

The journalist was practically alone in the courtyard. “Grey” and his bodyguards had disappeared into the building. There were just two security guards on the other side by the gate, making sure no one without a pass card got into the club grounds. The cool of evening was already in the air, but the reporter felt hot, his forehead was beaded with sweat. He wanted to do something, but he felt helpless. Everything around him was shrouded in mystery, so much so that it seemed unreal. The people, although he knew many of them, seemed to have changed into zombies here. He felt as if he was taking part in a performance or a reality show, but he didn’t know where the audience was.

The slam of a door shook him from his lethargy. Looking around, he saw the district attorney coming towards him. The DA was a stout man with the face of a low-budget action film actor. His excessively protruding, strong jaw, cheeks with deep wrinkles, deep-set eyes and shaved head meant that most people he spoke to respected him. Fronisz liked him, because he was someone who didn’t hesitate to make tough decisions. Moreover, he was a connoisseur of good food and drink, which certainly helped him win people over. As a matter of fact, the DA also liked Krzysztof, because he was one of the few journalists in town who didn’t work on commission. This could be troublesome for prosecutors, because attempts to manipulate proceedings were more likely to be exposed, but on the other hand, his publications could be taken seriously. They had been on first-name terms for about a year. The DA had invited him to a Russian restaurant for some vodka after Krzysztof had chanced upon a young prosecutor inebriated on a park bench in the middle of the night and discreetly driven him home. Had he taken a photo and published it, he’d have ruined not only the career of the prosecutor, but also that of his bosses. It soon turned out that following the closing of a very complicated case that resulted in a conviction, a few high-ranking detectives had gone out drinking. One ended up on a park bench, one on a railway siding, and another went home but forgot that his house was being renovated. He opened the door, fell to the floor, and stuck to the freshly varnished parquet. He was so ill from the toxic fumes that he ended up in hospital. DA Jacek Jaskóła was known for his strong head, so he made it home under his own steam. The next day, however, he had to work extremely hard to prevent the scandal from getting out.

Excerpt translated by Kate Webster



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MARIUSZ STANISZEWSKI

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Translation rights: Wydawnictwo Zysk i S-ka
anna.giryń@zysk.com.pl

Selected works

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Mariusz Staniszewski has worked as a journalist in popular Polish newspapers and magazines.