

# Court Case

By Will McNeice

We have a noisy neighbour. He plays music loudly at 7 o'clock in the morning, and the rest of the day too. He swears loudly on the phone. He shouts loudly at people who come to visit him. I learnt my first Polish swear word from him: "kurwa," which is one of the most offensive words in Polish. [Here's a description from Wikitionary](#). Don't look it up if your boss is around. Last year, we had enough and called the police. They came to the apartment and my girlfriend spoke to them for a while, and then they went next door. Through the wall we heard yelling, and when the police left, the noisy neighbour banged the wall and turned his music up so loudly that we thought it was coming from our apartment.

Months passed and the police decided to prosecute the man. We went to court as witnesses. I don't speak Polish, and the proceeding, which lasted an hour, was in Polish. What follows is my interpretation of the event.

We waited outside the courtroom with a man we had never seen before, whom we assumed was the noisy neighbour. He wore sneakers and jeans and an old multicoloured ski jacket. We wore suits. I wore a tie which I never do and I had practiced tying it in a Shelby knot, a classier style of knot than the Four in Hand, a traditional basic knot that most people use. It only took me three attempts to get it to the right length. I felt good about how we looked.

The judge arrived in a black suit with a black shirt and no tie. I wondered if it was because he didn't know how to tie the Shelby knot. Perhaps I could show him. We entered the court room and the judge sat in his seat, the note-taker sat beside him, the noisy neighbour sat at the far end of the room, my girlfriend sat at the opposite end, and I was instructed to sit on the audience bench against the wall between my girlfriend and the noisy neighbour. I faced the judge, and between us was a podium. The judge now wore a black robe with a massive gold chain around his neck, which he had to adjust throughout the proceeding as it continually slipped backward, threatening to choke him. I had only been in court once before, when I was sixteen and on work experience at a law firm. I had to sit in the back of the courtroom and listen, but I couldn't hear anything because the acoustics were so bad. I was happy that this court room was small and had good acoustics, so I would hear everything that passed. I hoped they would use some of the Polish words I know, which are "thank you, please, hello, cheers, chair," and "seven."

The judge spoke. He talked a lot. He waved his hands and gestured at my girlfriend and the noisy neighbour. After some talking, the noisy neighbour walked to the podium and stood facing the judge. He talked a little, and the judge interrupted him often. The noisy neighbour waved his hands in the air. The judge also waved his hands. The judge adjusted his chain. The noisy neighbour sat down. I was starting to feel uncomfortable on the bench and I wanted to alter my seating position. The bench was at an awkward height so that when I sat with my legs side by side, I felt like a schoolboy outside the principal's office. I crossed my legs, but I felt too casual, so I uncrossed them and wiggled my butt discreetly. It was going numb.

My girlfriend walked to the podium. The judge talked some more, waved his hands and adjusted his chain. My girlfriend also talked and waved her hands, but the judge interrupted her. By my estimation, the judge's voice dominated about 70% of the hour. When the judge finished talking, my girlfriend sat down.

The judge talked some more. He gestured to my girlfriend and to the noisy neighbour, and even to the note taker. He adjusted his chain and then took it off. It clanked onto his table. I wondered if

the chain would have been even more uncomfortable had he worn a tie. The noisy neighbour tried to talk and the judge interrupted him. The judge talked some more and then said “Dziękuję, do widzenia”, which means “Thank you and goodbye.” The case was over.

The noisy neighbour walked out of the room and my girlfriend and I followed, slower so as not to bump into him.

I later found out that the noisy neighbour used the argument that he had recently bought a new stereo system, and that he ought to be allowed to enjoy his music at a loud volume. He also believed he should be allowed to play new CDs as loudly as possible, though he didn't elaborate on a reason why. Perhaps new CDs are like new shoes – they need to be broken in.

The judge decided to postpone a verdict until next month. We don't have to go back, although that's the only way we'll find out the verdict. My girlfriend hasn't decided whether to go back, but if we do, I'll need a new tie and a new knot; I haven't tried the Windsor knot yet.

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