

FELBERG ENGLISH READERS

VA BANQUE II

RIPOSTE

A crime comedy based on
an original film script by JULIUSZ MACHULSKI



SIMPLIFIED EDITION


Felberg SJA

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A crime comedy based on
an original script by
JULIUSZ MACHULSKI

INTERMEDIATE LEVEL

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Warsaw 2002

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Printed in Poland
ISBN 83-88667-14-9

PROLOGUE



In Poland of the 1930s, a dishonest partner, one Gustav Kramer, **sets up** Kwinto, a man with the heart of gold, though a **safecracker**. With Kwinto in jail, Kramer establishes a bank and starts swindling his clients out of their money, **disposing** of some of them. Thus, Kwinto's musician friend is **defenestrated**, leaving his widow and child penniless. Finally, Kwinto goes out and starts **settling scores** with Kramer. Now it is he who sets Kramer up, and, consequently, the dishonest banker is put away for six years for having robbed his own bank.

set up [slang] *wmanewrować kogoś w kłopoty* in Polish; **safecracker** *kasiarz* in Polish; **dispose of** tu: *to kill*; **defenestrate** *to throw a person out of a window*; **settle scores** [slang] *załatwiać porachunki* in Polish

CHAPTER ONE

It was May 1936. Kramer was **doing time** in the **maximum-security prison** in Sikawa. On a nice May day, the prisoners were out for a walk inside the walls. They were enjoying exercise, dressed in their **prison stripes**. In the corridor leading to the visiting room, Kramer's lawyer was talking to Stawiski, Kramer's former secretary at the bank.

"You know that I've done all I can," insisted the lawyer.

"You'll tell it to Kramer," Stawiski said.

They walked into a room, which had iron bars separating the prisoners from the visitors. Kramer, also in prison stripes, was waiting for them, angry and impatient.

"Where have you been all this time? What about my appeal?"

"Unfortunately, as of yesterday your **sentence is final**," the lawyer said.

After a moment of silence, Kramer asked Stawiski in disbelief, "Is he serious?"

"I'm sorry, sir."

"Am I to do six years?"

"Don't worry. You'll be **paroled** in two or three years," the lawyer tried to comfort him. "Be patient."

"You were supposed to **spring** me! I'm in jail while Kwinto is outside!"

"The jails are full of innocent people," the lawyer tried to argue.

"I don't pay you for philosophizing!"

"Come to think of that, you already **owe** me 965 zloties not counting expenses."

do time [slang] *odsadywać wyrok* in Polish; **maximum-security prison** *więzienie o zastrzonym rygorze* in Polish; **prison stripes** *więzienne pasiaki* in Polish; **sentence (be) final** tu: *wyrok prawomocny* in Polish; **parole** *zwolnić warunkowo* in Polish; **spring** [slang] *zorganizować ucieczkę z więzienia* in Polish; **owe** *być winnym* in Polish

“Whom have you **hired?**” Kramer shouted to Stawiski. “From now on he doesn’t get another penny!”

“Quiet!” shouted the prison guard from behind them.

“This is our last conversation,” the lawyer said, leaving.

“You couldn’t even arrange a separate cell for me!” Kramer cried out furiously. “Do me a favor, Stawiski, and kick him in the you-know-what for me! Leave me alone, you beasts!” he shouted to the guards who were now pulling him away from the bars. “You don’t know who I am!”

This only made the **inmate** Sztyc and his friend, listening to the scene in the box nearby, laugh heartily.

In the prison **sewing work-room**, there were two rows of sewing machines. Prisoners were working very vigorously sewing some kind of covers. Kramer was at his machine, his face full of **dogged** determination. He was sewing very efficiently, which only showed he’d been at it for quite some time.

Suddenly, Sztyc, a **streetwise-looking** prisoner, brought Kramer some more **canvas**. Leaning over him he said, “Banker, join me after exercise.”

And he quickly moved to the back and disappeared.

Intrigued, Kramer asked the nearest prisoner:

“Who’s he?”

“You don’t know Sztyc?”

In the prison yard, during the break, Kramer walked up to Sztyc, who was lying on the grass, **soaking up** the sunshine. Kramer kicked him gently in the leg to attract his attention.

“I’m out in two days. There are four exits from jail, you know: pay out, run out, **work out**, and die out. How much can you pay for springing you in two weeks?” Sztyc asked.

hire nająć in Polish; **inmate prisoner**; **sewing work-room szwalnia** in Polish; **dogged zacięty** in Polish; **streetwise-(looking)** [potocznie] *o wyglądzie cwaniaka* in Polish; **canvas płótno** in Polish; **soak up wchłaniać, absorbować** in Polish; **work out** [slang] *odsiedzieć wyrok* in Polish

“A third of what I’ve got.”

“No, a half of what you have abroad.”

“Are you out of your mind? Where abroad?”

Sztyc got up. “See you. We made a mistake.”

“Wait a minute. It’s a **deal**. But you help me get to Zurich.”

“I get out in two days. I’ll need \$2,000 **up front**.”

“Dollars? Why not 16,000 zloties?”

“Forget it!”

“What guarantee do I have?”

“None.”

“OK. A **grand** outside and another on the border and the rest in Zurich.”

Sztyc turned to leave, “So I was wrong. Bye.”

Kramer took him by the arm, “I’d have to sign a check to get you your money.”

“Your secretary will bring you one.”

“What secretary?”

“Stawiski.”

“You know too much about me,” Kramer was really surprised.

“I’m too intelligent. You’re lucky to have met me.”

Sztyc walked away smiling. An older inmate turned to Kramer, “You, Banker, have got only money **on your mind**.”

An elegant Fiat **pulled over** at the prison gate. In a moment the guard at the gate announced, “Mme Zwirski. The **warden** is expecting her.”

The door opened and an elegant woman was let in.

The warden was just talking on the phone. A bald middle-aged man, he was speaking very politely. By the tone of his voice one could be sure his caller was definitely somebody important:

“Yes, sir, of course. She’s just on her way here.”

A beautiful, **shapely** brunette entered smiling.

a **deal** [slang] *Zgoda!* in Polish; **up front** [potocznie] *akonto* in Polish; **grand** [slang] *tysiąc*; **on (one’s) mind to be thinking about**; **pull over** *zjechać na pobocze i zatrzymać auto* in Polish; **warden** *naczelnik więzienia* in Polish; **shapely** *of a woman’s figure with a pleasing shape*

“Thank you, sir. I wish you speedy recovery,” the warden finished and **hung up**.

“What a charming place,” said the lady, no trace of irony in her voice.

“I love your sense of humor, madam.”

“My name’s Mrs. Zwirski.”

“Your husband was kind enough to call me. Be seated, please.”

There was a funny thing about the office. Over the window, hung a cage with a songbird.

“How can I help you?”

“In the first place, by being discreet.”

The warden was all ears, eyeing his visitor very carefully.

“I’ve come to do business,” the lady went on, “with Gustav Kramer, the swindler who robbed his own bank.” Here, she paused. “Can I be quite **frank**?”

“Absolutely.”

“This must be only between you and me.”

“My job often calls for particular discretion.”

“This is a matter of extreme delicacy . . . My husband and I were silent partners in Kramer’s bank, the fact of which the press has not been informed. He owes us a lot of money. It’s a question . . .” she stopped undecided.

“Of getting the money back,” the warden finished for her and picked up the package the lady had just dropped, embarrassed.

“Could I see him?” the lady wanted to know.

“Of course! The visiting room or . . .”

“I’d prefer . . .”

“Of course!” the warden understood immediately. “Excuse me . . . Malinowski!” he called his orderly. After a moment, a man walked in with a coffee pot and cups on a silver tray.

“Bring that ex-banker!” the warden ordered.

“Here?” the guard wondered.

“You heard me?”

“Yes, sir!” and the man walked out with the tray.

hang up to *put down the (phone) receiver*; **frank** *szczerzy, otwarty* in Polish

The warden sat down. “I think I’ve had the honor of meeting you somewhere . . .”

“One of the Minister’s banquets?” she wondered.

“That’s it!” he cried out happily. “You know,” he said a moment later, “this Kramer had the nerve six months ago to demand a private cell all to himself! He thinks he’s on vacation.”

A guard appeared at the cell door.

“Kramer, out!”

“They’re moving you to a **spa**?” his inmates **mocked** him.

Kramer **adjusted** his stripes and walked out.

In the office, Mme Zwirski was talking to the warden. “My husband thinks very highly of you. He was saying something about your promotion.”

“I’m only trying to serve my country,” the warden **modestly** replied.

Just then the door opened.

“Prisoner Kramer, sir!” said Kramer entering the room with the guard.

The warden **waved** the guard away.

“I’ll leave you alone,” said the warden.

“No, please stay. I’ll feel safer,” said the lady and turned to Kramer.

“You know why I’m here.”

“I’m sorry, but . . .” Kramer looked surprised.

“You see?” she gave the warden a knowing look. “It’s about money, Kramer. The money **put up** by us, my husband and me, for your bank in May 1930.”

“Are you out of your mind?!” Kramer cried.

“Behave, Kramer!” the warden **warned** him.

“I don’t know her, sir. She must be a **crook**.”

spa a luxurious summer resort; mock kpić in Polish; adjust tu: poprawić ubranie na sobie in Polish; modestly skromnie in Polish; wave (someone) away odprawić (kogoś) gestem in Polish; put up tu: zainwestować, wyłożyć (pieniądze) in Polish; warn ostrzegać in Polish; crook tu: oszustka in Polish



*“Hands up, baldhead!”
Kramer pointed the pistol at the warden.*

“A crook?” the lady was irritated.

“I’m being set up again, sir. What money?” he turned to her again.

“You have nerve,” the lady said.

In the meantime, the warden started to read a newspaper so as not to interfere.

“This will explain,” she said, handing Kramer the package she’d dropped before. Surprised, he opened it and found a pistol inside. The lady turned to the warden hiding behind his paper. “I say, Warden!”

“Yes, madam?”

“Hands up, baldhead!” Kramer pointed the pistol at the warden.

The lady came out of the prison building and walked up to the gate. The guard on duty started unlocking the gate, full of

baldhead [potocznie] *łysa pała* in Polish

respect. Yet the moment she was about to step outside, she suddenly stopped and asked the guard,

“Did I come here with or without a dog?”

“With or without a dog?” the guard repeated surprised.

Now the office door opened and Kramer pushed the warden out, the pistol at his head. “Open up the gate!” he roared.

They moved toward the gate, the warden **struggling** to free himself.

“Lock the gate!” he shouted.

But it was useless, as Kramer was deadly determined to get out and wouldn’t let the warden go. When the guard looked at the warden, he **nodded** his head, resigned. So the guard **stood at attention** and the two passed through the prison gate. The Fiat was waiting for them, its engine running. Mme Zwirski opened the car door and Kramer pushed the warden in **at gunpoint**. The Fiat drove off at once, its driver an uniformed policeman. Soon there were other guards with dogs running toward the scene.

“Don’t shoot! It’s the warden!” the gatekeeper shouted. “**For God’s sake, don’t shoot!**”

The Fiat sped on, undisturbed.

Outside the town, the car door opened and a man was pushed out. He was dressed in prison stripes, a cap on. It was the warden. Soon he **collected** himself and got to his feet. Seeing the car driving away down the road, he started to shout, “After them! The WE 10516!”

That was the license number of the car. He ran after the car shouting. A melancholy-looking horse and **cart** passed him by without stopping . . .

struggle *to fight, to resist*; **nod** *skinąć głowę* in Polish; **stand at attention** *stać na baczność* in Polish; **at gunpoint** *trzymając na muszce* in Polish; **For God’s sake** *Na Boga!* in Polish; **collect oneself** *pozbierać się* in Polish; **cart** *wóz* in Polish

CHAPTER TWO

Soon Kramer and Mme Zwirski drove up to a clearing in the woods. Stawiski was waiting for them. Smiling, Sztyc, his arms opened wide, ran up to welcome them. He was dressed in a **smart** suit now.

“It’s an escape in modern style. **Filing** bars is out of date!”

Mme Zwirski took off her hat and **wig** and turned into a gorgeous blonde.

“He **fell** for that phone call,” she told Sztyc, kissing him on the **cheek**.

“He thought he was talking to Zwirski.”

“In Poland nobody **searches** his superiors or ladies,” said Sztyc. There were two cars parked among the trees.

Kramer got out of the car, dressed in the warden’s uniform.

“Meet the Baroness—she’s been like a sister to me.” Sztyc introduced her and then his brother-in-law. He was the big man in a policeman’s uniform who had driven the car.

“Big. Drives well too,” Kramer said. “But why didn’t you try to escape this way for all those years?”

“I’d be a wanted man like you are now.”

All except Kramer started to laugh very much amused.

“Very funny,” Kramer said angrily.

In the meantime, the brother-in-law put on an elegant suit. Sztyc handed them passports and tickets. “You’ll be in Zurich tomorrow. Now the money.”

Stawiski gave him the dollars. “Bye bye!” said Sztyc.

Kramer, dressed in smart clothes now, was looking at his passport, undecided.

“Come on, you have a train to catch,” Sztyc said.

“I’m not going,” Kramer told them.

“What?” Mme Zwirski did not understand.

smart *elegant*; **file** tu: *piłować pilnikiem, pilnik* in Polish; **wig** *peruka* in Polish; **fall for** [potocznie] *dać się nabrać* in Polish; **cheek** *policzek* in Polish; **search** tu: *rewidować* in Polish

“I mean today. I have some unfinished business. An extra week or two makes no difference,” Kramer was determined.

“So long now,” said Mme Zwirski. “We’ve done our part.” And they walked to their car.

“We’ll **lie low**. And then take care of Kwinto.”

“The safecracker?” Sztyc asked.

“The only one I know.”

“In that case it’s your **funeral**.”

“You’ll hide me and get a false ID,” Kramer told him. “Who’s **footing the bill**, after all?”

At the police station, a cop was talking to the superintendent.

“That Kramer has gone crazy. We found him on the road to Zegrze. Once, **loonies** used to aspire to being Napoleon. But he says he is a prison warden.”

“Thank God it’s you, superintendent. Kindly tell these *bulvons* who I am,” said the warden, who was now **behind bars**.

“This is the warden of Sikawa prison,” said the superintendent.

“You **broke out** too, sir?” a cop turned to the warden.

“Enough already!” the warden reprimanded him. “Have you caught Kramer?” he turned to the superintendent, “I remember their license number!”

“So you can let him out again?” the superintendent was angry. “First we catch him and then you let him escape!”

Kwinto was sitting in an armchair on the **porch** reading a newspaper.

Work was in progress on his fruit and vegetable farm outside the city. Some farm workers were loading **crates** with vegetables. There was a picture of Kramer in the paper, and Kwinto was reading about his spectacular escape.

Now Melski, his **overseer**, walked up to him.

lie low [potocznie] *siedzieć cicho* in Polish; **funeral** *pogrzeb* in Polish; **foot the bill** tu: *fundować* in Polish; **loony madman**; **bulvon** [slang] *bulwan* in Polish; **behind bars** *in prison*; **break out to escape from jail**; **porch** *weranda* in Polish; **crate** *a box made of wood*; **overseer** *zarządca* in Polish