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POLISH CRIME FICTION:
FROM TORUN WITH LOVE LETTERS

I will always remember when I first came to the lovely city of Torun in the middle of Poland. At that time I was a 25-year-old student looking for new adventures in a foreign country. I was studying history and wanted to enroll for a Master's degree at the Nicolaus Copernicus University. One day, while I was decorating what was going to be my flat for the next two years in Warszawska street, I found an old box hidden behind a decrepit cupboard in the ceiling. This box contained several love letters from various persons but all addressed to a certain Anna Dietl. As I was writing at this time my thesis about the history of Torun and its different mayors, I recognized that Dietl was the name of Torun's mayor during the years 1921-1922. I have thus decided that it was a good idea to dig further into those letters to discover what mysteries were hidden behind them.

After long hours of research at the university library, I finally found a record of an unsolved case opened in 1921 and related to Anna Dietl. Anna Dietl was indeed a daughter of the current mayor of Torun at that time. In 1921, Anna was a young woman of 26 years. She was beautiful and really praised by most of the men in Torun. She had a lot of powerful and rich friends among the upper-class. She loved to flirt with boys and knew how to control them to get what she wanted. What connected the letters and the case was the fact that she had three main suitors. The first one, Hans, was a 43-year-old German, who was overprotective towards her and had a lot of influence in the society. The second one was Piotr (32 years old), a famous Polish violinist, who was totally in awe with Anna's charm. He wanted to earn her favors so much that he was ready to

do whatever it took to be by her side. Finally, the last one was Jacob, a 28-year-old Jew and the owner of a jewelry shop. He was one of the wealthiest men in town and the only one whose letters to Anna were answered. I thus guessed that he was the one of the three for whom Anna probably had feelings. The most obvious link between those men was Anna. However, Piotr and Jacob were both students in the same violin school and played concerts together. The case I discovered concerned the murder of Jacob. His body was found near a Teutonic monument at the junction of Aleja Solidarnosci and Waly Generala Wladislawa Sikorskiego at the northern entrance to the city which doesn't exist nowadays. According to the files, the murder of Jacob had been committed by Hans. The motives were simple, it was an act of jealousy and hatred toward his rival. It was also mentioned that Hans was a descendant of a long lineage of a secret fascist group from the 19th century. Hans was then sentenced to a lifelong incarceration. One particular thing caught my attention though—another case was linked to this one. It was a file about the mysterious and still unsolved disappearance of Piotr. However, since there was no information about this case, I decided to write a paper about this story with the help of the letters I had found before giving them to the authorities.

A few months later, I was at a Juwenalia party when I received a call from one of my friends saying that he was stuck in an abandoned house with one of his legs broken. When I arrived at the location he sent me, which was Fort sw. Jakuba, I found him down a hole. While we were waiting for the ambulance, we got scared by the view of a skeleton lying a few meters from us. A few weeks after this incident, the police communicated to the press that it was in fact Piotr's body. When I heard the news, I rushed to the police station taking my letters with me. The case had been reopened and I became a kind of consultant for the police since I had a good knowledge of the letters and focused on this story in my studies. The forensic scientist stated that the body had been mutilated with an incredible fierceness. The traces found on the skeleton but also the ones found near to it revealed that the body had been torn apart with

pieces of the body spread everywhere in the room. Moreover, the head had been cut off and his heart torn off his body. Surely, the murderer's hatred of this man must have been enormous. However, the forensic scientist made it clear that he didn't die from all of these injuries but from strangulation. What is more, a string coming from a violin bow was found not so far from the body with Piotr's DNA on it.

After three months of struggling with this case the police finally made some new discoveries. Indeed, my flat turned out to be the one of Jacob and further investigations revealed that the one next to mine was owned by the Dietl family. Thus, Jacob and Anna probably had a secret love affair. In Anna's flat some more letters were found which brought new light to the case. They revealed that Piotr, since he became a close friend to Jacob, was told that Anna and him had a relationship. The police also discovered that Piotr was, in fact, a former assassin working for the Polish government and consequently had access to a lot of hidden information. He thus killed Jacob and trapped Hans. Indeed, he knew the inglorious past of Hans's family and it was easy for him to make Hans carry the can for Jacob's murder. Finally, Piotr's murder remained a mystery until the police discovered Jacob's violin bow hanging on the wall with one of its strings missing in the old Dietl's family house, in Anna's room...