



Necrobusiness

Directors: Fredrik von Krusenstjerna and Richard Solarz, Sweden, 2008, 90 minutes

From the crisp black and white animation of its opening titles, *Necrobusiness* resembles a film noir come to unbelievable life. This is the story of how a funeral director in Lodz, Poland paid off ambulance drivers to supply him with fresh corpses and, thus, more business. It may sound like a tale spun off the pen of Dashiell Hammett or Raymond Chandler, but the reality of the situation would have strained even their darkest imaginings.

Co-directors Fredrik von Krusenstjerna and Richard Solarz lay out the Byzantine complexities of the scam through Monika Sieradzka, an investigative reporter. She begins to follow the story with the trial of Jacek Tomalski. Tomalski, a mortuary worker, was accused of hiring a hitman to kill a local businessman named Witold Skrzydlewski, owner of one of the biggest funeral parlour chains in Lodz. As the evidence builds, it becomes clear that graft, corruption, and a scam to profit from funeral state subsidies was only the beginning of the story. Monika, who is lucky to still be alive at the end of the film, does her utmost to elicit a confession from the man behind it all: Witold Skrzydlewski.

Reeking of bonhomie and guile, Skrzydlewski's combination flower shop/funeral parlour empire was built upon blossoms in the front and coffins in the back. One of the three richest men in the city of Lodz and a pillar of the community, his tentacles of influence were spread wide. At one point, he controlled more than 60% of all funeral business in a city of over one million souls.

Death was a booming business in Lodz. Skrzydlewski's scheme to pay off ambulance drivers and paramedics to supply him with

bodies worked like a charm, until the lure of greater profits led his partners to betrayal. While Tomalski was indicted for attempted murder, Skrzydlewski slipped loose and continued business. But the story deepens and darkens even further when it is revealed that Tomalski was merely the tip of the iceberg. The genuinely dead were delivered into the predation of Skrzydlewski's funeral parlours. But many people were also prematurely hastened into the great beyond and into his parlours, with help from paramedics and hospital workers (who were responsible for the deaths of an unknown number of patients). The case is ongoing, with more than fifty murders currently under investigation. The final death count is estimated to be as high as 20,000 people.

DIRECTORS BIOGRAPHIES

Richard Solarz was born in Wroclaw, Poland 1953 and emigrated to Sweden in 1969. He studied at London International Film School 1975-78 and after that he worked at the Swedish Television as editor and photographer. Since 1986 he has been working as an independent filmmaker.

Fredrik von Krusenstjerna was born in Stockholm 1958. He studied directing at Columbia College Film School in Hollywood and has been working at the Swedish Television as editor, director and camera operator. Since 1987 Fredrik von Krusenstjerna has been working as an independent producer and director mainly with international productions.