

FELBERG ENGLISH READERS

# VA BANQUE

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



SIMPLIFIED EDITION

  
Felberg SJA

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# **VA BANQUE**

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

**LOWER INTERMEDIATE LEVEL**

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## CHAPTER ONE

It was October, 1934. An elegantly dressed young gentleman in **spats** entered a jewelry shop on a side street in Warsaw. His name was Mox and he was wearing glasses. The store looked empty. Soon a salesman appeared and asked him politely: “Yes, sir, may I help you?” with a smile on his face.

“I’d like a **necklace**.”

Mox leaned over a **showcase**. He did not seem to see the jewelry inside clearly. “This one,” he pointed to a **bracelet**.

“I beg your pardon, sir, that’s a bracelet, not a necklace.”

“So a bracelet it will be, then.”

“Certainly,” said the salesman and went to get the key to the showcase.

Now Mox had second thoughts.

“No, not a bracelet, definitely. Can you show me a fine necklace, please?”

The salesman showed him some necklaces.

“Are you sure these are necklaces?” Mox asked when he looked at the ones the salesman brought.

“**Positive**, sir. I’ve been in the business for twenty-four years now.”

“May I take a look at this ring, please? It’s a ring, right?”

“Absolutely.”

Mox examined the ring for quite a while. He liked what he saw.

“Since everything is so beautiful, I’ll take all of it.”

“That will be 9,300 zloties altogether,” said the salesman a moment later.

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**spats** *getry*; **necklace** *naszyjnik*; **showcase** *szklana gablotka*; **bracelet** *bransoletka*; **positive** *pewien w stu procentach*

“Why don’t you throw something in to make it a full 10,000? Something special, you know.”

“At your service, sir,” the salesman replied. “How about this?” he showed Mox a gold **brooch**.

“What’s that?”

“A brooch, sir.”

“Sure.”

Now he took a metal object out of his pocket.

“Do you know what this is?”

“Just a second, please.” And after a moment, “No idea, sir,” again smiling politely.

“A **silencer**,” Mox said with a smile too. “Will you **wrap** it all up or should I put this on the gun?”

“Is this a **hold-up**?” asked the salesman, his smile gone.

Another man materialized out of nowhere and said, “I’m afraid so.”

“I wouldn’t press the alarm if I were you. It may not be good for you. Just smile and wrap all this up,” Mox gently advised.

His hands shaking, the salesman kept smiling the whole time, very much afraid. Note, for that was the other man’s name, ordered him:

“Turn round and look for something in the bottom drawer.”

“Count to one hundred before you **straighten up**, not earlier!” Mox said as he ran outside, following Note . . .

A moment later, an elderly gentleman entered the shop. Seeing nobody there, he came up to the counter and asked:

“Anybody there?”

“Thirty-two . . .” said the salesman in tears as he stood up.

A troupe of acrobats was giving a show in the **courtyard** of a **tenement**. They were dressed in the funny costumes of circus people. Some of them were doing acrobatics, others were helping them, and a girl was blowing fire from her mouth. A man in a hat was watching all this. When the spectators were completely

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**brooch** *brosza*; **silencer** *tlumik*; **wrap up** *zapakować*; **hold-up** *napad, rabunek*; **straighten up** *wyprostować się*; **courtyard** *podwórko*; **tenement** *kamienica czynszowa*



*“I wouldn’t press the alarm if I were you. It may not be good for you. Just smile and wrap all this up,” Mox gently advised.*

absorbed in the show, he left unnoticed and hurried upstairs. Pennies were falling from the open windows, crowded with onlookers. Another man was watching the acrobatics from his window. Suddenly, the one in the hat appeared behind him. The first man turned around . . .

While an acrobat was bending over backward, she saw the figure of a man falling from the sky. The man hit the cobblestones. What followed was absolute panic. After a moment someone put a pillow under the man’s head. He was definitely dead. One panicked spectator cried out, “It’s Rychliński!”

A man in spats watching the scene left in a hurry . . . But once he was in the street, he slowed down.

At Kramer’s Commercial Bank, the president’s secretary hung up the phone and went to tell the news to his boss.

pennies tu: *grosiki, drobne monety*; cobblestones *bruk*; president tu: *prezes*; hang up *odwiesić słuchawkę*

“He’s coming out today.”

“He had to sooner or later,” replied Kramer. In a moment he got up and went across the office to another phone. Using his code name he said, “Kramer’s Home Bank here. Turn off the alarm system, please.”

Soon, the alarm system in the bank’s **strongroom** was off.

Kwinto—a middle-aged prisoner, his hair cut short—was being **released**. He followed a guard to a room, where he got his things back, including a **trumpet mouthpiece**. He put on his street clothes in silence. Next he left through the main gate.

“Be seeing you,” he heard as the doorman closed the gate behind him.

It had just rained and the street was still wet. There was a dark Fiat parked at a distance as if waiting for him. A droshky was heading in his direction. When it drew near, Kwinto suddenly jumped in. Surprised, the cabbie asked: “You always get in like this?”

But Kwinto did not **bother** to answer. So the droshky rode on. The Fiat started up and followed them.

Kwinto got out in front of a tenement and went upstairs to his apartment. He tried to open the door with his key. The door did not open, however, as the lock must have been changed. So he rang the doorbell. A moment later, a woman, thirtysomething, opened and stood at the door, surprised.

“My God, Henry!” And after a long while: “Come on in.”

As he came in, she followed, **excited**:

“I’m so glad you’re out at last. Just in time for lunch . . . I couldn’t visit the last time because I was ill. And then I had to go away to Auntie’s because Uncle had died.”

Kwinto **embraced** her in silence. But he soon let her go when he noticed another man at the table put down his spoon. Kwinto came into the room, looking **sternly** at both of them. Embarrassed, the woman said, “Oh, I should introduce you. Henry, this is . . .”

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**strongroom** *skarbiec*; **release** *wypuścić z więzienia*; **trumpet** *trąbka*; **mouthpiece** *ustnik*; **bother** *trudzić się*, tu: *zawracać sobie głowę*; **excite** *podniecić*; **embrace** *objąć*; **sternly** *surowo*

“. . . Karmelicki. Pleased to meet you,” said the man getting up, his hand **outstretched**. Kwinto ignored the hand.

“I’ll go get you a plate,” said the woman, embarrassed, and was off for the kitchen.

Rather than sit Kwinto **bent down** and started examining the legs of the chairs around the table. Karmelicki sat down, surprised. Kwinto pulled his chair from under him, still silent. He put it on the table upside down. To Karmelicki’s surprise, he **unscrewed** one of its legs, which was **hollow**. Out of it, he pulled a roll of **bills**. Next he handed Karmelicki the chair leg and slowly pocketed the money.

“Please sit down. Don’t go! Have some lunch at least!” said the woman, returning with an empty plate. But he dropped his house keys into the plate, and left.

Karmelicki started, mechanically, to unscrew another leg of the chair.

“What’re you doing with that chair? Are you crazy? Stop it!” the woman started shouting angrily.

Outside the house, Kwinto noticed the Fiat driving toward him. When he turned, suddenly, Mox stood in his way.

“Are you looking for a droshky? We’re going your way. You can be sure of that,” said Mox, his hand in his pocket holding a gun.

Kwinto noticed it and stopped. There was little he could do now, so he got in the Fiat.

Mox followed him and the car drove off at once.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

A **smartly** dressed man entered the lobby of Kramer’s bank. He looked at the counter with **tellers** and headed for the office at once. One of them tried to stop him, but the man wouldn’t listen.

**outstretch** *wyciągnąć (rękę)*; **bend down** *tu: schylić się*; **unscrew** *odkręcić*; **hollow** *pusty w środku, wydrążony*; **bill** *banknot*; **smartly** *elegancko*; **teller** *kasjer w banku*

“Excuse me, sir! Sir!”

“I must see the president. Let me through!” the man violently **broke away** and walked quickly toward the president’s office.

“The president is busy,” the teller explained.

“I demand to see him!” the man replied and stormed into the office.

“Mr. President, your tellers don’t want to give me my money!”

“What is it, sir? Take it easy,” Kramer said quietly.

“My name is Jan Rożek. I deposited all my savings in your bank. And now these **scum**, pardon me, sir, your tellers, that is, don’t want to give me them. Isn’t that reason enough to get angry?”

“Stop shouting, please, and have some respect for my men!” Kramer got angry too. “Mr. Meyer,” he turned to the teller, who’d tried to stop Rożek from entering the office.

“This Mr. Rożek here wants to **make a withdrawal** from a Mr. Kowalski’s **account**. So we can’t give him the money.”

“I’m awfully sorry, sir, but only Mr. Kowalski can make a withdrawal from his account.”

“Why don’t you say something?” Rożek turned to the secretary, who was with Kramer. “It was you who advised me to use a different name. ‘There are so many Kowalskis,’ you said, ‘that nobody will find out who is who.’ And I wouldn’t have to pay **tax**. That’s exactly what you said. And you called it a ‘gentleman’s agreement.’”

“Did you really recommend a gentleman’s agreement to Mr. Rożek?” Kramer sternly asked his secretary.

“Mr. President, I don’t ever do a thing without consulting you, sir,” the secretary answered . . . Kramer was silent for a while before he turned to Rożek again: “It’s not nice of you to try to **cheat the IRS**.”

“To treat an honest Pole like me in this way?” cried Rożek. “All because I came to you rather than support foreign capital?! Robbers! Scum! You’ll pay for this!” Rożek took out a pistol and

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**break away** *wyrwać się*; **scum** [potocznie] *swolocz*; **make a withdrawal** *wypłacić z konta*; **account** *konto*; **tax** *podatek*; **cheat the IRS** *oszukać urząd podatkowy*

started shooting. Kramer was down on the floor immediately, trying to get under his desk. His secretary and the teller, however, quickly **overpowered** Rożek.

Luckily, he had missed.

“You won’t get away with it! There’s still law and order in this country!”

“Really, Mr. Rożek,” Kramer said standing up now, “**pulling a gun on me** is going too far. But if you stop shouting this nonsense, I won’t call the police,” he finished quietly as if afraid someone might hear. “Out with him,” he told the men. “All right?” he asked Rożek.

Poor Rożek put on his hat and walked out in silence.

“But my money!” he cried in despair in the lobby.

“Get out!” he heard in reply and was kicked out of the bank.

“Everything’s in order!” said the secretary to the staff. “Go back to your work.” And he returned to his boss.

“Gentleman’s agreement . . .” Kramer repeated. “Was it much?”

“Six thousand,” was the answer.

The Fiat left Warsaw and finally stopped in the woods by a river. Mox and Note brought out champagne and glasses. As the cork shot, Mox raised a toast, “To your release!”

“Nothing special about it. My time was up.”

“We don’t celebrate every release from prison,” Mox added.

“Only yours. Henry Kwinto, Poland’s number one **safecracker**.”

“Do I look like one?” Kwinto wondered. “I’m a musician.”

“Put in prison for bigamy, I suppose,” Note laughed.

“Yes,” Kwinto answered.

Now Mox started counting:

“The National Bank in Lvov in 1924, The Credit Bank in Lodz in 1925, The Country Bank in Bydgoszcz in 1927, The Agricultural Bank in Warsaw in 1928. And those are only your major concerts.”

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**overpower** *obezwładnić*; **get away with it** [potocznie] *ujść na sucho, uniknąć kary*; **pull a gun on (someone)** *sterroryzować bronią*; **staff** *personel*; **raise** *wznieść*; **safecracker** *kasiarz*

“Caught only once in 1928, but did six years, as those other concerts couldn’t be **proved**,” Note added.

“What do you want?” Kwinto asked after a moment.

“Your cooperation. We have some fine ideas.”

“To your health,” Kwinto said.

“To yours,” echoed Mox. But Kwinto did not drink.

“You won’t drink with us?” Mox wondered. “Note, show him.” But he showed Kwinto a silencer himself, his **patience** almost finished.

“You’ve taken me for someone else,” Kwinto replied.

“You know what this is?”

“A silencer,” Kwinto answered.

“A **deal** or should he put that on the gun?” Note was losing his patience.

“Do you know what this is?” Kwinto took out a metal object. They did not know.

“A mouthpiece,” Kwinto told them.

“What?”

“A trumpet mouthpiece. I’m a musician.”

“Okay,” said Note, “if you ever **feel like making** music with us, come to the garage on Okopowa Street.”

“You **did** those safes by ear alone, right?”

“What safes?”

“That’s enough! Mox!” Note got up angrily and took Mox aside. Kwinto stayed in the back seat.

“That’s the last time I listen to you! It’s not him.”

“We have to do something with him,” Mox said.

“You mean take him back?”

“Of course.”

Which they did by driving him back to town.

“A room, please,” Kwinto asked the receptionist in a hotel.

“I’m sorry, sir . . .” the receptionist started, but noticing a bill in Kwinto’s hand, quickly gave him a key. “Here you are, sir,” he said.

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**prove** *udowodnić*; **patience** *cierpliwość*; **A deal?** [potocznie] *Zgoda?*; **feel like verb + -ing** *mieć ochotę na* (to co wyraża czasownik); **do (a) safe by ear alone** [potocznie] *rozpruwać kasę „na słuch”*