



PRZEMYSŁAW
PIOTROWSKI

FETYSZ

KRYMINAŁ

CZARNA OWCA

Przemysław Piotrowski
The Fetish
Synopsis, Bio & Excerpts



Przemysław Piotrowski

About the author

Przemysław Piotrowski is one of the most popular Polish authors of crime novels and thrillers, political scientist and journalist.

He takes a down-to-earth approach to writing, grounding his stories in reality. He has not hesitated to visit a morgue or retrace the steps of a serial killer in Colombia to gain firsthand knowledge. His novel *Pestilence (Zaraza)* **won the Crime Fiction category in the 2021 *Lubimyczytac.pl* readers' poll**, and his books regularly place in the top three of that competition.

Piotrowski firmly believes that entertaining literature should be authentic, intense and evoke strong **emotions—after all, without them, why bother reading fictional stories?**

The Fetish

Przemysław Piotrowski

Crime



AT THE BOTTOM, ONLY EVIL LURKS.

Detective Igor Brudny has always been alone, but never this lonely. Abandoned by the woman he loved, he struggles to face the world on his own. One night, he gets into a fight with a man who soon turns up at the station as a suspect in a gruesome murder.

It is only then that Brudny realizes how far he has fallen. So many times he has disappointed colleagues and superiors that the investigation into a man who cold-bloodedly dismembered a woman proceeds without the city's best detective. But Brudny is determined: he will put an end to this evil.

Romuald Czarnecki, wanting to help his friend, brings him into the case. For Brudny, the investigation becomes the only chance to save not just potential victims, but also himself. Deprived of the support of those closest to him, he returns to his roots, descending straight into the depths of hell.

October 2025

352 pages



4.1/ 772 ratings/ 82 reviews

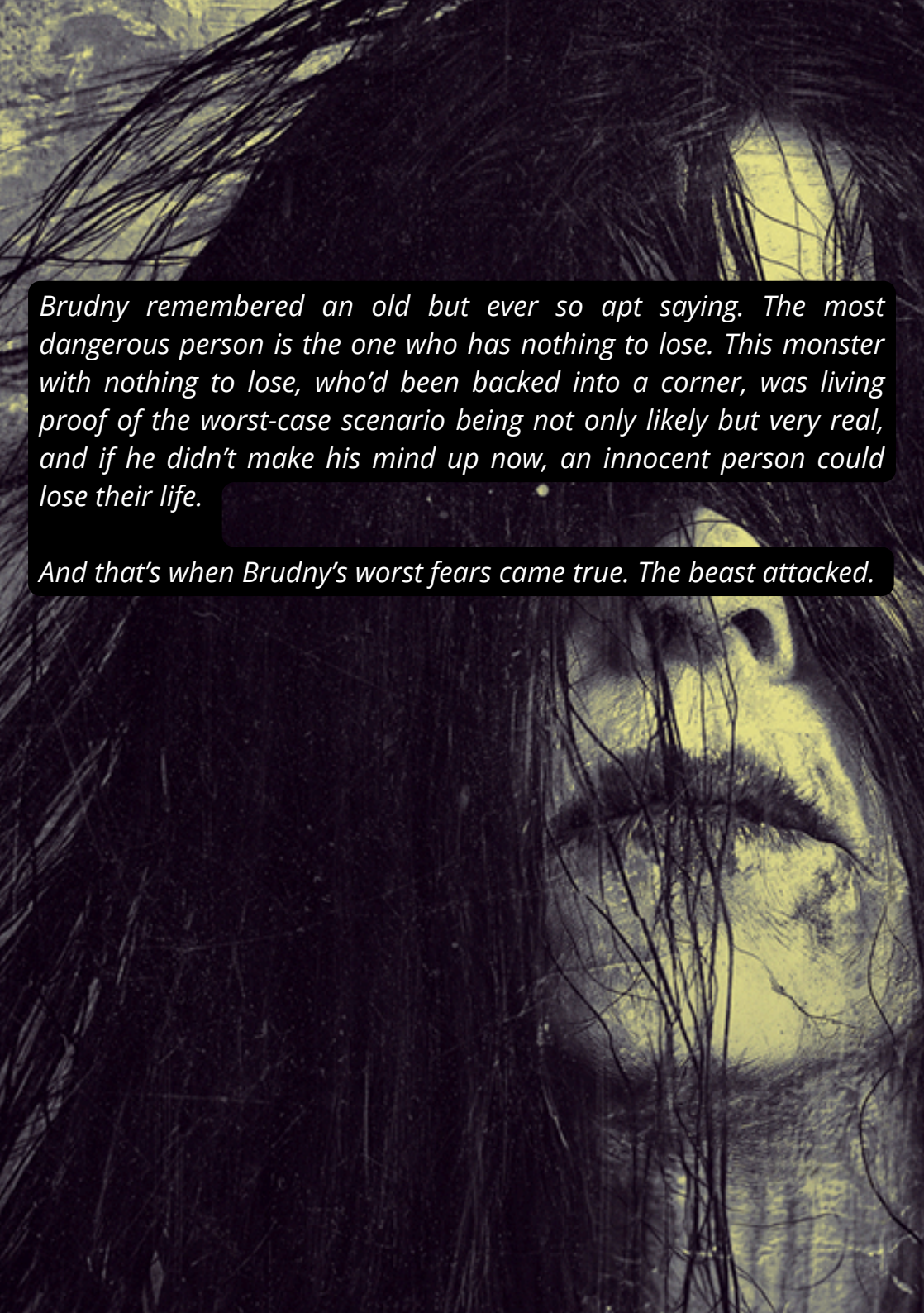


7.7/ 2 978 ratings/ 485 reviews

Przemysław Piotrowski shows no signs of slowing down. The author places Brudny at the most difficult moment of his life and launches an investigation that powerfully mirrors contemporary anxieties.

Paweł Piotrowicz, Newsweek

- The return of the “dirty” Brudny – after separating from his partner, Igor once again becomes rougher and emotionally withdrawn
- Beyond a gripping criminal plot, the novel is also a story about contemporary men and misogyny
- A dark, oppressive atmosphere rooted in contemporary Polish realities



Brudny remembered an old but ever so apt saying. The most dangerous person is the one who has nothing to lose. This monster with nothing to lose, who'd been backed into a corner, was living proof of the worst-case scenario being not only likely but very real, and if he didn't make his mind up now, an innocent person could lose their life.

And that's when Brudny's worst fears came true. The beast attacked.

The Fetish

Synopsis by Nasim Łuczaj

Volume eight of Przemysław Piotrowski's series of standalones, featuring the aloof Detective Inspector Igor Brudny, opens with a prologue from the murderer's childhood in which he is breastfed by his mother despite knowing he's too big for it, foreshadowing the fetish he will grow up to have. Later, scenes from the kidnapped victims' experiences in his cellar and some of their backstories are woven into the novel, tightening tension and reinforcing the dark atmosphere, but the bulk of the narrative follows the police investigation.

Readers find Igor Brudny fallen upon hard times. Despite his many professional successes, he no longer takes on important work and is treated coldly by his colleagues after Julia Zawadzka, his beloved partner of many years, breaks up with him. One night, Brudny gets into a drunken fight when he sees four men trying to force a pregnant woman into a car. One of them is Paweł Baszta, a middle-aged incel who still lives with his mother, Teresa. When a woman's head and foot are found in a forest, Baszta becomes a suspect, and a pregnant sex worker in a nearby brothel keeps seeing a man who matches his physical description watching her through the window.

Brudny joins Senior Detective Sergeant Kruszwica in the investigation. The first victim's DNA is identified as belonging to Monika Otręba. The last person known to have seen her alive was bus driver Janusz Wróbel. When questioned, he says that he remembers her well and brings up two other bus drivers who shared the route with him. Brudny doesn't pursue the lead any further and instead visits the victim's gynaecologist, who is reluctant to show him the victim's USG as she'd kept her pregnancy off the record. On his way in, Brudny bumps into Zofia Wasilewska, the woman he'd protected from assault at the start of the novel. They arrange to meet for a coffee.

Brudny visits Paweł Baszta's mother, Teresa. Baszta comes home, saying he was outside for a walk and stopped by the cellar to get some gherkins, but Brudny is suspicious – despite the heat, Baszta doesn't appear sweaty. Brudny asks to see the cellar, where Baszta keeps a locked safe. The detective forces Baszta to open it. All they find inside is a sex doll.

Meanwhile, the killer had been waiting for Zofia to come out of the gynaecologist's office. He kidnaps her and locks her up in his cellar. When she doesn't show up to their meeting or answer her phone, Brudny breaks into her flat, which seems to have been empty for at least a few days.

He also finds out about an old lady with dementia who lives in the same building as Baszta, has been hearing voices through the pipes and repeatedly complains to the police. As soon as Brudny pays her a visit and confirms the voices are real, he goes back to Baszta's flat. Teresa won't tell him where her son is, so he goes down to the cellar. There's no one in Baszta's cellar, but the detective walks through the underground network of tunnels until he hears loud noises coming from behind a locked door. He shoots at it. Inside, he finds a woman, tied up and on all fours, and a bulky, masked man who may or may not be Baszta. Brudny shoots again and just as he is about handcuff him, Baszta's mother creeps up behind the detective and hits him with a frying pan, giving the man time to escape.

The police find Baszta in an allotment and chase him to a railway embankment. Baszta holds a little boy hostage on the tracks, threatening to stab him if the police approach them. Hearing an incoming train, he throws the boy off the embankment and lies down on the tracks. The train cuts Baszta's head off, but the boy is spared thanks to the suspect's last-minute reflex. The media celebrate the apparent murderer's death, but the investigation and search for Zofia continue. The investigators develop the murderer's character profile as that of a middle-aged man scared of the world, with an overprotective mother, a menial and solitary job, and a fetish for pregnant women. Brudny spends days searching in vain.

When a drunk reports seeing a man by the canal walking with a big bag on his back around midnight some days before, Brudny searches the nearby allotments. He sees a light coming from a small brick house and goes inside. A shot is fired through the window. The attacker and Brudny launch themselves at each other. Brudny pins his rival to the ground. At the last minute, he notices that the attacker is his ex-partner, Julia, who can't help but investigate the case for herself despite being on leave. She refuses to talk to Brudny, and they go their separate ways.

Igor has nightmares about the orphanage of his childhood. He gets up and appears to shoot himself. Luckily this turns out to be a dream within a dream. Once truly awake, he begins frantically re-examining the case files. In the documentation from near the railway tracks, he notices graffiti about a guy named Henryk, who apparently has a cleft lip and is breastfed by his own mother.

Based on this description, the investigators find eighteen potential suspects named Henryk. Brudny and Kruszwica visit one of them. While the man claims to be locking up his dogs before they search his property, the policemen see a person running away, as if warned by him. They arrest Henryk and discover that he was one of the people who sprayed the graffiti on the wall.

He knows where the suspect lives and tells the police his real name: Jędrzej Sienkiewicz. As it turns out, the bus driver Brudny interviewed had mentioned him and shown the detective his photo, which had remained pinned to an office corkboard ever since he was named employee of the year, even though he'd left his job after his mother's death. Sienkiewicz then became a cleaner in a maternity ward and was on the police's list of menial workers yet to be interviewed.

Brudny and Kruszwica go to his run-down house. There, in the cellar, Brudny finds Zofia, naked and dirty, wearing a pig skin mask. Meanwhile, the police locate the murderer driving towards the city centre, where the most important event of the year, the Zielona Góra Wine Fest, is taking place. The town is full of people. Brudny chases Sienkiewicz through the traffic and blocked-off roads of the city centre. Eventually, he drives into the killer's car, and his own vehicle is sent flying. By the time Brudny and Kruszwica get out of the toppled vehicle, the murderer is nowhere to be seen.

Julia is in town and hears people in the crowd talk about a man covered in blood. Someone says it's the famous detective, so she starts looking for Brudny. Meanwhile, the murderer runs through the crowd with a knife. Brudny chases him through a funfair. Then the murderer grabs hold of a young woman, threatens to kill her, and runs off with her into the funfair's haunted house. Brudny follows.

They end up in a hall of infinity mirrors. There, the murderer tells him all about his difficult life and beloved mother. Julia appears just as Sienkiewicz takes hold of Brudny and places the butcher's knife on the detective's neck. Brudny moves swiftly to the side. The knife passes through his shoulder. The detective presses it deeper in so that the blade passes right through him and reaches the heart of Sienkiewicz behind him.

Brudny wakes up in hospital, a hero once again. His colleagues bring him up to date: records showed that Sienkiewicz's little sister died as a baby, and the remains of six infants were found in the murderer's well, three of which he'd fathered with his own mother, potentially to keep her lactating. Sienkiewicz's coddling mother probably breastfed him long past the appropriate time, hence his fetish. After she lost her battle to cancer, Sienkiewicz couldn't handle the shock. The masks he put on his victims were meant to depict his mother's face.

Nasim Luczaj is a Polish–English translator and prize-winning poet. She's an alumna of the NCW Emerging Translator Mentorship.

The Fetish

by Przemysław Piotrowski

Sample translation by Nasim Łuczaj

CHAPTER 4

The cell was small, cool and windowless. Paweł Baszta sat on the bed with his legs up against his chest, shaking. Chaos reigned in his head. He'd never been the brightest, so first of all, it was difficult for him to control the onslaught of dark thoughts, and second, these thoughts kept morphing into increasingly awful scenarios. The knowledge that he could end up in prison was totally crushing. It never looked good in the movies. There would almost always be some tattooed bruiser inclined to hunt for love among the fresh meat. In the shower or some shady corner of the laundry room. God forbid...

What he'd done wouldn't leave him in peace. Sometimes he'd feel self-disgust only to be bursting with pride just moments later. Wasn't that what they deserved? Of course it was. That and much more. She was the personification of all those disgusting women, that lower species so clearly subordinate to man, which did everything to deny the natural order of things, believing it could spit men in the face.

Who'd been giving them a roof over their heads for thousands of years? Who put food on the table? Who fed and watered them? Who provided support and protection from wild animals and enemy attacks?

In the past, at least women knew how to return the favour. But today? Everything was upside down. Instead of looking after the house and satisfying their breadwinners every night, they made careers, showed off their arses on Instagram and kept complaining, in newspapers and online, about how they were neglected and discriminated against, even publicly making a fuss about how – the horror! – their men couldn't satisfy them enough. Publicly, on TV, without hiding their identities! He sometimes thought that those Islamists were right to cover their ugly mugs with rags. Or cut out their clits and sew everything up. The fuckers are who they are, but at least they know how to bring a cow back down to earth and hold her by the gob so she doesn't kick too hard.

But now what? What if they don't make it out? She might kick the bucket in there...

What he feared most was that the others would squeal. Spud, Stiff and Chunker weren't exactly tough, it had to be said. At best, guys like them were called nerds. Unattractive, pimply four-eyes, usually overweight or, on the other extreme, looking like victims of the Holocaust, they had zero chance of picking up even a modestly attractive girl and were on the computer round the clock, playing online games or jerking off to gang bangs. He was no different. Paweł Baszta felt like a loser, too, not that he'd ever officially admit it. Unlike Spud, Stiff and

Chunker, he did know how to get out of his comfort zone and prove he was a real man.

What a shitshow.

The lock clicked. Baszta flinched. The door opened.

‘Out,’ said a man in a policeman’s uniform.

Baszta got up, swallowed and, in his mind’s eye, saw himself being led to the prison yard or the showers. God help him...

But two minutes later he was neither in the yard, because the headquarters didn’t even have one, nor in the showers, as those hadn’t been included in the building plan, either. Paweł Baszta found himself in an interrogation room with a one-way mirror, a table, three chairs and a camera. Inside sat two men, one of whom had a green bruise under his eye left after contact with Baszta’s shoe when, together with Spud, Stiff and Chunker, Baszta had decided to show the world that they were the real tough guys.

‘Sit down,’ the other cop said coldly. The one without the black eye, but whose shoulders showed off his every muscle and vein – just what Spud, Stiff and Chunker dreamt of, except they didn’t do much to make it happen. ‘Do you know why we’ve detained you?’

Baszta decided not to cave in. Still, he lowered his head and stared down at the floor, afraid to look the cop with the black eye in the face.

‘I asked you a question...’

‘No...’

‘And do you remember me?’ said Brudny, leaning against the table. Kruszwica forced Baszta to look him in the eye. ‘Because I remember you all right. You and your faggot mates. And you know what that means?’

Baszta started shaking. Tears welled up in his eyes. No good flexing his muscles. He was no tough guy.

‘That means you’re going to prison. Article two hundred and twenty-two of the Penal Code says you could spend up to three years behind bars for the assault of a police officer. But the prosecutor won’t charge you under that section. The prosecutor will fuck you over with article two hundred and twenty-three – that’s aggravated battery of an emergency worker – and because the assault was recorded on CCTV and you won’t defend your way out of that, you’ll be facing up to ten years in prison. Now once the sentence is announced and you’re sent off to prison, I’ll make sure the guards see to your bodily needs. Or the needs of the regulars, more like. They’re usually pretty red-blooded and ready to provide an unforgettable experience so that you’re in good company for your whole time there. You know what I mean?’

‘I... I... I’m sorry.’

‘You can shove that apology up your arse.’ Brudny leaned back against the chair again. He took out a cigarette, lit it and exhaled the smoke. ‘But maybe there’s a way we can avoid all this...’

Baszta's eyes widened and Brudny thought something wasn't right, but he didn't manage to voice his doubts before Kruszwica spoke.

'Our technicians have searched your devices and found lots of interesting stuff,' he said. 'And guess what, it's just the sort of thing we've been looking into lately.'

'I don't understand...'

'We know your views, and we know you belong to the incel community, or... wait a sec...' Kruszwica glanced at his phone screen. '...a subculture of people who self-define as unable to find a sexual partner. According to Uncle Google, you're misogynists and racists, full of resentment and hatred towards women, you have low self-esteem and you preach male supremacy. There's more, but I'll spare you. Or have I got any of that wrong?'

Baszta anxiously shook his head.

'Can I... I... I mean...'

'You trying to say something?' Brudny asked.

'Can I... ask for a lawyer?'

The guffaws of the two policemen filled the interview room. They seemed genuinely amused. Then Brudny banged his fist against the table with such force that it sent a packet of cigarettes up into the air.

'Listen, little shit,' he snapped. 'Go on, tell yourself you're fuck knows who, hate your blacks and migrants and women, but here you

answer my questions. Or else they'll grind your arse just like they used to back at the Hieronymite nuns' place...'

If only a moment before Baszta had some reserves of courage remaining, now he shrank to the size of a cockroach. His facial expression wasn't a long way off an insect's, either.

'But if you do want that lawyer...' Kruszwica started. Then Baszta wet himself.

'Fuck me.'

'Another one?'

'Oh please. What sort of men are you?'

'Well that's embarrassing.'

'Misogynist shitbag. Male fucking supremacist.'

'What if he shits himself?'

'Don't even...'

'I can't believe it.'

'No...'

The room was filled with another thump of a fist hitting the table. Browbeating the interviewee was the easiest and most common method of interrogation used by the police force. It was enough to shout, threaten, bang a fist on the table or mention the company of a hardened criminal for most of the youths and wimps of Baszta's stripe to instantly loosen their tongues. Then the prospect of a lawyer, to whom they were

very much entitled, would become so far removed that their interviewers could easily get more and more interesting information out of the rascals, mostly connected to bigger cases they happened to be working on. Then they tended to let them go, usually with an informally stamped agreement of mutual collaboration. That's how investigators recruited their so-called grasses.

‘Now tell us everything you know,’ Brudny said. ‘We’ll turn on the camera and the mic, and you kindly tell us whatever we ask, how does that sound?’

Baszta’s chin shook as if he were four years old and had just lost sight of his mum in a crowd. He looked down at the wet patch on his crotch with disgust.

‘There’ll be time to change your pants. Now confess.’ Kruszwica said and signalled for his colleagues behind the one-way mirror to turn on the recording equipment.

‘Question number one. Why did you assault that woman?’

While Paweł Baszta followed by each of his companions answered the investigators’ questions, quite nearby, a woman sat hunched up on a reeking mattress in the dark cellar of one of Zielona Góra’s historic tenement buildings. She was dirty, bruised and hungry, but above all thirsty. Her thoughts revolved around how she might bite through her own veins.

[The investigation continues. Brudny is meant to be having a coffee with Zofia Wasilewska, the woman Paweł Baszta had assaulted.]

However, she's not answering the detective's calls, and Brudny will soon discover that she's gone missing.]

CHAPTER 24

'Hey. I'm not disturbing you, am I?' He heard Kruszwica ask.

'No.'

'You on that date?'

'No. Why?'

'I was just finishing up the report when this note dropped into my lap.'

'Yeah...'

'Got it from the rookie on duty. It's probably nothing, but didn't you recently go to 18 Independence Avenue?'

'I did, yeah. Baszta lives in that building. But what is it?'

'The note says a woman called Genowefa Moskalewicz keeps ringing us. She lives at number 1. I wouldn't have paid it any mind if it weren't for the address.'

'Cut to the point.'

‘That Moskalewicz woman apparently hears strange voices coming from the plughole of her bath. Moans, screams, howling. She even mentions ghosts.’

‘And no one checked this?’

‘I thought I’d call you and...’

‘Who made the note and when?’

‘I don’t know the lad’s name. He’s new.’

‘When was this?’

‘Today, but apparently the old bat phones regularly. She’s got Alzheimer’s, so she’ll call even a few times a day, then forget and...’

‘I’ll go there.’

‘Is anything the matter?’

‘Don’t you think that’s a strange coincidence?’

‘Yeah...’

‘Right, I’m off.’

‘But...’

Brudny hung up, ran down the stairs and hurriedly crossed the road. He got into his patrol car and sped off. Gravel from the construction site shot up from under the wheels. On his way to the pedestrian zone, he wondered whether he’d lost his touch so badly that a turd like Paweł Baszta had managed to deceive him. Sex doll, he

snorted and put his foot down on the gas. Each breath that little shit took felt like a spit in the face.

CHAPTER 25

He stood at the door to the building and dialled Wasilewska's number again. Still nothing. Her phone was out of service. He pressed the button for number one and waited for a few rings.

'Yes, hello.' He heard an elderly lady's shaky voice.

'Police. Please open,' he said.

'Police?' She sounded surprised.

'Please open,' he said again, and after a moment the mechanism grated.

He opened the door and bounded up the stairs, then knocked. The front door was opened by a dainty elderly lady with glasses like jar tops. She was wearing a faded green button-up shirt and an old-fashioned ankle-length dress. Anxiety and surprise were written all over her face.

'Are you from the police?' She made sure.

'Yes. Can I come in?'

'Where's your uniform?'

‘Criminal Investigation Department. We don’t wear uniforms.’

‘Criminal?’

‘Can I come in?’

After a moment’s hesitation the elderly lady let the detective into her flat. The smell of old age filled the air, but the interior looked tidy. She led Brudny to a spacious living room with a large oak table, a tiled stove and an ancient chest of drawers that may have remembered the pre-war period. His attention was captured by the many pictures of the Virgin Mary.

‘Let me get you a cup of tea,’ the woman offered, but Brudny refused. He sat down on the ornate chair and suggested she do the same.

‘Mrs Moskalewicz, let me get right to it.’ He cleared his throat. ‘You called because you’ve been hearing some voices, is that right?’ Mrs Moskalewicz frowned and fixed her shirt collar, blinking.

‘Voices...’ she murmured. ‘Yes, voices. Yes, yes,’ she grew animated. ‘I do hear voices sometimes. It’s a good job you’re here, because I hear them all right.’

‘When did you hear them last?’

The woman’s head jolted as if she were suffering from some kind of nervous tic.

She gave Brudny a look that suggested he’d only just materialised.

She frowned again.

‘Are you a policeman?’

This won’t be an easy ride, Brudny thought.

‘Yes. Detective Inspector Igor Brudny, Criminal Investigation Department of the Zielona Góra City Police. We don’t wear uniforms,’ he added, just in case.

‘I see. Let me get you a cup of tea.’

‘Voices, Mrs Moskalewicz,’ he put a stop to her plans. ‘You said you could hear women’s voices...’

‘Oh yes. Voices. Yes, voices. I do hear voices.’

‘When did you hear them last?’

‘I hear them all the time. That poor thing must be suffering terribly.’

‘What do you hear, exactly?’

The woman frowned again, and Brudny thought she was about to ask who he was and what he was doing there. But she didn’t. Her old eyes looked at him with full lucidity.

‘I’ve been saying this for weeks, Detective,’ she declared. ‘But no one’s listening to me.’

‘I’m listening. What exactly do you hear?’

‘Moans and screaming. Sounds like purgatory. Or hell itself. Wherever she is, that poor soul didn’t do anything to deserve such suffering. And that devil...’

‘You hear him, too?’

‘Sometimes.’

‘What does he say?’

‘Awful things. Horrid. I’m ashamed to say them out loud.’

‘You can tell me. What does the devil say?’

Moskalewicz blinked again, and another nervous tick flickered across her face. Then her whole body shuddered. She glanced at the picture of the Madonna and child hanging above Brudny’s head. She swallowed hard.

‘What does the devil say?’ Brudny repeated the question.

‘I... I can’t. They’re awful words. Sinful. Evil.’

‘Mrs Moskalewicz, this is really important...’

‘He...’ She grimaced. ‘He says he’ll... you know... get into funny business. Do things to her. I mean horrible things, like he’s a real pervert. He calls her the worst names, he hits her, and then I think he does it.’

‘Does what?’

‘What he said he would. Funny business.’

‘Can you show me where the voices are the loudest?’

Mrs Moskalewicz got up from her chair and led Brudny into the bathroom. The bathroom was in the style of years rightly bygone,

dominated by a large bath with rust around the plughole. She pointed her bony finger at the rubber plug.

‘I leave it in so I don’t hear...’ she said, as if to justify herself.

Brudny didn’t answer. He glanced at the strong psychotropic medication on the shelf and, bending over the bath, shyly reached for the chain. He pulled it up and bent even lower down. Ear against the drain hole, he held his breath and focused his senses.

The old pipes spoke in their usual voice. There were gurgles, bangs and hisses. The installation probably needed changing – there seemed to be a wind howling through it. He felt like an idiot. Just as he was about to pull away, the labyrinth of pipes let out another sound. The wailing was barely audible, but it certainly wasn’t coming from a sex doll. He waited, listened, clenched his jaw. A moment later they heard the devil himself.

[Baszta dies and turns out to have been innocent. Brudny tracks down the killer and is now chasing him through the crowded city centre during the most important celebration of the year, Wine Fest.]

CHAPTER 44

Pink polo shirt. Cap. Ungainly gait.

He could see him. The guy had a slight limp and kept looking around over the funfair visitors' heads. This was hardly a problem, because most were youngsters, and he was well over 6'2". Even set against the ecstatic kids' mothers and fathers he looked like an elephant surrounded by the carefree frolicking of impalas.

Brudny scanned his surroundings. Here the fun never stopped. Mothers and daughters rode in frog-, butterfly- and dolphin-shaped carousel seats while fathers charged around the arena in dodgems with their sons, shot at cans with air rifles or fitted their progeny into harnesses that allowed the kids to jump so high gravity seemed to lose all its force. The racket was unbelievable. The machinery hissed, creaked and screeched, the children screamed, and the adults shouted over one another as if they couldn't just take a breath to focus on finishing their can of Coke or coffee they were plied with and had bought for a price that amounted to daylight robbery. Unaware of the beast lurking in their midst, they eagerly spent their hard-earned money to make their kids' dreams come true. The air smelled of popcorn, burnt oil and candyfloss.

Brudny thought that if he got between the kids in this state, the parents would get angry, or worse, panic might erupt. But then, next to a wooden installation topped with effigies of a bat, a bloke in a hockey

mask and a guy holding up a chainsaw, he spotted men in skeleton and bloodthirsty crown costumes having a smoke and stopped worrying about his appearance. He dipped his hands in the fountain and washed his face, then carefully passed the Haunted House and hid behind an installation of about a dozen shipping containers painted in bright colours. Now Sienkiewicz was in plain view. The man was panting and looked dispirited, even a little terrified by it all. A bit like a big kid who'd suddenly lost sight of his parents and didn't know what to do with himself. Except for one detail.

This big kid's sausage fingers were clutching the handle of the butcher's knife pressed against his thigh.

Using a firearm was out of the question, and Sienkiewicz's heft gave Brudny reason to assume he could put up a strong resistance. They were almost completely surrounded by mothers with children, so there was no room for error here. That must be why Czarnecki hasn't decided to strike yet, thought Brudny. He knows full well that a single bad decision might lead to the death of innocent people, including youngsters, and to topple a bull like this would take more than a taser or a couple of untrained officers. What they needed here was professionals of the highest class and a perfectly organised ambush, preferably far from people.

Brudny searched the crowd for any lurking plain-clothes policemen, but he didn't notice any. No uniformed officers either. He nervously clenched his jaw, forced to admit to himself that he couldn't take the risk, either.

What now? Would he have to wait for Sienkiewicz to leave the funfair? And what if he never did? What if he knew it was the only place where he could feel reasonably safe at this time? But what if he suddenly changed his mind and started waving his knife around? His psychological profile gave no guarantee that he wouldn't dare murder a woman or child in cold blood. The man was mentally ill. Unable to tell good from evil, with no empathy or higher feelings. An absolute nutter.

The hubbub only seemed to grow. The carousels creaked, the rollercoaster clacked, and the incessant noises melted together into one big ear-piercing din. Sienkiewicz looked more and more disorientated, and when he heard the loud and characteristic sound of a chainsaw coming from the Haunted House he flipped around and lifted his hand and knife, almost touching a young passer-by with its tip. The youth instinctively ducked, muttered something under his breath and emphatically tapped his forehead.

Brudny thought that in any other situation a passerby would immediately run for his life. But the guy simply merged back with the crowd. No one else, despite the swarm of people, seemed to have noticed the danger. Sienkiewicz must have looked like just another funfair employee with a fake knife, scaring the kids as they slipped past him on their way to the Haunted House.

Except he wasn't a hire actor, and his knife wasn't fake. Nothing here was make-believe.

Igor analysed the potential scenarios, but each seemed bad or very bad. The use of a firearm was totally out of the question, that much

was clear. Except how was he to topple this brute if the guy could cut his head off with a single swing of the 12-inch blade? How was he to neutralise the danger while surrounded by all these kids? Should he wait? That would be bad, too. Just moments before, Sienkiewicz had proven his unpredictability. What if another roar of the chainsaw pushed him to go a step further?

He thought that there was no way out of the situation, and time was certainly not on his side. With each second, Sienkiewicz appeared more and more unsettled and agitated. His bloodshot eyes wandered over the sea of townspeople blissfully unaware of the danger, his position no doubt becoming increasingly clear, the awful truth dawning on him. There was no way he could escape and, once stopped, as was bound to happen sooner or later, he would certainly be sentenced and sent to a tough prison where the other inmates would spend years tormenting him for what he'd done to those women. They'd shame, rape and debase him in every possible way. They'd turn him into a toilet and a sex doll in one.

Would such a life even be worth living?

Brudny remembered an old but ever so apt saying. The most dangerous person is the one who has nothing to lose. This monster with nothing to lose, who'd been backed into a corner, was living proof of the worst-case scenario being not only likely but very real, and if he didn't make his mind up now, an innocent person could lose their life.

And that's when Brudny's worst fears came true. The beast attacked.

Co-financed by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage as part of a
targeted grant under the name Polish Canon.



Ministry of Culture and National Heritage
Republic of Poland



WYDAWNICTWO
CZARNA OWCA