

FELBERG ENGLISH READERS

KILER

A crime comedy based on
a JULIUSZ MACHULSKI film
screenplay by PIOTR WEREŚNIAK



SIMPLIFIED EDITION


Felberg SJA

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INTERMEDIATE LEVEL

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CHAPTER ONE

A crowd gathered at the end of a busy street in front of an elegant pub. A section of the street was cordoned off with yellow tape. Inside there was a TV crew, an ambulance, a body bag on a **stretcher**, and cops. There was a TV reporter on the scene, of course, a blonde by the name of Ewa Szańska. And she was pressing a **paunchy** cop for details. “. . . shot with a sniper’s bullet, Andrzej G. alias *Guillotine* is the fourth victim this year. I’m talking to Inspector Fish of the Central Police Station. Is this a gang war?”

A **PO** came up to the inspector, who stopped him with a gesture.

“In five minutes . . .”

“I don’t get it,” said Ewa.

“Sorry, what was the question again?”

“Is this a gang war?”

“No gang war whatsoever, but a **contract killing**.”

“The **elusive** Killer again? When are you going to arrest him?”

“The police have their own **agenda**.”

“How many more victims until you get the legendary Killer?”

The inspector turned to face the camera, to address the viewers.

“Ladies and gentlemen, there’s no cause for alarm. There’s no Killer whatsoever. It’s a media invention.” And he said this with an accusing glance at Ewa.

The assistant cameraman tried to stop the stretcher-bearers.

“Where are you taking him? Wait! We aren’t finished yet!”

But the bearers ignored him. So he turned to Ewa and the inspector.

“If not Killer, who is killing then?”

stretcher *nosze* in Polish; **paunchy** having a large belly; **PO** police officer, policeman; **contract killing** killing of a victim by a gangster paid for it; **elusive** difficult to catch; **agenda** a list or a plan of things to be done

“**Man proposes . . .**”

The inspector turned on his heel and left.

“. . . **God disposes,**” the cameraman finished the saying.

“One more shot of the victim and we are finished,” said Ewa.

“But he’s been **carted away!**”

“How could you let him go?”

“**Hon,** I concentrated on you and the inspector.”

“Does it have to be *Guillotine* himself?” the assistant wondered.

“Let me find someone whose name starts with ‘G’”.

“Who?”

“Just anyone who’s **gawking** or something.”

“So you **blew it** again,” Ewa concluded, handed the assistant the microphone and left. A while later the assistant asked a smiling fair-headed man in his thirties standing in the crowd of gawking persons.

“You want to be **on camera?**”

“No. Why?”

“You mean you really don’t want to be on camera?!!!”

“No, thanks.”

“Look, man, I’ll give you 100 zloties. Just lie down for a while and play a **stiff**. Under a cover. They won’t see a thing.”

“Maybe another time.” And the man backed off.

“No volunteers,” said the amazed assistant to the cameraman.

“Well, why don’t you jump into the bag and lie down?”

“In front of all those people?”

“Who cares, anyway.”

“Let me take off my shoes at least. *Guillotine* was barefoot.”

The smiling man walked up to a parked cab on a side street. He got behind the wheel. A smartly-dressed man was taking a nap in the back seat. The taxi driver cleared his throat to wake

Man proposes, God disposes *Człowiek strzela, pan Bóg kule nosi* in Polish; **cart away** to transport in an unceremonious manner; **Hon** short for Honey, here *Kochanie*; **gawk** to stare stupidly; **blow it** [*Informal*] to ruin, make a mess of, spoil something; **on camera** televised by a live camera; **stiff** [*Slang*] a dead body

him. And then he handed him a pack of cigarettes. Having sipped some vodka from his **hip flask**, the passenger complained.

“Filters? I said no filter.”

“No such stuff in this city, sir.”

“What city is this?”

The taxi driver looked out the window into the dark street.

“Las Vegas.”

“Why?” wondered the passenger. “A **power shortage** or what?”

The driver was quietly chewing a candy bar.

“Where to?”

“What’s it to you?”

“As I’m your taxi driver, I have a right to know.”

“But what’s it to you?” the man repeated with a drunkard’s **obstinacy**.

“Let me pick up another passenger before you make up your mind.”

“Out of the question!”

“Why?”

“Because I’m not going home. Got it?”

“Where are you going, then?”

“To Zig.”

Early in the morning a VW **pulled over** to the sidewalk along an old **tenement** in downtown Warsaw. The taxicab was parked nearby. The VW’s driver got out, took a **skeleton key** out of his pocket, and opened the taxi door. The car alarm was instantly turned off. Two police cars drove up from the opposite sides and stopped, blocking the street. Untroubled, the car thief opened the trunk and liked what he saw. A broad smile on his face, he turned toward the VW. Next he raised his hand, with three fingers sticking up. The window was rolled down to reveal

hip flask the English equivalent of the Polish *piersiówka*; **power shortage** turning off a electricity in an area; **obstinacy** *upór* in Polish; **pull over** to direct one’s car to the curb; **tenement** a rundown and often overcrowded apartment house, esp. in a poor section of a large city; **skeleton key** a key that can open various locks

Inspector Fish, dressed in black. The inspector shook his fist and spoke into his cell phone.

Six men got out of either police car and ran to the gateway. Armed to the teeth and in **bulletproof vests**, they had ski masks on their heads. Two other commandos appeared on the rooftop with ropes and climbing gear. They got ready to **rappel** down and storm the house through a window. The others silently climbed the stairs. Finally at the door, they broke it down and rushed into the apartment. It was a **studio** with only a couple of white pieces of furniture. Somebody was snoring undisturbed on the mattress in the middle of the floor. It was Jurek, the taxi driver, a Walkman plugged in his ear. Now he woke up, only to see a row of **rifles** aimed at him.

Six men escorted the **handcuffed** driver to the VW, where the inspector was waiting, all smiles. The ‘car thief’ took a sniper’s rifle out of the taxi trunk. He raised it above his head for all to see. Undisputed proof . . .

Inspector Fish motioned to the men to push Jurek into the back seat.

“Let me go. It’s a mistake!”

“A mistake?! That was my second wife’s middle name,” joked Fish, looking at his catch with great satisfaction. Next he walked up to the taxi and **stripped** the taxi driver’s ID card off the **dashboard**. It had Jurek’s photo and ‘Taxi No. 7775 Jurek Kiler’ printed under it. Not Killer, mind you.

In the TV editing room, one of the sets was showing the **footage** of *Guillotine*’s killing. There was a panoramic shot of faces of gawking people with Jurek Kiler in the middle. Ewa was watching his **closeup**. She was irritated and shot an angry look at the cameraman nearby. He seemed self-satisfied, a bottle of beer in his hand.

bulletproof vest *kamizelka kuloodporna* in Polish; **rappel** to slide down a rope fastened overhead; **studio** *kawalerka* in Polish; **rifle** *karabin* in Polish; **handcuffed** *w kajdankach* in Polish; **strip off** to remove from a surface; **dashboard** instrument panel under the front window of a car; **footage** a film scene; **closeup** a photo or a camera shot taken at close range

“What’s that?”

“Pardon? What’s what?”

“Who’s this? Get me the one I need.”

“Which one?”

“Number One.”

“For me, Ewa, you are Number One,” the cameraman **made eyes at** her.

“But I’m talking about *Guillotine!*”

The cameraman turned on the video and stopped it when they saw a body under cover, its bare feet sticking out.

“And who’s that?”

Quite sure it was a practical joke, Ewa watched further until the ‘stiff’ threw the cover aside and said on camera, “That’s enough or I’ll get lumbago.”

“Is that *Guillotine?*” asked Ewa angrily. “Why, that’s your stupid friend, Stan!”

“Only you, myself, and Stan know it. But all the viewers will think he’s *Guillotine.*”

At that very moment, the door opened and Stan walked in.

“Hi, what’s up?”

“To cut it short before I forget . . . They’ve arrested Killer.”

“They have? How do you know it?”

“They said it on the radio.”

“What?”

“They got him.”

“Just that?”

“Isn’t that enough?”

A fiftysomething **fatso** was jogging along the park lanes of his large estate. This was Stefan Siarzewski alias *Siara*, an underworld king, in **workout clothes**. At a discreet distance, five men were following, dressed in similar fashion. Among them was Skinny, Siara’s right-hand man. When his cell phone rang, he listened to it still jogging. When the message **sank in**, he stopped and called after his disappearing boss.

make eyes at to look at a person to attract him/her; **fatso** [*Slang*] a fat person; **workout clothes** clothes to practice sports in; **sink in** to become gradually and clearly understood

“Stefan! . . . Stefan!!! I’ve got news for you!”

“Tell me!”

“It’s too awful!”

“Who asked you to comment? What is it?” Siara was by his side now.

“They’ve **collared** Killer . . .”

“What?”

“They’ve collared Killer. I told you it’s too awful.”

A sudden blow to the chin floored Skinny instantly.

“Who asked you to comment, dummy?”

His hands tied and his legs in chains, Jurek was pushed into the **interrogation room**. Behind the desk were Fish, his assistant, the ‘car thief’ and a gloomy-looking DA. Pushed with an automatic rifle by a guard, Jurek **tottered** because of his chained legs, tripped and fell, his face landing on the desk. Fish leaned over and looked him in the eye.

“Hi, Killer. If you totter like a geisha, you’ll kill yourself.”

Fish laughed at his own joke and looked at the others for approval. The assistant obediently roared with laughter, but the DA looked on in silence.

“OK, your name and occupation?”

“Jurek Kiler, taxi driver.”

“Your name’s Killer and so is your alias. You’re him. And if you say it’s a mistake, I’ll hit you!”

“But it *is* a mistake!”

Fish put on boxing gloves.

“Get him up!” he ordered the two guards. They followed the order.

Fish swung his fist. Jurek **ducked** the blow, and a powerful right landed on the chin of the guard at his right. He fell down, knocked-out. Another hard blow, which Jurek ducked too, and the guard on his left was floored as well.

collar [*Informal*] to place under arrest; **interrogation room** room where the police question suspects; **DA** *prokurator dzielnicowy* in Polish; **totter** to walk with unsure steps; **duck** to bend suddenly to avoid something



Fish leaned over and looked him in the eye.

“Hi, Killer. If you totter like a geisha, you’ll kill yourself.”

“What do you think?” roared Fish. “They’re here to protect *you* not me!” he charged Jurek like a **raging** bull. But the assistant and the DA jumped to the rescue and overpowered Fish.

“Boss, no **third degree**, please!”

“I’ve been on his tail for three years!”

“It’s a tragic misunderstanding,” Jurek interrupted, “My name’s Jurek Kiler, a taxi driver, number 7775.”

“You were real good, Killer, but you’re collared now. Because I was been better! Forty six times better! Now you’re in for it! For life, man. But first confess to the DA.”

“Confess? To the DA?”

“You think we sent a **SWAT** team to get an innocent taxi driver? You **botched up** the job and forgot to clean up. These toys,” he showed Jurek a sniper bullet shell in a plastic bag and a Mars candy bar wrapper in a plastic bag too. “We found them near the place where you shot Guillotine. And in your taxi

raging moving, charging furiously; **third degree** intensive questioning or rough treatment by the police; **SWAT** special police force to deal with dangerous situations; **botch up** to spoil by poor work

—a sniper rifle, which has killed forty in the whole of Europe. Making fun of the fifth **Commandment**?”

“Not at all!”

“The truth is you killed, **scum**! Start talking and you’ll be better-off. We’ll get you a single cell then. Or else we’ll lock you up with Hairy. You have no idea who he is.”

“I’m not saying anything.”

CHAPTER TWO

“I know, Mr. Lipski, that you think that building is a piece of shit. But, personally, I’d like to live there,” said Hector Sosa, a Latino-looking businessman to his Polish contractor Ferdinand Lipski. They were in an elegant **suite** on top of Warsaw’s Marriott Hotel. Sosa’s remark concerned the Palace of Culture, at which they were looking through the window. Besides the two, there were two Latino gorillas, Carlos, Sosa’s Latino assistant; and Stefan *Siara* Siarzewski along with two of Lipski’s bodyguards. What they were discussing was a **deal to be cut**, to turn the Palace into a gigantic ‘Central European Casino.’

“And that architectural wonder can be yours,” Lipski assured him.

“It’ll be Europe’s largest casino,” said Sosa smiling with satisfaction.

“And we’ll remain its owners,” Lipski wanted to make sure.

“Officially yes. In fact, we’ll have 98 percent of the **revenues**.”

“Only 2 per cent left to split between us two?” asked Siara, surprised.

“We’ve invested a lot of money,” complained Lipski.

“Mr. Lipski, **give me a break**,” Sosa interrupted, irritated.

Commandment *jedno z dziesięciorga przykazań* in Polish; **scum** a low, worthless, or evil person; **suite** *apartament hotelowy* in Polish; **cut a deal** [*Slang*] to make a business transaction; **revenues** *przychody* in Polish; **Give me a break!** ‘That is enough!’, ‘Stop it!’

An uneasy silence followed. A moment later Lipski cleared his throat and stated matter-of-factly.

“The building is yours when the money is in the Swiss bank account.”

“No, no, no Swiss accounts, please,” Sosa interrupted again. “The price is so astronomical because of one condition: cash or no deal.”

Lipski glanced at Siara, who glanced back, puzzled. “Cash? **What’s cooking?**”

“Cash, baby,” Sosa silenced Siara.

“How do we collect it?” pressed Lipski.

“In three days, a dollar-packed container will arrive at the Warsaw airport. All it takes is to drive there and pick it up.”

“And we collect the delivery just like that?” Lipski **snapped his fingers**, a look of disbelief on his face.

“Carlos, who’s at the airport on Friday?” Sosa turned to his assistant.

“On Friday . . .,” Carlos looked at his cell phone screen, “Waldek.”

“And Waldek will give you the container when you show him . . . this.”

Here Sosa tore a 2,000 peso bill in half and handed one half of it to Lipski.

“And the other half?”

“Waldek will have it.”

Lipski and Siara looked at each other, amazed.

“Are there any problems, gentlemen?” asked Sosa.

“No . . .,” said Siara **snapping up** the torn half, “but why tear up the money?” As he wanted to pocket the half, Lipski quickly grabbed it back from him.

“Anyway, rather than to America I’m going to the land of these,” said Sosa handing them a handful of large photos.

What’s cooking? [*Slang*] ‘What’s going on?’, ‘What’s the matter?’; **snap fingers** to make a sudden, sharp sound with one’s fingers; **snap up** to seize or take with a quick grab

They were pictures of the Palace of Culture **look-alikes**, the Lomonosov University of Moscow among them.

“They’re expanding, **SOBs**,” Siara commented angrily.

The cell door opened with a bang. The three **inmates** inside looked at Jurek with interest. One of them, his head bald like a skinhead’s, sat up in his bed.

“Is that you, Killer?”

Jurek, risking everything, answered immediately.

“Hairy?”

His jaw dropped and all of a sudden the bald inmate was in seventh heaven.

“Guys, Killer recognized me. What an honor!”

Then he turned to his cellmates:

“Out with you! Make room for Mr. Killer. He’s the Boss now! Sit down, sir.” This last to Jurek, whom he watched with admiration.

“We weren’t expecting you. Or else I’d have had them clean up. These guys are **messy**.”

“Thanks. It’s . . . cool,” Jurek gladly accepted the invitation and sat down at the table.

At lunch time they were all in the dining room at a long table.

Hairy, full of excitement, pressed with questions:

“How did you **off** that Turk in Munich. I read about it in the papers.”

“That Turk? . . . Easy.”

“But how?”

“From a distance with a sniper rifle. It had infra-red **sights**.”

“And that explosion in Mannheim?”

“Oh that? Semtex.”

“What?”

“Czech plastic.”

“How did you **plant** it? The car was watched, right?”

look-alike a person or thing that looks like another; **SOB** [*Vulgar Slang*] a completely disagreeable person; **inmate** a person who does time in prison; **messy** characterized by a dirty, disordered condition; **off** [*Slang*] to kill; **sights** optical viewing devices on a firearm; **plant** to place something in order to get the desired result

“Easy. I had a . . . toy car, radio-controlled. I filled it with plastic, sent it under the Turk’s car and wham!”

A giant of a man, Big Ear, rose from the neighboring table. He looked frightful, his left ear all in scars. He came up to Jurek’s table. Now he put a giant paw on the back of the inmate next to Kiler. With his back to him, unaware what was going on, Jurek continued.

“But plastic is kid’s stuff. Any idiot can plant a bomb. But to face your **mark** is a real **challenge**. The fatter the better. And for a fatso you need a dum-dum bullet. It’s deadly effective.”

Just then Jurek noticed Big Ear take out a piece of sausage out of the soup bowl next to his. He ate it right away and poured the bowl of the steaming soup over its owner.

“You’ve spilled all your soup, stupid,” said Big Ear and looked at Jurek’s empty bowl.

“Where’s your sausage?”

“I’ve eaten it already,” answered Jurek, looking Big Ear straight in the eye.

“Don’t hurry next time,” Big Ear threatened him, but returned to his seat quietly.

The **warden** of the prison was in his study answering questions from Ewa, sitting opposite him. The warden, a middle-aged man, definitely in a **midlife crisis**, was eyeing beautiful Ewa with a hungry look. But he tried his best to sound **adamant**.

“This is absolutely out of the question, Miss . . .” And the warden took a discreet glance at the calling card on his desk.

“ . . . Ewa.”

“Dear Mr” And this time Ewa glanced at the calling card that the warden had handed her a moment ago.

“Dear Mieczysław, I must see him.”

“Anybody, Miss Ewa, but Killer. He is a European-class criminal.”

mark the intended victim; **challenge** something that serves as a call to battle, contest, effort; **warden** the chief officer in charge of a prison; **midlife crisis** a period of psychological stress during middle age; **adamant** determined not to change one’s mind

“Exactly, we have few **luminaries** of his caliber. So we can’t afford to hide Killer.”

“I prize your professionalism, Miss Ewa, but you must understand.”

“I see. Well here’s another project. A documentary series: *Polish Penitentiary Pantheon*.”

“That sounds interesting.”

“Could you help me with a list of 8 to 12 of the best wardens in Poland?”

“That many of us? Are you sure? Let me see. Czesiek from Łęczycza. But he’s retired now. How about that?”

“No, only wardens in active service.”

“Then what about Mirek from Białoleka. He’s grown bald on the job. Will a **baldie** qualify?”

“Impossible. They must be exceptional individuals: handsome, IQ over 240, well-read, who can speak foreign languages. The best of the best.”

“Yes, ja wohl, très bien! What about Piotrków? That’s where Stan Alcatraz is.”

“Do you mean the great escape?”

“Exactly. Six hundred **cons on the lam** now. They must’ve done it with chartered buses, or what? And Stan’s hair turned gray overnight.”

“The gray-haired are also out . . . Give me at least one name. It doesn’t have to be a *Pantheon*. A plain *Pillar of Polish Prisons* could do.”

“Or maybe just *the Star*?”

“Great! *The Star of Penitentiary Poland* Warden Mieczysław . . .” And she stole a look at the calling card again, “. . . Klonisz?”

“You mean me?!”

“Why not? You’re aren’t gray-haired or bald, let alone retired.”

“And no one has ever **sprung on me!**”

luminary a person who is famous and respected in his/her field; **baldie** [*Informal*] a bald person; **cons on the lam** [*Slang*] convicted criminals hiding from the police; **spring on someone** to escape from jail while someone is the warden