

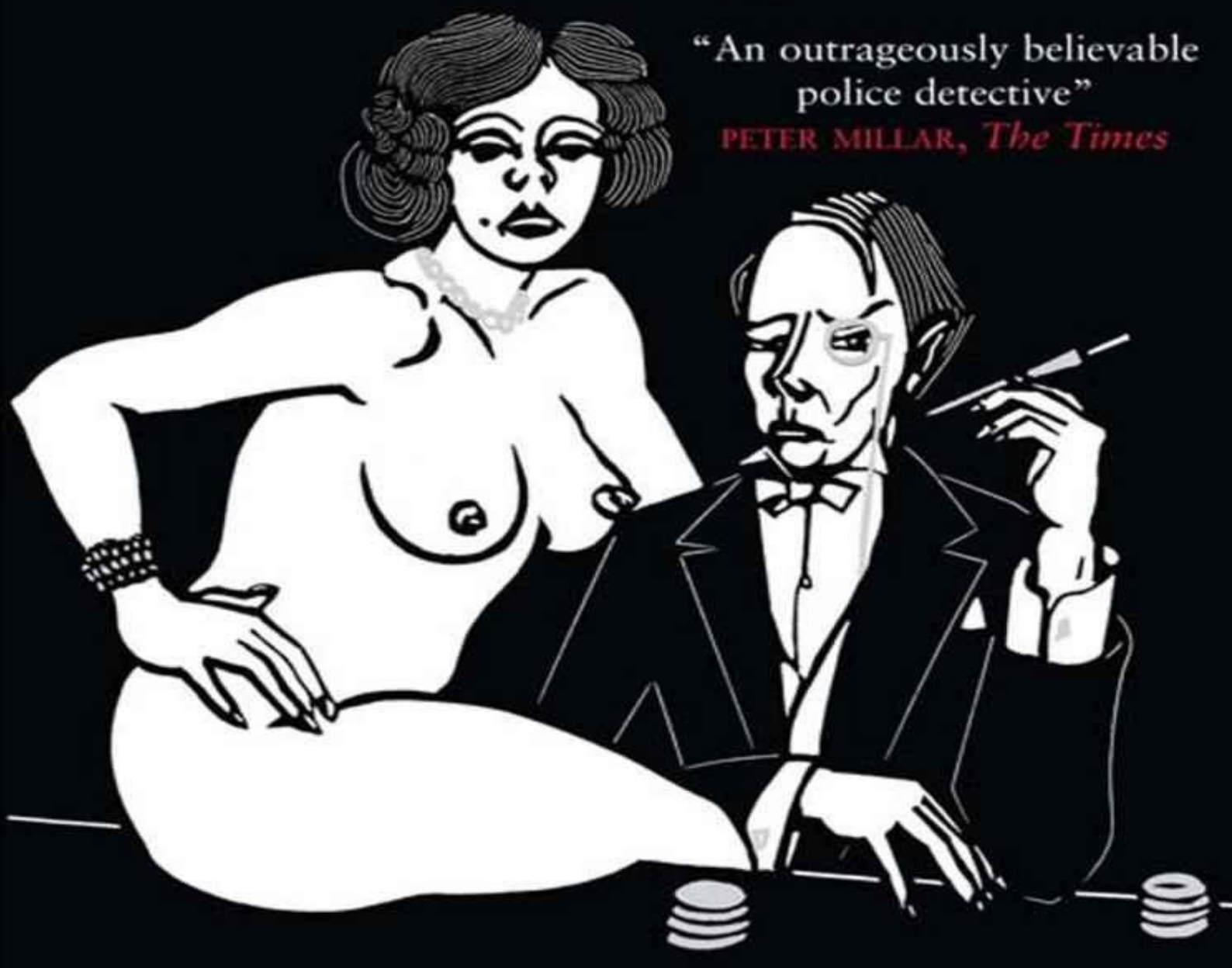
An Eberhard Mock Investigation

THE END OF THE WORLD IN BRESLAU

MAREK KRAJEWSKI

"An outrageously believable
police detective"

PETER MILLAR, *The Times*



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Translated from the Polish by Danusia Stok



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THE END OF THE WORLD IN BRESLAU

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TEN O'CLOCK IN THE EVENING

The black cab-driver, James Mynors, increased the speed of his wipers. Two arms greedily gathered large flakes of snow from the windscreen. The wipers worked as a singular metronome which accentuated the rhythm of Chuck Berry's rock'n'roll hit, "Maybellene", flowing from the radio. Mynors' hands danced on the steering wheel, nonchalantly pushed and pulled the gear stick, and slapped his knees and thighs. The song made not the slightest impression on the glum passenger who with one cheek pressed against the cold window, moved the newspaper he was holding this way and that so as to catch the light from passing street lamps and shop windows. When Mynors turned the volume up to maximum, the passenger shifted to the centre of the back seat. The eyes of the two men met in the rear-view mirror.

"Turn it down and stop jumping about at the wheel," the passenger said with a strong German accent. His gloomy, bloated face, shaded beneath the rim of his old-fashioned hat, took on a malicious expression. "We're not in Africa, on some banana plantation."

"Motherfucking racist." Mynors' words were drowned out by the happy chorus; he turned the volume down and drove into a side street of pseudo-Victorian, one-storeyed houses. There was not much light here. The passenger carefully folded his paper and slipped it into the inside pocket of his coat.

"There, on the corner," he muttered, trying to see through the dirty curtain of snow and rain. The cab drew up at the place indicated. The passenger grunted his disapproval, opened the door and sank his shoes into the muddy slush. He unfurled his umbrella and, panting heavily, approached the driver's window.

"Please wait for me."

Mynors rubbed his index finger against his thumb in response and lowered the window a little. The passenger pulled a banknote from his wallet and slipped it into the driver's hand. A merry voice, distorted by a peculiar accent came from behind the window:

"You can walk back, you old Hitlerite."

With a contemptuous and controlled skid of its rear wheels, the cab waltzed on the slippery road and sped away. The driver lowered his window – Chuck Berry played at full volume in the quiet street.

The man slowly climbed the steps to the small porch, stamped his snow-covered shoes and pressed the bell. The door opened almost immediately. In the doorway stood a young priest wearing thick tortoise-shell glasses and sporting a Chuck Berry hairstyle.

"Mr Herbert Anwaldt?" asked the priest.

"That's me. Good evening," panted Anwaldt in annoyance as he watched the cab turn the corner. "How am I supposed to get home now?"

"Father Tony Cupaiuolo from St Stanislaus' Parish," Chuck Berry introduced himself. "I was the one who telephoned you. Please come in."

The familiar click of the lock, the familiar parlour filled with books and the lamp with its green lampshade. Missing were only the familiar smell of cigars and the familiar host. The troubled Father Cupaiuolo hung Anwaldt's sodden coat and hat by the door and clumsily shook off the sticky spittle of snow from his umbrella. Instead of the smell of Cuban cigars, Anwaldt's nostrils drew in the sharp odour of medication, the pitiful stench of a bedpan, the penetrating smell of death.

"Your friend is dying," the priest declared.

Anwaldt inhaled a deep gulp of nicotine. From a bedroom on the first floor emerged a young nurse

With apparent revulsion, she carried the enamel containers that the sick man had filled a moment earlier. She glanced at Anwaldt. He sensed immediately that she felt the same towards him as to the bedpan she held out in front of her.

“Do not smoke in here, please.” Heartfelt indignation almost burst the buttons of the housecoat that tightly hugged her breasts. Anwaldt, counting on just such an effect, inhaled even deeper.

“Mr Anwaldt, your friend is dying of lung cancer,” Father Cupaiuolo whispered reproachfully. “Smoking tobacco in his house is ill-advised.”

The nurse went into the bathroom, so Anwaldt decided to abandon his smoking and threw the cigarette into the fireplace. He looked at the priest expectantly.

“My dear sir, your friend’s nurse telephoned me today asking for the last rites for the sick man,” Father Cupaiuolo drew in his breath and gathered his confidence. “As I’m sure you know, the sacrament of confession is one of them. When I sat down beside him, ready to hear his sins and bless him on his last journey, Mr Mock told me he had one terrible sin on his conscience which he would not confess until you were here. He will confess only after he has spoken to you. You come practically every morning – I could have waited with confession until tomorrow, but he insists I hear it today. *Salus aegroti suprema lex*,[†] and for a priest too. Go to him now. He will explain everything.” Father Cupaiuolo looked at his watch. “Please don’t worry about the cab. I fear you will not be going home today.”

Anwaldt made his way upstairs but, halfway up, he turned back. Father Cupaiuolo watched in surprise as Anwaldt approached the hat-stand and pulled a newspaper from his coat pocket. Tilting his head, the priest read the German title. “What can *Süddeutsche* mean?” He pondered for a moment and let his memory flick through the small exercise book he had once filled with German vocabulary. “*Deutsche* means German, but *süd*? What does that mean?”

The priest put aside these musings on the German language and, as Anwaldt reached the top of the stairs, returned to the problems of his Puerto Rican parishioners. The sound of retching and gurgling from sanitary appliances came from the bathroom. Anwaldt pushed open the bedroom door a crack. A streak of light severed the bed in two. Mock’s head was resting on the summit of a mountain of white pillows. Next to the bed stood a drip and a bedside table cluttered with medicines. Slender little bottles with parchment-like hoods stood alongside squat jars full of pills. Mock lifted a hand perforated by needles and aimed an ironic smile at Anwaldt.

“See what a malicious old man I am. As if it wasn’t enough that you were here this morning, I call for you in the evening too.” The hiss of Mock’s breath fell a tone deeper. “But I’m sure you’ll forgive me when I say I wanted to show off my new nurse. She alternates with the one you see here every morning. What do you think of her? She finished nursing school a week ago. Her name is Eva.”

“Worthy of the name.” Anwaldt made himself comfortable in the armchair. “She would tempt many a man with her apples of paradise.”

Mock’s laughter whistled for a long time. The flaccid skin across his cheekbones tautened. Beams of car headlights glided across the bedroom walls and briefly drew from the semi-darkness a framed map of a city encircled by a broad, mangled ribbon of river.

“What brought the biblical comparison to mind?” Mock looked intently at Anwaldt. “The priest, no doubt.”

Silence descended. Sister Eva choked and spluttered in the bathroom.

Anwaldt hesitated, nervously twisting his fingers, then spread out the newspaper.

“Listen, I wanted to read something to you ...” Anwaldt began to search for his glasses and instead found his cigarette-case. Remembering it was forbidden to smoke, he put it away again.

“Don’t read me anything, and go ahead and smoke. Smoke here, Herbert, go ahead and fucking smoke, one after another, and hear my confession,” Mock caught his breath. “I told you about my first

wife, Sophie, remember? This is going to be about her ...”

“Exactly ... I wanted ...” Anwaldt said, and stopped. Mock was whispering something to himself and did not hear him. Anwaldt strained his ears.

“Thirty years ago, it was a Sunday too, and snow stuck to the windows just like it does today.”

‡ The well-being of the sick is the first priority.

BRESLAU, SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 27TH, 1927

TWO O'CLOCK IN THE AFTERNOON

Snow, swept along by gusts of wind, stuck to the windowpanes. Mock stood at the window looking out at Nicolaistrasse, covered in tyre tracks that criss-crossed the snow and mud. The clock on the Town Hall struck two. Mock lit his first cigarette of the day. His hangover returned with another wave of nausea. Images of the previous night teemed before his eyes: the theatre-variété and the three inebriated policemen – Commissioner Ebners, with his bowler slipping back to the crown of his head; Counsellor Domagalla smoking his twentieth Sultan cigar; and he himself, Counsellor Mock, pulling at the crimson velvet curtain which separated their discreet alcove from the rest of the room; the owner of Hotel Restaurant Residenz with a servile smile bringing them pot-bellied tankards on the house; the cabby trying to calm Mock as he forced an open bottle of schnapps into his hand; his twenty-five-year-old wife, Sophie, waiting for him in the bedroom, throwing back her hair, spreading her legs and looking stern as he rolls in, dead drunk. Mock calmly extinguished his cigarette in the horseshoe-shaped ashtray. He glanced fleetingly at the waiter coming into the parlour.

Heinz Rast, a waiter from Schweidnitzer Keller, was carrying plates and dishes. Placing them on the table, he cast an eye over the gathering. Franz Mock he already knew; overawed, he had approached Rast's boss, Max Kluge, a few days earlier to order a grand dinner in honour of his brother. With Rast himself he had not been so humble, and had argued over every pfennig as they sorted out the menu. Today the waiter had also met his wife, Irmgard Mock, a dispirited woman with gentle eyes who took the enormous thermoses of food from him and stood them on the coal cooker.

"The corned brawn with caraway is excellent. Speciality of the house, cold, in aspic," the waiter commended, unable to conceal his admiration for the shapely blonde with dreamy, slightly absent eyes who casually passed a crystal cigarette-holder to the college boy sitting next to her. The boy ducked out the smoking cigarette end from the holder and turned to the stocky, dark-haired man of over forty standing at the window:

"Uncle Eberhard, please come to the table. The hors d'oeuvres are served."

The dark-haired man kissed the dreamy-eyed young woman on the hand and sat down next to her. Franz and Irmgard sat opposite them. The college boy was planted awkwardly at the head of the table. Rast, hastened by a gesture from Franz, hurried into the kitchen and brought in five stout bottles of beer with E. HAASE engraved on their porcelain caps. He opened three and poured beer into the narrow tankards. Then he settled down in the kitchen and, through the closed door, listened to the conversation at the table.

"You shouldn't have spent so much on this grand dinner. Irmgard is such a good cook – her dishes could be the boast of Schweidnitzer Keller," – a calm bass voice, the sucking in of beer froth and a sigh of relief.

"We couldn't let a lady like Sophie eat our Sunday black pudding and sauerkraut. Here we have something that is eaten in higher ... society," – a nervous baritone, stammering at every word. "Thank you for finally agreeing to come and visit us. It is an honour for a simple foreman."

"I assure you, Franz, I've seen ladies lick the grease off bowls," – a melodious, quiet and almost childish voice. "Although I come from an aristocratic family, I rid myself of class prejudice when I was at the Conservatory ..." – a note of impatience. "Besides, I don't understand this 'finally'. As far as I know, nobody's ever invited me here before."

"Erwin, you're taking your final school exams this year," – the bass voice, the crackle of a match and smoke exhaled through nostrils. "What are your plans for the future?"

Rast stirred the bouillon and filled the soup dishes. On a large platter he arranged some asparagus and poured over it some melted butter. He opened the door, carried all this into the room and announced merrily:

“And here is something hot: bouillon with egg yolk and asparagus.”

Eberhard put out his cigarette. His nephew studied the Trebnitzer embroidery of the tablecloth and said slowly and emphatically:

“I want to study German at university.”

“Ah, interesting,” Eberhard poured spoonfuls of the bouillon into his mouth with evident satisfaction. “I remember you wanted to be a policeman not long ago.”

“That was before I discovered Heine’s poetry.”

As Rast reached for the plate of aspic to take it away, Franz Mock grabbed the waiter by the wrist and sliced off a sizeable piece of brawn with his fork.

“I’ve paid for it so I’ll eat it,” Franz Mock’s face grew pale and he made Rast think of a drunkard who, in one movement, had turned a table upside down in his restaurant. “I know a simple foreman on the railways cannot be a role model for his son ... But I’ve told you so many times – be a railway engineer; you’ll earn lots of money, go to Zoppot every year ... But you won’t listen to me and insist on studying some Jew ... ”

“Papa, I’m a poet,” Erwin cracked his knuckles nervously. “I want to do the thing that I love ...”

Irmgard signalled to Rast to leave the room. Rast grabbed the plate with what remained of the aspic but Franz Mock held his hand back once again.

“I love, I love ... ” Bits of meat and spittle landed on the Trebnitzer tablecloth. “Are you some sort of queer, or what? Poets are all queers, or dirty Jews. And what sort of poems do you write? They’re all about stars and machines. Why don’t you write a love poem to a woman? I know, I know ... The new German tutor of yours ... He’s the one who’s trying to turn you into a queer ...”

“Franz, stop, or you’ll remember this for a very long time.” Irmgard’s eyes threw daggers first at her husband, then at the waiter. The latter tore the dish with the remainder of brawn from Franz Mock’s hand and hurried into the kitchen. He melted some butter in a huge frying pan and arranged slices of potato on top of it. He stood a pot of mutton in thick sauce on another hob. Silence descended in the dining-room. It was broken by the voice of a spoilt child:

“Ebi, you were interested in Latin literature yourself once. You wanted to be a professor. Does that make you a homosexual?”

Rast carried in a tray with the next course.

“Ladies and gentlemen, mutton in herb sauce, roast potatoes, celery salad and sour cherry compote.” Rast efficiently gathered up the plates, hastened by Irmgard’s angry eyes. He repaired to the kitchen and glued his ear to the door: nothing but the penetrating clatter of knives and forks.

“My dear,” – a calm voice – “Surely you would know that better than anyone.”

“Uncle Ebi, what is wrong with studying literature?” – the uneasy tenor rising occasionally to falsetto – “Explain to my father that there’s nothing wrong with it. You of all people know how many sublime moments poetry can give us, what ecstasies it imparts ... You studied Horace yourself and you wrote an article about him in Latin ... Our Latin scholar, Rector Piechotta, values those comments of yours a great deal ...”

“I think,” – the hiss of gas from a bottle being opened accompanied the hoarse voice, strained by the dozens of cigarettes smoked the previous day – “that education and the career one pursues do not always go hand in hand, as you can see in my case ...”

“Stop, Ebi, and speak like a normal human being,” – a suppressed burp. “You left behind all that nonsense and chose to work as a policeman. Get to the point: what is best for the boy – poet or railway engineer?”

“Go on, tell us,” the child indulged herself. “We’re all waiting for a solution to this interesting dilemma.”

“Engineer.” A mouthful was gulped down loudly.

Rast sprang away as Erwin all but demolished the door as he fled the room. The boy thrust a canteen onto his head, wrenched on his somewhat too tight coat and ran into the street.

“Here is the dessert, ladies and gentlemen: Silesian poppy cake.” Rast served cake and coffee. As he removed the untouched chops from in front of Sophie’s bust, he noticed that her hand holding the cigarette-case was shaking. He looked at her and understood that this would not be the end to this unpleasant dinner.

“It is interesting, I have known my husband for two years and today is the first time I do not recognize him.” A faint flush appeared on Sophie’s cheeks. “Where is that plebeian strength of your husband Eberhard, which makes criminals flee from you and once enthralled me so? Today it ran out when you should have defended that sensitive boy. When we’re at home you sneer at technocrats, at people whose horizons are limited to financial gain, but when we’re here you put a railwayman above a poet. It is a pity your refined brother cannot see you reading Horace, or witness how moved you are by *The Sorrows of Young Werther*. Criminal Counsellor Mock falls asleep in his armchair, in the safe halo of his lamp, and onto his round belly, bloated with beer and pork knuckle, slips a school edition of Horace’s *Odes*; a school edition with a little dictionary because this eminent Latin stylist can no longer remember his vocabulary.”

“Shut your trap,” Eberhard Mock said quietly.

“You pig!” Sophie suddenly got up from the table.

Mock watched with melancholy as his wife ran from the room, then listened to the clatter of her shoes on the stairs. He lit a cigarette and smiled at Franz.

“What is the name of Erwin’s teacher? We’ll check, maybe he really is a queer?”

BRESLAU, THAT SAME NOVEMBER 27TH, 1927

MIDNIGHT

Mock staggered out of the Savoy restaurant on Tauentzienplatz. The bellboy ran out after him and handed him his hat, which Mock did not put on, instead allowing the wet flakes of snow to settle on his sweat-dampened hair. Beneath the windows of Sanger’s restaurant swayed a lone drunkard, interrupting his involuntary movements only to whistle for passing cabs. The bellboy’s whistles were evidently more persuasive because in a moment an old and patched droschka stopped beside Mock. The drunkard lurched towards it but Mock was closer. He threw a fifty pfennig piece to the boy and collapsed into the seat, almost squashing a delicate human being.

“Forgive me, sir, but you got in so quickly I didn’t have time to inform you that I already have a passenger. I’m cabby Bombosch, and this is my daughter, Rosemarie. This is my last run and we’re on our way home.” The cabby jovially twisted his bristling whiskers. “She is so tiny that the gentleman will not find himself too cramped. She is still so young ...”

Mock observed the triangular face of his travelling companion. Enormous nave eyes, a toque with a veil, and a coat. The girl might have been eighteen; she had slender hands, blue from the cold, and red-soled shoes with holes in them. All this Mock took in by the light of the street lamps located around the Museum of Silesian Antiquities.

Rosemarie watched the vast edifice of the museum slip past on the right-hand side of the street. Mock counted out loud the bars and restaurants on Sonnenplatz, Grabschenerstrasse and Rehdigerstrasse, and announced the results of his findings to Rosemarie with genuine pleasure.

The carriage stopped outside a splendid tenement on Rehdigerplatz, where Mock and his wife Sophie occupied a five-room apartment on the second floor. Mock scrambled out of the droschka and threw the driver the first crumpled banknote he pulled from his coat pocket.

“Use the change to buy your daughter some shoes and gloves,” he hiccupped loudly and, without hearing the cabby’s joyous thanks, stretched his shoulders wide, lowered his head and made as if to charge at the tenement door.

Fortunately for Mock’s head, the caretaker of the tenement was not asleep and managed to open the door in time. Mock hugged him effusively and, in no particular hurry, began his arduous expedition up the stairs, tumbling against the Scylla of the banister and the Charybdis of the wall, threatened by Cerberus who, wailing and barking, was thrashing about in the vestibule of Hades behind some closed door. Mock, detained neither by the siren song of the servant who tried to take his coat and hat, nor by the wild delight of his old dog, Argos, reached the Ithaca of his bedroom where the faithful Penelope was waiting for him in her muslin dressing gown and high-heeled slippers.

Mock smiled at the pensive Sophie whose head was leaning against the backrest of the chaise longue adjacent to their turned-down bed. Sophie stretched herself a little and the muslin of her dressing gown clung to her generous breasts. Mock took this to mean only one thing and feverishly began to undress. As he struggled with the cord of his long johns, Sophie sighed:

“Where were you?”

“In a tavern.”

“With whom?”

“I met two friends, the same as yesterday – Ebners and Domagalla.”

Sophie stood up and slipped beneath the eiderdown. Mock, somewhat surprised, did the same and snuggled close to his wife’s back. He squeezed his hand under her arm with difficulty and greedily spread his fingers over one soft breast.

“I know you want to apologize to me. I know that perfectly well. Carry on being proud and hard and don’t say a word. I forgive your behaviour at Franz’s. I forgive your coming back late. You wanted to drink, you were annoyed,” she said in a monotonous voice, staring into the mirror of the dressing table opposite the bed. “You say you were with friends. I know you’re not lying. You certainly haven’t been with a woman.” She propped herself up on one elbow and looked into the eyes of her reflection. “You wouldn’t manage it with a woman in the state you’re in. You’ve had no fire in you lately. You’re simply feeble in bed.”

“I can do it right now. I can hold you down. You’ll be begging me to stop,” Mock’s cheeks were burning; with one hand he tore at the muslin of the dressing gown, with the other, at the cotton of his long johns. “Today is the day our child will finally be conceived.”

Sophie turned to her husband and, touching his lips with hers, spoke with the voice of a sleeping child:

“I waited for you yesterday – you were with friends. I waited for you today – again you were with friends, and now you want to fuck?”

Mock adored it when she was vulgar. He ripped his long johns in his excitement. Sophie leaned against the wall. From beneath her nightdress appeared two narrow pink feet. Mock began to stroke and kiss them. Sophie slipped her fingers into her husband’s thick hair and pulled his head back.

“You want to fuck?” she repeated the question.

Mock closed his eyes and nodded. Sophie drew her legs towards her and planted both feet on her husband’s ribcage. She straightened them abruptly and pushed him off the bed.

“Fuck with your friends,” he heard his wife whisper as he fell onto the rough carpet.

BRESLAU, MONDAY, NOVEMBER 28TH, 1927

TWO O'CLOCK IN THE MORNING

Mock woke up at the desk in his study. His right hand was covered with clots of blood. In the lamplight stood a bottle of Rhein Spätburgunder and a half-filled glass. He scrutinized his hand. Stuck to the dry, brownish clumps of blood were a few fair hairs. Mock went to the kitchen, holding up his torn long johns. He washed his hands meticulously in the cast-iron washbasin. Then he poured some water into an enamel mug and drank, listening to the sounds coming from the courtyard: a metallic creaking of springs. He looked out of the window. Cabby Bombosch had put a nose-bag over his horse's head and was stroking its nape. The carriage shook and bounced on its suspension. Rosemarie was earning the money for a new coat.

BRESLAU, THAT SAME NOVEMBER 28TH, 1927

SIX O’CLOCK IN THE MORNING

Mock opened his eyes and listened for a while to the persistent calls of milkmen. The coldness of the morning penetrated his body, squeezed as it was into an armchair. He opened his mouth with difficulty and ran his parched tongue over the sandpaper of his palate. Since no position in the armchair was less than painful, Mock decided to stand up. He wrapped himself in his dressing gown and padded down the sandstone floor of the hall in his bare feet. Argos the dog expressed his usual morning delirium, not shared to any degree by his master. In the bathroom, Mock dipped his toothbrush into a box of Phönix powder and began his oral ablutions. The result was such that to the acidic-alcoholic effluvia was added an acrid aftertaste of cement. Mock furiously spat the grey paste into the basin and soaped his huge badger brush with Peri shaving cream. The razor was an object he should have used that day only under close supervision. A sharp prick, and he realized he had cut himself. The small trickle of blood was very light, much lighter than the blood which had poured from Sophie’s nose the previous night. Mock studied his reflection.

“How is it that I can look you boldly in the eye?” He wiped his face dry and patted it with *Welz* eau-de-cologne. “Because nothing happened yesterday. Besides, I remember nothing.”

Their servant, Marta Goczoll, was busy in the kitchen while her husband, the butler Adalbert, stood straight as an arrow, holding more than a dozen ties in one hand and a hanger with a suit and white shirt in the other. Mock dressed hurriedly and tied a deep-red tie around his neck. Marta tucked its knot under the wings of his collar. Mock just managed to squeeze his swollen feet into his shoes freshly polished by Adalbert – threw his pale, cashmere coat over his shoulders, donned his hat and left the apartment. On the landing, a large Pomeranian began to fawn on him. Mock stroked the dog. Its owner, the lawyer Patschkowsky, looked with contempt at his neighbour from whom, as every day, emanated a smell of alcohol and eau-de-cologne.

“There was a terrible noise coming from your apartment last night. My wife couldn’t get to sleep until morning,” Patschkowsky drawled.

“I was training the dog,” Mock mumbled.

“Your wife, more likely,” Patschkowsky’s pince-nez glinted in the yellow light of the hallway lamp. “You think you’re allowed to do anything, don’t you? That dog of yours wailed with a human voice.”

“Some animals speak with a human voice a month before Christmas Eve.” Mock felt the urge to throw his neighbour down the stairs.

“Is that so?” Patschkowsky raised his eyebrows in surprise.

“I’m talking to one of them even now.”

The lawyer stood as if turned to stone, staring for a moment into Mock’s bloodshot eyes. Then he walked slowly downstairs, plucking up the courage to offer one last witty “Is that so?”

Mock turned back to his apartment. Finding that the door to the bedroom was locked from the inside, he reeled into the kitchen. Adalbert and Marta were sitting anxiously at the table.

“You haven’t eaten any breakfast, sir. I’ve made scrambled eggs with chanterelle mushrooms,” Marta revealed the gaps in her teeth.

“Enjoy it yourselves,” Mock smiled effusively. “I wanted to wish you a good day. May it be as good as last night. You slept well, did you?”

“Yes, sir.” It seemed to Adalbert that he could still hear Sophie’s dreadful screams and the dull scratching of the dog’s paws against the closed bedroom door.

Mock left the apartment, squeezing his eyes shut and gritting his teeth.

BRESLAU, THAT SAME NOVEMBER 28TH, 1927

NINE O'CLOCK IN THE MORNING

Criminal Sergeant Kurt Smolorz was one of the finest employees of the Breslau Police Praesidium. His brutality was cursed by villains and his laconic reports praised by his bosses. One of his superiors valued yet another of his virtues above all others – his perspicacity. Smolorz demonstrated this virtue very clearly that morning – twice. First, when he walked into Mock's office with its dark wood panelling and saw the red impression of Mock's signet ring on its owner's forehead, a clear sign that the Counsellor had been resting his tired brow on it. He did not report right away the terrible crime committed in the Griffins tenement on Ring where, by order of Criminal Director Heinrich Mühlhausen, he and his boss were to present themselves without delay. He knew that Mock was in no condition to understand anything just then.

"I'll wait for you in the car, Counsellor sir," Smolorz said, and left to bring the new black Adler up to the gate of the Praesidium. This was not the only reason the Sergeant had taken his leave so swiftly. Mock discovered another when, cursing, he rolled into the passenger seat and saw Smolorz's red-haired hand holding out a bottle of milk. Mock opened it and greedily took a few gulps. He was not ready to hear the story. Smolorz turned on the ignition.

"The Griffins tenement, eight o'clock this morning," Smolorz spoke just as he wrote his report. "Shoemaker Rohmig couldn't stand the smell in his workshop and knocked down a wall. Behind it was a corpse."

It was not far from the Police Praesidium at Schuhbrücke to Ring. Mock drank the last drops of milk as Smolorz parked the Adler outside the Lottery Bookmakers on Nicolaistrasse. In the inner courtyard of the Griffins tenement, outside the shoemaker's workshop, stood a uniformed policeman who saluted as they approached. Next to him was a whiskered consumptive who bore the weight of his heavy leather apron with heroic effort, and a stout woman who could not accept the fact that there was no bench in the dirty yard. Every few seconds, magnesium lit up the wretched room filled with the odour of old shoes, rotten with sweat, and bone glue. When Mock and Smolorz walked in they detected another smell, one well known to them and unique in its nature. A counter, sticky with glue, divided the workshop in two. Two walls were lined with cellar shelves on which stood rows of shoes. There was a small window and a door in the third, and from the fourth wafted that familiar stench. An opening of roughly one metre by one metre had been knocked through this wall. The policeman, photographer, Ehlers, was kneeling in front of it, poking his lens into the dark recess. Mock held his nose and peered in. From the darkness of the small niche, his torch picked out a hairless skull covered with decomposing skin. The hands and feet had been tied to hooks on the far side of the recess. The Counsellor looked at the corpse's face once again and discerned a fat maggot trying to worm its way into the film that covered one eye. He quickly stepped out of the workshop, removed his coat, threw it to the uniformed policeman and, legs astride, leaned his hands on the outside wall. Smolorz, hearing the sounds coming from his boss, reproached himself for failing to anticipate the combined effects of a hangover, a bottle of milk and a disintegrating corpse. From his trouser pocket, Mock pulled out a handkerchief on which Sophie had embroidered his initials and wiped his mouth. He turned his face to the sky and greedily swallowed drops of falling rain.

"Take the pick-axe," he told the uniformed policeman, "and bring the wall down so we can get the body out. Smolorz, tie a handkerchief around your mouth and nose and search the recess and the policeman's pockets, and you, Ehlers, do what you can to help Smolorz."

Mock pulled on his coat, adjusted his hat and cast his eye around the yard.

“And who are you?” he said, aiming a brilliant smile at the stout lady who was shifting from one leg to the other.

“Ernst Rohmig, master shoemaker,” the consumptive eagerly introduced himself without being asked. He hunched his shoulders to adjust his leather armour.

“The tenement administrator,” the lady huffed. Cheap dye flaked from her greasy hair which was wrapped around curlers. “Get on with it, sir. Do you think I can stand around for ever worrying about the extra money I’m going to have to pay someone to clean up the wall you’ve fouled? Now, please introduce yourself! I am Mathilde Kühn, the owner’s plenipotentiary, and you are?”

“Eberhard Mock, ladies’ prize-fighter,” muttered the Criminal Counsellor, turning abruptly and squeezing himself once more into the little room. “Ehlers, tidy up here and gather anything that might be of importance. Smolorz, question these people.”

Mock trotted off to the tenement lobby, passing Smolorz who was huddled under an umbrella with those he was questioning, trying to avoid venom on the one hand and bacilli of tuberculosis on the other. At the entrance door Mock greeted Doctor Lasarius from the police mortuary, followed slowly by two men carrying a stretcher.

Mock stood outside the building and distractedly watched the traffic in the street, already busy at this hour. A couple were so engrossed in each other they did not notice him. The young man accidentally jostled the Counsellor and immediately apologized, politely removing his hat. The girl glanced at Mock and instantly turned away her face, which was ashen with tiredness. The night rocking in the droschka had obviously disagreed with Rosemarie.

Mock looked about and quickly strode off towards Apelt florists. In the made-up eyes of the plump flower girl, he detected a flicker of interest. He ordered a basket of fifty tea roses and asked for it to be delivered to “Sophie Mock, Rehdigerplatz 2”. On a cream-coloured card, which he requested be attached to the bouquet, he wrote in his beautiful script: “Never again, Eberhard”, and then he paid and left the flower girl alone with her mounting curiosity.

A newspaper boy got under his feet. Mock dismissed him, pressing a few pfennigs into his hand and then, wielding a newspaper under his arm, cut diagonally across the western side of Ring. A moment later he was sitting in the Adler, smoking his first cigarette of the day and waiting for Smolorz and Ehlers. He passed the time reading the *Breslauer Neueste Nachrichten*. On one of the announcement pages, his eye was caught by an unusual illustration. A mandala, the wheel of change, was drawn around a gloomy old man with his finger pointing upwards. “Spiritual father, Prince Alexei von Orloff, proves that the end of the world is nigh. The next revolution of the Wheel of History is now taking place – crimes and cataclysms dating back centuries are recurring. We invite you to a lecture held by the sage from the Sepulchrum Mundi. Sunday, November 27th, Grünstrasse 14–16.” Mock lowered the window and flicked his cigarette end straight at the approaching Smolorz. The latter shook the ash from his coat and climbed into the car, passing over Mock’s apologies in silence. In the back clambered Ehlers, weighed down by his tripod, and Criminal Assistant Gustav Meinerer, the fingerprint expert.

“Rohmig has been renting his workshop for a month now: from 24th October, to be exact.” Smolorz opened his police notebook. “From July to the end of October, according to the old bag, the workshop was empty. Anyone could have broken in. The caretaker is often drunk and asleep instead of keeping watch. He’s disappeared somewhere now. Probably recovering from a hangover. The shoemaker complained about the stink from the beginning. His brother-in-law, a mason, had told him about a job masons play if they don’t get paid properly. They set an egg into the wall. And it stinks. Rohmig thought there was an egg behind his wall, and he decided to get rid of it this morning. He knocked down the wall with a pick-axe. And that’s it.”

“What did you find?” asked Mock.

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