oleander hung from a pagoda. But there was also Hawthorn for hope. Magda was tending her little garden and at the same time watching the activities of the police around the lake.

Finally, she thought with satisfaction, they are taking my account seriously. How long was it since she reported that to the police? She seemed to remember it being a long time. But then it could have been only yesterday. Her memory played tricks on her nowadays. It was mischievous, her memory. It was mischievous like the young Rusalka that was in the forest near the lake. She had often seen this young tree spirit waiting to lure men into her arms where they would then die. There was no doubt in Esther's mind that this was the spirit of the young woman whose body was put in the lake, for the Rusalki are the spirits of young women who have died violently at the hands of men.

How very clearly she remembered that night. A man was lifting a canvas bag out of the boot of a motorcar. She was walking near the lake and felt all of a sudden that something was not right. This caused her to hide behind the trees. The man pulled a girl out of the boot. She was sure it was a girl, but sometimes she remembers it as a doll. The girl's blonde hair cascaded onto the ground. The man, a short man he was, stuffed the girl into the bag and wrapped chains around it. Then he dragged the bag into the lake. He waded out quite far. Pushing it further. The chains must have some kind of weights on them for it to sink like it did, she thought at the time.

Esther shook her head. The police were searching in the woods around the lake, silly of

them because the girl was in the lake itself. Esther made up her mind that she would speak to the policeman in charge. She could show him where the man left the body.

Maciek felt a gentle tugging at his sleeve. He turned and was confronted by the old woman.

"Yes, can I help you *pani*?"

"Are you looking for the girl?"

"Yes we are, *pani*."

"She is in the lake. I saw the man put her in the lake. She is over there. See that small pier. He pushed her past that, towards the centre of the lake. But not the very middle of it, if you know what I mean."

"When did you see this, *pani*?"

"My name is Magda Skalka and I reported it to the police already."

"I see. *Pani* Skalka, would you wait here for a while." Maciek took out his mobile and dialled Klusek's number. "*Pan* Klusek, Maciek here. I have a woman here with me who says she saw a man dump a girl's body into the lake. She says she has reported it to the police. Her name is Magda Skalka. Right. I'll keep her here with me until you arrive." He ended the call.

At the Starachowice police station on Krajowej, Klusek left the office he had commandeered and went to the front desk.

"Sergeant!"

"Yes, sir," the Sergeant answered.

"What do you know about a woman called Magda Skalka? She lives at the end of Zytunia, near *Zalew Lubianka*."

"That name does ring a bell," the Sergeant said. "Hang on, I'll check our 'complaints' files."

The Sergeant returned a little later with a file.

"Of course, Magda Skalka," the Sergeant said. "The woman first reported seeing the body of a young woman thrown into *Zalew Lubianka* in 1985. At the time we did a perfunctory search but found nothing. We did nothing more about it because there was nobody of that description missing from the area. Over the last twenty years since her initial complaint, Magda Skalka has reported a girl in the lake a total of fifteen times and all

of these within the last two years. We did a bit of background, *Komisarz*, her husband died two years ago. We think she has lost it a bit.” He twirled his right forefinger next to his head.

Klusek nodded and thanked the Sergeant.

“I will need that file.” The Sergeant handed it over to him.

Klusek arrived shortly afterwards at Lubianka and took Maciek to one side.

“Look, this woman has been reporting a dead girl in the lake for a number of years. She is a little cuckoo.” He passed the file to Maciek.

“But don’t you think we should check it out anyway? Maybe she is cuckoo, but maybe she really did see something. Who knows? She described the incident as if it happened yesterday.”

“Read the initial report, Maciek, the description of events is the same.”

Maciek read the document.

“Damn, I really thought we might have something there,” he said.

Klusek slapped him on the back.

“Don’t worry, we will find her.”

“*Komisarz*, in my haste I passed this information on to *Komisarz* Dyka too. Perhaps you can straighten it out with him also.”

Klusek bit his lip as he walked back to his car.

As Klusek drove away, Magda stared after him. He looked older, yes, she thought, but he was the same man. He was the one who put the girl into the lake.

After class that evening Gosia waited for Alan.

“Can I speak with you?” she said.

“What’s on your mind, Gosia?”

“It’s something quite important,” she said.

They sat, him at his desk and her to his left. “It’s about Kasia Baran, who has gone missing.”

“It is terribly sad. I know Kasia, we helped her when she was in an accident.”

“Oh! I was not aware that you knew her.” Gosia blew blonde hair away from her mouth.

“Kasia lives next door to my family, but recently she has been behaving very strangely.”

“How do you mean?”

“She started dressing in old tatty clothing. Never brushing her hair. It seemed she wasn’t taking proper care of herself.”

“But Gosia, students, they go through phases like that,” he said.

“No!” The young woman pouted her lips. “It was more than that. At night I used to see her walking around her back garden without shoes and mumbling to herself. I think she was praying. Then she would prostrate herself – that is the right word?”

“Yes, prostrate, means to lay flat.”

“Prostrate herself on the ground for ages.”

Alan thought for a while.

“She did this often?”

“Yes. I also used to see her in Wachock coming from the monastery there. I take piano lessons with *pani* Nowak who lives across the road from the monastery. One day I asked her why she went there so often. She was quite incoherent in her reply. She spoke about Saint Adalbert and a shrine. She also said something about an important message for the world because of her suffering. I did not know what to make of it at the time.”

“But now you think you do?” Alan said.

“Yes, I still don’t know what it means, really. I have an idea, but I don’t know for certain. I just think that this might be important. I tried to tell the police but they wouldn’t listen to me. Maybe if you came with me then they might listen to what I have to say.”

“But Gosia, what would you say to them?”

In her mind it made sense. What she wanted to say was that she thought Kasia had gone looking for some lost shrine to Saint Adalbert on Lysica, Lysica Mountain. That after finding it she wanted to tell something to the world. But somehow when she tried to articulate this now in front of Alan, her words failed her. She sunk into herself with despair.

“I know she has gone looking for this shrine. The monks at Wachock have been making a big thing of it. I think that she has got it into her head to look for it.”

“Look Gosia! What if you are wrong? You may waste the police’s time.”

“I think,” she touched the tip of her nose with the palm of her hand, “I should tell them what I know anyway.”

Alan looked hard at the young woman. He did not know Kasia very well, but he knew Gosia. He knew her well enough to know by the set of her jaw that she was quite determined in what she said. And even though he could not see the Kasia that he knew, albeit briefly, behaving in the manner Gosia described, he made up his mind to help her tell her story to the police.

"As it happens, I have the card of the policeman in charge of the case in my wallet." He fished it out. "*Komisarz* Pawel Klusek," he read off the card, "and he has a mobile number. He interviewed me over her disappearance."

"Oh!" Gosia was surprised.

Alan dialled the number.

"Damn, voicemail.... Klusek, Alan Hicks here. Look! There's a student of mine called Malgorzata Dabrowski, a neighbour of the Baran's, who says she has something to tell the police concerning the disappearance of Kasia Baran." He ended the call. "Look, let's stop by the police station on *ulica* Krajowej on the way home. Come in Krzysztof's taxi with me."

"Thank you, if that's all right?"

"Yes, of course, Gosia."

After explaining to Krzysztof why they needed to go to the police station and reassuring him that everything was okay, Krzysztof drove even faster than he normally did to get them there.

"I will wait. Don't worry. I will wait," Krzysztof repeated as they got out of his taxi.

The desk sergeant looked up as they entered.

"*Dobry wieczor*." The policeman said.

"*Dobry wieczor*. This young lady has some information concerning the missing girl, Kasia Baran."

"Unfortunately, the detectives handling that case are based in Kielce. Does the young woman wish to make a statement?" The sergeant smiled flirtatiously at Gosia.

"It would be better if she spoke to a detective," Alan said.

"There is no one here," the Sergeant said.

"Is there no way to contact *Komisarz* Pawel Klusek who is in charge of the case?"

"During the daytime, but not now. If you give me your name and contact details, I will

see that he gets hold of you.”

“Thank you. I think that would be better,” Gosia interjected. Then she gave the sergeant her name, address and home telephone number.

As they left the building, Alan asked her why she did not leave her mobile number.

“No,” she smiled, “that would not be a good idea with that guy.”

“Everything okay?” Krzysztof asked, when they were seated again in the taxi.

“Yes, but we couldn’t get a hold of the people we wanted to see.”

Krzysztof shook his head.

“*Ul. Miodowa?*”

“*Tak*, to Gosia’s home and then to mine.”

Alan was deep in thought as he entered the apartment.

“How was work?” Justina asked.

“Fine.” He took a Tyskie from the fridge and removed the pull-tab. He drank a few sips from the can and then sat on the couch next to Justina.

“There’s spaghetti and bolognaise on the stove. Should I heat some for you?”

“I’ll have some in a little while. Odd thing happened.”

“Yes?”

“Gosia came to me after class. Well, she told me that Kasia was acting very strangely just prior to her disappearance. That she would see her praying at all hours of the night and that she would prostrate herself on the ground for long periods of time.”

“That’s strange,” Justina said, as she leant forward. “Kasia never struck me as being particularly religious.”

“No, me neither. But then she is Polish after all.”

“That is such a bloody generalisation.” Justina rose to turn the stove on to heat the food. “Sometimes, people develop a religious mania after a traumatic experience. Maybe that is what happened to her after the accident. Her friend did die.”

“But the accident was months ago.”

Justina furrowed her brows.

“I suppose,” she said and turned away from him.



## Chapter 18

Isaac chose to tell his story through the National Media, TVP in Warsaw, using a television reporter he knew who covered the commemoration of the Kielce pogrom. With tears in his eyes, Lukas Mazowiecka told of how he was arrested by Action Group and interrogated by Pawel Klusek. How he betrayed Ola Kalaman to them, saying she was an agent of the West, when in fact he knew that she was no such thing. Isaac told his part, explaining how the events from the past were revealed. Finally, Oskar, whom Isaac now knew was former General Oskar Zymanski, told what he knew of the events. Surprisingly to Isaac, though he mentioned Jurgen Krenzen, he did not reveal the name of General Wojciech Piotrowski. Ola's parents hugged Mazowiecka, forgiving him, and thanked Oskar and their nephew, Isaac. Afterwards, Ola's mother and father went straight home.

After they left the television studio and sat drinking a cup of coffee in a restaurant near the train station called Sphinx, Isaac asked Oskar why he did not give much detail of Piotrowski's involvement.

"I came to an agreement with Piotrowski. It will be better for all." He said no more.

After Mazowiecka left, Isaac said to Oskar.

"I thought I would despise that man when I first met him. But I could not."

Oskar nodded.

"I understand that," he said.

The telephone ringing somehow merged with Klusek's dream. He was at the end of a thin line, falling and falling. Then it seemed, before the image faded, there was a vague recollection of something bronze, spinning like a dervish pulling him closer and closer towards it and all the while that mewing sound growing louder and louder. The murdered girl's face spoke to him, "Pawel, Pawel", and the string of these words jerked him back, before the falling reached its end.

"Pawel?" It was Mira.

"Yes?"

"Superintendent Dyka, on the telephone." Klusek got out of bed, his feet hitting the

floor and aching because of the cold hardness of it.

The other's voice was brusque.

"Klusek?"

"Yes, *pan* Dyka?"

"Have you seen the paper today?"

"No, not yet."

"Look. You'd better see one. Then get down here, right away." Klusek replaced the receiver.

"Mira, I'm just going to get the paper." Klusek threw on a jacket and tracksuit pants over his pyjamas. He sat on the small hall chair and put on a pair of running shoes. When he left the building he noticed that small yellow flowers began to open on the grassy verge at the entrance to the flats. Beyond that, the multi-coloured blur of motorcars passing along the busy road. Klusek glanced up at the sky. It looked like they were in for another storm. Spring rains, finally.

He stepped into the little shop and smiled at Renata, the shopkeeper's wife, who averted her eyes from his gaze.

"*Gazeta Wyborcza, prosze?*" He took the paper and stepped outside. He sat at the bus stop nearby and opened the daily. At first he did not recognise that it was he in the photograph on the front page. Recently his face had been on the front page a lot, and he had stopped noticing it. The headline declared, "Allegations of Murder Against *Komisarz* Pawel Klusek." He read on. Then he read the piece a second time. Folding the newspaper slowly, very slowly, he returned to the block of flats.

By her expression it was clear that Mira had heard the news.

"Ana?"

"Yes, our daughter has just telephoned."

Klusek sat down at the dining room table.

"Is it true, Pawel?"

Klusek did not reply because he knew she was not finished.

"I know terrible things happened then. It was a terrible time. But a girl?"

Klusek stood up.

"No Mira, it is not true," he said, but his tone held no conviction.

After he left the flat, Mira telephoned her sister. Then she packed a suitcase with her clothing. She wrote a note and cellotaped it to the pot with the Laburnum. This she placed in the centre of the dining room table, so that the note faced the front door. When she heard the taxi hooting for her outside, she picked up her suitcase and left the flat, locking the door behind her.

Dyka squeezed his mouth between thumb and fingers, pushing the edges of his mouth down, out of a smiling position. He picked up the little vanity mirror on his desk and looked quickly at his face. It's the eyes, he thought, relaxing them into a passive stare. That will do. He placed the mirror in a drawer and then retrieved it. Stop looking so smug, he told himself, as the smile returned to the corners of his mouth. He replaced the mirror and gently slapped his cheeks with his hands. There was a tapping on his door. He cleared his throat.

"Enter." But his voice was an octave too shrill. "Ah, Klusek, please have a seat." Dyka rose and shook his hand.

The misfortune of others puts Dyka in a good mood, thought Klusek.

"You've seen the newspaper?"

"I have." Dyka glossed over any space for discussion.

He had prepared what he was about to say, thought Klusek.

"Look! Pawel, I don't know what the truth of all these allegations is. I don't want to know. Don't want your reassurances about it either. What I need to know is, will this affect your work?" Before Klusek could reply, he continued. "Concerning the Baran case, perhaps it would be better if Maciek proceeds from here on. What do you think?"

"I would have to disagree *Komisarz* Dyka. This will not affect my work."

"Still, maybe it is better if you took a leave of absence. Your performance on this case has not been of your usual high standard. Perhaps there are things on your mind." Dyka was fishing. "It would seem perfectly normal for you to step out of the limelight. You know, a missing girl from then, a missing girl now. The press will continue to make mincemeat of it."

"I understand," Klusek said. He was not going to argue with Dyka to keep the case. Sensing this, Dyka backtracked. He did, after all, want the case solved.

"I will consider whether you should take a leave of absence."

Klusek nodded.

"Do you have anything, on this Baran case?" Dyka asked.

"There are leads, I am following them up."

"Maciek seems to think you should send divers into the lakes. Something about a reported sighting of the missing girl in the vicinity of *Zalew*," Dyka put on his reading glasses and read from his notebook, "Lubianka."

"Yes, but the woman is not a very credible witness. She is known for making groundless reports to the police. She has reported this 'girl in the lake' story for years."

"Do you have anything more substantial to go on with?" Dyka asked.

"No, I don't."

Dyka picked up the telephone receiver.

"Should I give the order, or do you want to make the call?"

"I will make the call," Klusek said.

Dyka passed the telephone across the table. Klusek spoke to the police operator and was put through to the relevant department. He gave the order to send divers into *Zalew Lubianka*. He detected a faint smile on Dyka's lips and could not help feeling that the man had formed his own suspicions about Lubianka.

There was a throng of reporters waiting for Klusek as he emerged from police headquarters. Momentarily blinded by camera flashes he stumbled and almost tripped on the stairs leading down to the pavement.

"*Komisarz Klusek*, do you have anything to say in response to the allegations brought against you?" a reporter from TVP asked. Klusek kept silent.

"*Komisarz Klusek* will you be resigning your commission?" asked the female field reporter from Studio Telewizji Kablowej.

Klusek continued to say nothing as he walked through the crowd and down the stairs to his motorcar. He left Kielce behind him and drove towards Warsaw. He took the Suchedniow turnoff and then at the Mostki and Bodzentyn T-junction, he turned towards Mostki.

He parked outside the artist's cottage. Along with the tangle of wild berry hedging he noticed that Hawthorn also grew. With increased hope he opened the gate and walked

through the garden. He climbed the stairs to the raised veranda and knocked on the door.

The woman answered.

"*Komisarz* Klusek!"

"You have heard?" Klusek said.

"Yes, come inside," she said, opening the door to let him in. "I am glad you came back." She showed him into the studio and went to the kitchen. "Vodka?"

"Yes, thank you."

She brought through two glasses and a bottle of Metropolitan. She poured them each a shot and they drank. She poured another that they drank too. And another.

"It has been a bad day for you, *Komisarz*," she said.

He looked at her and had a momentary sensation of being flipped upside down. He was usually the one who told people how bad their day was.

"Yes," he replied.

She rose and went to the hi-fi.

"Do you like jazz," she asked.

"It might surprise you," he said, "I have always liked jazz."

She poured him another shot.

"It might surprise you, *Komisarz* Klusek, that I have been thinking exclusively of you since reading about you in the newspaper. I want to tell you something that I feel you should know."

Klusek poured more vodka for himself.

"What is that?" he asked.

"You need to find Kasia. That is your salvation. However, going on should not be a consequence of this. You should go on because that was always what you were going to do. That is how you must go on."

Klusek downed the vodka and poured more for both of them.

"How do you know I could be capable of something like this?"

"I knew from the first moment I saw you," she said.

They downed their vodka.

They drank until the bottle was finished and then Klusek took her in his arms and placed his face within the curve of her neck. She removed her housecoat with his hands a cutout

of hers. They made love in her studio beneath her paintings of the Swietokrzyskie; farmers sowing fields of cabbages, schoolchildren walking along snow covered roads, the trinity of priest, altar server, and parishioner. Klusek buried himself deeper and deeper into Jadwiga, the artist from Warsaw. Hiding from the gaze of the benign priest and his wide-eyed, expectant flock. He felt safe from the bright eyes of the shiny youth and the dim gaze of the dowdy elderly. Especially, he hid from the eyes of the weeping girl at the roadside cross. Lovemaking was an act of forgetting for Klusek and now he was forgetting that any of them existed at all.

Alan looked up as the poet sat on the stool beside him.

"What is the deal with Poles and religion?" Alan said.

"How do you mean?"

"All these religious festivals, it is a kind of madness."

"No, for you it would be madness, for us it is normal."

"I think it has the potential to do harm."

"Perhaps. But have you considered this, that when you look from your window on the festival of Monte Christo and see thousands of your Polish neighbours kneeling on the tarmac before the stages in prayer. Or on All Saints Eve when you look at the millions of coloured candles in cemeteries across the country. When you listen to your friends in conversations with the deceased at their gravesides. You find this remarkable. For you this is out of the ordinary. For us it is very normal. Now, I would like to ask you for a drink because I seem to have left my wallet at home." Alan ordered a round of beer.

"We are joining the EU soon. This is a dream for many because Poland has always seen itself as being part of Western Europe. We are Catholic after all and our written language comes from Latin. For so long we have not been free, even worse at times, not a country at all. We identify so strongly with Jesus because he suffered too, didn't he?"

"Yes."

"Within the Poland of the Polish imagination is suffering and something distinctly messianic. Unfortunately, we all know what happens to messiahs. Because there are devils too."

Jan turned to Alan.

"You haven't seen the papers yet, have you?" Jan asked.

"No, I don't really read Polish newspapers," Alan replied.

Jan unfolded the day's copy of the *Gazeta Wyborcza*. He translated the headline.

"Baran Case: Shocking Revelations about *Komisarz Klusek*."

"What does it say?" asked Alan, who was intrigued.

"It seems that your friend *Komisarz Klusek* might have had something to do with the disappearance of a young woman, Alekszandra Kalaman, in 1985. She went missing from police custody and the last person with her was Klusek. In fact he was the one who arrested her. There are also allegations that the woman was raped in police custody, but the indication is that Klusek took no part in that."

"Fuck," Alan said, shaking his head, "only in Poland."

"That is *Polish Reality*," Jan said.

## Chapter 19

She had always been good, she thought as she walked with an absent-minded gait that because of her young age made her appear somehow eccentric. She walked up the long cobbled lane to where it forks in two directions. She took the left split past rows of washing lines, with their white linen flapping like sails. Yes, thought Gosia as she flicked a blonde curl from her eyes, it is important to be good.

She remembered being a small child, her feet lapping at the edge of the Baltic shore near Gdynia. Jarek, her brother, was poking something with a stick. It was a dead fish. Its eyes sticky, like drying glue. The sight upset her and she wandered off on her own along the beach. At first she was drawn by a fishermen's buoy in the sand. Then by the sight of a small boat, sunk in the shallow water, still tethered to a pole. She climbed into the craft and lay there. She lay there, very still for a long time. Faraway she heard the sound of voices, made unnatural by the strong wind. They frightened her and she hid from them. They seemed to be calling out to her, but she hid deeper in the boat.

Maybe Kasia is just hiding somewhere. Perhaps she is safe, thought Gosia, as she herself was safe all along, in the little boat - safe with her father who understood, as he lifted her gently from within the boat and then knelt in the sand hugging her.

"Why didn't you answer me," he whispered into her ear. Her mother kept silent. As in most things involving her and her father, her mother was the outsider.

Gosia's friend, Ewa, cycled up to the building and chained her bicycle to the railing of a small stairway. Ewa strode into the bakery and bought bottled water and four small doughnuts - two for her and two for Gosia. She checked the sports watch on her wrist and waited by the door to the language school.

Ewa felt irritated with her friend. The reason why was not something she could put her finger on yet, but it showed. Yes, it showed in her behaviour towards Gosia. Ewa felt impatient with Gosia and sometimes picked on her. Ewa did not like that. And felt she should try and be nicer to her. But right now Ewa felt it again, that indefinable irritation towards her friend. What on earth could Gosia want to tell her that she couldn't have said over the telephone?



Ewa's thoughts turned to her father and the harsh words he said to her. He was being ridiculous, accusing her of not spending enough time with the family, of taking him for granted, of doing too many after school activities. She had to study English and German, otherwise what kind of future would she have.

Her image of her father seemed to slouch. Or hang around waiting, wearing his leather jacket, jeans and running shoes. He peered out of a particular place, a nondescript sidewalk, leaning against a building with iron and glass doors that scraped the concrete loudly when you opened them. That same door banging, screeching shut and him, her father peering at her through his glasses, his lips seemingly always smiling from under his bushy moustache. He no longer looked like the great surgeon and this more than anything else frightened her.

As Gosia walked towards the school, her mind delved into the places where her treasures were kept. These were her hidden things. The little box of mementos collected from the places she had been to and the people she was with. The first rose a boy gave her. Even a collection of old coins that her father helped her find when she was a child.

Her father was a carpenter who repaired old furniture. He could make a pile of what looked like rubbish into something beautiful. She collected her experiences in the same way – then she made them beautiful, restored them to perfection and, when she needed to, opened every secret place to savour the sweetness, emotion, scent, vision and touch of each of these moments.

Gosia looked around her. Where was the springtime, the trees still in their wintry bleakness? The grass was green but then it always was even so soon after the thaw and although it rained, it was still so cold. She heard that morning on the radio that the bats had still not left the Rai caves. Until they did, spring never really began in Swietokrzyskie.

Earlier that day, she was handing out small cakes. There she was, giving her cakes to people she thought would want them. There were many who did not. Some even shouted at her. They can shout all they wanted, she thought, it did not matter because she knew it was important to do good deeds.

She crested the rise and could see Ewa with her bicycle standing in front of the building on *ul. Murarska*, the English Language School occupied the upstairs floor. She approached and tried to gauge Ewa's mood. Her friend was morose of late and seemed so very often

impatient and annoyed with her, in fact, thought Gosia, intolerant with everyone.

They ate their doughnuts and Gosia turned to Ewa.

"You know that girl who has gone missing?" Gosia drew a deep breath as she always did before saying something important.

Ewa smiled.

"*Taaak?*" Ewa asked loudly, elongating the vowel and grinning, as she looked sideways at her friend sitting next to her. She's your neighbour isn't she, or at least she lives on *ul. Miodowa*?"

"Yes she is. They say she is somewhere here in the forest," Gosia said.

"And you don't think she is?" Ewa asked.

"She became very strange." Gosia looked down at her own hands that she pulped the one against the other.

"What do you mean strange?"

"Well, I used to see her at night walking around her little back garden, talking, but I think she was praying. She would kneel, sometimes prostrate herself on the ground."

"How often did you see her do this?"

"Almost every night for about a month."

"How come you never told me this before?"

"I was trying not to gossip. I was trying to be good."

"And no one else knew about this?"

"Her parents must have known about it. They must have, don't you think?"

Ewa was silent, thoughtful for a while.

"You're right, they must have known," she replied, giving her friend the assurance that she needed, even though she doubted it herself.

"I have an idea where I think she might be," Gosia said.

"Where?"

"In the Swietokrzyskie Mountains."

"That's a big place."

Gosia took a deep breath.

"Do you think you could help me look for her? We could take our bicycles and ride up there and look for her."

"But you haven't even told me why you think she is up there."

"It's hard to explain. I have a hunch. Say you'll help me look for her and I will tell you on the way."

"Aaah! But Gosia, it's a very long ride and you are not as good a cyclist as me."

"Please! Ewa."

Ewa considered the prospect. She wanted to help, but knew that Gosia was not up to cycling all that way.

"Okay, we'll go look for her. If she's alive even, so many days outside, in this weather. She might be dead already, you know that, don't you?"

"Please, let's just try."

"All right, but we won't cycle there, we'll take the bus and then search on foot. I don't know where we'll start though."

"I have an idea," said Gosia. She beamed as she self-consciously looked down at her hands. "I'll explain it to you on the way. But first we must see when the next bus leaves."

Ewa looked at her friend and knew that in a small way she had been set up.

"We'll probably have to take a minibus, one of those going to Bodzentyn," Ewa said.

They walked down to the bus station, next to the lake. Ewa pushed her bicycle and Gosia ambled alongside her. At the station, Ewa chained her bicycle to a railing, and then they checked the timetables under each shelter. A cold wind ripped off from the still partially frozen lake through the shelters. Ewa walked across to the Pizza place and bought bottled water for their journey, which she fitted into her backpack. A train crossed through the intersection and headed off in the direction of Skarzysko Kaminiera.

Klusek tapped his fingers impatiently on the steering wheel as he waited for the train engine, bilious green with a Cyclops headlight, to pass through the intersection. Mentally he cursed the idiot of a desk sergeant again for not telephoning Kielce and giving him the message that the Englishman, Alan Hicks and Kasia's neighbour, the girl Gosia, were trying to contact him. Klusek's mobile network was experiencing problems and he was not receiving any of his messages. If they left a message, that is. A short, stout woman with close cropped hair and in her early forties stepped out of the switching room and stared down the track in the direction from where the train engine was coming.

Klusek was trying to contact Alan Hicks, but the man was not answering his mobile. His girlfriend, Justina Schmallenberg when telephoned, did not know where he was either.

Finally, the train passed and the boom lifted. He started his engine and drove along Radomska, *Zalew Pasternik* to his right. At the stop street he turned left onto where the 42 now changed from being Kielecka to *Aleja Wyzwolenia*. He drove as far as Statoil and then turned right into Miodowa, immediately he turned right again into 6-go Wrzesnia.

Klusek parked outside the flats on 6-go Wrzesnia, he passed through the little wrought iron gate and along the path to the front door. He rang the bell. There was no reply. He rang again. Still nothing. He took a few steps back from the building and shouted Alan's name up at the second floor window.

A man's head popped out of a first floor window and identified itself as the landlord.

"*Przepraszam pan*, can you tell me where Alan Hicks is? It is urgent." Klusek flashed his identification. "I am *Komisarz Klusek*."

"*Nie!*" The man shrugged. "*Nie Przepraszam!*" The head disappeared.

Klusek returned to his motorcar and drove back down 6-go Wrzesnia to Miodowa, there he turned right and drove up past the shops. Just beyond these was the complex where the Baran's lived.

He parked outside the duplexes. He knocked on the Baran's door.

"*Pani*, sorry to disturb you again, but I need to speak to a neighbour of yours. Well, to their daughter really, *Malgorzata Dabrowski*."

"Gosia - why? Does she know something about Kasia?"

"I'm not sure, she wanted to speak with me."

"She lives in number five. Here to the left. Her father works from home usually, in the garage. But I don't think there is anyone there. The mother is at work. The daughter is probably still at school."

Before he turned away, *pani Baran* stopped him with a gesture of her hand.

"*Komisarz Klusek*, I have seen the newspaper, and I don't know the truth of what it is all about, but please find my daughter. In spite of it."

"Yes, *pani*," Klusek said.

Klusek knocked on the neighbour's front door. There was no reply. He knocked again. Still nothing. "*Pani*, do you know which school she goes to?" he asked Kasia's mother.

“Yes Gymnasium on *ulica* Szkolna.”

“Thank you *pani*.” Klusek checked the time. Two-thirty – she might still be at school if she is doing something extramural.

Klusek walked across the front courtyard and entered the large grey building that housed the school. In the foyer he looked around. Sensing the office to be to the right he strode in that direction. Instead he found himself in the school hall. He retraced his steps and a stern faced woman approached him and asked if she could be of assistance. She led him to the principal’s office.

On hearing his enquiry and checking his credentials the principal, who was a younger and friendlier woman, had some idea that the girl might be in the vicinity of the basketball courts. Thus Klusek found himself battling to keep up with the woman’s brisk pace as she led him up a flight of stairs and along a corridor to the courts. But the girl was not there.

The woman tagged three senior students and sent them off to find out where Gosia was. Then they returned to her office.

“Might I ask what this is in connexion with?”

Klusek cleared his throat. “We are questioning people who knew Katarszina Baran.”

“The young woman who’s missing. I see.” She paused for a while. “*Komisarz* Klusek, do you not think her parents should be present at this interview?”

Klusek knew that the principal finally placed him with the news story.

“I hoped they would be. I tried them at home but they were out.”

The three youngsters returned. “Gosia is at her English School – Global on *ul. Murarska* – not the new branch on *ul. Jelenia*.” The principal dismissed the pupils and turned back to Klusek. “Global has two branches. Gosia attends classes at the Murarska School. It is on the second floor above the post office and shops.”

“Yes, I know the building.”

The glass and steel door made a screeching sound when Klusek pushed it open. The building looked the same as it did when it was used as Party headquarters for Starachowice during the Socialist era. But everything else about it was different, shops occupied the lower floor and a kind of market had been set up in the main auditorium. He went up a

flight of stairs and into a waiting area. Teenagers lounged on black fabric and metal couches identical to the chair in the teacher's flat. He went to the reception. The woman there led him down the corridor to the staff room where he found the School Co-ordinator poring over what he assumed to be student test papers. The secretary introduced him and the woman rose to greet him.

Klusek sat on a chair beside the desk and a bookcase. On the desk there was a plate of biscuits and a large crystal bowl of sugar. A kettle, a jug of milk, and a box of tea bags stood on a low cupboard against the wall. The teacher offered him tea, but he refused. A tape recorder atop another cupboard near the window whirred and clicked off.

"I am marking Listening tests," the woman explained to him.

"I would like to speak to Malgorzata Dabrowski, if she is here."

"She should be, but I haven't seen her. There's a study break in a few minutes. Should I wait, or go call her now?"

"I'll wait. A minute or two won't really matter."

"Is this in connexion with the missing girl?"

"Yes, I received a message that she wanted to speak to me. She lives in the same complex as Gosia. They are neighbours."

"I see. She was a student here, you know, Katarszina Baran, before she went to university." Klusek looked at the woman.

"Did you know her well?"

"As well as any of the students. She was a clever young woman. She went through a bit of a rebellious phase before she left us. But then so many of these kids do, you know. We never thought anything of it."

Klusek added this piece of information to the puzzling nature of Kasia Baran. As a girl she collected bronze figurines and old lace. Then she went through a typically teenage rebellious stage. It all seemed so normal. So how does one explain the complete lack of her personality in the bedroom where she slept, the lack of any sense of her?

Whilst he sat there waiting the woman seemed uncomfortable with his presence and kept giving him sideways glances. By now everyone must have heard the news about him, he thought.

Then the sound of doors opening and the hubbub of young voices as the students

stepped into the corridors. The door to the staff room opened and Iwona stepped into the room.

Klusek rose as she greeted him, extending her hand.

"Iwona, this is *Komisarz* Klusek, from the Kielce police."

"Yes, I know. I have met *Komisarz* Klusek, before now," she said.

"Oh! I see. Iwona teaches our junior levels here. But you probably know that." Klusek shook her hand. Iwona gave him a conspiratorial look. "Iwona, can you see if you can find Gosia Dabrowski, please?"

"Yes, certainly." Iwona walked from the room and shut the door behind her. She returned a minute or two later. "I'm sorry," she said to the *Komisarz*, "she did not come to lessons today."

"What about her classmates or friends, do they know where she is?"

"I have asked them too. Her friend, Ewa, is not here either."

Klusek pulled out his pocketbook.

"Please," he turned to the Co-ordinator, "can I have Ewa's full name and details."

"Surgeon Borowiec's daughter, they live on *ul. Warszawa*."

"Ah, yes, I have met surgeon Borowiec."

The Co-ordinator gave him Ewa's home telephone number."

Klusek left the School, wading through a mass of teenage students. Poland is so full of young people these days, he noted. Where in amongst all these young bodies, these self-absorbed, revolving universes, is Kasia Baran, or for that matter this girl Gosia? Klusek tried the friend Ewa's number, but it was busy.

Klusek drove to see if the girl, Gosia, was back home. Whilst waiting for the Dabrowskis to open the front door he noticed *pani* Baran looking at him from an upstairs window of her house.

Klusek was ushered into a living room crammed with antique furniture. From their expressions, Klusek could tell they too had seen the news about him.

"You restore antique furniture, *pan* Dabrowski?"

"Yes, since my health took a turn for the worse. I sell here and through dealers in Kielce."

"I noticed some pieces in the Baran's house. Those came from you?"

"Yes."

"Kasia also collected old lace, according to her mother?"

"Yes, but not from me, I don't deal with things of that nature."

"Her mother mentioned that a bronze figurine of a ballerina was missing. Did that come from you?"

"Yes, Gosia gave it to her as a present after Kasia completed matura."

"So it was a school graduation present?"

"Yes."

"Where is Gosia?"

The two looked uncomfortably at each other.

"She is with Ewa." *Pan* Baran paused and then continued. "She sent us a text message to say that Ewa and her were in the mountains."

"Did she say why?"

"Look, Gosia has this idea that Kasia is somewhere in the Swietokrzyskie mountains. She's even tried to tell the police about her idea, but she said they didn't listen to her."

"What idea?"

"Well she has got it into her mind that Kasia is looking for some lost shrine. To Saint Adalbert. Kasia hasn't been right since the accident. We've all seen her at night wandering around their backyard, muttering and then kneeling in the snow praying. Gosia takes piano lessons in Wachock with *pani* Nowak. She lives near to the monastery. Gosia saw Kasia there last Wednesday and asked her what she was doing there. Kasia told her about a lost shrine to Saint Adalbert that she heard about from Piotrek, the curator at Wachock Monastery. "Imagine if I find it," she said to Gosia. Then she said something about a message because of suffering, if I remember what Gosia related correctly. This scared Gosia because there was an unreal look in Kasia's eyes when she said this.

"This curator at the monastery?"

"Piotrek, just Brother Piotrek."

Klusek made a note of the name in his pocketbook.

Back in his motorcar he pondered whether he should drive into the Swietokrzyskie or go



to Wachock to question the monk. Girls and their imaginations, he decided to visit the monastery at Wachock first.

He left the Barans and drove down Miodowa and then turned left and on towards where this road became the 42. When he reached the centre of the small town of Wachock he turned to the right and drove up to the monastery. He parked his motorcar and approached the building. Religious places, though aesthetically pleasing to him, made Klusek feel uncomfortable. He did not like religious types either. Beneath all that was benign about them he detected a keen understanding of power.

The doorkeeper ushered Klusek into a comfortable reception area. After a little while the curator, Piotrek, entered the room and greeting him, took a seat opposite.

Piotrek had already spoken with Isaac who gave him details of how the man behind Ola's disappearance had been tracked down. He also read the newspaper articles. He knew who Klusek was. He knew this man sitting before him probably murdered his close friend's cousin, and as much as he tried to seem relaxed in the man's presence, he felt tight with anger.

"Thank you for seeing me, *pan*?"

"*Brat* Piotrek," Piotrek said.

"We have information that Katarszina Baran saw you here."

"That is correct. She was a Bible Studies student of mine at Gymnasium."

"When was the last time she visited here?" Klusek asked.

"Last week on Thursday."

"But she went missing on Friday, why did you not inform us of this?"

"She visited on Thursday, but I was away in Krakow. I only got the message that she was here, when I returned. The last time I saw her was Wednesday."

"Still, you should have called us."

"What did she come and see you about?" Klusek asked.

"Last year she visited with her friend Emilian."

"Was his surname Ostrowski?" Klusek asked.

"He was a young man, but I do not know his last name."

"Please continue," Klusek said.

"They were interested in finding out more about a shrine to Saint Adalbert, that we

believe is somewhere in the Swietokrzyskie Mountains.”

“How did they come to know about this shrine?” Klusek asked.

“I told Kasia’s class at Gymnasium about it.”

“What in particular did they want to find out about it?”

“What it looked like. What it would look like now. Where it might be located.”

“And where did you tell them it might be?”

“Well, we don’t know. However, it is possible it might be on Lysica Mountain. Textual references speak of it being on the tallest of the Holy Cross Mountains, but a thousand years ago they might have thought another of the mountains in the range to be the highest.”

Klusek leant forward.

“Do you think Kasia believes the shrine is on Lysica?”

Piotrek thought for a while.

“Now that I think about it. Yes, she probably does.”

“Please, can you tell me everything you told them about where this shrine might be and what it would look like now?”

Piotrek told the policeman all he could remember telling Kasia and Emilian about what he knew of the shrine and Klusek made notes.

Finally, Klusek asked.

“When Kasia visited you last Wednesday, what did she talk about?”

“She told me about the death of her friend, Emilian. She spoke about finding God. Talked about a welcoming place where she would find peace. She spoke about finding that place. I had to cut the meeting short because of my duties here. I sensed she wanted to speak more and invited her back, but I did not think she would return so soon.”

“Why do you think she returned the very next day?”

“I am not sure.”

“Could it have been because she did not get to the reason why she called the previous day?”

Piotrek thought about this.

“There was something left unsaid, but I had to leave. I told her to call again. What are you getting at?”

“It seems that Kasia’s interest in visiting you had to do with this shrine. Surely, that is

why she visited you on Wednesday and came back again on Thursday, because of the shrine.”

Piotrek looked surprised.

“But why?”

Klusek looked at him with consternation.

“Isn’t it obvious, she wanted to find the shrine.”

Piotrek assumed it was that she looked up to him. That she sought his advice as happens between students and teachers. That she was speaking of finding solace in that special place with God. This revelation threw him. Was he so stupid that he did not realise Kasia and him were talking at crossed purposes.

“You think she has gone looking for the shrine to Saint Adalbert?” Piotrek thought about that last time he saw her. She seemed distracted, but he put that down to the bereavement she so recently suffered. It was obvious from their earlier visits that Kasia and Emilian were in love. What about her that last time could he not fathom?

“There was something about her that disturbed me, but I cannot recall what it was.”

Piotrek ran his hand through his fringe. “Something about the way she was. I don’t know.”

Klusek gave the monk time to think before speaking.

“Was it her dress, her appearance,” he said finally.

Piotrek’s face lit up.

“Yes, of course,” he said, “she looked terrible and there were no shoes on her feet.”

Before the *Komisarz* left, Piotrek stopped him.

“One other thing. The last time she visited with Emilian, well, I felt like she was using me in some way. Like I only mattered to answer her questions. It was an odd and uncomfortable feeling. However, I dismissed it because young people can be trying like that at times. You know, unconscious of the feelings of others.”

After Klusek left, Piotrek had mixed feelings about him. He wondered if Isaac was right about this policeman.

The words dropped like leaves at Kasia’s feet when the monk read the description of the place. Nestled in an alcove atop the highest of the Holy Cross Mountains they placed a likeness of the Saint, his arm outstretched to all. The words were spoken, but Kasia felt a

sense of herself being drawn towards the recess, could see it clearly and the nearer she came to the figure with outstretched arms, the more elated she felt. It was a feeling of elation, beyond mere physical joy. She was certain of that.

Klusek sped along the 42 until he came to the Mostki turnoff. He hurried along that through Mostki and past the lake. Ignoring the Suchedniow turn to the right, he continued straight along the road towards Bodzentyn. Elements of Kasia beat in his mind, the shrine, the death of the young man, Emilian, the motorcar accident and her injuries, her behaviour after that – prostrating herself in the Baran's little yard at all hours of the night, and the austerity of her room, her unkempt appearance. It must all be connected with looking for this shrine. Had Kasia lost her mind?

Of course, Kasia remembered now, her beautiful Emilian was dead.

She recalled Emilian and her together that day in the forest that lies off the Warsaw road, to the north of Kielce. They walked some distance into the woods to where the trees grew in thick knots.

"It's dark in here," he said.

"The forest is dark without Bialog," she said as they sat near the trunk of a magnificent Baltic oak that was long since fallen to the ground.

He uncorked the bottle of cheap wine that they brought with them and poured them each a glass. Then they drank and made love beside that fallen oak.

As she lay there she imagined the white marble statue of Adalbert. Its arms outstretched to all below. The gesture was welcoming, a typical Slavic welcome, rather than some kind of universal benediction.

"You seem far away," Emilian said.

She smiled at him.

"Just lie here, still with me," she said.

The image of Adalbert, both arms outstretched, stayed in her mind. It was as if he called her. Beckoning from a place that was private and intimate, not the usual kind of places where crowds thronged past such shrines. What intrigued her the most was that this meeting place was a place long forgotten.

"I wish I could find the shrine," she said to Emilian.

"Why?" he asked.

"It seems so sad that it is lost."

"But Adalbert: what is so interesting about him?"

Kasia nibbled at a hangnail before she answered.

"I'm not sure, Emilian. A feeling, that is all."

She had not considered this. Perhaps it was the way Piotrek brought him to life. There was something about the shrine that tugged at her. Something about Adalbert, too, but she could not say exactly what it was.

"Come with me to see Piotrek again?" she asked.

Emilian was not really that interested in this new fascination of Kasia's.

"Come with Emilian, it is important to me. I feel it is important for both of us."

After further coercion he finally gave in.

"Okay, okay, I will come with you," he said, "but it will have to be when I am down this way again."

The next day, Emilian returned to his studies in Warsaw and she to hers in Krakow. It was a full three weeks later before they found themselves in the forest again looking for the same spot until, exhausted and disappointed, they sat down to catch their breath.

Emilian was weaving a garland of wild flowers that he picked from beside the road, near the entrance to the forest. He now placed this in her hair with mock seriousness.

"Tomorrow we will visit Piotrek again. I have arranged it with him." Emilian was annoyed because the last thing he wanted to do was visit some old and dusty monastery.

"You thought I had forgotten your promise," she said.

"Yes, but it wasn't a promise," he replied. And Kasia sensed that he was jealous of her interest in the Saint.

"What is it?" Ewa said as she approached Gosia, who was bending over something.

"I recognise this," Gosia said, picking up a shiny brass object. "This belongs to Kasia. It is part of a brass statuette I gave as a present to her when she graduated from school."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, I'm sure. It means that she came this way."

"We need to telephone someone, now."

"Kasia! Kasia!" Gosia called, cupping her hands around her mouth. "Kasia!" she shouted. They listened, but there was no reply.

"Gosia," Ewa grabbed her friend by the shoulder, "we must phone the police."

"That's no use. I've tried to speak to them, but they wouldn't listen."

"Then who can we tell?"

"I don't know. What about your dad?"

"No! He doesn't listen to me."

"I can't think."

"What about phoning Alan. He's English. The police will listen to him. He's a foreigner, after all."

"Yes, I have spoken with him already," Gosia said. Ewa removed her mobile from her knapsack and made the call.

Gosia wandered a little way examining the roadside ditch.

Ewa ended the call.

"Alan is coming," she said.

Klusek continued to drive quickly towards the Swietokrzyskie Mountains. He wiped sweat from his forehead and blinked as it dripped down into his eyes. He radioed Maciek.

"Found anything?"

"They haven't gone into the lake yet," Maciek replied.

"Look, I've got a lead that I'm checking near Bodzentyn, Lysica Mountain. Bring a dog team and meet me on the Bodzentyn road. No, I am not sure exactly where, near Lysica, you will see my car."

Alan was first to come upon the two girls.

"What have you found?"

Gosia held up the bronze canopy.

"This, it came from a statuette I gave as a present to Kasia."

"We need to call the police." Alan took his mobile and the card Klusek gave him from his pocket. He dialled the number.

“Voice mail,” he said, ending the call without leaving a message.

## Chapter 20

The Dive Leader assembled the team at the lakeshore. Nearby was stationed an Emergency Medical Team. There were ten divers, all ordinary policemen, who trained together twice a month and were called in when needed. Andrzej was excited. This was his first dive with them. He only recently completed Police College in Czestochowa and then, as he already knew how to dive, was sent to do a Police Diver Certificate in Gdynia. Andrzej loved to dive. His father was an underwater welder on USSR owned oilrigs on the Russian shelves in the Barents and Karas seas. When he was very young his father taught him to dive.

The Sergeant called them to attention.

"We are looking for the body of a young woman. Probably she will have been weighted down. She will also not be too far from the shore, as we do not suspect a boat was used to place her there. Visibility is very poor because of the rains. You will use lights. And Grieszek?"

"Yes, Sergeant?"

"I want you to operate the video camera."

"Yes Sergeant."

"We will use lines and the small flotation bags to bring her up when we find her. Understood?"

"Yes Sergeant!"

"Right, suit up. Will you be okay Andej?" the Sergeant asked.

"Yes sir! It's in my genes sir!"

The team put on their dry suits. They double checked each other's equipment and then put on their brand new Cresso EXO skeletal facemasks that allowed them to communicate underwater.

Klusek recognised the English teacher who stood waiting with two girls. He pulled off the road and approached them. They were looking at something.

"What have you found?"



Gosia stepped forward.

"We found this. It is part of a brass ballerina that I gave as a present to Kasia."

Klusek took the metal canopy from her and looked at it.

"You are sure of this?"

"Yes."

"This ornament was missing from her bedroom. Her mother swore it was there the day before," Klusek said. He turned to Alan. "I am going up to the top." He pointed to the rocky peak of the mountain. "Will you wait here for my colleagues and direct them after me?"

"Yes, certainly."

"I'm coming with you." Gosia said.

Klusek paused for a while and then nodded his head.

"Yes, I suppose you should." The girl had brought them this far already.

The two set off, leaving Alan and Ewa waiting beside the road.

"It is a difficult climb," Klusek said.

"I've climbed harder," Gosia said.

"I bet I will be the one who finds the body," Andrzej said through the communication link to the other divers.

"I don't want any maverick behaviour from you, Andrzej," the Sergeant said.

The lines in place, they began to wade into the water and then when it was up to their chests they sunk down into the murky depths of the lake.

Klusek helped the young woman up onto the first of the narrow ledges. They sat there for a while catching their breath.

"Do you think she is still alive?" Gosia asked.

"I don't know," he said.

They continued their climb.

Very slowly the divers examined each square metre at the bottom of the lake, moving further and further out. Andrzej felt his way over the bottom as gently as he could so as not

to disperse mud and slime into the water. Deeper and deeper he went, the daylight above him becoming a pale wash of yellow. Down into the murk, the glare of light from his bulb illuminated particles of soil and vegetation suspended in the water before him. Suddenly there was a coppice of underwater plants surging before him. Then there was something white. There was something light and white amongst that waving, swirling, eddying thicket of vegetation. Something ghostly that sent a chill through him.

Klusek paused in his stride. They were now walking up a grass-covered incline. Above them was the final rocky outcrop, the scraggy peak of the mountain. He cupped his hand into a shell around his ear, against the icy wind that whipped this side of the mountain. Yes, there it came again, the sound of a dog barking. Good. The dog team is here. They continued their climb up towards the summit.

Kasia was brought back to the present by the sound of a dog barking down in the valley below. Its baying rent the air, disturbing her more than such a sound normally would. She closed her eyes as tightly as she could. She wished she could block her ears, but she could not move. Quickly she slipped from consciousness.

Andrzej swam into the vegetation towards the white outline, fighting against the clinging plants. The light of his torch illuminated what looked like faded sacking material and rusty iron chains. He heaved against the plants that wrapped around his dry-suit and oxygen tank, pushing fronds away as they clung to his goggles.

Klusek and Gosia stopped, to catch their breath before beginning their climb of the steep rock face that towered above them.

"I've known she is somewhere here from the start," Gosia said. The conviction in her voice caused Klusek to pause.

"Yes, well, we'd better get going again," he said.

The dive leader hailed his men back to the shore for a break.

"What's that idiot doing?" the Sergeant addressed one of the other old timers next to him,

pointing out to where Andrzej resurfaced, waved, and dived again. "Tomek, go and tell him to come in. He's not responding on his communication link."

The police diver swam out to his young colleague.

"Andrzej, get your arse back to the shore."

Andrzej removed his mask and spoke, spitting water from his mouth.

"I've found something. There's something down there." He dived again.

"Oh! What's he playing at?" The dive leader was becoming very angry.

Andrzej resurfaced. He shouted excitedly.

"It's just as the old woman said. Some kind of a bag that's weighted down." He replaced his mask and dived again.

She must find that shrine. She would place the little bronze dancer before the shrine. The place that she was looking for was just a little further up, she knew it, but she felt that she would rather rest some more, maybe even go back to sleep. She curled herself a little onto her side but something prevented her from moving too much. I will move just a little anyway, she thought, and I will be comfortable enough.

She must find the place. She had suffered and she had lost that which was most precious to her. She needed to know the reason for her suffering. What was she doing lying here, staring at a tuft of grass and beyond that, hills and more hills? She rose a little on her elbows. There was a glint of brass. At first she could not make out what it was. Then the realisation came to her. It was the legs of the dancer stuck firm in the crevice. The torso, head, and raised arm, were not visible beneath the tunic that she wore. Below her there was no puddle of blood. Only the dancer was covered in blood and, underneath it, the entrance to a small crevice, sticky with more blood. She slumped back, her head flat onto the floor of the small ledge. Her eyes were still open to part of the sky. But it did not look right. She was not sure whether she was looking at the sky anymore or the valley beneath. A bird flew quite close to her and she was sure, now, that she was looking at the sky. She could no longer shift her head, but managed to move her eyes down to see over the edge of the ledge again, through tufts of grass, and over the valley, lighter and darker shades of green.

The bird fluttered as it landed somewhere above her. She tried to call to it because she felt that it might stay with her. But her throat made no clear sound, only a dry rasp, not loud

enough for the bird to hear. Anyway, it let out a loud awk awk and she knew it was nothing but a crow. She did not try to call to it again. She heard the gathering of its wings as it left its perch and flew down into the valley. Its shadow crossed her eyes as it descended to other pickings. She believed that the raven cast its lot for her piece of shadow. She believed this because she now knew that she was dying.

Time could not be moved. Everything still looked the same. The sky was as light as it was before. In the valley below there was no smoke yet from the chimneys of the houses dotted around. She forced her eyes upwards, towards the bright part of the grey sky, where the sun hid behind clouds. The sun was still in the same place. It had not moved. Nothing was changed at all. Perhaps none of this was real. Her eyes rested again closer to the ground. Her eyes closed and opened much later, but the sun still shone from behind those clouds in that very same place. And again from way below came the sound of dogs barking.

Gosia and Klusek climbed the steep semblance of a path up and onto a wide ledge on which stood a solitary tree. Panting to catch their breath and holding their sides, it took them a while to take in the ledge visually.

"That tree," said Gosia, "it's an aspen. They say the cross was made of its wood," and she shuddered as the wind caused its branches to tremble.

She heard it and immediately knew what it was. It was an aeroplane flying high above her. If it was a clear sky then she would see it flying, leaving a vapour trail as it criss-crossed Poland, to and from Warsaw, the Ukraine, England, Austria, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Italy, France, wherever. She did not know where it was going. She forced her eyes upwards - the sun was still in the same place. The aeroplane stayed in the sky for a very long time, it comforted her. Even though she already knew that she was dying and that was why time slowed right down.

They walked along the ledge and it was Gosia who first noticed the fluttering of cloth. The blood pounded in her ears and she heard the loud awk awk of a crow high in the air above her. It caused her to shudder as the noise echoed down the valley. She did not know

how loudly blood can throb in one's ears, how dry her mouth could become and how blurred her vision was. And all of this in a mountain place, a beautiful place, the kind of place where she hid in that boat as a child away from everyone, yet safe. This was very different, and that fluttering of cloth belonged to a dress worn by Kasia. She knew Kasia was dead because besides that cloth all was still. Klusek's mobile rang loudly, cutting through the air. It was Maciek calling from down below. He took the call.

## Chapter 21

Klusek ended the call from the general. He noted with pride the first shoots of his little community garden. So, spring has finally come. He looked across to a house opposite. A woman beat a large wall hanging, which bore the face of Jesus wearing his crown of thorns. Over Christmas, the hanging was draped from her balcony.

He tuned the small transistor radio on a table beside him and listened to a repeat broadcast of an overly excited young female reporter describing the bats leaving the Rai Cave.

He stood and looked at the row of little community gardens to each side of his own. Each with their own little shed, but what sheds some of them were. Extravagant miniature houses that boasted glazed windows, chimneys, tiled roofs and disproportionately large verandas stood at the back of each little plot. Klusek looked with satisfaction at his own functional wooden tool shack that he refused to improve upon.

He sat down again and looked one last time over the new little shoots. Then he removed his glasses and placed them on the table beside him. He picked up his service pistol from the same table, steadying himself with the other hand against one of the wooden poles that held up the small porch. He placed the end of the barrel under his chin. But he did not pull the trigger.

"No, General Wojciech, not today," he said out loud. Then he replaced the pistol on the little table.

"I suppose you want an explanation?" Oskar looked at Isaac.

"Yes, I still don't know why Ola died." He said this as he shrugged his shoulders.

"I will tell you, Isaac. But understand that this is not for the press. Not now, at least, later, maybe, but not now." Isaac agreed, although he was reluctant to do so.

"Operation Purple Orchis was a task that emanated from Action Group and came under the control of Piotrowski. However, the idea for it was said to have come from Minister Kiszczak himself. It was a joint operation between Action Group and Department

I, espionage and its aim was to blackmail Pope John Paul II. Action Group faked the diary of a Polish woman that claimed John Paul II fathered a child with her, when he was a cardinal. These sworn statements were then passed to Krenzen, who, although based in Berlin, was running agents who were priests at the Vatican. One man in particular, Father Konrad Hejmo, was close to the Pope and involved in spying on John Paul for Krenzen. He was to go public with the information. This coming from someone close to the Pope, and one of his own, would have been devastating for the Church. After the murder of Father Jerzy Popieluszko, Kiszczak pulled the plug on the operation. It all became far too risky. The credibility of Department IV was in the toilet and it seemed to the world that they were capable of just about anything, including murder. So what's a little defamation by comparison? It would have been easy then for the Vatican to call their bluff."

"But Ola?"

"I am coming to that. Remember that the arrest and imprisonment of the Department IV operatives who killed Popieluszko was reverberating loudly through the security apparatus. Bezpieka's credibility in terms of religious work was shot to pieces.

"When Krenzen got ill he became garrulous. They were worried about this fiasco leaking out. It would be too damaging to their reputations, even then. Times were changing. That is why Ola was arrested. The rape happened on Klusek's watch. They could not afford to have that come out. Further, it would reveal operation Purple Orchis. Klusek murdered her. But all of them conspired to cover it up. That would have sent them to prison back then. Today these men are all respectable churchgoers, men in positions of power, credible men in the eyes of society. It would be even more damaging to them now if it were all exposed. If you go after them, Isaac, I cannot protect you. They have promised to leave you alone if you leave them alone."

"And you trust them?"

"I have a guarantee, and so do you. This knowledge is a sword over their heads. Guard it well, ensure that if anything untoward should happen it will come out."

He understood what Oskar meant.

Isaac leant against the railing and looked out over the Vistula River. The far bank was now green with grass.

"So Ola was arrested because Bezpieka thought she had gathered information from

Krenzen about this conspiracy, when what she was really after, for Uncle Singer, was information on Major Sobczynski and the massacre in Rzeszow where Sobczynski was stationed before."

"It was your uncle's contact that put them on to her. He was under suspicion of being a lower echelon operative for Western Intelligence."

Isaac shook his head.

"A case of mistaken conspiracies. And her Jewish, not even Catholic."

"Yes." For a long time Isaac stood in silence, staring out over the river. In the distance he could make out smoke from the stacks of what was once the Lenin Foundry. Then he spoke.

"Will you come to Ola's funeral? It is this Wednesday."

Oskar coughed into the palms of his hands.

"I will be there."

Oskar sat on the sofa, across from Wodek. It was Wodek who spoke.

"So, you old dog. You have nicely discredited Wojciech Piotrowski and his lot."

Wodek smiled.

"With Saloni out of the running it leaves the way open for your son to succeed as mayor when Zajac's term is up. Of course that will be very good for your business interests."

"Yes, I suppose it will. By the way, I've brought you a bottle." He removed a bottle of Johnny Walker from his briefcase.

"Oh! I don't drink anymore. Health reasons you know."

"It's Johnnie Walker Blue Label." He wagged the bottle before Wodek.

"Well, maybe I will have a little. Only one, mind you, before Marisha gets back from her group at the Church."

"Although, I am concerned for Isaac," Oskar said.

"Isaac! Why! What has he done?"

Oskar handed Wodek the day's copy of *Gazeta Wyborcza*. Wodek put on his spectacles and read the headlines: "Polish priest spied on Pope for Communist secret police."

"Bloody hell!" exclaimed Wodek. "He leaked this?"

"I assume so. Who else?"



“What do you think Piotrowski will do about it?” Wodek asked.

“I don’t know.”

Wodek adjusted his glasses and continued reading:

*The state agency overseeing Poland's communist-era files has accused a Polish priest at the Vatican of spying on the late Pope John Paul for his country's secret services.*

*Father Konrad Hejmo - one of Poland's best-known priests and an acquaintance of the late Pope - informed on the Polish pontiff during the 1980s when Poland's communist rulers battled against the Solidarity movement, the Institute of National Remembrance said.*

*Father Hejmo, the main link for 20 years between the Polish-born pontiff and Polish pilgrims visiting Rome, was not available to comment but Polish public television said the priest denied the allegations. The Vatican declined to comment.*

*Replying to the accusation, the priest, 69, said in Rome that he had never co-operated knowingly with secret police. He confirmed that he had written reports on church matters for Polish church officials and had been sharing the reports with an acquaintance introduced to him by other priests.*

“And who did he think those Polish church officials really worked for,” Wodek said.

“Or those “other priests,” Oskar said.

*“I have never been a secret collaborator,” he said. “I can blame myself for being naive. This man came, we helped and, on top of it, I took his family around Rome . . . I partly feel a victim of this situation now.”*

*He had only just learnt that the man, a Pole who was living in Germany but had since died of cancer in Krakow, might have been an intelligence agent working for the Stasi, the East German secret service.*

“They think Krenzen was Stasi,” Wodek said.

“Continue reading,” Oskar said.

“Other sources believed he worked for the Polish SB, Bezpieka.” Wodek read aloud.

“Oh, I see, yes, Bezpieka.”

*Father Hejmo, a member of the Vatican circle of Polish clergy, has headed the*

*Pilgrimage House, a hostel for visiting Poles, for many years.*

*The agency did not say what information Father Hejmo handed over, but Marek Lasota, who works for the institute on secret service involvement with the Polish church, said the priest might not have passed on much of interest. "I think he rather gave away second-hand information," Mr Lasota said.*

*In his research, Mr Lasota found the Polish secret service had tried to discredit the Pope in the 1980s by producing fake diaries from a woman purported to have been having an affair with him.*

"So that was the scam," Wodek said.

*Institute of National Remembrance director Leon Kieres said Father Hejmo had operated under codenames including "Hejnal", the name for the traditional bugle call that sounds from a church tower every hour in the medieval Old Town of Krakow.*

"Aha," Wodek said, "so this priest was "Hejnal", never thought much of what we got from him. It was gossip more than real intelligence information."

"No, I never thought he was a valuable asset," Oskar said.

Wodek traced his finger back up the page.

"I think *pan* Lasota of the IPN is right when he says that Hejmo passed on "second-hand information."

*John Paul supported pro-democracy activists as an archbishop in Krakow and continued to help as leader of the Catholic Church. He is widely regarded as a prime influence in the collapse of communism in Poland.*

"Well it doesn't name Piotrowski," Wodek said.

"Not yet it doesn't, but it will as the story unravels."

"And you think Isaac Kalaman will unravel it for them?"

"Yes I do," Oskar said. "All the way to Piotrowski who commanded operation Purple Orchis and all the others who conspired to cover up the murder of his cousin, Ola. I went to her funeral, by the way, it was a sad affair on a rainy day."

Wodek took his spectacles off and looked at Oskar.

"It would be in your interest to protect Kalaman."

"I know," Oskar said.

“More whisky?”

“Just a little before Marisha gets back.”

## Chapter 22

The PKS bus from Starachowice to Kielce travels almost to Skarzysko then it turns left and goes through Mostki towards Bodzentyn and Suchedniow. Instead of continuing to Bodzentyn it turns and goes through Suchedniow and connects with the main road that runs from Warsaw down to Krakow. Kielce is about twenty minutes drive along this main road in the direction of Krakow.

A few kilometres before you turn onto the motorway is where Tom bought his five acres and a little house. It is not much of a house, a small single storey. Its old bricks were recently insulated with sheets of polystyrene, coated with resin and now painted. At least it would be warm in winter, unlike some of the old wooden houses that surrounded it.

Alan met up with Tom at the shopping mall in Kielce called Galeria. He went there to buy stationery and whilst waiting for a taxi outside the main entrance, heard someone calling out his name. It was Tom and he went over and joined him for a drink.

Eventually Tom's arrest entered the conversation.

"That, I will always truly regret," Tom said.

"Getting together?"

"No, of course not. Those damned photographs. Turned Kasia cold."

"I heard the police gave you a hard time?"

"Yes, that bastard Klusek. You read about the political murder of that young woman in the 1980s that they fingered him for?"

"Yes!"

"Hard bastard he is. I thought I was really done for. I don't know why Iwona took that photograph from my house, but it saved my neck."

On May 1, 2004 Poland joined the European Union. The Starachowice Town Council invited Alan and Justina for the European Union Accession ceremony. That sunny morning the Town Clerk picked them up and drove them to the Town Hall. They took their seats with the other foreigners. Germans from MAN that now owned STAR Trucks. A

blue podium stood at the front of the hall flanked by the flags of EU member countries. At the back of the stage was a large map of Starachowice with facts and figures about the town. All around the stage were banners depicting stick people with EU member country flag bodies and EU star-circle heads. The ceremony opened. The town's youth choir sang and the mayor gave a speech. Then the foreigners were asked to stand at the podium and the mayor, through a translator, asked them questions.

When Alan took his turn, the mayor asked him about life in Starachowice, about what he would like for the town and about the future. Alan spoke about the friendliness, the need for paint; there was too much bare grey concrete in Starachowice, and about investing more in the youth, after all they are the future. Then the mayor presented awards to those who made a significant contribution to the town notably the chief representative of MAN and the owner of Constar, the pork processing plant. He also gave awards to those who worked closely with the EU process. The choir sang the Polish Anthem and then the EU Anthem.

They all left the hall and walked around to the front of the building for the flag raising ceremony. The Polish flag was raised to the sound of the National Anthem, but when, to the strings of the EU Anthem, it was time to raise the EU flag, it got stuck and would not unfurl. The mayor tried to lasso the ropes to untangle it and then the town clerk took over this activity.

Justina began to giggle.

"Shush!" Alan said.

"But you must see how funny it is," she whispered into his ear.

"No I don't," he replied.

"Look at them all," she said. "They want this for themselves. They just used you, Alan. They could care less about Poland. They want what they can get out of the EU for themselves. But look how pathetic they are."

Indeed the sight of the Town Clerk and then one councillor after the other trying to unfurl the EU flag was comical, and Alan began to snigger too.

"It's a new day," Justina said. "It's a new Poland."

"A new Poland," Alan said. His thoughts turned to Kasia, who died on the Mountain.

"I wonder what she was doing there," he said.

“Who?”

“Kasia. I wonder what she was doing on Lysica Mountain.”

“Getting away from this shit,” she said.

“That’s a bit heartless.”

“I know,” she said. “It’s a new day in a new Poland with the same old shit,” she said.

“Maybe she was trying to find something.”

“What?”

“How should I know, but I’m sure Jan will have a theory.”

“Oh, he’s told me his theory already,” he said. “When you suffer so much without justification, you ask why, and look for reasons. Sometimes you begin to believe it is for a higher purpose. That you are in some way chosen.”

Justina was silent for a while.

“That actually makes sense, for once,” she said.

“You think so?”

“Yes I do. The thing about Jan, though, is that he will use it to explain why Poland needed to join the European Union too. He will use it as some kind of panacea to explain it, as if we all suffer from a common malaise.”

Klusek sat across from *pani* Baran at her diningroom table.

“There is something I wanted to show to you,” she said.

She stood up and from a sideboard drawer removed a sheet of folded paper. She sat down again at the table and passed it across to Klusek. He unfolded it and looked at it. Yes, he thought, it makes sense now. The drawing on the page was done in great detail. It showed an alcove with stone blocks on both sides, and a lintel at the top. In the centre of the alcove stood the figure of Saint Adalbert with arms outstretched. But it was the expression on the Saint’s face and in the gesture itself, that caused Klusek reason to pause. It engendered a feeling of absolute welcome.

“It is of the Saint, Adalbert,” he said.

*Pani* Baran took the drawing back from him.

“I felt it important that you see it,” she said.

“Yes, it is important.”

“What will you do now, *Komisarz*?”

“I have a small sailboat on the Baltic. I am going to spend some time there.”

Klusek drove down Miodowa and then turned left into 6-go Wrzesnia. He continued along and then turned right into Moniuszka. At the bottom of the hill he crossed over Kielecka and made his way along Radomska. He passed the end of *Zalew* Pasternik and the little restaurant that served Italian food. He went over the railway crossing, which was clear, and drove past the bus station. Making his way up Radomska he passed the STAR Trucks factory. Further, he drove past the Town Hall and noticed the EU flag fluttering in the breeze beside the Polish flag and the Starachowice flag with its distinctive anvil and hammer that was the town emblem. He accelerated as the cemetery near the edge of the town came into view on his right. Then leaving Starachowice behind him he drove on towards Radom, Warsaw, and the Baltic.

**Mr G B Pope**

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**Special Topics (ENL – 810)**

**Faculty of Humanities, Development & Social Sciences**

**A Critical reflection on the Writing Process of “Kasia from Honey Street”: A novel in the thriller mode set in contemporary Poland.**

*I affirm that this essay is my own work and that all acknowledgments have been properly made.*

Signed:.....

Date:.....15 June 2007



A Critical reflection on the Writing Process of “Kasia from Honey Street”:  
A novel in the thriller mode set in contemporary Poland.

**Introduction**

The problems of writing a manuscript set in Poland from a South African context are immediate and obvious. Equally, using the thriller mode for a ‘serious’ work of fiction – whilst a fairly well trodden path in contemporary fiction – still presents certain specific writerly challenges. The two came together in this project in that students of mine essentially gave the idea for the work of to me when I was teaching English as a foreign language in Poland in 2003. An actual case of a girl who had gone missing under mysterious circumstances came under discussion in one of our classes; after my return to South Africa, the case became something of a focal point for my thinking about and working through my experiences in Poland.

Creating an imaginative account of the scenario began to serve as something of a ‘hook’ that pulled together the various aspects of Poland that intrigue me. In constructing an imaginative account of the mystery of the missing girl, each of the elements crucial to the mystery take on the form of a serious meditation on the history, religion, politics, and felt experience of Polish life. In this way, the, somewhat formulaic aspects of the thriller genre are deepened and amplified in a fictional reworking of a specific case emerging out of contemporary Polish life. My ongoing research into those aspects of Poland became one with the process of investigating the potential of the thriller mode.

As Sandra Kalniete, Latvian Minister of Foreign Affairs, stated in March 2004 in Leipzig. (Reproduced in Krzysztof Persak And Lukasz Kaminski’ (ed) *A Handbook Of The Communist Security Apparatus In East Central Europe 1944 – 1989*:)

After the Second World War, Europe was cut in half by the Iron Curtain, which not only enslaved the people of Eastern Europe, but also erased the history of these people from the overall history of the

Continent. Europe had just rid itself of the plague of Nazism, and it was quite understandable that after the bloodbath of war, few people had the strength to look bitter truth in the eyes, they could not deal with the fact that the terror was continuing in half of Europe, that behind the Iron Curtain the Soviet regime continued to commit genocide against the peoples of Eastern Europe and, indeed, against its own people. For fifty years the history of Europe was written without our participation. [...] It has only been since the collapse of the Iron Curtain that researchers have finally accessed archived documents and life stories of victims. These confirm the truth that the two totalitarian regimes – Nazism and Communism – were equally criminal. (Persak & Kaminsky 2005:10-11)

It is partly this erased history that I have attempted to portray in this manuscript alongside a contemporary sequence of events that reveal what is hidden about Polish life, even today - the unspoken things that people today still abide from the past, and the many ways that this past influences and besets with problems Polish society. Through the character of a murdered girl from the communist era, and a living police detective who committed that murder in the line of duty, I want to bring to life on the page, in the 'now' that "erased past" (2005) that Sandra Kalniete speaks about.

### **Plot**

The manuscript "Kasia From Honey Street" is set in contemporary Poland and deals with a young woman, Kasia, from *ulica* Miodowa (Honey) Street in Starachowice who has gone missing. She is a student at a College owned by Zbigniew Zajac, the Mayor of Krakow, who calls on *Komisarz* (Superintendent) Pawel Klusek, an old antagonist from Communist days, to help find her. The College receives most of its funding from the European Union (EU) and Mayor Zajac is worried that her being missing will adversely affect the image of the College. Representatives are coming to Poland soon for the EU Joining ceremonies and Zajac wants the girl found before they arrive. At first Klusek is

resistant to helping the Mayor. He is against Poland joining the EU and feels that *Inspektor* (Inspector) Maciek Skora, a competent policeman, is doing a good enough job. He shows this resistance when he meets the Mayor in Krakow (4). And later, when he meets with his superior *Komisarz* (Commissioner) Dyka, he asks, "Why must we drop everything to find Zbigniew's girl?" (21).

Please note that *Komisarz* means both Superintendent and Commissioner.

But Klusek is also distracted when he meets with Zajac. On the train journey to Krakow from Kielce he shared a compartment with a man who wore a blue suit and a 'Herbalife' button on his lapel. The man was someone he knew, "connected to an unpleasant experience," that he couldn't place (Pope:5). Later, in the restaurant with Zajac, the waitress's large hands brings back the memory of a young woman, Alekszandra (Ola) Kalamian who was undergoing interrogation in early 1985. Her hands had pleaded with him, but he had ignored them to take a telephone call. Whilst out of the room, the young woman was raped by junior officers. Times were changing in Poland. The murderers of Father Jerzy Popieluszko, agents from Department IV (churches and religious organisations) – a department within the Security Services (SB) or Bezpieka as it was commonly called – had been convicted of his murder and given long sentences. "In December 1984, following the shockwaves throughout the MSW sent by the arrest of three Department IV officers, who abducted and murdered an active opposition priest, Father Jerzy Popieluszko..." (Persak & Kaminski 2005:230). The rape was his responsibility. The operation, Purple Orchis, that he was interrogating her over, concerned an attempt to blackmail Pope John Paul II. Bezpieka was meant to have cleaned up its act, but the secretive Group 'D' conducted these operations, the 'D' standing for 'Disintegration', the disintegration of the Church from the inside out.

In 1973 Independent Group "D" (...) was set up in MSW Department IV (...) the MSW did not want to resign from many already tested methods of fighting against the Church but to keep them more secret. One solution was Group "D," whose

functionaries were involved in activities that were illegal (Persak & Kaminski 2005:268).

Such activities were not meant to be going on at this time, and if this all came out, coupled with the rape, so soon after the murder of Father Jerzy Popieluszko, Bezpieka's credibility would have been seriously compromised. Klusek took the decision to murder the young woman, Ola, and dispose of her body. His superiors, specifically the head of Group 'D', General Wojciech Piotrowski, a fictional character, knew what had happened and helped to cover up the crime. Klusek now remembers that the man he had seen in the train compartment, wearing a blue suit and a 'Herbalife' button was Sylwester Gorzynska, one of the young officers who had raped Ola when he had left the interrogation room.

In the meantime, Piotrek, a monk from Wachock Monastery, has something important to tell to Isaac Kalaman, the cousin of the murdered Ola Kalaman. Whilst delivering a lecture on a newly discovered ancient text, "The Legenda Adalbert" by Jaroslaw of Gniezno, he stays at Isaac's hotel, Alef, and tells him about a confession made by Sylwester Gorzynska, who is Piotrek's cousin. Sylwester had spoken of the rape and possible murder of a young woman called Alekszandra, in Krakow in the mid-eighties. The girl worked for Hospice. Ola too had worked for Hospice.

During the 1980s Hospice was a banned organisation in Poland. The Lenin Foundry on the outskirts of Krakow was poisoning the city and UNESCO had declared Krakow an environmental disaster area. Hospice was banned because of the nature of the work it did with the unusually high number of people that were dying of cancer and respiratory diseases in Krakow at this time. Hospice also had links to Solidarnosc, the Church, and other areas of the Democratic Movement.

Ola's great uncle, Singer Kalaman, is a real character that I have fictionalised. As Bozena Szaynok states, he was the man who was standing outside the house on *ul. Planty* that morning when Walenty and Henryck Blasczyk walked by on the way to the police station. He was the man Henryck accused of kidnapping him and whom the police arrested

and put in jail (Szaynok: 1999). From then the life of Singer for the purposes of this story becomes fictionalised. I could not find any information on what happened to the real Singer Kalaman, except that the police promised to release him, but did not (Szaynok: 1999). It is possible that he was never released. My Singer, however was released after the massacre. He spends the rest of his life, in Poland (most other Jews left), trying to get to the bottom of the Kielce Pogrom.

“Singer had evidence concerning a Major Sobczynski, head of the political police in Kielce at the time of the massacre, that also placed him at the scene of anti-Jewish incidents in Rzeszow (Pope: 90). From work done by Szaynok there is a real link between a massacre in Rzeszow and a Major Sobczynski who was a commander of the Polish Secret Police in that town.

The Singer Kalaman in my story spent almost forty years researching the Kielce Pogrom. He uncovers an aide to the long dead Major Sobczynski, Jurgen Krenzen, who is himself dying of cancer in Krakow. He enlists the help of his great-niece, Ola, who does volunteer work for Hospice, to find out things from Krenzen about the Kielce Massacre, but things go horribly wrong.

### **A Confusion of Conspiracies**

Krenzen had been involved in a conspiracy called Purple Orchis that was an attempt to blackmail Pope John Paul II with the diary of a woman who claimed he had fathered a child by her. Operation Purple Orchis was abandoned after Group ‘D’ of Department IV (churches and religious organisations) of the MSW (Ministry of The Interior) that controlled the SB (Security) or, as it was commonly called, Bezpieka, had murdered Father Jerzy Popieluszko in 1984. Those responsible were arrested, convicted and sentenced to many years in prison. This reverberated through Bezpieka. They were no longer free to do as they pleased. Further, Bezpieka's credibility was at a low point and any subsequent secretive activity against the Church, if it came out, would be disregarded by almost everyone. However, routine letterbox surveillance brought about the arrest of Mazowiecka

who subsequently betrayed Ola to Bezpieka. Pawel Klusek, the policeman whom Mayor Zbigniew Zajac was to ask many years later to find the missing girl, Kasia, was in 1985 called in to bury all traces of operation Purple Orchis. He arrested Ola and whilst under interrogation she was raped. He felt the best way out of this situation was to murder her and hide her body.

### **Two Missing Girls**

It is ironic that Klusek is now searching for a missing girl from Starachowice when he had himself hidden the girl he had murdered in a lake, *Zalew Lubianka*, in that same town. *Zalew Lubianka* exists and I specifically chose that lake, rather than Pasternik or Piachy, because of the connotation of its name – Lubyanka Prison was the name of the infamous KGB prison in Moscow. The words mean a kind of rock. I thought this irony would not have been lost on Klusek either, but intentionally did not play this up in the manuscript, “Kasia From Honey Street,” as it is nothing more than the irony of two very dissimilar entities that share the same name.

Simultaneously, Isaac Kalaman, Ola’s cousin, and Klusek begin their investigations - Isaac to find Ola, and Klusek to find Kasia. However this is Klusek’s manuscript. He is the central character and for me the greatest achievement of this book. Isaac’s investigation is that of the antagonist who uncovers Klusek as the probable murderer of Ola. Klusek’s investigation into the disappearance of Kasia leads him step by step on towards his own downfall, the uncovering of Ola’s body. In fact it is Klusek who gives the order to send police divers into *Zalew Lubianka*, where they find Ola’s body.

### **The Image of a Red House**

The manuscript “Kasia from Honey Street” began with the image of a red house seen

from my window in Starachowice: - “Looking from my window there is a patch of sunlight. In it stands a red house with white snow glistening on its roof.” In writing this down, I began this work with a description of this image. Janet Burroway in *Imaginative Writing, The Elements of Craft* says “The kinds of writing we group under the heading *imaginative* – (...) exist fundamentally as representations. They bring people, places, objects, and actions to the mind as if physically present” (Burroway 2003a:3). This manuscript began with that image and although it has developed away from myself and belongs to the character Alan now (34), that is what started the process that unravelled this story. The scene was particularly sensual to me. I had to capture it because it felt, to me, like I was making art.

“Novelist Robert Olen Butler points out that *all* art objects are sensuous and are produced by a process that is sensuous rather than logical” (Burroway 2003a:3). In capturing it my intention was that it would then appeal to the senses of others. “An image appeals to the senses” (Burroway 2003a:4). However, this would depend on my description of it. “...show don’t tell. What this means is that it is crucial to address the senses. Vivid writing contains concrete, significant details” (Burroway 2003a:7). And, “Specific, definite, concrete, particular details – these are the life of fiction” says Janet Burroway in *Writing Fiction, A Guide to Narrative Craft* (Burroway 2003b:75). “It ends with your translating what you see in your mind into words on the page” (King 2000:136-7). And, “If you want to be a successful writer, you must be able to describe it” (King 2000:137). The image is in my memory and still evokes those sensations, this is what I had to describe on paper.

It is this image that I have to *show* to the reader. They need to experience what I experienced, or what is in my imagination, through all of their five senses. This is what makes the written image vivid. What is vivid about a red house is the way it stands out against white snow, a hot colour against the cold white of winter. Where the details become more significant and concrete is when I place myself there, looking at this scene through my window. This is not just a scene, but someone looking at a scene, experiencing a scene, and the reader feels more what I felt when I looked at this image. How does this

scene make the person looking at it feel? And. Who am I? Why am I looking at this? All of these details stimulate the senses of the reader even further, and hopefully begin to tickle the intellect.

Poland joining the European Union was an event that my wife and I were a part of. The Starachowice Town Council invited us to speak at the EU Joining Ceremony, as they called it. The description of this in the book is exactly how it happened, including the EU flag that would not unfurl. Images like these, in all their irony, were what built the things that influenced this story. It did not begin with notions of Polish character, Zeitgeist, or overall religious, social or political themes; it began with images that stuck in my mind.

The flag refusing to unfurl; my student Gosia, with all her good intentions, incurring the wrath of the townspeople who thought her handing out cakes was a charity thing; getting drunk with my boss, Zbigniew, when he told me how he started smoking again because as leader of Solidarity in Kielce he was expecting to be arrested by the Jaruzelski government at any time, and was; the way the light illuminated the dining room of Hotel Alef in Krakow; the lyricism of youth that I saw in my young language students; the sad frozen dog on 6-go Wrzesnia as I walked to the bus stop by Statoi; the tied up dogs waiting outside the pub nearby for their imbibing owners; the desperation on the faces of easy-wine drinking bums at the *sklep* beneath the school where I taught; the wooden house that was falling over near Murarska where perfect children played in the garden; the picnic at Tokarnia where we were hailed on by the elements; the most balmy day in the world beside Itza Castle, above the famous poet's house.

### **Description**

Stephen King says, "Description is what makes the reader a sensory participant in the



story” (King 2000:136). It was very important for me to accurately describe these images in a detailed way. A way that brought them to life, even before I had any idea of what the story would be about.

After six months of descriptions I wanted a good story, a canvass, to put these images into.

### The Story

When I first approached the page I wanted to portray the Poland of these images. As Stephen King reminds us, “*you must not come lightly to the blank page*” (King 2000:80). And I did not when I first put pen to paper. However, I must reiterate, my initial motivation, the way a story begins for me, is the image of a thing that I put to paper. Before there was even a notion of a plot I was capturing scenes and images and writing them down. Then very slowly I began to form possible plot ideas for these images. As Dorian Haarhoff says in *The Writers Voice*, “Creation myths celebrate and embody form” (Haarhoff 1998:253). Forming a story is to me the great excitement, the great joy of writing. I was forming and abandoning stories at this time because I had no really good central idea. More than anything I wanted to capture my vision of Poland. I had made jottings, but had nothing that was approaching a real story. I had this one image in my imagination more than any other and that was the one of the red house bathed in sunlight, surrounded by snow, seen from my window. This was right at the beginning of spring, which came late in 2004. To me it was a hope of spring.

We had recently visited the Raj (Paradise) cave, which is filled with bats that hibernate there throughout winter. The saying goes that only when they leave the caves will spring truly begin. It seemed a good start, so I wrote, “Looking from my window- (looking for spring). . . .” This was how the story began. It began with an image of a red house, a visit to the Raj caves, and putting the image together with the feeling of waiting for spring. I cannot describe how desperately one waits for spring after the Polish winter. I tried to

portray that feeling, though, in this description.

Then I met Zenex, a farmer from Mostki, who had been selling cabbages at the market in Starachowice. Zenex was a young man who took his produce to market using an ox-wagon. My teaching staff got drunk one afternoon and I invited Zenex along. This did not go down very well with my colleagues, Polish teachers, because Zenex was uneducated. Needless to say it was an awkward evening and Zenex insisted that one of my fellow teachers translate everything he was saying for my benefit. This onerous task fell on one teacher who was really annoyed with me for spoiling the evening. But the look she gave me seemed to convey more than mere irritation. This perplexed me at the time.

Now this same teacher had a secret lover who she kept from us. I made up a story, on paper only, that her lover was a farmer like Zenex and that was why she had been so upset. I called this story "Shades of Grey, Shades of Green" and it was about Iwona, a Polish language teacher who falls in love with Tom, an Englishman. Tom is a Polophile who had left the UK to teach English in Kielce. I based the character Tom on another colleague called Ivan who is all of these things. I changed his name to Tom.

He buys a small farm in Suchedniow. Iwona, from Starachowice, is ambitious and eventually realises she wants more from life than to be married to a small-time farmer and English teacher. That was the general plot idea then. It was not much, but I thought it would make a short manuscript for a novella.

Then, at around this time, Malgorzata, my CAE (Cambridge Certificate in Advanced English) student, and her friend Ewa distracted me from my usual lesson, and began to talk about my desire to find a good story in Poland. Gosia told me about her neighbour who had gone missing in Spain on a religious pilgrimage. That she had been a student and involved in a motorcar accident. That Gosia had seen her praying, late at night in her garden. The missing girl had been big news in the Swietokrzyskie region of Poland. Ewa, my other student, had supplied more details, along with Aga, a pharmacist and my friend, and another Aga, a slightly older woman.

My idea was to incorporate this story with what I had already. I changed some of the details and made the girl disappear in the Swietokrzyskie Mountains. Initially she was to die of exposure on Miedzianka Hill, but later I changed this to Lysica Mountain. Lysica is the tallest of the Swietokrzyskie Mountains.

Besides the scientific explanation that her religious mania was a result of the car crash, Kasia needed a reason to go on this strange pilgrimage. I knew about Saint Adalbert – the patron saint of the Kielce region - and wanted to incorporate him in this. I made up the character Piotrek, a monk from Wachock monastery as the authority on Saint Adalbert.

I also invented the fiction of a lost shrine, which fitted neatly into the scenario. The girl, Kasia, was looking for the lost shrine of Saint Adalbert. That she had been taught Religious Studies by Piotrek at her high school, Gymnasium, worked well as a place where she could first learn about the shrine.

The character Isaac and the Hotel Alef both exist. We stayed twice at this hotel and I have described it exactly as it is. The initial meeting between the two friends, Isaac and Piotrek, sets up the two religious strands of the book - Jewish and Catholic. Ultimately, “A case of mistaken conspiracies” (Pope: 182), involves these two religious themes. But the reason why I wanted these in the story was because of the Jewish images I saw and wrote down when I stayed at Alef in Kaziemierz City; and my experience of All Saints when we visited the graves of the family of our friends and along with tens of millions of people all over Poland placed lanterns on these graves as we watched our friends speak to their deceased ancestors. Another image was seeing thousands of people kneeling and praying in unison on the streets outside our window during Monte Christi. I wish I could have used more of these images. However, as this is really Klusek’s story, I was limited to those images relevant to him, and to the storyline.

Stephen King has the following to say about story, “I think that in the end, the story

should always be the boss” (King 2000:151). This philosophy I share. It does not mean that my approach to writing is plot driven. I feel strongly that plot must be created from setting and image and written through the characters. As King says, “I think the best stories always end up being about the people rather than the event, which is to say character-driven” (King 2000: 151).

A good story is essential to me because it is good stories that I like to read. “...it is probably fair to assume that you will begin by writing what you love to read” (King 2000:123). I like reading thriller novels, Erskine Childers, Ken Follet, Graham Greene, and Frederick Forsythe. However, I am more drawn towards Childers and Greene than Follet and Forsythe because I hold the literary merit of their work in higher esteem. I hope that my manuscript, “Kasia From Honey Street,” is this kind of work - a good story in the thriller genre, a good read, and of some literary merit.

I hope “Kasia From Honey Street” is a good tragedy. It concludes with the diminishing of the protagonist, Pawel Klusek. As Burroway says, “it can end in diminishment or narrowing” (Burroway 2003a:180). He does not grow to “greater wisdom, compassion, or understanding” (2003a). Klusek loses his struggle to find Kasia before the girl he murdered, Ola, is discovered in the search. He has no change of heart or mind. Afterwards he leaves all behind to go and live on his boat on the Baltic. All is now lost for him. It is a tragedy. It follows “a shape that comes from Aristotle’s insistence of *a beginning, a middle, and an end*” (2003a:181). It also involves “some sort of journey, literal or psychological or both” (2003a:183), but even so, for Klusek, the psychological impact of literal events is left unresolved. In this, the manuscript might beg a sequel.

### **Setting**

When the Starachowice Town Council invited my wife and I to the EU Joining Ceremony at the Town Hall, this event had all the elements typical of auspicious occasions held in small towns. In the manuscript I have described this setting exactly.

A blue podium stood at the front of the hall flanked by the flags of EU member countries. At the back of the stage was a large map of Starachowice with facts and figures about the town. All around the stage were banners depicting stick people with EU member country flag bodies and EU star-circle heads. The ceremony opened. The town's youth choir sang and the mayor gave a speech. Then the foreigners were asked to stand at the podium and the mayor, through a translator, asked them questions. (186-7)

The setting of the stage for EU accession is the setting of the manuscript. It is against this backdrop that the events take place. Joining the EU is the reason why Klusek has to investigate the disappearance of Kasia. Janet Burroway says in *Imaginative Writing, The Elements of Craft* that, "Setting often begins a piece" (Burroway 2003a:133). The setting of "Poland joining the EU" became a hook that brought this story together and moved it forward.

Contemporary Poland is also a setting that compels one to delve into the history of Poland as it is a place very much overshadowed by its past. In "Kasia From Honey Street" the characters in the story, their memories, and fragments left by remembered ancestors limited that history and subsequent historical research. But, interestingly, at this time people were becoming very vocal about their own visions for Poland. The country was polarized between those who wanted EU accession and those who did not.

Within the setting of Poland there is also the marked difference in contemporary attitudes that exist between larger and more progressive cities like Warsaw, Lodz and Krakow, and the smaller cities and towns like Kielce, Radom and Skarzysko and Starachowice. The character Pawel Klusek is a product of this setting, who he is now is because of the past - years living away from the big cities has caused him to identify more with the attitudes of the people of the smaller cities, towns and villages. The two main settings, Krakow and Starachowice, starkly contrasts and shows the sophistication of one, as opposed to the lack of sophistication of the other. This is indicative of the attitudes and behaviour of the people

in each respectively.

Krakow:

Klusek wiped condensation from the windowpane to make more of the square visible. He looked to see as much as he could, the market building, the horses that draw carriages, tucking into their nosebags. The Justus patrols in elongated golf carts, nothing more than mafia. Wiping and looking, his hand moving quicker and quicker to catch each scene before condensation misted it over. He tried to see the tower of the Church of Saint Mary. At two o'clock the bugler would open the shutter and play across the city, but from where he sat he could not clearly make it out. (Pope:2)

Starachowice:

He drove along the 42 through forested land all the way to the town of Skarzysko Kaminiera and then through farmland as he continued towards Wachock and Starachowice. Thick frost covered the countryside, where green grass was appearing from under the thaw. To his left the Kaminiera River and its surrounding wetlands became visible. Lake Pasternik came into view and beyond it the town of Starachowice. He noted a few old-timers hunched over their fishing rods as he motored past the lake. (Pope:26)

Burroway sums it up perfectly: "As with character, the first requisite of effective setting is to know it fully, to experience it mentally, and the second is to create it through significant detail. What sort of place is this?" (Burroway 2003a:139). Krakow is a very different sort of place to Starachowice. "What are the social assumptions of the

inhabitants?” (2003a:139). In Krakow they are very different to those in Starachowice. People do not fish in the Vistula River in Krakow as they do in the Kamienna in Starachowice. They do this in Starachowice out of necessity.

Says Albert Zuckerman in *Writing The Blockbuster Novel*, “The setting of a novel can be the key determinant in the foundation of a plot and in the establishment of characters” (Zuckerman 1994:28). The images of Poland around me, the people, the architecture, the weather, the geography, the beliefs, the politics, and suffering, were things I captured on paper. They were like written snapshots of the place. This was where I established the setting that was then to drive story, plot, characters and theme. But it was this time of change, the impending accession that glued these elements together. “Writer after writer will tell you that setting fuels the drive to write” (Burroway 2003a:129). It was the setting of Poland at this pivotal point in its history, becoming a part of Western Europe again, that inspired me to write “Kasia from Honey Street.”

I have mentioned already that the setting of contemporary Poland forces one to delve into the setting of past events. “Setting is not merely scenery against which the significant takes place; it is part and parcel of the significant; it is heritage and culture; it is identity or exile” (Burroway 2003a:129). This is true also for the main character in “Kasia from Honey Street,” the disillusioned policeman Pawel Klusek. Klusek could not exist as a character without Poland. He is, I believe, typical of many of his generation who dislike the changes that have taken place post *Autumn of the Peoples*, and who yearn for former times. They are everywhere in the poorer and more rural parts of this country.

Pawel Klusek exists within a setting littered with the remnants of Socialism, STAR TRUCKS, The Network, concrete Community Blocks – even the building where Global School is located on Murarska was formerly where party faithful met every other evening. “The building looked the same as it did when it was used as Party Headquarters for Starachowice during the Socialist era. But everything else about it was different. Shops occupied the lower floor and a kind of market had been set up in the main auditorium” (Pope:165). This is new wine in old wineskins and it is hard for him to come to terms with

it.

In Graham Greene's *The Quiet American*, there is a scene where Fowler and, the new to Indo-China, Pyle, are sitting in a restaurant. "He (Pyle) gazed at a milk-bar across the street and said dreamily, 'That looks like a soda fountain.' I wondered what depth of homesickness lay behind his odd choice of what to observe in a scene so unfamiliar" (Greene (1955) 1984:23). Greene shows how Pyle looks for the familiar in a strange setting. So too does any reader. Burroway says: "If the world you are writing about is itself in some way exotic, you will need to work in the opposite direction, to make it seem familiar to us as the nearest mall" (Burroway 2003a:130-1).

I have done this by using familiar places, such as a train compartment, restaurants, or school children going to school. But there is also the Poland that is unique which I have wanted to portray as being unfamiliar, to me certainly - the religious festivals or buildings that belong very specifically to the Socialist past are examples of this. These are the things that make it a Polish tale. Leaving a tension between making familiar and keeping elements "other" and unique.

Graham Greene overcomes this problem by making such associations happen through characters foreign to the places where they live. Switzerland seen through the first person narrative of Jones in *Doctor Fischer of Geneva or The Bomb Party*, or Fowler's description of Vietnam in *The Quiet American* –

He would have to learn for himself the real background that held you as smell does: the gold of the rice fields under a flat late sun: the fishers' fragile cranes hovering over the fields like mosquito's: the cups of tea on an old abbots platform, with his bed and his commercial calendars, his buckets and broken cups and the junk of a lifetime washed up around his chair: the mollusc hats of the girls repairing the road where the mine had burst etcetera." (Greene (1955) 1984: 25)



The setting is exotic. Anyone who knows anything about Vietnam will recognize the 'mollusk hats' or the 'rice field.' Greene has given us this description to develop the setting. What he is also doing is that he is using Fowler, an English speaking character, to select and possibly hint at interpretation of this exotic setting so that it will be brought home to the English speaking reader. It is filtered through an English character, bringing it nearer to us, making it more familiar to the reader.

In "Kasia from Honey Street" I have used the device of the English teacher, Alan, and his friendship with Jan the Polish poet, and the Polophile Tom to make the setting more understandable to English speaking readers.

### **Writing**

When I returned to South Africa and enrolled to do Creative Writing with the University of KwaZulu-Natal I invented a character called Pawel Klusek, a policeman, who was to set about looking for the missing girl. Very early in the writing of this it became clear to Professor Michael Green, that Klusek was stealing the show. He was the most interesting character and certainly was looking like being the protagonist of this manuscript. I agreed, but what did this mean? I would have to change focus completely. I had a story about teachers, foreign and Polish, and students who uncovered Kasia. Now I would have to understand the character of a Polish detective who was central to the plot. I had to do some serious research.

Thankfully, the Institute of National Remembrance (IPN) in Poland had just published, in English, work on the SB (Security) files from 1946 to 1989. This was a godsend as it allowed me access to information on the security apparatus in Poland during Socialist times. I needed this because the way that the character Pawel Klusek had been forming was that he had come from this era, that he had done bad things, and that he had chips on his shoulders. For me to understand him, I would need to understand what created him. I had a way into that world in a 'factual' kind of way that I did not have from talking to people, often reticent, about that era.

I wanted Klusek to have a skeleton in his closet and invented the rape and murder of Ola Kalaman (5-7). I researched the SB (Bezpieka) and through the work done by the IPN discovered a world that I had only known previously through spy novels and Cold War thrillers. For me this process involved research and imagination because I was constantly fictionalising what I was discovering. I was also piecing together experiences of that time from accounts told to me by people I knew in Poland. In this way Klusek's world opened up.

At a later meeting, Professor Green suggested that I use Klusek's investigation of the missing girl as a vehicle to drive the plot, and uncover Poland. This made perfect sense, but it presented one difficulty. My initial vision of the story involved the English teachers and Iwona. Right up until the end the "Shades of Grey, Shades of Green" draft impacted on the story and was a hindrance. Professor Green told me that this was happening and I had to cut it down to its bare relevance to the story now, that is Klusek's story.

The first draft of the manuscript contained two fundamental flaws. The first and most obvious of these was that tying up the ending was too quick paced. It lost the flow of the first part of the manuscript. The problem I needed to address was firstly that of pace. I needed to create an even pace in keeping with the earlier parts of the manuscript. The second problem was to overcome a kind of "breathiness", as Professor Green termed it, concerning the lead up to the discovery of Kasia's body. This did not create suspense and so I had to focus in on very visual description of sight and sound to make for this tension. This created a kind of slow motion effect that is quite filmic in nature.

The second fundamental flaw was that although this is Klusek's story, in terms of plot, I did not have him discover where Kasia was on his own. This first draft had him learn of her whereabouts from Gosia, the Dabrowskis, and Alan without figuring out these pieces of the puzzle for himself. This had to be rectified because it is his search and he needs to see it through to the end. The way it was in that first draft cheapened him as a character, I believe, in the eyes of the reader.

Another problem I had was getting the character Piotrek and a sense of the shrine right. I also battled with the notion of why, or how, Adalbert and the shrine resonates, albeit enigmatically, for Kasia. "For an author to create any of these types of richly textured out-of-the-way settings, it certainly gives her (him) a tremendous edge to have actually lived or worked within one of these environments" (Zuckerman 1994:31). Living and working in Poland helped greatly with this novel, however it is not really an out of the way setting anymore, certainly not contemporary Poland. The religious setting of this book is, however.

I am not sure that I entirely agree with Zuckerman on this point. Academically I come from a theological background. I studied and taught theology at the University of Natal in Pietermaritzburg. I thought the religious theme of Kasia and the setting of the shrine, the monastery at Wachock, and the creating of the character Piotrek would be relatively easy. These, for me, were the hardest and most problematic elements of the book. Perhaps because I had moved on from the world of theology and had a kind of mental block to it all, but all those years of studying and interacting with all manner of religious types did not prevent me from getting Piotrek the monk all wrong, the shrine intangible, and the reason for Kasia's seeking it insubstantial rather than enigmatic.

It was far easier and exciting for me to recreate the world of the State Security Apparatus in Poland and all the kind of characters inhabiting that world than it was the religious world. It did occur to me that as a South African I have a general experience of State Security, because of Apartheid and growing up in a police-State. But I do not to the extent that I know religion. In fact my theological study was a hindrance. My settings and characters were wooden and lifeless because I could not see them from a distance. They were not real because of propinquity perhaps. I had to forcibly distance myself from them to get them right. I had to find a peripheral vision from which I could survey them.

Professor Green kept bringing me back to these religious elements. They had to be right

because this was a major theme. Finally, I believe he found the key when he pointed out that there was no real sense of the shrine. The shrine did not seem real and after creating a description of it, it came to life and drew the other religious elements together.

As Stephen Fisher points out: "Structure is the art that conceals itself-you only *see* the structure in a badly structured story, and call it formula." The 'structures' that underpin Polish life are hidden things that take some detection to unravel. This process has worked alongside the process of uncovering and hiding of structure within the work, "Kasia from Honey Street." It is a thriller, attempting to emulate Polish reality by concealing well the structure, or formulas of its genre. But this was not always easy. At times I gave too much of the plot away for the sake of what I perceived as serious fiction. Again, Professor Green reined me in when I did this. For example when I revealed that Kasia was on a mountain far too early in the piece. This was in the earlier drafts. I was following an artistic notion. I wanted to balance the entire present narrative with segments of Kasia's last thoughts. In terms of the thriller mode, this gave too much of the plot away.

Initially the questions I asked were: What issues will need to be addressed in terms of such a novel written in the conservative and even non-progressive thriller genre? What practical nuts and bolts are needed in concealing the plot? Hiding the underlying structure of the story through emphasis on characterization, setting and theme.

This work has involved an investigation of how to write such a manuscript. It has relied on stylistic predecessors, specifically the works of Graham Greene and looked seriously at textual strategies, such as how to reveal the plot in such a way as to not give too much away, to maintain suspense and the reader's interest. The key to this was to keep the story character driven. However, the major problem I encountered with this was the blending of elements quite opposed. A thriller needs a fairly quick pace to keep the reader interested. However, the nature of the work had a strong element of the abstract as far as Kasia's reasons for seeking the shrine to Saint Adalbert. This resonates in the abstract and the danger would always be maintaining a balance between the sense of action and reality needed for thriller genre and the abstract needed for showing the spiritual. I did not want

the reader to skip paragraphs to get back to the action. Still, I feel, this tension is not completely resolved. Having said that, though, my way forward has been to only use this abstract, in back story for example, where it would move the plot forward. To hide the plot, I have used it to show the character and never to directly reveal the next logical conclusion. Where Isaac learns more about Bezpieka from the doctoral student at the IPN archives is an example of this (128-). Or through the character Magda Skalka (147-), where we learn something about Polish folklore in terms of it moving the plot forward through knowing something about the character Magda Skalka.

Here I have also relied on the writings of the Polish novelist, Czeslaw Milos, specifically his work, *Issa Valley*. Milos uses Polish pre-Christian religion, folklore, mythology and superstition to explore Polish ironies. "A girl lights two candles on St. Andrews Eve, gazes into the mirror, and her future is revealed: the face of the man with whom her life will be joined, or the face of death. Is this the devil in disguise, or could it be the work of other magical forces" (Milos (1955) 2001:6). This superstition is practised by many young Polish women and for my character, Kasia, carries with it a confirmation, the love of her young and lyric life is dead, therefore when she looks in the mirror on St. Andrews Eve, she sees a nothingness staring back: "...for it was an empty room that stared back at her" (Pope:78). This gives both a valuable insight into Kasia's character and the superstitions of Poles. I feel it is a good example of the balance I have attempted to achieve between the realistic elements of a thriller and the more abstract elements of serious fiction.

### **Plotting**

King says: "I distrust plot for two reasons: first, because our lives are largely plot less, even when you add in all our reasonable precautions and careful planning; and second, because I believe plotting and the spontaneity of real creation aren't compatible" (King 2000:128)

I have to disagree with King's first assumption. I do not think our lives are plot less because we give plots to our lives. It could be that our lives run along bad plots that never

reach a desired conclusion. The plot of “Kasia from Honey Street” is an attempt to tap into a kind of meta-narrative in a sense. Religion and politics, the past and the present, through seemingly unrelated events conspire to bring about the downfall of Pawel Klusek because of a crime he committed. I think that the larger the scope of the plot, the more it approximates life itself in this work, and the more believable it is to me. Life, I believe, is serendipitous. The trick with plotting Kasia in this way was to effectively hide this serendipity. Further, to hide the plot so that it is never obvious to the reader.

Concerning King’s second point, I think that certain types of stories require more plotting than others. This, I think, has to do with the complexity of the story. King’s books, as he says: “tend to be based on situation more than story”, (King 2000:129) means, “I lean more heavily on intuition” (King 2000: 129).

However, for me, in a story where threads that began with images combine with, or grow into, smaller cameos and stories that need to be pulled together, plotting is essential. It is still character driven, but I am liberated by the fact that as author, I can change what my characters do by using the ‘delete’ button. When I first started writing this book the character Iwona played a larger part in her love interest with Tom. This was a carry over from how I originally began the story and played more on her finding him unacceptable because he wanted to be a small time farmer in Suchedniow. The thread ran through the following scenes, most of which I deleted because it was too weighted in terms of proportion. Here is an excerpt from that:

“Yes,” she admitted, “I have been seeing someone, but I have to cut it.” She said this with an open palmed, cutting down through the air motion of her hand. “I have to cut it,” she repeated, with the same motion. They tried to find out why, but she had shaken her head and would say no more. (Pope)

At times in writing this book I became so locked into what the characters had done that it became fact. I had a mental block to changing these past actions even though it was in

the way of the story moving forward. Deleting these scenes and changing their actions was a liberating experience, once I had done it, it was easy, and I felt it worked.

I plotted every inch of this book and never felt that it hindered the creative process because the creative process always came first. Plotting was drawing a map, not creating a detailed architectural plan. It focused the story towards an outcome; it did not presuppose that outcome.

For me it always began with an image, and then another image. Then there is the idea for a story and the images take shape around that. It is a constant creative process aligning itself to the plot. Mostly the images were of people, for example the man in the blue suit.

I was journeying with my wife, Radhna, by train from Wroclaw to Katowice. A little girl was window painting the passing scenery with her finger and then became very attached to Radhna, showing off how she could count in English. A man in a cheap blue polyester suit wearing a “Herbalife” button on his lapel entered the compartment. When he left the train, in Wroclaw not Koslow, he stood and in a very military way nodded – almost bowed – to everyone in the compartment. This scene became the opening scene in the manuscript:

A little girl traced the outline of the passing scenery with her finger onto the windowpane. Her hand moved quicker and quicker, window painting each scene before it passed from view. (...) A man in a blue suit rose and nodded goodbye to everyone in the compartment, rigid as if to attention. He wore a “Herbalife” button. When he alighted from the train he went and stood near the little brick station house. He checked his watch, as if he was in a hurry, as if someone was meant to be there to meet him. Klusek sensed it was all for show. (Pope:1)

Not one of the images in this opening scene was not seen by me and described. None of

always that I would not be able to keep the two types of theme, simple and complex, in a tension that would satisfy the reader. I think I have achieved this, and without compromising either genre, because I have layered the two in a way that the commercial theme, “the length of rope” (2002:195), feeds out the more complex insights that the story reveals. “The theme of a story is whatever general idea or insight the entire story reveals” (2002:195). In this case, these underlying insights or themes form an attempt on my behalf to understand Poland as best I can.

Further, in choosing this theme structure I was concerned with finding something typically Polish that would fit with the original story of the missing girl as told to me by my students. The works of Graham Greene seemed an obvious fit with his recurring theme of characters choosing their own destruction, in spite of the warnings against this. As Greene said in Marie Francois Allain’s *Conversations With Graham Greene*, “... the paths of creation, however well signposted, are subject to the laws of the unconscious” (Allain 1983:119). Kasia chooses her own destruction, as does the man in the blue suit and of course Klusek, who ultimately orders divers into Lake Lubianka where he, years before, dumped Ola’s body. However, in retrospect using Poland as a theme is far more complex than this kind of assumption. A complexity I have tried to show in the diversity of characters portrayed in this novel and the way they each have a different take on what transpires. This is summed up rather well by Justina in conversation with Alan at the EU joining ceremony in Starachowice.

“How should I know, but I’m sure Jan will have a theory.”

“Oh, he’s told me his theory already,” he said. “When you suffer so much without justification, you ask why, and look for reasons. Sometimes you begin to believe it is for a higher purpose. That you are in some way chosen.”

Justina was silent for a while.

“That actually makes sense, for once,” she said.

“You think so?”

“Yes I do. The thing about Jan, though, is that he will use it to



explain why Poland needed to join the European Union too. He will use it as some kind of panacea to explain it, as if we all suffer from a common malaise.” (Pope:188)

Greene also talks about a sadness that is the human condition: “the nail parings on the unmade bed of brittle love, the blood on the over-polished shoes of Pyle, the evening’s whiskey in which the double agent drowns his loneliness, or again that unhappy spider slowly suffocating beneath the tooth-mug” (Allain 1983:120). Secret agonies, such as Klusek being able to make out the bugler whereas Zbigniew can: “He wiped more furiously, his hand moving quicker and quicker to catch each scene before condensation misted it over. He tried to see the tower of the Church of Saint Mary – at two o’clock the bugler would open the shutter and play across the city – but from where he sat he could not clearly make it out” (Pope:2). And: “Zbigniew wiped the window using the right sleeve of his woollen jacket. He looked up as the wooden shutters at the top of the Church opened, so that one could make out a filigree of brass. The notes began to float down across Rynek Glowny” (Pope:3).

My aim was to create a subtlety in the manuscript in that on one level it is a fairly straightforward thriller – even detective – novel. However, it is also a story played out against the background of greater influences that resonate through the plot.

EM Forster in *Aspects of a Novel*, quoted here from Burroway’s *Writing Fiction, A Guide to Narrative Craft*, says that, “A plot is also (like a story) a narrative of events, the emphasis falling on causality (Burroway 2003b.) In “Kasia from Honey Street” causality is a key element that provides the momentum for the events to unfold as they do, for the story to develop as it does.

What I have hopefully achieved is to hide these reasons well so that they provoke rather a sense of irony. The irony involving: two missing girls, a confusion of conspiracies, the investigation of one crime leading to the uncovering of the other, religion being the reason that the political crime is uncovered, against the greater backdrop of contemporary Poland,

fed-up with the corrupt SDL ruling party (reformed Socialists) and about to join the European Union. Three years later Poland is led by a Centre Right Coalition that has opened the IPN files and is naming and shaming any public figure, including the last Archbishop of Warsaw, for collaborating with Bezpieka.

A political leadership led by Jaroslaw and Lech Kasczynski that sees Poland as being religiously messianic in terms of the rest of Western Europe. My character Jan, the poet said, "Within the Poland of the Polish imagination is suffering and something distinctly messianic. Unfortunately, we all know what happens to messiahs, because there are devils too" (Pope:158). I wrote this before the Kasczynskis came to power.

Had I not in some way tapped into the Zeitgeist of Poland I do not think accurate assumptions like this would be present in this novel. In some way this statement tells a greater and more universal truth about Poland and Polish people's perceptions, that they choose this role for themselves. Further, had my plotting been rigid I would never have been able to explore Poland with any real intellectual depth because I would be too busy fitting Poles and Poland into my narrative of events. I would not understand them or the place and its history beyond my own self-serving chronology.

Kasia embodies a religious theme, but she is also the antithesis of what most young Polish people want and therefore is a social indicator. In Catholic Poland religious fervour is secretly admired by many young people, pilgrimages to Busko Zdroz and other places are made by a large majority of the youth. Pilgrimages are both normative and seen as a positive growth experience, in terms of faith. However, modern Polish youth would regard Kasia as either mad or a loser. Kasia has lost herself. Become the true and authentic Christian. "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me (...) but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it (Mk 8:24-35).

However, the reason for the extreme nature of her pilgrimage, and what her possible motives are, is never explained. She has suffered head injuries, that is a possibility, but

rather like we would accept a psychological reason for something as extreme as demon possession. In the reader's mind it is never meant to be the explanation, merely a mild foil. That she has lost her love, Emilian, provided me with a more of a foundation. But why is she looking for the shrine to Saint Adalbert? This question can never be answered because it is like expecting an answer from someone who is looking for God. Why are you looking for God? Why indeed. There is no straightforward answer to that.

Therefore Kasia has to resonate with Adalbert and the shrine, without the reader knowing why. Of course she has to do this in the novel. I cannot explain the mysteries of life. But I have a sense of Kasia that is exactly the inexplicable sense I have of Poland itself. This is how Kasia develops in the novel. Never defined, yet always there in ways that are inexplicable.

The simple truth about Kasia, in this plot, is that religion taken to extreme killed her, albeit by accident. She also became the catalyst that caused the discovery of Ola's body in the lake that led to the naming and shaming of Klusek. Here the complexity of insight into her thematically in a literary vein actually develops the thriller theme. The innocence of the one, who loses her life for the spiritual, has consequences in the real world.

As I have mentioned before, the political leaders of Poland today have a vision for Poland to become a Messianic State within Europe.

In the description of the destruction of Babylon in the Book of Revelation the following prophecy describes what will befall nations outside who follow that city. "When the kings of the earth who committed adultery with her and shared her luxury see the smoke of her burning, they will weep and mourn over her" (Rev. 18:9). Is this what present day Poland is trying to avoid? Is this what Poland intends to evangelise the rest of Western Europe against?

Unjust suffering causes the sufferer to start thinking and then believing that there is a reason for their suffering. Poland today is experiencing this crisis in the very interpretation

and outcomes of its politics in a way that no European country has experienced since medieval times. It has also suffered more in recent history by outside hands than any other European country.

To reiterate, Kasia remains enigmatic as far as her motivation for seeking the shrine to Adalbert goes. In the book there is a resonance between her and Adalbert, the denial of present life, family and friends, the denial even of worldly goods. The welcoming gesture she imagines of his likeness in the shrine to a fellow rebel. The shrine too must remain enigmatic; she seeks the impossible; the impossible seeks her, or so she believes. Tragedy here is brought about through religious confusion and even mayhem. Klusek, an atheist, is destroyed because of this. He becomes collateral damage. He is not innocent in life. This is my great irony, that all who cause his destruction are far more innocent in life than he is.

As I have said before, the deeper and more complex themes move the simpler thriller, or detective genre – commercial even – theme forward. The deeper ideas drive the simpler ones.

### **Characters**

#### **➤ Klusek**

Burroway says in *Writing Fiction*, “... only the human is tragic” (Burroway 2003b:118). Early in the novel Zbigniew recalls, “Klusek was symbolic of the ugliness of Krakow at that time, ugliness both literal and moral” (Pope:2). Klusek is a tragic figure from a landscape that was itself tragic. But as Burroway states, “the tragedy lies in the cupidity of those who wrought the havoc” (Burroway 2003b:118). In uncovering Klusek’s character, a tragic figure, it became clear that he is someone who knows exactly the gravity and wrong of what he did. At first I was not even sure of this, until writing this critical component, when Professor Green pointed out that I had misrepresented Klusek. “Klusek knows,” said Professor Green. Klusek does know what he has done. Does know what was wrong with that past, but for whatever reason, still holds with it. Perhaps, and this is

speculative, it is because he feels there is more that is wrong with the present.

As I have stated earlier, very early on in writing this manuscript under the supervision of Professor Green, it became apparent that the character of Pawel Klusek was really at the fore as the protagonist. There was no reason for this and initially the characters of Kasia, Tom, Iwona, Alan and Justina were to be central to the story. Piotrek and Isaac were in a way secondary characters that pointed towards the religious nature of the plot. But it was Klusek who then became obvious as the central character.

Whereas the other characters I have mentioned were based loosely on actual people I knew in Poland, Pawel Klusek was a complete fiction whose character is not based on anyone I knew. Only his name comes from my student register. I do not know why he came out so strongly, and still feel this question is enigmatic. He just felt right from the very beginning and stayed like that. He was an easy character to write in that he just flowed. I had to research his world, but getting him right came naturally. I cannot explain why. And strangely, he still seems a mystery to me. Were I to continue writing about him, he would not be predictable even to me. And this is as much as I know about Klusek.

The centrality of Klusek as protagonist forced the most critical change I have made in terms of initial hypothesis. This has been to remove myself, and my sense of discovering Poland, from the story. I got in the way of the events that unfolded. My interests were too personal. It was important to still discover Poland, but in a way that hid what interested me personally. Klusek was now uncovering those things. Poland was being expressed through his character. The autobiographical elements portrayed through the character Alan were reformulated as narrative and although this diminished Alan's presence in the work, I believe it heightened the reader's sense of believability in the authenticity of these characters and landscapes. Alan still served to bring the setting closer to the reader.

Through Klusek I found a way of amplifying my Polish experience that went beyond my own experiences and into research and imagination. The more I wrote about Klusek, the more I realised that he could take this exploration much further than say Alan, who was

very much an experimental self quite close to my own person, and personality.

➤ Singer Kalamán

In studying the history of the massacre, I discovered the historical figure of Singer Kalamán whom I then fictionalised. “Isaac’s uncle Singer had been standing outside the Jewish house that summer morning in 1946 when Walenty Blaszczyk and his son Henryk walked by on their way to the police station.

Is this the house the man took you to?” Walenty, pointed at the white building on ul. Planty. In that moment Singer was paying no attention to these two. He was enjoying the sunshine. Dazedly he had been staring at a butterfly on the step beneath the hot July sun.

Walenty dragged his son closer to get a better look. “Yes, this is the house.” The boy remarked. Singer looked up and smiled at the two. A father and son out walking together, it was a good day. But he had not seen the tight grip the man had had on the boy’s arm, now released. The child rubbed the appendage, hurt and angry. Singer smiled at them.” (Pope:13)

I made him Isaac’s great uncle and I then made the murdered girl Singer’s great niece and Isaac’s cousin. Further, whilst researching the Kielce massacre I came across a theory that placed Major Sobczynski, head of the Provincial Bureau for Public Safety, at the scene of another massacre in Rzeszów. “The actions of the head of the Provincial Bureau for Public Security, Major Sobczynski, were, without doubt, designed to escalate the pogrom. Sobczynski had been in Rzeszów during an attempted pogrom there in June 1945. He understood perfectly well how people and soldiers behave during a pogrom. The reasons for Major Sobczynski’s actions are not known. One can only state that he had an interest in seeing the pogrom spread” (Szaynok: 1999).

I decided to make Krenzen his aide at that time and primed it so that Singer used his

niece Ola to dig for information about the massacre from the dying Krenzen.

Unfortunately, the SB connected her to her uncle but also her uncle to a man suspected of being a western informer.

Using the thriller mode, the way my character Klusek discovers more about the missing girl, the way the character Isaac discovers more about the murdered girl and Klusek's part in it has mirrored my further exploration of Poland, in its cultural, social, political, historical, and religious aspects. The missing girl, Kasia, whom the protagonist Klusek has to find, is emblematic of my own discovery of Poland. So too is Isaac's discovery of what happened to his cousin, Ola.

Singer is a character I would love to develop in a sequel. Specifically his obsessive nature, and how it is destructive to those around him, especially Ola.

➤ Alan, the Poet, Jan, and Justina

Whilst living and working in Poland the place and its people intrigued me. I observed many similarities between Poland and South Africa. Primarily, both are new democracies and both are developing countries. I wanted to write about the country. I have a preference for the works of Graham Greene and in them came to see a vehicle for capturing Polish life in novel form. I wanted to write a book that is exciting to read. I also wanted a book that revealed the nature of the place and time and the character of Polish people. Mostly, I wanted to reveal the cold greyness of the former Polish political landscape. Greene's books capture all the elements to which I aspired in my own work. Therefore he became a model on which I based my own work. Apart from avoiding a cloying style of writing and limiting verisimilitude, not always easy as this is, in part, an exploration of a foreign place. Elements of Greene influenced the dreary inevitability of the characters in my own writing. The character Justina leaves Alan for Tom and then returns to Tom, as Phuong leaves Fowler for Pyle and then returns to Fowler, in *The Quiet American*, exemplifying the relentless need for love in difficult times.

My rationale for writing this novel comes out of the experiences I had whilst living and working in the Kielce region of that country. I became interested in Polish problems and noticed many similarities with South Africa. However, this created the problem of imposing myself upon the story. In parts I felt like one of those tourists who ask too many questions and find things interesting that most would ignore.

To solve this problem I used the device of fictionalising the poet who lives in a house in the shadow of Itza castle. There really is such a poet and I had seen his house before climbing the stairs up to the castle ruins. I then used him as a foil for the character Alan, thus enabling me to add another dimension to the proceedings in the novel. At first the device did not work. I had made the poet, Jan, too preachy and too abstract. Then I pondered removing the poet completely, but resolved to keep him and make his character more substantial. This brought him to life and made him work better for the task I had set him as a dispenser of insights into Polish character for the purposes of the novel's themes. Alan's girlfriend, Justina, also provided a way to explore possible reasons for Kasia's disappearance.

At first the character Alan was autobiographical. I overly identified with him and it was obvious to the reader. He had become, possessed by the author, at these times. By making Alan less reflective and more interactive with the other characters in the story created a distance between him and me that let him have his own life in the story. He became less an extension of authorial omniscience and found his own as a character thrown into the revelation of plot through character.

One of the most critical changes I have made in terms of initial hypothesis has been that of removing myself, and my sense of discovering Poland, from the story. I got in the way of the events that unfolded. My interests were too personal. Discover, yes, the story still uncovered Poland but in a way that is hidden in standalone characters in the story. The concept of Alan and Jan as "my experimental selves," as Milan Kundera discusses in *The Art Of The Novel* (1984) was simply too obvious.



➤ Isaac Kalaman

The antagonist Isaac, a Jew, involved with the Institute of National Remembrance (IPN) – a Polish body set up to investigate crimes against the Polish Nation - tries to uncover the truth about a rape and rumoured murder of his cousin, Ola, that happened in Krakow in the early 1980s. Of course, this is the same girl Klusek murdered to cover a rape by his younger officers. He uncovers the truth but has no idea where the body is until Klusek, the murderer, gives the order that reveals it.

Isaac is the outsider because he is not Roman Catholic. However, he is very much a part of new Poland because he chooses to be so and engages. In terms of his character development, he is one who has grown to see the importance of who he is, belonging and justice. He does this through realising more about his great uncle, Singer Kalaman, who remained in Poland after the Kielce pogrom. In this way he highlights the flaw of so many in Poland – especially the youth – who would prefer to leave. This issue is a South African concern as well, with so many young people leaving for Australia, England, New Zealand and elsewhere.

Perhaps it was sheer bloody mindedness, and certainly Isaac knew how bloody-minded his great uncle could be. Or perhaps, as he began to see now, that it could have been that look of suspicion in Albert Grynbaum's eyes, that forced Singer to remain in Kielce when everyone else left after the massacre. For most it was the final straw. But for Singer it became his life's work to expose what had happened, to expose his own innocence. (Pope:44)

Uncovering Isaac's character was more difficult than Klusek's. I believe the reason for this was because there is the young Isaac and Isaac the adult. The young Isaac embodies a juvenile streak, irreverence and humour, which needed to, in a way, still be recognizable in the older Isaac. I made the older Isaac a bit of a flirt, and hoped I got away with it. However, my main problem with Isaac, and I still need to address this, is that I do not think

I have fully shown why the Kielce Massacre, or being Jewish became important to him as an adult. Certainly he grew up and that explains it to a degree. But, I think that there should be more of a reason than this. In this sense, Isaac is still a work in progress.

➤ Tom and Iwona

Tom is an ex-patriot Englishman who loves everything Polish. He is a Polophile. Why he is a Polophile is not explained in the manuscript and Professor Green believes this might be a fault. The truth is that I do not know why Tom loves everything Polish. He is loosely based on a former colleague of mine, Ivan, and apart from being disillusioned with England, I cannot say why he loves Poland so much. Perhaps being a Polophile is simply that one falls in love with a particular place and its people, Poland. Or falls in love with the Nation Poland and all that means. Maybe it is as confusing as why anyone falls in love with another. This is an area I would need to explore further before sending the manuscript to a publisher.

Tom wants to be a small time farmer and teacher and beyond these has no ambitions. He is a creative man who takes photographs. Tom is 'kinky' in terms of his sexuality and it is because of this that he becomes Klusek's fall guy for the disappearance of Kasia. He had previously been involved with Kasia.

Iwona, his current girlfriend, has found a photograph he took of Kasia, one that has compromised him with the police. She is upset by it. But mostly she is upset with Tom's lack of ambition. For Iwona, being a farmer is a very lowly thing to want to be. At the end of the book we know that she has left him, but not before she frees him from hospital.

Both these characters are fictionalised from real life. The Englishman I mentioned earlier who bought a small farm in Suchedniow, and Iwona is based on a teacher I worked with in Starachowice. However, much about them has been made up.

➤ Ewa and Gosia

Ewa and Gosia, my two students who told me about the girl in the first place are also real people who I have fictionalised. Through Gosia I was able to give a reference to Kasia's state of mind – her religious mania that would show how Piotrek was unaware of the obvious staring him in the face about the young woman. In terms of the plot, it is Gosia and Klusek who discover Kasia's body. But not before Ola's long dead body is retrieved from Lake Lubianka. I wanted Gosia in this scene because she represents the lyricism of youth that Kasia was. I wanted her there because in this way she is also emblematic of Ola, and I wanted her with Klusek at this time, as a kind of hope for the future.

These two characters, Gosia and Ewa, came from the initial draft, "Shades of Grey, Shades of Green," and it was always a concern that they might carry too much weight in the new story idea. Further, in the first draft their search for Kasia overshadowed Klusek's and this had to be rectified. He had to discover the truth on his own. This problem was solved with a faulty mobile telephone. I kept them in the story because they lighten it a little before the end and bring an evocative sense of naivety indicative of Kasia at heart.

➤ Ola and Kasia

I have an interest in religion and Christian faith. I studied theology at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg and at one time considered entering the Church as a priest.

What struck me about Catholicism in Poland was how much it imposed on the country and culture of the place. How much it affected the lives of everyone there. Poland is Catholic. It is intolerant of other religious groups. Gypsies in Poland are thought of as inferior by many Poles and in Starachowice live in an area that everyone else avoided. This raised interesting questions concerning Polish complicity in the Holocaust. And also there is the issue of the Kielce massacre of Jews after the war, which I touch on in chapter five of the manuscript. Certainly, Poles very rarely have positive things to say about the Jews.

Their grandparents have told them about how Jews stole from them. Today, they resent the pressure Israel applies in terms of Remembrance the place in Kielce where 64 Jews were massacred has only recently been turned into a heritage site.

Urszula, Zbigniew's wife and the owner of the school where I worked, told me, "Poles get really mad when foreigners talk about Polish concentration camps, because they were German, not Polish concentration camps." And she is right. It is a touchy subject in Poland. And it is for this reason that I have introduced the character of Isaac. Through Piotrek's dilemma concerning the missing girl and what he feels as his guilt over it, he turns to his old friend Isaac. This is fertile ground for covering the Jewish issue.

Further, the symbols of Roman Catholicism are, from a Protestant point of view, overwhelming on such a scale. The Medievalism of it all, and the fact that it is considered normal by those practising it, makes me want to examine it with scepticism.

The death of two girls linked to two different religions made sense to me in this plot. Indeed this is an overriding theme in this work. Firstly there is Ola, who is murdered because of a 'confusion of conspiracies', and then Kasia who dies looking for something symbolic of the Roman Catholic faith. The reasons behind their motivations and circumstances are quite complex, but the symmetry of them both being missing for religious reasons is what attracted me to the idea of portraying them like this.

The longing to suffer as Christ and Adalbert suffered, that comes to a climax in Kasia after the death of her boyfriend, Emilian, and her head injury, leads to her death. To begin with she had a fascination for the shrine but her religious fervour was nothing as extreme as this. It was important in the plot that Kasia resonated with Adalbert and the shrine, that there were things that attracted her to both. However, these had to remain enigmatic because that is really the nature of the believer with the spiritual.

## Symbol

It will be essential that the relationship between a character driven plot and the thriller mode is a convincing fabrication in a way that the reader will find the melding of the two believable. To further complicate this process, the work relies heavily on allegory and symbol. It is a fable, a story with a moral, that moral being, how doing the seemingly right thing can have disastrous consequences. Kasia's death exemplifies that.

I have introduced much that is symbolic into the work. The mythical Saint Adalbert whose shrine Kasia seeks in the Swietokrzyskie Mountains (Holy Cross Mountains). In many ways the work is totally of the 'symbolic mind' and will need to be placed carefully within the conservative and often non-progressive thriller genre.

The symbol of the cross, that symbol of crucifixion and martyrdom is portrayed over again in different forms: the figure of the ballerina with arm outstretched, the cross-roads or intersection which Klusek constantly drives through passing from one side of Starachowice to the other and through which Gosia and Ewa will pass as they leave Starachowice for the mountains in search of Kasia or the compass points on a map used to find the missing girl. My intention was always to keep this symbolism very subtle, like detail in a background. "Ewa walked across to the Pizza place and bought bottled water for their journey, which she fitted into her backpack. A train crossed through the intersection and headed off in the direction of Skarszysko Kaminiera" (Pope:83).

Kennedy and Gioia in *An Introduction to Fiction* state, "This indefinite multiplicity of meanings is characteristic of a symbolic story and distinguishes it from an allegory, a story in which persons, places, and things form a system of clearly labelled equivalents" (Kennedy & Gioia 2002:243). "Kasia from Honey Street" is essentially a symbolic story because it does not equate, for example what happens to Kasia with the broader historical, social or religious context of Poland, rather Kasia is symbolic of these. There are no conclusions to draw, no simple meanings and what one thinks of her in this context will remain subjective.

Another example of the symbolic in this novel is the crossroad that Klusek often passes through. To Klusek it may signify the prompting of a decision, or that he is about to be crucified if he does not find the girl, perhaps even hints at the religious nature of her disappearance. On another level it can mean that Poland is at a crossroad because it is about to join the European Union. But it can also mean other things, such as point to the messianic nature of Pole's perception of themselves and their country.

Symbolically, the coming of spring is an omen, but only for Klusek. Spring will uncover his crime, like the thaw uncovers children's lost gloves on the pavement. This is intentionally ironic, because for everyone else spring is a happy time. Spring uncovers what winter hides, the body hidden in the lake that would have been frozen until now. "If we cannot find her in the woods, I think we should send divers into the lakes, when they have thawed out more, when spring comes" (Pope:109). For Klusek, this is "an external manifestation of the inner" (Burroway 2003a:136). This tells us of Klusek's unconscious dread of spring coming, not manifestly, and that he is a character at odds with what is normal.

### Narration

As far as Point of View goes, I use Free Indirect Discourse (FID) – writing in the third person, but limiting authorial omniscience to the character being developed. When dealing with a complex plot and multiple settings and characters this works best, I feel, as it is a very free form of voice. It allows me to show what is going on in the minds of the character in the foreground. It also allows for a switching between these characters quite readily. An example of this is where Klusek meets with Dyka (20-22): "For Klusek it seemed that ding, ding, ding was Dyka's internal rhythm. Slower paced, ding...ding...ding, when he is inactive and faster paced, ding-a-ding-a-ding, when he is active" (20). And in the same scene, "'Na zdrowie!'" Dyka said. Although, he stayed uncertain of the real meaning in what Klusek said. The man always made him feel maudlin" (22). On page 20, Klusek's thoughts are revealed, and on page 22, Dyka's feelings are shown.

### **Vocabulary And the Use of Polish Words and Phrases**

The use of Polish titles, *pan* (Mr.), *pani* (Mrs./Miss/Ms – in Polish these are rendered lowercase), *Inspektor*, *Komisarz* are to enhance and make more authentic the sense of setting. Further, for the same reason, I have used *ulica/ul.* (Road), or *Plac* (Place), and *Zalew* (Lake). I have also used common words, such as; *tak* (yes), *nie* (no), *dziekuje* (thank you), *prosze* (please), and phrases, such as; *dzien dobry* (good day), *dobry wieczor* (good evening), *jac lechi* (how are you), *do widzenia* (good bye), among others. I do not think this has hindered the reader's understanding as these words and phrases are used where the intention either is obvious, or will become obvious shortly. For example when Isaac says: "It is a wonderful gift, Piotrek. *Dziekuje bardzo!*" And Piotrek replies: "*Prosze bardzo!*" (Pope: 9). It is obvious that Isaac is thanking Piotrek for the gift and that Piotrek is saying something along the lines of, *you're welcome!* It is not necessary to know exactly what the words mean as the intention is clear.

### **The Challenge of Repetition**

King says, "The word is only a representation of the meaning; even at its best, writing almost always falls short of full meaning. Given that, why in God's name would you want to make things worse by choosing a word which is only cousin to the one you really wanted to use?" (King: 89). When that word is repetitive and chimes, making it necessary to find a substitute, otherwise the reader will become distracted by the recurrence.

But King is right, and often there is no way around using another word that just is not quite up to the first one that came to mind, no matter how carefully one matches the two. I

had initially written, “Klusek wiped condensation from the windowpane and looked out wiping and looking at each visible corner of the square.” This is in the scene where Klusek is at a café in Rynek Glowny and is waiting for Zbigniew. The words, *wiped* and *wiping* and *looked* and *looking* are repetitive, they chime. I could have substituted *cleaned* for *wiped*, but it does not really mean the same thing – he is wiping condensation, not cleaning a dirty window. Certainly *gaze* does not convey the same intention or meaning as *look* – *gaze* being more fixed on an object already in view. I was left with the dilemma that these repetitions would irritate the reader. However I wanted to convey the detail in how he wiped and looked out of the window. How a kind of momentum developed quickly in this. This would betray a pedantic quality in his character to the reader.

Eventually I left it as it is, though in a more modified form: “Klusek wiped condensation from the windowpane to make more of the square visible. Looking to see as much as he could, the market building, the horses that draw carriages, tucking into their nosebags. The Justus patrols in elongated golf carts, nothing more than mafia. He wiped, looking, his hand moving quicker and quicker to catch each scene before condensation misted it over” (Pope:2). I feel subtle repetition is useful if it serves a greater purpose, such as conveying nuance.

### **Active and Passive Verb**

“If your prose is to be vigorous as well as vivid, if your characters are to be people who do rather than people to whom things are done, if your descriptions are to ‘come to life,’ you must make use of the active voice (Burroway 2003b:83). Throughout this work I tried to use the active verb (subject then action), but possibly at times, I will have erred and slipped back into the passive form (action then subject).

I have tried to avoid the passive form as much as possible because something will then always be being done to the subject of the sentence, rather than the subject of the sentence doing something. “When the passive voice is used the object of the active verb becomes



the subject of the passive verb” (Burroway 2003b:83). “The passive voice is more indirect than the active; the subject is acted upon rather than acting, and the effect is to weaken the prose and to distance the reader from the action” (Burroway 2003b:83).

Before submitting this work for publication I hope to have corrected any such lapses, as I believe there are only a few instances where it is justifiable to use the passive form, spin is one of them. A hospital loses your patient file: Which is better for the hospital to say?

*We lost your file. Or: Your file has been mislaid.*

Where the hospital does not want to admit it has itself been negligent and take responsibility for losing the file, then the passive voice is a better way to go, as responsibility becomes distanced. In terms of representing this in a scene in a novel, this would probably be portrayed through dialogue, anyway.

“I won’t say there is no place for the passive tense,” says King. “Suppose, for instance, a fellow dies in the kitchen but ends up somewhere else. The body was carried from the kitchen and placed on the parlor sofa is a fair way to put this, although ‘was carried’ and ‘was placed’ still irk the shit out of me. I accept them but I don’t embrace them. What I would embrace is Freddie and Myra carried the body out of the kitchen and laid it on the parlor sofa” (King 2000:93).

Burroway states: “The passive voice does have an important place in fiction, precisely because it expresses a sense that the character is being acted upon. If a prison guard is kicking the hero, then *I was slammed into the wall; I was struck blindingly from behind and forced to the floor* appropriately carries the sense of his helplessness” (Burroway 2003b:83).

In a scene in “Kasia from Honey Street,” where a young woman is raped, I chose to use the active rather than the passive verb. “She made a mewling sound as they raped her, as blood poured down the inside of her thighs” (Pope:6). I think this conveys her helplessness

as much as, if not more than, if I had written, “A mewling sound came from her as she was raped by them, dripping blood down her thighs.” The latter seems clumsy, and as H. W. Fowler remarked in *Fowler’s Modern English Usage* – “...it sometimes leads to bad grammar, false idiom, or clumsiness” (Fowler 1965:439). The passive voice is more complex and tends to produce sentences that are just not as streamlined or clean. Using the passive in this rape scene would have diminished the stark and vivid horror of it. My intention was to keep the perpetrators and the victim of this act very much active in it because the impact of these actions, have consequences later in the book. Frankly, the only reason I can see to use the passive here would be to diminish the violence of the scene, to dampen the visual horror of it. Pandering to sensitivities.

“But there is one other common grammatical construction that is in effect passive and can distance the reader from a sense of immediate experience (...) linking verbs are effectively passive because verbs with auxiliaries suggest an indefinite time and are never as sharply focused as active verbs” (Burroway 2003b:83).

Initially in the rape scene I had written - “Those big hands would always seem larger than life within the space of the pleading they were helping to deliver.” But *were helping to deliver* seemed too indefinite in time. Replacing it with *helped to deliver* focused it sharply as a definite point in time for the reader. Visually it became a solid act in time -

“Those big hands would always seem larger than life within the space of the pleading they helped to deliver” (Pope:5).

However the following line: “The rumour spread that Jews were kidnapping and murdering Polish children” (Pope:10) I left because I wanted the sense of time to be indefinite. If I had changed it to: “The rumour spread that Jews kidnapped and murdered Polish children,” in terms of time it would have been more definite, but I wanted it to appear vague to the reader because, after all, these were rumours of things that never happened. I wanted the reader to know that, and using linking verbs allowed me to create this effect.

### Dialogue Attribution

I have tried to avoid using the adverb in dialogue attribution. Mostly I have merely used the verb of dialogue attribution, and even then have pretty much confined myself to *he said, she said, Alan said, Klusek said*. And: *he asked, she asked, Tom asked*, and *he replied, she answered*. Also I used for example: (end quotation mark), *said Justina, who was half hidden behind him as they walked upstairs*. (Pope:36) As much as I could, I avoided using more descriptive attribution verbs wherever possible. For example in a scene where Klusek is speaking to Justina, I had initially written: *I am listening,* prompted Klusek. This I changed to, *"I am listening," Klusek said to prompt her*. (Pope: 102) For as King points out: "The best form of dialogue attribution is said" (King 2000: 96). Keeping it simple keeps it pure. The reader will know from the dialogue itself and the context how the words are spoken. I would rather they enjoy this through their imagination rather than clutter it with distracting irrelevant descriptions.

### Indicating Scene Changes

Where there is a break to another scene, unless indicated in the text, I have used the convention of spacing. I have also used this for introducing back-story and flashbacks.

When I first started working on the manuscript, I did not know that such a convention was permissible within the Academy, and thought I had to use numbering and chapters only. This really messed up the pace of the work and it was only when Professor Green explained the convention to me, after being frustrated by sudden scene changes, that I practiced the rule. It made for much better pace and movement within the manuscript, and made it a lot easier for the reader to follow.

## Revision

To bring the manuscript, “Kasia from Honey Street” into its present form has taken a number of rewrites. Of primary concern were two areas of the novel. I have mentioned these before, the character of Piotrek and Adalbert and the shrine. Kasia was not resonating with Adalbert or the shrine, and indeed the shrine itself was hazy. To overcome this problem, my supervisor Professor Green, suggested I define the shrine, as this would pull the other elements into focus. The way I overcame this problem was to create a fictitious description of it in the equally fictitious manuscript of Jaroslaw of Gniezno.

In the first sling were the small stone blocks. In the second was the stone lintel. In the third, the alabaster image of Adalbert, with both his arms outstretched. This was commissioned in Bohemia and brought to Gniezno by the faithful Marcus. (Pope:72-3)

Doing this focused the resonance between Kasia and this actual thing that she was seeking. It also made what were before notions more clear to me, as to what Adalbert meant to her. He was a martyr who died for his faith, after all that is why the shrine was erected.

Up until now, Piotrek the monk had been concerned with the theological nature of the Jaroslaw group. His idea to find the shrine was to justify certain beliefs he held concerning the Polishness of these early Christians. Apart from a terrible characterisation of him swamped with guilt over the disappearance of Kasia, that I deleted, he is quite a dry character. However, making the shrine real seemed to, in a way, compensate for his bookishness.

The second real problem with the earlier drafts that I have mentioned was that I was

tying my ending up too quickly. It seemed breathy and out of proportion with the more solid pace of the rest of the book. Ultimately, this really was just a matter of pacing, and once I understood this it was relatively easy to rectify this problem. It was a prime example of over-plotting and giving in to a neat ending that was a little premature. Also I had multiple characters coming to conclusions that belonged to Klusek because it is his book.

I spoke of the issue of Iwona and Tom being too heavily weighted in terms of proportion. This was a problem caused by that being part of an earlier version of the story that was imposing itself on the new, and much changed, version. In the words of Stephen King, "Murder your darlings," (2000:156). I did and deleted the problem.

In the current analysis, I believe this novel still needs more revision before it is ready to be sent to a publishing house or a literary agency. Parts of it need smoothing out and grading, for example, and even though I have justified it, the scene where the doctoral student at the IPN Archive is telling Isaac about Bezpieka activities against the Church is just too long-winded and too encyclopaedic.

### **Conclusion**

I feel that I have achieved the objectives I set myself when I began this novel. I think that "Kasia from Honey Street" is a successful combination of the thriller novel and serious literature and am happy with the fullness of the setting, the suspense and depth of the story, the dimension of the characters and the way the two different types of theme structures interplay. I hope for the reader that I have created a work that is both symbolic and exciting.

To conclude I need to mention that I need to let this book rest for a time. From a revision perspective it has become very difficult for me to distance myself from the story when I read it. This propinquity means that I cannot see it as a reader would see it. It is time for fresh eyes to look at it for it to go forward now. That is my hope for the marking process.

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