



DAMN THE SOURCE A collection of short stories by Marek Kazmierski

Due to be published in late 2012 by OFF_PRESS London

Marek Kazmierski escaped communist Poland as a child, studied literature in London, then, having decided to become a writer, worked as a journalist, prison governor and stripper to have something to write about. Joint winner of the Penguin Decibel prize and sole recipient of the BIKE Magazine Philosopher of the Year award, he recently quit his job managing the anti-discrimination department in a West London jail to concentrate on writing, translating and publishing full-time. Also busy acting as trustee of several literary charities, running OFF_PRESS, a bi-lingual publishing house, and editing *Not Shut Up*, a journal of writing from prisoners from across the UK.



Ten stories, a dozen Poles, labourers, aristocrats, dealers, all living in the UK. One last day before Christmas, each life somehow changed by a blade. A surgeon's scalpel. An artist's knife. An antique bayonet. Each tale, all based on a true story, revealing something about the experience of modern exile.

Elvis and the third sea

Zofia, a young Polish woman living on the coast of East Sussex, has problems going to work or even into her own kitchen. Addicted to self-harm, she cannot handle any sharp implements, afraid she will one day really hurt herself or someone else in her home. Perhaps Antek, her alcoholic husband. Or Karol, their young son. When the boy is involved in a near-drowning accident, the compensation she receives appears to help resolve her problems – but nothing is ever straightforward when dreaming of waters on the other end of the world...

The animal quixote

Wal, a young gay man from Poland, has come to London to start life a new. Managing a West End pub, living a comfortable existence with his French boyfriend in a leafy part of Hampstead, he is shaken out of his reverie by what at first appears to be an innocent gift – a Swiss army knife. Musing on what the object could mean, Wal has to confront his own past – a violent childhood, unfinished doctorate studies, the hell of army service – to begin realising why his London haven may be something else he will need to escape...

Merry little killing time

Michal is a teenage boy from a small village on the border between Poland and Russia. His father was once a powerful chief of police, but following anti-corruption purges, he has escaped with his family to England to start a new life. Meanwhile, his son befriends some Somali boys in his school, and together they come up with a plan to get rich – disgusted by the failed lives of their fathers, instead of doing their homework they plot how to get their hands on serious money. With criminal connections linking three continents, getting their hands on guns and drugs will not be hard. Holding on to them, and their young lives, however, will prove to be a far harder struggle...

Wolf to a wolf

Artur, a young poet from Poland, has spent the last few years living in London squats, escaping his own language and running a fake

charity with Dawid, another young Polish migrant. But whereas Dawid delights in their life of rebel Robin Hood scamming, Artur realises he can no longer steal nor avoid writing nor pretend that one day they will get off their asses and do something creative with their lives. One day, Artur makes the immediate decision to return to Poland, but Dawid realises he cannot manage without him. The fall out from the unstoppable meeting the immovable will be decisive for both men, as well as the women in their lives...

Karma kurwa

Helena, a young Polish woman from a liberal, intellectual home in Krakow, has come to Oxford to study media and international development. Having invited her parents to visit her for Christmas, just before they sit down to their traditional meal, she drops a bombshell – she has found God and decided to join the Church. This kicks off a war of family wills which involves knife throwing, cuckolding and crashed cars, an evening no one in Helena's family will forget, no matter how much they might wish to...

Stations of the wasted

A Polish man cuts off his penis in a crowded London restaurant - Jurek Marciniak, the editor of *Nowa Era UK*, wants to cover the story, but the newspaper's owner thinks it laughable and vetoes the idea. Tired of being censored, jaded from years of working for different emigre tabloids, Jurek sneaks into the hospital where the amputee is in post-op recovery and gets the man's story anyway. Which may yet make or break his hack future...

I'll see you in the dark

Kinga, a young nurse from Lodz, has come to London to develop her career. Cheated by fellow Poles, she ends up working as a carer for Countess Lucja, a deranged aristocrat. Tired of London, keen to turn tables on her bullying boss, Kinga decides to be back home for Christmas at any price, even if it involves sabotaging the Countess' famous parties and conning one of the richest men in London.

Warhead

Adam Staropolski survived the Second World War working as a child spy for the Soviets, then hunting freedom fighters in post-War Poland, then, following anti-Semitic purges of the late Sixties, moved to London to report back on the emigre community. Now in his eighties, forgotten by history, paranoid, drunk and utterly alone, he decides to make one last bid for immortality. Armed with a bayonet, he decides to cross London and confront the Polish ambassador, demanding to be returned to Poland with full war-hero honours. But the capital itself, once the playground of his playboy years, has its own story to tell the old ghost...

Jail flower

Natalia is spending the last day before Christmas awaiting court in a Belfast jail. Having almost stabbed a fellow Pole for telling a racist joke in a local pub, she spends the night telling her Gypsy cell mate her story: childhood heartbreak, a short stint in the army, then adventures working as a drug dealer in London, a madame in Scotland and a chauffeur in Wales, all out of the back of the same stolen car. Natalia toys with lies, dreams up visions of various futures and struggles to come to terms with a world in which being a woman, an alcoholic and a wanderer guarantees trouble.

Losing light

Krystian, a critically acclaimed but permanently impoverished young Polish artist, moves to England and becomes an interior decorator. But soon enough, the very people who hired him to paint their houses rediscover his talents and start commissioning him to make art again. Krystian meets Fay Keiller, a journalist. After a few months communion, Fay leaves him and returns to her husband. Two years later, Krystian revisits scenes from their brief but life-changing affair. Travelling across the capital, he muses on the nature of modern exile, the mechanics of his own creativity and the need to recover purpose in a world too dark to so much as breathe in.