

**H**e'd been in a good mood since the morning. That was no surprise: the verdict of the court in Vienna, which definitively laid the spectre of a prison cell, was just what he had expected. But the certainty that his abandoned lover would creep off with empty hands imbued the whole world with a new colouration from the very break of day. He settled his account with his lawyer Rosenberg, even tossing in a nice tip, before plunging into the newspapers. *Wealthy Pole acquitted, lover left without a cent.* That was the headline, below which the journalist related, in somewhat flowery terms:

*The verdict arrived at in court yesterday puts an end to the case of the Pole, Count Ignacy Korwin-Milewski, his former lover Cecylia Włodzimierska, and Barber, her protector and a citizen of Bukovina, who had been shot, which had been played out over the course of an entire year. In 1904, Milewski, a resident of the Hotel Astoria, published an account of a romance, in which he described his achievements, so to speak, in the field of Cecylia Włodzimierska. The woman in question had been his mistress for eleven of the previous twelve months, and, so it seems, during that time the couple had scorned propriety, morality, civilised behaviour and the honour of a young woman's family.*

The count had a good laugh at that. Propriety, morality, civilised behaviour and family honour... He thought of those journalistic hacks with bitterness. Yeeesss. Ciunia, a young girl when he had met a few years earlier, all of twenty-one summers, had a body like a dream. Long fingers, a tight little derriere, breasts just right... Oh, just to sink into her, breathe with her breath, touch her, caress her. It's true, she didn't come cheap. Always demanding more and more presents. He'd have gladly passed her on to one of his artist friends. Chelmoński, maybe Gierymski or Pankiewicz. Let 'em paint her portrait. Those delicate veins beneath that crown of hair, those beautiful green eyes of hers. He read on:

*It is known from well-informed sources, however, that Milewski was not satisfied with carnal relations with the beautiful Viennese girl. He also spent his time in establishments worthy neither of his noble family, nor his earlier accomplishments. After her divorce, the jealous mistress subjected him to frequent scenes in public, in which words that would be inappropriate to our Readers' eyes often fell.*

At least that was true. She swore like a sailor, and ran roughshod over the whole clan.

*Bored, perhaps terrified, the amorous count elbowed Włodzimierska out of his circle of friends, until the*

*fateful day of 6 July 1904, when, in the company of the above-mentioned Herr Barber, she fell upon him at the Southern Station just as he was entering his carriage on the evening train to Kraków. According to eyewitnesses, harsh words were exchanged between the two former lovers, to which a young man claiming to be Frau Włodzimierska's intended soon chimed in. The latter two demanded a significant sum, to the tune of twenty-five thousand crowns, as satisfaction for the alleged injuries to her reputation and loss of honour; they also demanded the return of certain letters in Herr Milewski's possession. Frau Włodzimierska's escort seconded her efforts in this conflict in so pressing and eager a manner that, at a certain moment, he not only insinuated the use of physical force against the count, but also struck the older man in the head. For his part, the count, without quite thinking things through, pulled out his revolver and shot Herr Barber in a region it would be shameful to mention.*

Excerpt translated by Charles S. Kraszewski



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**WACŁAW  
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