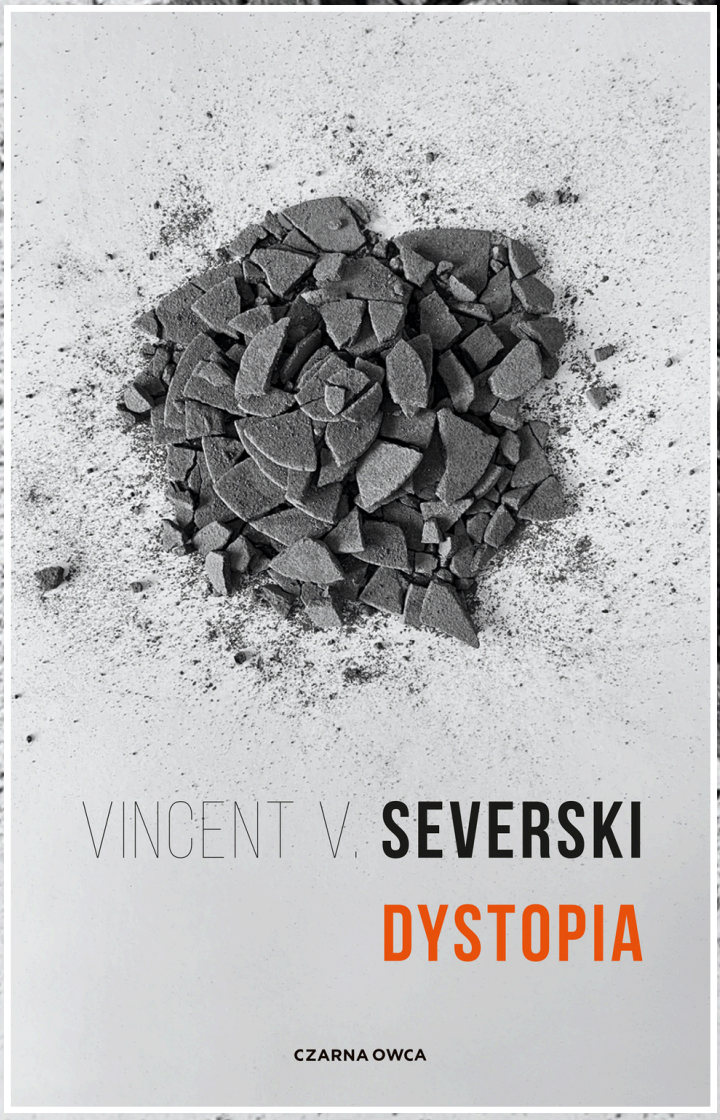
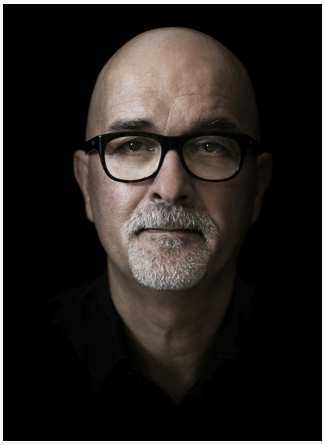


Vincent V. Severski
Dystopia

Synopsis, Bio & Excerpts



Vincent V. Severski

About the author

Vincent V. Severski is a retired intelligence officer, with the rank of colonel, and former Director of Poland's Foreign Intelligence Agency.
He is a bestselling author of several critically acclaimed spy novels, with over **1 million copies sold in Poland alone.**

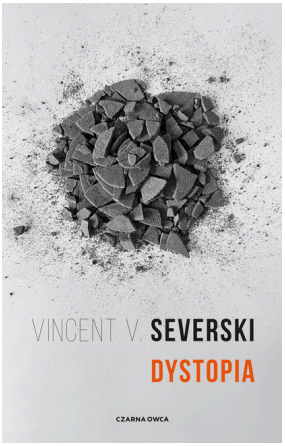
Severski spent **13 years abroad** and participated in **more than 140 missions across 50 countries**, including regions in Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and Europe. He was trained in Poland and in the U.S by the CIA. His first-hand experience in global intelligence operations provides a unique authenticity to his writing.

In recognition of his service, Severski was awarded **the Legion of Merit**, the highest U.S. military honor for foreign officers, **by President Barack Obama**, as well as several high-ranking Polish orders.

Based on his *The Illegals* Series, Studio Canal produced a 10-episode series in 2018, directed by Jan P. Matuszyński and Leszek Dawid, starring Andrzej Seweryn and Grzegorz Damięcki, among others.

Dystopia
Vincent V. Severski

Espionage



October 2023
536 pages

4.4/ 253 ratings/ 25 reviews

8.2/ 866 ratings/ 167 reviews

Poland at the heart of the eternal East-West conflict.

A Russian agent, Jerzy Kaziura, rises to the position Deputy Prime Minister and Coordinator of Security Services in Poland, throwing the highest levels of government into chaos. Konrad Wolski, Marcel Cichy, Roman Leski, and Zofia Winiarska are arrested, and the Intelligence Agency is disbanded. Uncertainty and mistrust deepen, with tensions reaching a breaking point.

In the shadows of these events, three agents – Sara, Monika, and Maria – prepare for a perilous mission to free their imprisoned comrades. With support from MI6 agents, former Russian intelligence officer Mikhail Popowski, and George Gordon, Assistant to the NATO Secretary General, the women face off against a cunning and formidable enemy.

As buried secrets come to light, Kaziura's true identity is revealed: he is the shadowy mastermind behind a Moscow-orchestrated campaign against the West. A dramatic battle unfolds on multiple fronts, brimming with twists and unexpected turns, culminating in a confrontation that will decide the fate of the international order.

"Dystopia" shows how disastrous governing can end and what enslavement and subjugation are. It is a surprisingly relevant story about today's Poland and Europe.

Danuta Awolusi, writer and journalist, onet.pl

- Over 50 000 copies sold in Poland alone.
- Three strong female protagonists.
- A dystopian and timely political fiction.

They launched a smear campaign against the Intelligence Agency, portraying it as a base for Russian spies. They dug up all the issues from the past and forced the dissolution of the intelligence service. The rhetoric is strongly anti-Russian, making it look as if everything they do is against Moscow, and the public buy into it. But in the long run, only the Kremlin benefits. Ingenius, don't you think?

VINCENT V. **SEVERSKI**

Dystopia
Synopsis by Kate Webster

Dystopia tells the story of the Polish secret intelligence unit known as Sekcja. After years of covert operations across Europe, the group faces its most dangerous challenge yet – a threat from within the Polish government itself.

Poland appears stable, but political divisions and public confusion hide a deep internal crisis. In this climate, Jerzy Kaziura, an ambitious and manipulative politician, rises to power. He becomes Deputy Prime Minister and then Coordinator of the Special Services, gaining direct control of the intelligence agencies and of Centaur, a sophisticated Israeli surveillance system. He presents himself as a reformer cleansing the services of corruption, but in truth he is an agent for the Russian military intelligence service, the GRU. His aim is to weaken Poland's alliance with NATO, to spread disinformation, and to fill key security positions with loyal figures who will serve Moscow's goals.

Under Kaziura's direction, the intelligence service is dismantled. He orders the dissolution of the Intelligence Agency and the arrest of its senior officers, including Konrad Wolski, Marcel Cichy, Roman Leski and Zofia Winiarska. The agents who once defended the country from Russian infiltration are accused of treason and imprisoned. Poland's intelligence network is left paralysed and blind.

Three former operatives – Sara, Monika and Maria – realise that Kaziura's campaign is part of a larger Russian plan. They regroup and begin operating outside official structures, forming a small underground team to uncover the truth. Sara leads the mission, Monika handles surveillance and communications, and Maria manages coordination and external contacts. Each woman carries emotional scars from previous missions, but their shared loyalty binds them together. Their immediate aim is to collect evidence of Kaziura's collaboration with the GRU and to avenge fallen colleagues, including Dima Calderón, who was murdered after he recorded a conversation that could expose Kaziura as a mole.

Meanwhile, Jagan – an ex-Russian agent who has turned his back on the evils of the Russian secret services to side with truth and support the ideals of the 'free world' – is wounded in an ambush and ends up in hospital under police investigation. With help from Lutek, a communications specialist from Sekcja, he is secretly rescued and goes into hiding. A young policeman, Daniel Arciszewski, begins his own discreet inquiry, which inadvertently brings new information to the attention of Kamiński, a senior minister in Kaziura's government.

Sara travels to London under a false identity to meet George Gordon, NATO's Assistant Secretary General. She presents him with some digital files: the recording acquired by Dima, in which a GRU officer warns Dima about a Russian mole inside the Polish government, material showing false evidence planted to discredit Dima and Roman Leski, and information linking Kaziura to these incidents. Sara asks Gordon for help to contact Misha Popovsky, a former GRU officer now cooperating with the West. Popovsky agrees to come to Warsaw.

Meanwhile, in Poland, Kaziura and his associates, Kamiński and Farbiarz, intensify their pursuit of the resistance group. They use Centaur to intercept fragments of conversations between Monika, Sara and Maria containing words such as "GRU", "MI6", "Gordon", and "Kaziura", feeding the atmosphere of suspicion inside the ministry.

Maria and Monika secure safe houses and encrypted communication channels through trusted contacts. They gain cautious support from Zwoliński, an experienced police officer who recognises the political manipulation behind Kaziura's orders. Meanwhile, on learning that he's not the only Russian mole in the Polish government and is therefore replaceable, Kaziura grows increasingly anxious. Prime Minister Bolecki begins to doubt him, while Kaziura's Russian handler, who goes by the codename Karol, pressures him to expand the disinformation campaign and to plant the Centaur software on Bolecki's phone. Kaziura's private life also unravels: his marriage to Joanna is falling apart, and he is in the midst of an affair with Anna, a Russian agent living nearby who manages Kaziura's communications with Karol.

Monika travels to Israel to meet Tamara, a Mossad contact, who agrees to help disable Centaur. During Monika's absence, the pressure on the team intensifies. Russian mercenaries attack Sara's father, causing a serious heart attack, and later torture and kill Borys, Monika's former partner who had been sheltering the fugitives. Sara decides the best chance for the mission to succeed is to use herself as a decoy. She visits her father in hospital, knowing she will get arrested, which will take the pressure off the surveillance so the rest of the team can continue their work. Sara's plan unfolds as intended, and she is arrested.

Maria approaches Joanna and learns of Kaziura's affair with Anna. Using this link, she persuades Anna to cooperate and discovers her role in managing the secret communications channel. With Tamara's technical help, Centaur is disabled, giving the team a short period within which they can operate beyond surveillance.

Lutek, Jagan, Popovsky and others hatch a plan to record Kaziura's meeting with Karol, whose real name is Braun. During the mission, Anna is abducted by Russian mercenaries but later freed by Jagan and Lutek. They capture Braun, who is then handed over to British agents.

Monika returns to Poland and decides to confront Kaziura herself. She follows him to his house, intending to kill him, but before she can act, he is shot by a sniper. Kaziura dies instantly. While the sniper is never identified, it was clearly an assassination ordered by the GRU. In the aftermath, Prime Minister Bolecki resigns, and Kamiński and Farbiarz take charge of the investigation. Braun is detained in the UK.

The novel closes with the political order shaken and the intelligence network severely damaged but still functioning underground. It turns out that many people have benefitted from Kaziura's death – Kamiński and Farbiarz have greater powers in the wake of the investigation, and the senior figures of the Intelligence Agency are released from detention. In a surprising twist, George Gordon is revealed as a long-time Russian agent and imprisoned in the UK. The remaining members of Sekcja regroup and prepare to resume their secret operations to defend their country.

Kate Webster is a professional Polish-to-English literary translator, editor, and subtitler. Her literary translations have been nominated for prestigious awards, including **the International Booker Prize** and **the Oxford-Weidenfeld Prize**. She lives in London, UK.

Dystopia

Sample translated by Kate Webster

Due to the actions of Jerzy Kaziura – a GRU agent who has risen to the position of deputy prime minister and coordinator of the special services – the Intelligence Agency has been disbanded and its key operatives arrested. However, Sara, Monika, and Maria are still free and have begun devising a plan to get their friends released. They have to operate in secret, because they are also being hunted by the authorities…

Chapter 8

Monika sat on the platform in Pomiechówek, waiting for the train. She knew that if she was going to make contact with M-Irek, she couldn't go back to her flat in Ursynów. She had to disappear, at least for a few days, until they could set up some kind of new communications system. She needed a hideout. In her head, she listed all the people she'd met since moving from Komornica to study in Warsaw. As it turned out, Borys was the only one she could trust.

He'd been her first real boyfriend – at least, that's what she'd thought at the time. They'd studied together at the Academy of Fine Arts – she painting, he sculpture – and their love was woven as if from pure art. His real name was Marek Borys Erdman, but he preferred Borys.

They'd rented a flat together for two years in Powiśle, until Borys fell in love with a girl from the design department. In reality, he loved only art (his own, mainly) and everything else was lower down the scale of importance. He didn't achieve significant success, nor did he chase fame or follow the trends. He was a classic egomaniac and didn't hide the fact that he was incapable of living with anyone else. Everyone in their circle knew this, and yet there was always some new art student from the Academy of Fine Arts who thought she could tame him. Still,

when he'd popped into Monika's gallery a few months back, he'd immediately announced that he was single, adding that she wasn't to read anything into it.

A few years had passed since their breakup, so she hadn't recognised him at first. He looked old beyond his years, his face was furrowed with wrinkles, his eyes faded; he was unkempt, possibly drinking too much. But his hands were still the same.

They'd spent a nice afternoon together. She was surprised now that only good memories resurfaced, as if the bad ones had been left at the door. She pictured herself wandering between Powiśle and Krakowskie Przedmieście, their parties along the Vistula.

The train pulled into the station. Monika waited for a few passengers to get off, then took a seat by the window. Borys seemed like the best person with whom to hide out for a while. She knew he had a studio somewhere outside Warsaw because he'd shown her pictures, but she couldn't remember where. She'd saved his number on a phone she didn't currently have access to.

"But I've got his business card. It's in the drawer under the coffee machine," she muttered to herself. The train jolted.

She suspected that the gallery might be under surveillance.

Her intuition told her that the best solution was to go in quickly, grab the business card, and make a controlled exit. Even if they spotted her, they wouldn't have enough time to bring in reinforcements.

Worst comes to worst, I'll just zigzag through Powiśle and shake them off, she thought with a surge of confidence. *It's my home turf, after all.*

It was 2 PM when she emerged from the metro at Tamka. The gallery was 200 metres away. She didn't scope the area too carefully, because the threat level was still low. She finally stopped fifty metres before the gallery. From the gateway of a large house on the other side of the road, she had a good view of the gallery entrance and the whole

street. Cars were parked along the curbs, and Monika knew at once that one of them could have been planted there. Sara was right: their disappearance would definitely have been noticed and someone would have been alerted. She observed her surroundings for a few minutes. There was no traffic on the street, only a few pedestrians, nothing suspicious. Still, she felt uneasy. She wasn't sure if trying to get Borys's address was a good idea. She didn't even know if he'd be willing to hide her.

Maybe I should wait and look for another solution, she thought, and then, as if defying her own doubts, she walked out of the gateway and headed quickly along the line of parked cars towards the gallery.

After hesitating for a moment, she put the key in the lock and went inside. She usually kept business cards in a drawer in the cabinet under the coffee machine. She pulled hard on the handle and the drawer fell out onto the floor, dozens of business cards scattering at her feet.

"Shit," she muttered, scrambling to pick them up.

She'd have to chuck them all into her backpack and search for Borys's card later. She remembered that it was blue with the logo of his sculpture depicting a cracked nut. Suddenly, she saw a blue corner sticking out from under a pile of cards. It was Borys's. She slipped it into the back pocket of her trousers, slung her backpack over her shoulder and went to the door. She surveyed the street through the window. Thirty metres to the right, on the other side of the road, she saw a man standing by a car. He glanced in her direction. He seemed perturbed.

"So they *are* here!" she whispered, wondering what she should do now. There was no back exit. *They're probably bringing in reinforcements*, she thought. *I need to get out of here.*

Monika liked to improvise. She always felt that things worked out best when she followed her intuition, and that her first decisions were usually correct. She instinctively glanced around the room, as if

searching for something – some tool, some inspiration. Suddenly, her gaze fell on a bike belonging to Kasia, who helped her at the gallery. It was a white Dutch bike, unlocked.

She opened the door, wheeled the bike out, closed the door behind her and, without undue haste, headed towards the Vistula boulevards, where there was no car traffic. Out of the corner of her eye, she saw a steel-coloured Škoda pulling out of the line. Monika cycled to the shopping centre and then turned onto the boulevards near the Copernicus Science Centre. The car had disappeared from view. She stopped and took the blue business card from her pocket. Borys's studio was in Włochy.

It's near Piastów, she thought, feeling pleased. *Bingo!*

She cycled along the Vistula and, reaching Ludna Street, crossed over to the other side of Wioślarska Street, continuing along Solec Street to the Poniatowski Bridge. She took the lift up to the bridge. There was no better place in Warsaw to escape surveillance.

She reached the end of the bridge and wheeled the bike onto the platform of the Powiśle suburban train station. A train to Skierniewice was just pulling in. Monika secured the bike in the special compartment and sat down on a folding seat.

It should have been the most difficult and important test route she'd ever done, but it had turned out to be the easiest – all thanks to Kasia's bike.

Her final operation was underway and she had every reason to dedicate herself to it completely. The priority was to rescue Konrad, Marcel, Roman and Zosia; that was a realistic and achievable goal. But for Monika, revenge was more important. Revenge, plain and simple, for Dima, her friend. His death had been caused by Kaziura and the system that created him.

Monika's battle against her own country had just begun, and she already had a small victory in Powiśle under her belt.

The doors slammed shut, and a moment later, the train entered the tunnel beneath the city.

Kaziura is presenting the dissolution of the Intelligence Agency as if the arrested agents have been exposed and imprisoned for treason and collaboration with Russia. While standing in for the Polish Prime Minister at a reception at the British embassy, he tries to gauge among foreign officials how his stance is being received – who takes it at face value, and who sees right through him…

Chapter 17

The reception at the British embassy was being held to celebrate the birthday of the heir to the throne. It was no wonder, then, that all of Warsaw had turned up – at least, those who were invited. Such events were always attended by all the ambassadors, leading Polish politicians from across the political spectrum, as well as figures from the business and cultural worlds. Everyone wanted to warm themselves by the hearth of the English manor house, especially since Ambassador Sir Thomas Winslet himself was related to the royal family, which was evident just from looking at him.

This time, Prime Minister Bolecki wasn't attending because he'd been called away to Brussels. Everyone knew that Minister Jerzy Kaziura was now second in command in the government, so it was obvious that he would play a leading role at the reception. There couldn't have been a better opportunity to quickly sound people out, make deals, sell or buy, all eased by the alcohol and the informal atmosphere. Information is the most valuable commodity, so among the professional diplomats, politicians, and those selected for decorative purposes, predatory spies from almost every country in the world were on the prowl. They knew each other well, knew who was

who, because they had met often at similar receptions held at other embassies. This was an important, informal channel for exchanging information between intelligence services, or for ordinary trading between spies based on quid pro quo. The spies were easy to spot at these receptions because they ate little, drank a lot, and changed conversation partners frequently.

Kaziura was very familiar with this world; he was even quite fond of it. He excelled in it because he knew a lot about others, but nobody knew anything about him. Not even the Russian ambassador or any of the numerous Russian spies who attended these receptions.

This time, on account of Bolecki's absence, he was able to do more, because he was finally the main man. He was representing the prime minister, but he could pursue his own objectives and ask his own questions. He wanted to speak with Helen Beckman, Sir Thomas Winslet, and the MI6 liaison, Edward Milton. He also intended to approach Lubert and see what kind of mood he was in. But Beckman was the most important. Her relationship with Bolecki was strained, and the prime minister usually prevented anyone else from having contact with her. Therefore, Kaziura wanted to take the opportunity to find out what was going on, to learn why the CIA liaison had left, and to try to get something for Karol. He also intended to lay the groundwork for his visits to London, Brussels and Washington.

Kaziura always went to receptions alone. He believed it was an important part of his job and he couldn't afford to be distracted. For this reason, he never took his wife with him, as she could be a burden, restrict his freedom of movement; besides, she might even accidentally say something inappropriate, even compromising. The reception was full of spies, opposition figures and well-known journalists; anything could be used against him.

At 7:05 PM, Kaziura's black BMW X7 pulled up to the entrance of the embassy. The driver had to wait a moment because there were

several cars ahead of them in the queue. The bodyguard jumped out first and opened the door with a flourish. Kaziura looked majestic. His six-foot-five-tall frame was clothed in an elegant navy suit, a shirt tailored by Góral and Dąbrowski and a burgundy tie, with a pocket square tucked into his jacket pocket. He walked serenely towards the entrance, nodding in greeting to the other guests.

It was a warm and sunny evening, so Sir Thomas, Lady Margaret, and Tim, their ten-year-old beagle, were greeting guests on the steps in front of the entrance. There were several people ahead of Kaziura. He knew almost everyone there, but it took him a moment to notice Lubert and his wife standing a few metres in front of him. He hadn't seen them at first because the leader of the opposition was no more than five foot two. Kaziura had sometimes wondered how such a short man could be successful in politics.

"Sir Thomas… Lady Margaret…" Kaziura shook hands first with the ambassador, then his wife. "Thank you for the invitation, it's an honour," he said, looking them straight in the eyes with a diplomatic smile. "Unfortunately, the Prime Minister had to go to Brussels and wouldn't have been able to return in time, but he asked me to convey his thanks for the invitation and to extend his warmest wishes for the health and prosperity of the heir to the throne, Prince James."

Sir Thomas greeted Kaziura with his innate British chivalry. He was an extremely experienced, fifth-generation diplomat, and Lady Margaret was a sixth-generation diplomat's wife. They had spent almost their entire adult lives outside of Britain, yet they had lost none of the charm of Westminster or Oxford. Warsaw was to be their last posting.

Kaziura went inside. The large reception room was filled with guests, and some had spilled out onto the terrace. Due to his height, Kaziura had an excellent vantage point and spotted Edward Milton almost immediately. His thick, grey hair with a perfect parting on the

right-hand side was quite distinctive. He was easy to recognise, even with his back turned.

Milton seemed to sense Kaziura's eyes on him and turned around. Excusing himself, he made his way over to Kaziura. After a brief exchange of pleasantries and comments about the weather, Kaziura launched his attack.

"I'd like to meet with Donovan," he began. "Could you find out when he's available? I'll fly to London."

"Of course," replied Edward. "Can you give me any details?"

"Yes, I've got a little mission from the Prime Minister. It's to do with the new talks with Iran."

"Can you be more specific, Minister? Donovan will be better prepared if he knows the details. The situation's delicate, you understand. It's American-Iranian talks, after all. I believe you're in contact with Helen Beckman?"

"Of course," replied Kaziura, surprised at Edward's aloofness. "I'd like to discuss general matters, but mainly the future cooperation between our agencies."

"It seems that we still don't have a partner on your side. When will the parliament pass the law on the new Agency? Who are you planning to appoint as the director, if I might ask? Donovan is very interested in that, as you can imagine." Edward was being unusually inquisitive, and his tone was verging on impolite, which wasn't exactly in keeping with the image of an English spy and diplomat.

"The law will be passed soon. The work is nearing completion, and we already have a candidate for the position of director. I think he and Donovan will get along swimmingly. The collaboration will gain momentum. Now that we've purged the security services of Russian agents, we're going to launch a new offensive against the East."

"Yes, but the men who were arrested are yet to be tried. We find it hard to believe that Konrad Wolski or Leski could have worked for the

Russians, though of course, if the prosecution has evidence…" Edward broke off, but his message was quite clear: I don't trust a single word you're saying.

"The public will soon learn the details for themselves. Believe me, the evidence is rock solid. Nobody is more concerned about this issue than the Prime Minister and me. We wish things were different, but…" Kaziura spread his hands in a gesture of helplessness, and at that moment the Czech ambassador joined them, a glass of whiskey in his hand.

"To the health of Prince James," he declared, his glass raised in a toast.

"I'll call you tomorrow with the possible dates," Edward said, bringing the conversation to a close. "To his health," he added, raising his empty glass.

Sara is travelling to London to meet George Gordon, NATO's Assistant Secretary General, to seek his help. Despite their long-standing acquaintance and the support the Polish intelligence services have received so far, Sara is uncertain about what her visit will achieve. She is entering the world of international politics and decision-making, where nothing is straightforward or transparent.

Chapter 24

Magda and Harry had showed Sara no mercy – they were excited to catch up and, despite Sara's pleas, the conversation had continued until one in the morning. Unsurprisingly, she'd woken with a headache this morning and immediately regretted not having gone to a hotel. This was the most important day of her life and she needed to be on top form. She took some painkillers, ran a hot bath and drank a large cup of black coffee. The main thing was to relax and let the tension drain away. This was vital ahead of her meeting with Gordon.

Before she went downstairs for breakfast, she received a text message from Gordon: 'Hi. I'll be home at 1 PM. See you then.' Sara knew where his house was. She'd been there a few times, but this would be the first time without Konrad. *It'll be symbolic*, she thought.

Gordon lived within walking distance of North Greenwich tube station, five metres from the prime meridian, in a red brick house built in the 1920s. Nothing special – there were many such houses in the area.

The weather was beautiful, so despite Harry's insistence on giving her a ride, Sara decided to take the tube and go for a walk around Greenwich. She didn't need to prepare for her conversation with Gordon. She'd known what she was going to say for weeks now. The success of their plan – which, after all, had been devised by three determined young women in a guesthouse on the banks of the Wkra river – depended on the outcome of this meeting.

George Gordon was now her only hope, but she wasn't at all sure that he'd be able to do anything, or that he'd even want to. Sara knew perfectly well that this conversation would mark the end of her role. From that point on, it would be all about high-stakes politics, which wasn't necessarily guided by honesty and responsibility, and certainly not by sympathy. She had to convince Gordon that Kaziura and Bolecki posed a threat not only to Poland, but to Europe as a whole.

She strolled through the sun-drenched park surrounding the Royal Observatory. Birds were chirping, flowers were blooming, and children were playing on the lush, green lawns. Even in this peaceful, idyllic setting, Sara felt a will to fight rising inside her, as if everything she had experienced so far was nothing compared to the task ahead of her.

At one o'clock on the dot, she stood in front of the green door and pressed the doorbell.

Gordon opened the door almost immediately.

Dressed in navy suit trousers and a white shirt with rolled-up sleeves, he looked as if he'd just got in and barely had time to take off his jacket.

They greeted each other warmly, and Gordon led Sara into the spacious living room with huge doors opening out onto the garden. She looked around carefully and sensed that nothing had changed since the last time she was there. Had it been two years, maybe three?

"Nothing's changed," Gordon interjected, as if he'd read her mind. "You were last here with Konrad in May, two years ago. I'm in Brussels most of the time now, so the house is often empty. Mary goes with me." He looked at Sara with a slight smile. "I like the short hair. Motherhood suits you. Shall we have a seat here, or do you prefer the garden?"

Sara noticed that a tea set for two people and a plate of biscuits had been prepared on a tray.

"We can stay inside," she said. "I like this living room, and I don't want to take up too much of your time."

"Not at all. I came here specifically to talk to you. We have time, and this is a serious thing. We know what's going on in Warsaw. It's extremely troubling."

Sara sat on the edge of the large, soft sofa with a delicate rose pattern, and Gordon sat in the armchair next to her. He reached out his hand towards the teapot and looked questioningly at Sara, who nodded.

"We know about the arrest of Konrad and the others, we know what they've been accused of. We know about the events involving the Iranians, the dissolution of the Agency, the plans to establish a new institution, and we're monitoring the situation…"

"That's good," Sara cut him off. "But you don't know everything."

"No one knows everything," he replied. "We're aware that a power struggle is underway in Warsaw, and Bolecki will do anything he

can to avoid giving in. He has too much on his conscience to sleep peacefully after the elections, and Lubert is pushing ahead." Gordon deftly arranged the teacups and poured the tea. "We know that Warsaw's anti-Russian campaign doesn't ring true, and that Moscow stands to benefit from it the most. Important questions must be asked."

"That's it!" said Sara. "You've got it in one. Thank you! I couldn't have put it better myself. The arrests of Konrad, Marcel and Leski – it was all part of a game. And I can prove it!"

"I don't doubt it, but…"

Sara reached into her jacket pocket and took out a USB drive. She placed it on the table and, with a theatrical gesture, slid it towards Gordon.

"One of our best operatives obtained this." She lowered her voice and looked Gordon straight in the eyes. "His name was Dima Calderón, he was our agent in Russia for many years, and he also worked for you. Less than two months ago, he was murdered by the Russians in Athens, precisely because of this information…"

"I read about it." Gordon was visibly animated. "There was a report in our internal bulletin that a Polish intelligence officer had died in Athens because he was involved in a drugs operation."

"That's the information you got from our authorities?"

"The bulletin contains only official information authorised by the relevant missions – in this case, Poland and Greece." Gordon was looking at Sara in disbelief. "What really happened?"

"That's why I'm here, George," said Sara. "For that very reason! You'll find three files on this USB. The first is a recording of a conversation between Dima and Colonel Arsen Fedotov. Fedotov was the head of the Polish department of the GRU, a group known as 'Bagration'. The conversation took place earlier this year, in April, at the colonel's flat in Moscow. Fedotov laid out the entire philosophy of Russia's approach to Poland and indicated that we have a Russian mole

in our government, at the highest levels of power. After the conversation, Fedotov took his own life – not because of a guilty conscience, but because he had stomach cancer. Dima, with the help of a certain Russian, managed to leave via Donbas at the last moment, taking the recording with him. Unfortunately, he left traces and the Russians tracked him down in Athens. They have considerable resources there…" Gordon nodded. "They faked the murder of a Greek man who owned a small shop in the same building where Dima was staying, and planted drugs on him. Dima's death was made to look like an accident. We have reason to believe that he was set up by the Russian agent whom Fedotov mentioned. According to our information, he's the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Internal Affairs, the coordinator of the special services, and Bolecki's closest and most trusted associate…"

"Jerzy Kaziura," Gordon said. "I know who he is. I've met him. Have you got evidence of that?"

"The second file. It's a video of Kaziura and his men planting fabricated materials in Dima's flat in Athens, which were intended to prove that he was working for the Russians. Then the Greeks were supposed to carry out the arrests. The third file shows Roman Leski removing the planted materials. He holds them up to the camera. The same materials were later planted in Leski's partner's flat, and their discovery led to Leski's arrest. They launched a smear campaign against the Intelligence Agency, portraying it as a base for Russian spies. They dug up all the issues from the past and forced the dissolution of the intelligence service. The rhetoric is strongly anti-Russian, making it look as if everything they do is against Moscow, and the public buy into it. But in the long run, only the Kremlin benefits. Ingenius, don't you think?"

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