**Shadows of Warsaw**

by Danielle Baldock

The name of the cafe bristles with Z’s. Coffee is a million Zlotys, the extravagant pile of notes tastes bitter in my throat. The Old Town Square glows perfect in the pale sun. War-torn, resurrected, brick by identical brick, scars of lost life tucked neatly away.

Arriving, laughing, a scarecrow lurches from the shadows. Face grey as ancient stones, sharp bones etching messages under his skin, he holds out his hand, creases in his palm

mapped with dirt. I breathe in damp earth, and decay.

Proszę... Syllables stutter in the cool air. My hot pulse flutters inmy throat. I look into his eyes, shadowed remnants of life swirling deep in darkness.

I want to help, but I don’t want to open my wallet here in the shadowy laneway

Please...

I look into his eyes... and I turn away.

His eyes follow me still, through flickering years. Echoing deep in the shadows, scarred black-edged into memory.

The face of the square is perfect, but the stones hold onto darkness.

The ghosts of Warsaw watch like rooks from the chimney pots. They have seen it all before, and they remember.

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