

THE LITTLE REVIEW

CHILDREN'S AND YOUTH PAPER

PUBLISHED EVERY FRIDAY MORNING

CORRESPONDENCE AND MATERIALS SHOULD BE SENT TO THE LITTLE REVIEW NEWSROOM

WARSAW, NO. 7 NOWOLIPKI STREET

WŁADYSŁAW BERG (7th grade of middle school)

JUVENILE COURT FILES

LAYOUT OF THE ISSUE:

Pages 1 and 2 – for youth
 Page 3 – “From the pen of
 a 13-year-old” – for readers aged
 10–14
 Page 4 – for everyone
 Pages 5 and 6 – for children

A systematically arranged collection of pages. Old ones, from a few or a dozen years ago, faded and reddened; recent ones, with slightly yellowed edges; and – finally – new ones, searing the eye with the snowy whiteness of freshly filled paper.

The small, clear feminine handwriting makes up short, concise notes from juvenile court – the fruit of long, arduous labor, a rich gallery of characters. It is an invaluable chronicle of details and facts, excised from life with a sharp scalpel of an insightful psychologist – a museum of children's “sins.” It is a contribution interesting both to a psychologist and a scholar of social conditions. It is a contribution that gives an answer, based on years of observation, to dozens of questions that pop up. Why do they steal? What forces them to step onto the slippery path to misdemeanor? Can their actions be described as “misdemeanors”? What? How? Why? A series of awkward question marks, coming together in a broken line of a statistics graph, full of unexplored mysteries.

* * *

The characteristic feature of most incidents – they usually do not steal for themselves. They steal for love. For love of their near and dear ones, who are in the throes of poverty.

A small, frail, thirteen-year-old girl with a nearly transparent face the color of molten wax appears before the court. Blue faded pupils, buried somewhere in the sunken eye sockets, stare dully, or rather, they have a dead look of resignation, forged with the hard, merciless hammer of pain and suffering.

The file records her name – Jadzia – and a last name, a cluster of worthless letters, stuck like an official government stamp to an independent, thinking human being. Jadzia... The name says nothing. Perhaps the court papers, which accuse her of stealing fifty zloty, will say more.

The interview takes place in Jadzia's home.

We are in the interior of a broken addition, clumsily clinging to a sprawling ruin in Podwale. A dark room, filled with small people. Sitting near a broken, smeared window, sits a small creature with an enormous head, an unnaturally distended belly and bulging, cloudy eyes. A typical alcoholic's child. The mother, a no longer young woman with eroded – probably by tears – cheeks. She has a bony, dry, tubercular chest and overworked, rough hands of a washerwoman. She speaks in a broken voice.

She had two children with her first husband; Jadzia is her first daughter.

After his death, she married a second time – a widowed blacksmith, also with two children. She had two girls and a boy with him; the boy is the child sitting under the window. Her husband works in a factory, earns quite a lot, but he drinks. He constantly drinks away his whole salary. He gives his wife nothing, or a measly few groszy. At night, when he comes back drunk from the bar, he drags his wife out of bed and tortures her with refined sadism, threatening to kill the children.

Deep in the most painful corners of Jadzia's heart, her mother's suffering hits the hardest. The frail, tyrannized human life seethes in its helpless weakness. And on the long, silent nights, interrupted only by her mother's trembling moans, Jadzia thinks. How to help her mother? Mother! Who does not know what a mother is?

The washerwoman sighs. Dry, tubercular cough chokes her. She slowly starts talking about the theft. One day, Jadzia and a friend went to the cigarette kiosk owned by her friend's sister. An elegant gentleman approached, asked for a pack of cigarettes and laid down a fifty zloty note. The friend's sister put the money in her pocket and handed the man his change. Jadzia stared at the paper note with lust. “Oh,” she thought, “mother would have lunch for a week and could buy herself whatever she wanted.”

The internal struggle lasted a fraction of a second. Jadzia stole the money. When she brought it to her mother, she said she found it on the street.

“It was after the first, my husband had been at the bar the night before; there wasn't a grosz at home, so I simply took the money.” Her moaning tone changes to muffled sobbing. “When I asked what she wanted me to do with the money, she asked me to eat properly and buy a shawl, because it's cold outside now. And for herself,” the woman bursts out into uncontrolled weeping, “she didn't even take a grosz for herself. Not one grosz.”

* * *

But sometimes they steal for themselves.

When the first freezing winds arrive, when the slanted rays of the sun cease to give the body their life-giving warmth, when the first snow chases away the last memories of the past summer, hunger becomes more and more intrusive and insistent. The juvenile court deals with a variety of uniform, identical, practically cut from a stencil cases, on a daily basis.

The urchins want to live. To live, you have to eat. It is an inexorable law of life. And the food is so close: you just have to reach out and take the

tasty, tempting pretzel from a street vendor's basket. More and more often, the greedy hand reaches out, grabs the desired prize and the young, now turned “criminal” entrusts his salvation to the speed of his not quite completely frostbitten legs. Sometimes, however, he fails, and the “criminal” is stopped, unnecessarily for everyone.

And then there is another “template” case for the juvenile court.

* * *

A sharp difference from these everyday cases is a completely different matter, which cannot be called a trivial one. It is quite a sensational thing, of course not the kind of sensation worthy of pulp crime novels, nor the sensation of degenerate brains, hungry for deranged thrills.

It is the case of Franek (let's call him Franek), a fourteen-year-old psychopath.

This is a strange word, and the effect it has is also strange. Unbidden, the excited imagination brings up images of grasping madman's hands and faces distorted with a paroxysm of fury.

Nothing like it!

Franek is a nice, blond young man, with clear dark-hazel eyes. He is accused of stealing two hundred zloty. He answers clearly, calmly, intelligently. So what makes him a psychopath?

Franek's psychosis is a rare, but severe case of an instinctive escape from reality, that dirty-gray reality, stained with the wretchedness of everyday life. A self-preservation instinct of the imagination and fantasy against the binding shackles of a ragged life. A psychopath like him is the grim, baseborn child of today's abnormal social system.

Immediately after the birth of his son, Franek's father was called to the front. Perhaps blind fate sentenced him to wandering, perhaps it felled his body on one of the fields where in the wild, mutual slaughter, many people lay, covered by various uniforms, people in whose veins flowed the same red, unnecessarily spilled blood.

We do not know. The fact is that he did not return. Blind fate often becomes mute and deaf to the sobs of a broken woman's figure with a crying bundle at her breast.

Franek's mother took up many occupations.

From being a seamstress and washerwoman, she descended lower and lower on the slippery slope of her damaged life, until she became a fence, making money by storing thieves' stolen goods.

And Franek grew.

The little tyke quickly learned to walk and talk. He also quickly learned

something a hundred times more important – he learned to listen.

He listened greedily, whether it was to long babbles of his mother, or the strange, incomprehensible, mysterious filthy anecdotes of the thieves, told in a slang of low-lives and scumbags, or the words of the teacher at the public school he started attending when he was eight.

Franek listened.

Not only did he listen – he started to read.

The tomes of Hugo's “Les Misérables,” stolen by burglars from who knows where did not find a buyer in their underworld. So they lay there, gleaming with their gold letters on dark blue bindings, forgotten in a corner of the thieves' den.

Franek found the books. He started reading them. And suddenly he experienced an epiphany. He was dazzled by their fabulous, but so realistic world. He fell in love with Cosette, cried with Fantine, tracked criminals with Javert, marveled at Marius, rough-housed with Gavroche, but above all, he loved Jean Valjean. He started to take on his character, live his life, think and feel like his favorite character did.

Franek stopped suddenly in front of the travel agency window display. Two hundred zloty! Two hundred zloty in his pocket. The money was burning a hole in his pocket. He had never held, or even seen such a sum in his life. But today, after a year's apprenticeship with the tailor, his boss evidently trusted him, and gave him the money to pay various obligations. Franek felt rich with other people's money.

March was coming. There was still sticky snow falling, and turning into dirty puddles as soon as it touched the ground. Franek trod through the mud with difficulty. And suddenly he stopped. The giant advertising poster of the travel agency laughed at him from behind the window pane. The black letters of the title clearly stood out from the sun-drenched mountain and forests. Franek read, “Midi de France”... Strange, exciting words: “Midi” and “France.” Franek had never heard these words.

The multicolored poster burned his eyes. The sun shone with a palette of colors, it lured him from the poster. Yes, clearly it was smiling at him, saying, “Come on, don't go home again! You hate being a tailor so much!”

Short and sharp, the thought came like a dazzling lightning strike: Jean Valjean would not listen. Franek stops, but...

“A ticket to Gdynia, please.”

“Why exactly Gdynia?”

Franek doesn't know.

“Which train?”

“The next one.”

“At the moment, we are sold out,” the official informs him politely. “But you can still get them at the station.”

Franek breathes a sigh of relief. He will not spend his boss' money. Jean Valjean has kept him from stealing.

But here is the train station. And again, as if driven by a magnetic force, Franek goes in and asks for a ticket.

After a moment, a ticket to Gdynia is in his pocket.

The piercing whistle of the locomotive, the long howl of a ship's siren. The grating noise of the harbor crane. “They're loading coal,” thinks Franek, pulling up his torn pants.

He is hungry. The money disappeared somewhere. With the last few groszy, he bought a stamp for a letter to his mother.

“Mom, I'm in Gdynia,” the crooked letters express the storm raging inside the boy. “I have no money left. Please send me some so I can come back.”

The court has acquitted Franek of guilt and punishment. He was considered a psychopath and assigned to a court officer. Franek goes to see her for lessons every day. He learns. The unknown, colorful world pulls at him. Knowledge. Franek listens carefully. Natural science, geography, history.

In the small pharmacy where he works as a delivery boy, Franek dreams in the evenings.

Jungles, pampas, prairies, herds of wild horses, mysterious dark forests, slender and tall eucalyptus trees, the roaring sapphire sea, all flooded with the golden smile of the sun from the advertising poster.

“Oh, spit on everything!” Franek thinks about just throwing it all away and running.

And Franek spat on everything.

With twenty zloty stolen from his boss, the pharmacist, he set out into the world on the railway.

The money quickly ran out. He started walking.

His bare feet – his shoes had long since worn down – kicked up clouds of dust from the country roads. When he was hungry, he stole or begged. At first it was hard, then he got used to it. And he kept walking.

It was a beautiful spring May.

Franek walked and all nature smiled at him.

She smiled at him with the hint of wind-blown meadows and the silvery murmur of young ear of grain. She smiled with the black patches of tall pine forests and the babble of a flowing stream. She smiled with the clatter of the old stork and the lark song,

CONTINUED ON P. 2

RYSZARD (6th grade of middle school)

THE DEATH OF MANIEK KRUSZYNA

A second after the red button was pressed, the bell rang from the other side of the gate, its hammer weakening momentarily, then only trembling slightly and finally giving in and falling silent. Only its echo rang in the doorway.

The moon fluttered the eyelash of the nearly transparent veil of a cloud. The sound of footsteps of the watchman could be heard, first quiet then growing louder as his slippers struck the concrete floor, and finally the screech of a key being turned. In the distance behind the black fence, on the black shore of the river whitened by the light of the moon, someone plucked the strings to weep an unknown melody about longing.

The sounds reached and filled the sleepy back yard, bounced off the latrine in the corner and dripped down the basement window to Maniek. It was beautiful, and Maniek wasn't sure why it felt so close, so clear.

The room breathed the silence of the night. From the depths came the snoring of Maniek's father, the light, stutter breath of his mother and her two children: Zdzich and Niusia.

Maniek breathed more and more loudly, choked on the air he swallowed with a light whistle in his throat more and more often. He sat up on the bed, fixed his wrinkled pillow and sheets, turning them over, and lay down, pressing his sheets to the cool white fabric.

Maniek spat: he tensed the muscles of his jaw, letting the spit that came from his lungs into the depression of his tongue, and along with the rest of the air in his chest, pushed it all out through the window, towards the deathly pale moon. The spit fell onto the moon-silvered cobblestones, red with Maniek's blood.

Tired, he fell back on his pillow, and choking with the effort, gulped greedily for air, which scratched his lungs and made him choke again, until he began coughing, horribly, without end.

He tried to control the coughing; covered his mouth with his hands, curled in on himself, but it didn't help – the walls of the tiny room reverberated with the sudden noise and reached the ears of the sleepers. Maniek's mother rolled over and, exhausted from work, fell into deeper sleep again.

His mother was a seemingly funny woman: small, petite, eternally worried, like every mother. Lately, she had been getting up at half past five. First her head emerged from under the comforter, then hands and feet, suddenly wanting to hide them all under the covers again, but the covers had already moved away. And so mother got up, bare feet slapping on the white floor. Along with Mrs. Popławska from the third floor, her opposite – the enormous, wide-hipped tram driver's widow – she went to work at the laundry on Wielka Street. Mrs. Popławska has large, huge hands and is strong; mother has weak hands, and sometimes, after coming back from work in the late evening, she quietly complains to the wardrobe (Maniek has heard her more than once), "Oh, how my hands hurt. My God! My hands..." and then at the table, if someone hears her, she makes naïve excuses:

"It's arthritis, not because of work. The weather is probably going to change tomorrow. Whenever that happens, all my bones hurt. I'm getting old..."

The stars burn like the lamp in the quiet room. Maniek woke up from his deep wonderings. He thought: mother said "getting old." I'm young... young... I'm seventeen years old and I want to live, love, breathe with ease like I used to, work, smell my own sweat, be a cart driver, pat Maciek on the back, and I won't – here, he feels a dull pounding in his head and a scratching in his throat – and I won't... I won't even see the twilight, maybe not even dawn, I won't see mother again. Mother! Mother, help! God, I don't want to die, no, no... Why am I so hot?

He calmed down. The lamp over the latrine flickered. Maniek fell into a half-numb state. He was delirious, surrounded by memories.

Here is Maniek Kruszyzna, knocking on his neighbors' windows: Helka, come for a walk! And here they are, walking. The Vistula flows beside her – Helka, his girlfriend. They walk, keep walking, holding hands, and before they take a few steps beyond the bridge, the red cloud of the evening will disappear and a star will shine in the sky. When the sky turned dark blue, they sat down. Below in front of them, the river flowed like a slithering serpent. It flowed and trembled, like a girl stretching after being woken up. It was night, and the moon was just like it was now: pale, eternally silver, with a stupid smile on its face.

And since then, Maniek had always knocked on the neighbors' windows and whispered, "Helka, come for a walk!"

And they would go walk along the Vistula. Until his father forbade it. He was a huge, enormous man, strong like Lampucer himself – that strongman from the Vistula shore, who, when he hit someone in the face, there was no one who could withstand such a blow.

Father had a mustache and two arms hanging at his sides, veiny from work. Once those hands pushed a "bateau" away from the shore and brought up wet white sand from the river bottom, sand that was money; now they have to hang uselessly. There is no work. And father doesn't know what to do with his hands sometimes, he wants to hit something or shake out fur coats, and sometimes he would run up to the first person he saw, throw his arms around them and embrace, love...

Maniek's thought come back to Helka again, and then Maciek comes to mind. Maniek sees him, stretching his head upwards, stretching his body, he pulled the green cart, loaded up "top heavy" with sand. Maniek helped him pull: he pushed the green box from the back, calling out warmly, "hyah, hyaaah" – or ran his hand over his side.

Once Maniek got really angry at him, and for the first time, dragged him into a quiet side street and whipped his head, legs, belly, didn't matter where. And he didn't beat him only for he torn reins, but because he would have to say goodbye to him now, say goodbye forever because he's the one coughing up blood now, blood, do you hear, Maciek?

That was his farewell with Maciek. Later, he often visited the stable, wrapped in his father's old fur coat, and he cried and cried, and Maciek neighed.

"Now, after I die, Zdzicho will ride him," Maniek thought.

Zdzicho is like father, with a thick neck and long arms. Those long arms will support the family later.

And suddenly Maniek's heart swells. He would like to embrace Zdzicho and kiss him, whisper in his ear how to deal with Maciek. But it's nighttime – Zdzicho is far away, and Maniek doesn't have the strength to get up. He cries, sobbing quietly and biting his white pillow with his white teeth.

The room breathes the silence of the night. The gate squeals as it's opened again, it becomes day for a moment, and Maniek can see the beautiful, slender legs of the lady from the first floor. Legs in silk stockings. Silk stockings? Joanna the hunchback had silk stockings, with arrows, he remembers. The Kielbasiński family also got into it over a silk stocking. A stocking that stupid Janek Cygan stole from Mrs. Kielbasińska's window. First he and Mr. Kielbasiński fought over it, then old Mrs. Kielbasińska with Mrs. Cygan, until finally old Kielbasiński swore revenge. Stupid Cygan stole one stocking, and what could he even do with it?

Old Kielbasiński kept his word. On Saturday, after payday, he went to Kopcio for a bottle and when he was drunk, he went to beat up old Cygan. Maniek met him in the doorway and chatted him up.

"Hey, Mr. Kielbasiński, where are you off to in such a hurry?"

Kielbasiński swayed on his feet. "Come on, boy, we'll go beat Cygan up. He's a thief, damn him."

"Let it go, it was the young one, Janek, and he's still just a kid."

Kielbasiński only muttered under his nose. Maniek kept explaining, and Kielbasiński got mad. He growled something and pushed Maniek aside as he walked past him. Maniek fell. That was enough to put him in bed, since he was barely able to walk.

And here he is now, lying in bed and staring at the moon's smile. Maybe he would live longer, if not for the stocking?

Maniek tries not to think. He lies comfortably on his back and stares into the sky, the boundless sea of dark blue.

The buildings are shrouded in darkness, pressed up against one another, sleeping. Maniek tries to fall asleep, but he's afraid – will it be forever?

Water drips monotonously from a faucet. Maniek feels it's getting harder to even gasp for air. There is a horrible noise in his head, and his heart beats slower and slower. He closes his eyes. Along with the disappearing moon, he falls asleep.

It's quiet, horribly quiet, and the lamp above the latrine winks sleepily. Dawn.

* * *

Several days later, a black notice was posted on the white wall of our building; he "died," he was "seventeen years old," and his name was Maniek Kruszyzna. Parents? His mother, a petite, weak woman, has grown even smaller, wasting away in despair. And he, the father – enormous, powerful – has bent under the weight of the pain. People stood in front of the notice and wondered that Maniek was so young but died anyway.

In the evening, everyone followed the hearse: Bambura, Cygan, the Kielbasińskis – everyone. The church bells sang mournfully. Everyone cried. Only Zdzicho spat into his hand and thought: time to get to work. ■

LUSIA FROM CZĘSTOCHOWA

(7th grade)

THE LETTER

THAT DID NOT COME

I wait every day for a letter,

A letter in a blue envelope

That does not come.

The mailman with the leather bag

Has a bad heart –

He slowly walks up the stairs.

From under his yellow mustache,

His heavy breath, like the whistling of a steam engine,

Fills the anxious hall.

His bowed back. His heavy bag.

Maybe he holds a letter for me?

No. Another day passed uselessly.

I can't fit the key into the lock

(On the first floor, the mailman pants,

His half-opened mouth gasping for breath).

Finally, I open the metal door

(It squeaks unpleasantly in the silence)

And the mailbox is empty again.

PILOTS

The roar of the engine, the moaning voice of the propeller –

The slender hull pierces the clouds like a needle.

The belts do not crush your body,

The speed is intoxicating. The bird flies like an arrow.

A young year in a pilot's helmet

Over the steering wheel in sunny light.

Air acrobatics, a sudden turn.

Half-circles, a corkscrew, upside down.

It floats – and again, a wonderful climb.

Oh, winners of world records,

Heroic sky acrobats.

In the hour of fires and murders,

Will you drop bombs on your brothers?

Demolish the towns of quiet residents,

And at night, illuminated by hostile lights,

When you fall in savage breakneck dances with the enemy,

How then will you stand before God?

WHY ARE DEPARTURES SO SAD?

In fashionable tangos and foxtrots,

The words "farewell" and "love" are entwined.

Maybe "farewell" means something else?

When the African sky is as pale

As in Conrad's saddest novels,

The white god, in the rhythm of black feet,

Moves at the head of the caravan,

Maybe thinking about the last farewell,

Somewhere in a distant and small town?

And when, on the white-hot rocks

The golden lion sees a dead body,

Scenting the unknown smell of the stranger –

Maybe in some small distant town

A mother will be writing a letter – to a dead man?

JUVENILE COURT FILES

CONTINUED FROM P. 1

soaring over broad fields. And above all, the playful golden sun smiled at Franek, a hundred times more beautiful than the stylized southern sun of the advertising brochures.

Franek's soul splashed in the boundless space, breathing life-giving juices in with a full chest.

For the first time in his life, Franek felt happy

* * *

Do not judge!

The task of the juvenile court is

not to judge or punish, but to help

What should this help be like?

The court officer who is entrusted with a child visits them from time

to time, bringing them some small things as gifts.

"Thinking morally and healthily, giving alms is debasing the one who receives it; and the opposite, to give him some work is at the same time helping him and honoring him" (E. Sue).

Philanthropy – a word that, these days, has lost its importance, it is a difficult and dangerous legacy. The right to work – that is the only valuable achievement of sociology. Work – that is the only way to help and the only goal of well-understood help.

The juvenile court must be reformed on this principle, if we do not want it to become an unnecessary or even harmful institution in society. ■

FROM THE PEN OF A 13-YEAR-OLD

THOUGHTS

It's late. I'm lying in bed, but I can't sleep. I don't have any really serious worries – my thoughts just won't let me sleep.

What am I, really? Such a silly question that others wouldn't even consider, and which until recently, didn't come to my mind. After all, I know that I'm not a bench, or a cat, but a human. And yet... That's not what I mean.

What is the soul? Is it the purest thoughts that ennoble humans, or is it dreams? I asked some older people about it. They said:

"The soul is the noblest part of a person."

That's not enough for me. I close my eyes. I think about it, hard, I tried to explain it to myself. It's all for nothing.

I'm very tired. Everything is mixed up in my head, coming together in fantastic images.

I see the Nile, and a temple rising above its waters. Priestesses in white robes perform a rhythmic dance in front of a holy fire. A monotonous, sentimental melody plays.

Whenever I think about something, whenever I want to explore some mystery, I see Egypt, majestic and mysterious. The irresistible charm of the land draws me to it. I love the pyramids and sphinxes. The Nile, flooding wide, and the priestesses, keeping the fire.

Bim... bam... The old clock strikes midnight. It has measured another chunk of time.

What is time? Did it start one day, will it end someday?

Do people feel anything after death? What is death? What is the universe?

These questions didn't just come to me today, or yesterday. They have been nagging me since I started wondering and understanding what I didn't understand before.

Thoughts, or rather images, become more and more misty. The waters of the Nile lazily flow over my head, the longing memory grows quieter... The enormous statue grows. Is it the Sphinx or Truth? Or maybe Truth is the Sphinx?

Ina from Solna Street

A FROSTED WINDOW

It gives me a lot of pleasure looking at windows in the winter. I might seem to be silly, it's just an ordinary frosted window. But how much pleasure it gives me, when on long winter evenings and mornings, I imagine the silhouettes as people in a hurry. Where are they going? Most likely to the nearest forest. They are trees, after all. A little farther, that silvery shape, that's Lake Narach.

On the neighboring quarter of the window, I see another shape. On it, a speedy boat. That stripe past the boat are the fading streaks of water, and on the side, you can see the oars. Who's steering, who's sitting in the boat – I don't know that yet.

Past that are tall mountains and low hills – all white. I think those are the Tatras in the winter. I can see many children, skiing downhill. And here

is another plain, with a small white point in the shape of a sail. Perhaps it is a ship on the Atlantic? Perhaps right now, there is a ship like that, sailing... It's probably sailing to New York! And then there are enormous buildings visible here, all of them so tall, to the very end of my window.

The pictures on the window change almost every day, depending on the weather. I will never get tired of looking at the frosted window, on which the artistic frost paints what I dream of.

Luba from Vilnius

AT THE ICE RINK

My friends – Bela, Lola, and Mirka – came to visit me:

"We're going to the ice rink. Will you come with us?"

"Of course, are you going right now?"

"Yes."

"Where?"

"To the harbor."

"No thanks, I'm not going to the harbor," Lola said. "At the harbor, the 'Scots' harass people shamelessly."

"You're a shameless liar!" Mirka got offended. "There's no harassing at all. At the harbor you can skate for free, that's why I'm going there." "You're not going because you can skate for free, but because there are 'Scots' there. You want them to harass you."

Seeing an argument brewing, Bela suggested a vote. Went to the rink in Traugutt Park because that's what the majority decided.

At the ticket office, Lola whispered to me:

"If Mirka puts on her own skates and actually skates by herself, it'll be a miracle."

Indeed, Lola was right. I looked around and saw Mirka sitting on a bench, and a student kneeling in front of her, putting on her skates.

Mirka with her beau were the first out of the changing room. Walking behind them, we could hear them talking.

"How long have you been skating?"

"Two years. And you?"

"This is my third year. Who are the three who came with you?"

"Acquaintances."

"Or perhaps friends?"

"No," Mirka lied.

"She's ashamed of us," said Bela. "Just you wait, you'll ask me to teach you the pistol squat. Like hell I'll teach you!"

Lola got angry with Bela. It wasn't worth it getting angry with Mirka, she was born that way. It was better to just follow them.

And we did.

"Which one do you like best?"

"The brunette in the dark blue pants. She skates really well. Who is she?"

"Bela R. She's the Pińsk champion in figure skating."

"He's going to want to meet Bela," I thought, "and the rest of us, too. Let's get out of here while we can."

We all grabbed hands and run away. In that moment, we heard someone calling us. While turning back we saw Dorka. We all grabbed hands and formed a "snake," running a few people over. We were reprimanded

by the controller and, embarrassed, sat on a bench.

Two students of a public middle school came up to us and asked Bela to show them how she skates. Naturally, Bela tried to decline, saying that there was nothing to look at, but in the end, she had to give in.

She built up speed, did some pistol squats, one-leg turns, switches, brackets, marking flourishes on the smooth sheet of ice.

"That's enough, Bela, everyone's looking at you!" Dorka shouted.

Bela looked around and froze: all eyes were on her.

That's not all. Mirka's friend ran up to Bela, calling out, "Bravo! Bravo!"

Mirka stared at her partner with despair, as well as at her friend, whom she truly hated at that moment.

Bela, not wanting to hurt Mirka, turned around and skated away. The student followed her.

"Changing room, now!" Bela ordered. "Time to go home."

Mania from Pińsk

A WALK

My soul is heavy. I go outside.

On the main street, a car rushes by. A carriage driver holds back his spooked horse. A policeman writes out a ticket for lack of a driver's license. Curious onlookers gather.

The advertisements stop me in front of the State Lottery outlet.

"The luckiest outlet!" "Winning 10,000 zloty ticket sold here!" "Buy a ticket – win a fortune!"

A beggar goes into the kiosk. He will not buy a ticket. His ticket is always the losing one. If they give him a few groszy, that will be his win.

Next to the bookstore, a boy with a bookbag and bulging eyes stands looking at the marvelous books. Who can buy such wonders now?

I keep going, thinking that the street is a true Tower of Babel. Contrasts everywhere. A peasant's cart next to a motorcycle, a peasant in a torn coat and a whip under his arm passes a woman in a fur coat and drives his herd of rams to the butcher's.

A crowd of onlookers stands in front of an advertisement. Tomorrow, a large confectioner's store will open. People are happy: at the start, every new store lowers its prices and brings in the best products. Only the owner of a nearby wooden kiosk with halvah, seeds, and soda water walks away from the advertisement with a sour expression. After the opening of a store like this, his kiosk will go belly up.

It's after noon. Tired workers are hurrying home. A halutz group comes back from work, singing Palestinian songs, several policemen lead a dozen communists to jail. Both groups gross each other's path. They look at each other proudly.

A small boy from the cheder stares at the delicacies in the window of the deli shop. From time to time he turns away and looks around in fear for anyone who could tell on him to his parents that he likes treif foods more than kosher ones.

I walk around and observe. Every time, I find something new in the city I know so well.

The street is beautiful. Beautiful in its ugliness, like life.

Moniek from Kowel

STUDENT MANIAS

There is no one who has never suffered from any mania, such as collecting stamps, pictures from Anglas chocolate boxes, etc. Our class has gone through writing in albums, collecting photographs, and believing in superstitions and fortunes.

If one of us were to pick up an album of one of the girls from our class, they would see poems, written in all directions, something like "May your life be very sweet, may you never sadness meet."

If someone was very enamored of botany, they would write, "Roses are red, violets are blue, the center of my world begins and ends with you," and sign as "Sour Tomato" or some other marinade.

A proponent of self-sufficiency would write, "Have heart and look in the mirror."

A practical person wrote it all on one page, adding a spell from themselves: "To find true love, I conjure thee, I conjure thee, I am the flower, you are the bee, As I desire, so shall it be."

I won't even mention things like "Sleep, age of youth, age of innocence," since everyone knows them.

I consider this mania to be quite pleasant, since the writing was usually done during boring classes.

When this one passed, another mania came along. Most of the class decided that they should: first, see 99 white horses (at the movies, parades didn't count), second, three chimneysweeps with brushes, and the first boy whose hand you shook after that would be your future husband.

In classes, when the windows were open, mysterious numbers would be called out from various seats: 12, 96, 32, 40 and 4.

The second thing our class believed was the law of nine stars.

Recipe: count nine stars each day for nine days, and the one you dream of at night will fall in love with you.

We believed that when your left eye itches, you'll be laughing, and when it's the right, you'll cry. We believed in the hunchback, too – when you saw

one, you had to hit your right knee four times. Of course, we believed in black cats. It even went so far as one girl, who was half an hour late for school, explaining that when she saw a black cat, she had to go back home and take a different way to school.

Finally, there were two crafty girls, who started telling the future for "a mere 5 groszy" cash "for meal supplements." How accurate they were, I won't go into, but their "meal supplements" at the school buffet were really something, and the whole class had to watch as they stuffed themselves with chocolates and wafers, paid for by their classmates' desire to know their dark future.

That is how the last mania ended. What will fate bring us this time?

Biba from Radom

THE STREET OF POVERTY

This street has no name. It could be Karolkowa, or Gliniana, or Łucka, or Burakowska. It may be a lively street, or a deserted one. The only thing that's certain is that it's a street of poverty.

It doesn't have a specific character, but you can recognize it by its inhabitants.

They are as numbed to life as if by vodka, or a poison one is forced to drink.

On that street, no one will hear the sound of the latest news because the residents do not read the papers. There is no one there who is pulled into the swamp of politics because there are too many swamps of their own.

But on the bed of humility, calousness, grief, and dejection, hatred blooms. The goal of these people is not living, but staying alive.

"As long as we stay alive."

The inhabitant of such a street, as a primitive person, must fight, finding food by strength and wits.

That is why people from that street have thin, sunken faces, that is why they walk hunched over, as if under the heavy weight of life. That is why their children have no childhoods.

What do these people want?

They only want a right to live.

Officially, they have it, but in reality...

Ludwik Dal

ON THE WAY TO SCHOOL

Every day, I walk the same path,

At the same time of day.

Every day, I feel the same kind of freak

As yesterday morning.

I don't walk, but run as fast as I can,

Running breakneck through narrow streets,

Through disgusting alleys of a stinking park,

Through nasty alleys and filthy sidings,

I have to go through Simons' Passage,

Where the Mirilasowa School is.

A group of girls looks out the window,

And suddenly I hear it: someone's voice calling me!

I'm mad (and embarrassed)

At these awful girls' tricks.

I press my lips together, and flooded with anger,

Curse myself for being shy.

Once I make it past the hell of comments and faces,

And cool off from the heat of the moment,

I move away from the awful girls,

Walking the path of what you are also: a school prisoner.

Saul

A TRANSMISSION FROM THE FLU VS. ORANGE MATCH

Hello, hello! This is Otwock and all stations of the Little Review.

In a moment, the sensational match between the teams of Flu and Orange will begin. 25,000 residents of Otwock have signed up for the competition, led by orange sellers and doctors, who accuse the oranges of spreading the flu.

Making up the Flu team is a representation of students from all schools, as well as a number of teachers with the Chairman of the School Board himself.

The Orange team includes all of Otwock along with students of 5th grade from middle school no. 174. All competitors are dressed in orange shirts, with armbands and a supply of skins in their hands.

Among the guests, we see the troupe of the *Wesoły Wieczór* theater from the Poznań National Exhibition. The troupe, having taken up residence in the receiving salons of the Łopato confectioners, appeared with an inaugural performance called "Something for everyone." The troupe consists of some genius dwarves starting with the Czarski family. Among the other guests is Konrad Veidt, who rented a spacious room at the Oaza Cinema, incognito, as the Russian "Rasputin."

Attention! The referees are signaling. Right now, the center, that is the Zionist Hashomer Hatzair organization, starts a strong collection offensive, which is led by the delegate of Warsaw command. There are shouts:

"Down with oranges! Better put the money in a Keren Kayemeth LeIsrael can!"

The Hashomer Hatzair players score a goal, collecting 180 zloty in copper coins for the KKL, taken away from the orange sellers.

Hello! The tension is incredible. The spectators are on their feet. There is a dangerous situation at the Flu goal, in the vicinity of Meran, which has gone belly up. Only the Polish language professor in the blue socks remains on the hill. All players have run to the competing hill by the railroad embankment; the entire game is moving over there.

Just a moment... I have no words to adequately condemn this. A fight! A Flu player has stabbed an Orange player. The police are intervening.

The incident has been suppressed. The game is proceeding in the normal tempo. Neither of the teams is showing advantage. But... but... the entire crowd has suddenly run to the gate of middle school no. 174, where a dance organized by Brotherly Help is taking place, with an orchestra playing. Oranges are disappearing from the buffet and landing on the stage like flowers, as proof of the gratitude to the artists of the measure of Mr. Blaufuks, appearing in the double role of Tońcio and Szczepcio, and Hanka Drewitówna as Ordonówna.

Orange wins. Under the pressure of the students' verve and determination,

the Flu team leaves the field. We can hear the local doctors grinding their teeth.

The players are dancing the oberek. But uh oh, one feels bad, and another... The Flu attacks! Many of the players from the school representation are lying in bed.

If Orange doesn't score within 24 hours, they will lose the match.

Orange sends the last players from the Nordija sports club to the battlefield. The club immediately sets up a boxing division under the supervision of the coach of the Warsaw Maccabi. The pale faces of the flu sufferers are disappearing. Many players abandon the Flu team to take their first boxing steps, straight out of bed, even if their opponent happens to be their own sister. Enthusiasm fills the youth. Fists wrapped in towels start drumming. Their appetites grow, consumption of oranges increases.

In a moment, the referee will announce the defeat of the Flu. But... a terrible scare! The lead Orange player falls as if cut down. The spectators jump to their feet at the news that our new mayor, O. Salomonowicz and his family have been hit hard by the flu. Seven days of oranges.

Seven days of flu.

End result: a tie, 7:7.

Szlamek from Otwock (5th grade)

CURRENT NEWS

— C.A.J.P. in Paris announces a contest for school youth aged 14 to 18.

1st topic: "What thoughts come to mind on the subject of countries suffering due to excess of exchangeable products, which they cannot sell?"

Please provide a practical solution to this issue.

2nd topic: "How to establish and maintain a friendship with youth from one of the federated nations."

The deadline for sending in works is March 25th. A short biography should also be added to the work.

— The teacher's division of the Maritime and Colonial League, in order to commemorate the 15th anniversary of regaining access to the sea, has organized, in one of the rooms of the National Museum (on Al. 3-go Maja), a maritime exhibition, which includes, among others, the works of students of primary and secondary schools (drawings and boat, sailing ship and ship models). The exhibition will be open until the 28th of this month.

— On the 23rd of this month, the first proms will take place: the Z. Kalecka Middle School with the Kryński Middle School, the Teacher's Union Association Middle School with the "Spójnia" Middle School.

— The Physical Education Teacher's Union is organizing an intra-mural skiing competition for students of secondary and vocational schools,

as well as teachers' schools, from February 22nd to March 9th.

— An exhibition of paintings by J. Adler, an artist refugee from Germany, is currently being held on the premises of the United Committee to Fight the Persecution of Jews in Germany (8 Króla Alberta Street). The exhibition is open from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Admission is free.

— The "Masada" Youth Zionist Organization is organizing a raffle lottery, proceeds from which will be donated to the Ch. N. Bialik library. Each ticket costs 25 groszy. The draw will take place tomorrow, February 23rd, at 8:30 a.m., at the Menora (9 Żabia Street).

— On Saturday, February 23rd, at 3:30 p.m., the Polski and Letni theaters will stage discounted shows for young people. Polski will present "Forefathers' Eve," while Letni will present the comedy "Wicek and Wacek."

— On Sunday, February 24th, at 12 p.m., the Baj Puppet Theater will present a comedy for children at the Conservatory: "About the Poor Lobster and the Weirdo Trout."

— The administration of the Summer Camp Society of public schools for Jewish children will present a play for children, "Staś the Pilot," tomorrow, February 23rd, at 12:30 p.m. at the Young Viewer's Theater (18 Karowa Street). ■

MUSIC SHOWS FOR YOUTH

The concert, announced for 4 o'clock, aroused so much interest among young people that over a quarter of an hour before the beginning of the program, the hall was overflowing. The moments of waiting are filled with conversation. The fragments of sentences that reach us prove that in general, the initiative of Professors M. Centnerszwer and L. Weiner, undertaken to carry out the School Board recommended plan for musicalization of secondary schools, was accepted by youth with great affection and understanding.

The bell rings. The first rows are crowded. Excitement. Then silence. Mr. Maksymilian Centnerszwer with his Spanish beard appears on the stage, and responds to the loud applause from the audience with an embarrassed bow. A stack of cards makes its way from his pocket into his hand.

"Haydn's piano trio," he says, and starts to discuss the piece.

After a successful mission, he retreats into the back with the accompaniment of spirited applause. The next batch of applause goes to the

surprised janitor, who unexpectedly appears on stage. Perhaps we didn't miss. After all, he deserves some recognition as well. Finally, the trio appears. Welcome, welcome!

Mr. Fiszhaut seriously takes his seat at the piano, Mr. Ginzburg picks up the violin, and Mr. Weiner runs the bow across the cello.

In absolute silence, the rhythmic sounds of the "Andante" ring out, followed by "Poco adagio" hurrying in at an even pace, and finally "Rondo all'ongarese."

A short pause, after which the melodic and fiery "Aria" by Bach, Mozart's "Minuet," and François Francœur's "Sicilienne et Rigaudon" tug at the heartstrings.

After the songs performed by Mr. Elman, whose pure, strong bass evokes genuine admiration, our hands thunder long and vigorously.

The program includes Schubert's "My Home" and "The Sea," Schumann's "Two Grenadiers" and "Lotus Flower." Once again, we listen with delight to Mr. Elman.

A true hurricane of applause meets the choir of the Jewish Musical Society, which, under the baton of our beloved Professor L. Weiner and with the accompaniment of his wife, achieves a true success. Artistry and hard work are obvious in the performance. Carried away by the mood, we clapped without pause. Encore, encore!

Mr. Weiner lets himself be convinced and the choir sings a song titled "Sailing." This is a fragment from "The Crimean Sonnets" by Mickiewicz, set to music by Moniuszko.

Again, people shout, encore, encore! This time, however, without effect.

"We can't. We have to vacate the room. The next concert is in the planning stages."

"Program! What will be the program!"

At the last minute, I found out that the concert will take place at the Conservatory on Sunday, February 24th, at 4 p.m. Tickets, as always are available in school offices, or at the ticket office of the Conservatory before the show.

Lilka H.

19TH MAIL DELIVERY

The best works of this past week (up to February 15th): "Juvenile court files" and "The death of Maniek Kruszyna."

Manuscripts suitable for printing: Biba's correspondence from Radom, Kuba H.'s "Lottery outlet," Bela from Vilnius' "Norway," Lenka from Częstochowa's "Boys on the question of women's equal rights, Szlamek's "Skating competition in Otwock," Rita's "The girl;" letters – Dianka from Sapieżyńska Street, Sonia from Muranowska Street, Fela from Będzin, Es-Zet from Będzin, Bela from Solna Street, Różia from Pawia Street, Renia from Włocławek. Meir's and Samuel's articles about Maimonides will be reviewed on March 6th.

ANSWERS:

Alina – The work is worth describing. Your friend can receive tips at the newsroom (Sunday, 4 p.m.).

Cesia – Thank you for the honest and substantive critique.

Losia from Tel-Aviv – Please send us more correspondence from Palestine.

Dawid Litman (14 y.o. – Koło nad Wartą),

May (14 y.o. – Warsaw).

I. O. (14 y.o. – Warsaw),

Fela Wajcemberzanka (15 y.o. – Będzin),

Enge (15 y.o. – Warsaw),

A. R. (16 y.o. – Częstochowa).

There was a strong advantage of the "middle" group (12–13 y.o.). For the first time, the girls won all the awards.

In the next issue, the Little Review will begin to print the winning and honorably mentioned works. ■

CONTEST RESULTS

92 works were sent in for the contest, including 41 on the subject "A day of my own accord," 42 stories about life, and 9 humorous pieces on the subject "Period."

"A DAY OF MY OWN ACCORD"

First prize – 25 zloty – was awarded for the work titled "Where Thebes

stood." Author: Ina Ostryńska, 13 y.o., Warsaw.

Second prize of 15 zloty is awarded to Cilla Mandelbaumówna (12 y.o., Warsaw) for the work titled "At the shomer camp."

STORIES "ABOUT LIFE"

1st prize – 25 zloty – S. D. from Łódź (15 y.o.) for "Biography."

2nd prize – 15 zloty – Dorka from Zamość (16 y.o.) for the story "Tojbe Ruchcia."

HUMOROUS PIECE

There were no winners.

Authors whose works earned an honorable mention:

Mira Bajtnerówna (12 y.o. – Zawiercie),

Alfred Goldstein (12 y.o. – Paris),

Marek Nojar (12 y.o. – Warsaw),

Gustaw Redelman (12 y.o. – Warsaw),

Salek Rabinowicz (13 y.o. – Warsaw),

Gustaw Wójcikiewicz (13 y.o. – Warsaw).

I. F. (13 y.o. – Warsaw).

Jakób from Vilnius – The poems are not very good. In regards to becoming a contributor, you can get in touch with the lead correspondent for Vilnius: Bela Kinkulkinówna, Wielka Pohulanka 17, apt. 6, Sunday, 3-4 p.m.).

Stanisław W. – This was why we requested you come to the newsroom. You would have received an answer if you had shown up on Sunday, February 10th.

DEADLINES FOR SENDING IN MATERIALS:

urgent mentions for the next issue – Sunday, February 24th, for the Purim issue – Friday, March 1st;

"Maimonides" – Tuesday, March 5th; for the spring issues – Monday, March 15th at the latest;

for the summer issues – before April 1st.

ADDITIONALLY, THE FOLLOWING

WROTE TO THE LITTLE REVIEW FOR THE FIRST TIME: Alpert B. – Eisenberg N. – Fajerman Saluś. – Frajdenrajch Fajwel. – Gertzówna Basia. – Goldberg Symek. – Graff Reginka. – Jabłonowicz Szmul. – Kupfer Renia. – Lichtszajn Niusia. – Lubelski Josek. – Muentz Kalman. – Obligharc L. – Pinesówna Alinka. – Stendówna Genia. – Wołkowicz Basia.

We received 62 letters from Warsaw, 41 from the province, 2 from abroad, total – 105.

ADAM M. MAZUREK PEOPLE ARE GROWING UP...

A LITTLE REVIEW NOVEL
REPRINTING PROHIBITED

PART ONE: HOME

How much joy the violin brought!

Yes, a shiny violin! So light, so loved! It turned out that Marek has an ear for music. The music teacher, Mr. B, is very pleased with him. He says that Marek will very quickly surpass Paweł in playing. Yes, the guy has talent, and mom always thought that Marek was a clumsy oaf and that he would never amount to anything.

Zdzicho was the funniest. He was given a small violin, shiny and fragrant, and couldn't understand in the first few days, that it was really, really real. He thought it was just a toy, a little red violin made out of plywood, that only made pitiful squealing sounds. He had one like it twice before. Their lives ended quickly because Zdzicho was always curious what was inside and how they made sounds.

There was only a small problem with Marysia. A girl, she should play the piano. No, there's no law that says this, but it's just the way it is. And where to get a piano? It's quite an expense, after all! Marysia is smart enough to realize that there would be no playing the piano and that it was better to just let the matter go, when her mother sat her on the ottoman and explained in a friendly talk about their financial situation – her father's money problems. Yes, there are more expenses now and daddy is having a very hard time handling them all with his salary.

Marysia understands this. She isn't Marek, after all. No, she doesn't want to make her parents' life more difficult. She'll make do without music, although... she would really, really like it. And since it's important to daddy that she also play the violin, she does it gladly. Daddy says that when you play with four people, that's called a quartet. Such quartets often play at concerts. Soon enough, they'll have their own quartet, made up of Marysia, Paweł, Marek and Zdzicho, and they'll play successful concerts in backyards.

So, there's croaking noise in the house, enough to make "the ears bleed," as mommy complains. It's no surprise – four players, each of whom tries to play the loudest. Because the louder, the better!

True – Paweł and Zdzicho's enthusiasm faded a lot after a few weeks' playing. After all, who has that much patience? They thought they would play a bit and then they would be able to play "numbers." And instead, it's practice and practice and no end in sight. Who knows if they'll know how in a year? Such naïveté! They thought it was like a harmonica – just lift it up to your mouth and play.

One time, Paweł didn't prepare his exercise. Mr. B told mommy about this, mommy told daddy, and daddy called a family meeting.

There was no reason to talk a lot, to get emotional, make a scene or try and encourage playing. The matter is simple. Nobody is forcing the violin on anyone. If someone doesn't want to play, they should say so openly and stop playing. Learning in school is mandatory but music is not.

And instead of talking about music, daddy gave a talk about the unemployed. There are so many of them now. It is more and more difficult to find work. More and more difficult to make a living on the skills of reading and writing, because today, nearly everyone can do that. Which means you have to know more. There is a lot of competition between those who want to work. Because if I want to hire someone, I'd rather hire someone who knows more than others for the same amount of money. For example, they know foreign languages because that can come in handy. A person who knows more than others also has a better time making a living. They've finished school and can't find a job in an office, but they know how to play the violin; and so they can get a job as a musician or give music lessons. Everything is useful in life. Yes, you have to know everything you can, even though you might not use that knowledge. Just in case.

Marysia and Paweł understood daddy very well. And Paweł decided that he would not only work diligently on the music himself, but also make sure Zdzicho did the same.

* * *

Some of Paweł's friends are inviting themselves to the workshop. They would also like to work.

But how to decide who's allowed and who's not? This one is good, and so is that one. If you invite one and not the others, they'll get offended. Better not to invite anyone at all.

These friends started telling stories about Paweł's "miracles," about the new order, the student council. They tell stories and they envy him. Their mothers listen and more and more often advise their sons to be friends with Paweł, to go to him because he is a good and decent boy.

Ha ha ha! A "good" and "decent" boy. Since when? Until recently, he was a reprobate, the worst bully under the sun, the kind that nothing good can grow out of. How many people cried because of him, had black eyes or broken noses? It even got so bad that if someone's son got into trouble at school, the mother would blame Paweł immediately. She would assure the homeroom teacher that her son wasn't like that, that he was a good and exemplary boy, who fell under the bad influence of Paweł and was spoiled.

Yes, until recently, he heard the song constantly. And now, suddenly, a decent boy, one of the most decent.

Paweł thinks about this and feels proud that they talk about him this way. He has shown all those mothers who think they know better that they were very wrong. They missed the target entirely.

And Paweł thinks about the fact that he has actually improved. He doesn't fight in school, he doesn't break windows. As if with a wave of a magic wand, he's changed completely. Paweł and not-Paweł. Another boy.

When did that happen?

This puzzles him. He wonders: when did he stop fighting? He puzzles over this, but nothing comes of it. Because

how can he remember when he stopped beating people up? If he didn't beat anyone, that means nothing was happening.

And if nothing was happening, of course he couldn't possibly remember it.

Despite this, his "decentness" won't let him be. He thinks about his behavior during breaks at school. He's starting to understand. Really, it's so simple, and he didn't think of it right away. In the past, he ran around like crazy on breaks, throwing himself this way and that, and he had a lot of opportunities to hit, run over, or bump people. And now? Right after the bell, he's surrounded by his classmates, whom he tells about what he is currently working on in the workshop and how he's doing it. He also talks about his plans and future inventions. His classmates listen with envy burning in their eyes, and Paweł gets excited by his own stories and – let's be honest – the tall tales about inventions. Later the boys ask him questions. This one and that babbles on about his own invention attempts, although he doesn't have a workshop. And then, the conversation slowly moves on to cars and planes. What if they could build a plane?

The boys' eyes light up. They dream out loud and the high-pitched whine of the bell irritates them increasingly often, interrupting their talk at the best and most interesting moment.

Only now does Paweł see that his father was right about reading. Recently, he read about a man who built his own boat and crossed the ocean in it. Not many people saw the book. Brash Paweł is proud that his friends listen to him so eagerly and pepper him with questions. One makes a joke, another says something smart. Inventions and travels give the boys no rest.

Paweł has recently noticed that his friends have started treating him, how to put it – with respect. Paweł, he's not just anyone! Paweł is the owner of a workshop! Paweł is a future inventor! Everyone wants to be his friend and, as they say, sucks up to him.

Yes, he understands why he became a "decent" boy. He simply doesn't have time to get into trouble. He has been absorbed by various interests. In the past, he had a lot of free time and nearly zero interests, so he was up to no good and always getting into trouble.

Paweł has grown more serious in his own eyes. In his speech, he tries to imitate his father. He speaks slowly and smiles, tries to make jokes at the same time. If anyone else behaved like this, the boys would mock him for playing the fool. But Paweł? The owner of a workshop who reads interesting books, receives a weekly salary, and is the strongest in his class? Well, if such a bold one were to be found...

And Paweł really likes the role of the decent boy!

* * *

Various boys' mothers are inviting Paweł to come over, to visit Janek, or Olek. And to be friends with them. The mommies would really like that.

Paweł excuses himself with a lack of time. And on top of that, all the talk from the painted ladies irritates him.

He can't stand it. Always those silly and irritating questions: how is he, what's going on, and how is he doing in school? He never knows how to answer. And besides, they never speak to him directly, honestly, the way adults talk to each other. No, they pretend to be very smart and very understanding of his age. And the smiles on their faces are fake. The conversations feel like he's three or four years old.

Paweł hates being treated this way. All boys do. It's especially offensive to him that some mothers try to force their sons on him as friends. What does "she" have to say about this? He'll be friends with whoever he likes. Every mommy thinks that her son is perfect and unique. Yes, perhaps in her eyes. But for Paweł, a boy like that was and will be a numbskull, good for nothing. What would it be like if he tried to force one mom on another as a friend? They'd get mad at him.

But some mommies hear so much from their sons about Paweł, about his workshop, about the fact that he can drink water without control, and other marvelous things he does, that they do not give up. They can get what they want and force Paweł to be friends with their sons. They wouldn't be able to forgive themselves if their son was not friends with the valued boy that Paweł unquestionably is. What's the telephone for? They call his mother. They apologize for being so presumptuous, since they do not know her personally, but... And they talk a lot about what they have heard, about the extraordinary son she has, congratulate her on Paweł, etc. Their boys, coming back from Saturday parties, tell them so many beautiful things that they are simply amazed!

Paweł gets angry when his mom repeats these conversations to Mrs. Antoniowa, who listens with her mouth wide open. And what irritates him the most is that his mom buys it all, that she's happy and flushed. Tomorrow, there will probably be a delicious cake for afternoon tea. But these ladies purposefully fib to mother.

On top of that, mother peppers him with questions: why isn't he friends with the son of Mrs. M? Does he even know who she is? Or the son of Mrs. Z? He's being silly, and that's that! He should invite them to his workshop. Mother would like that.

Mother says one thing, Paweł another. He's not doing it out of spite. He won't invite them because Mrs. M's son is a complete dolt and very difficult to get along with (he's a selfish pouter). Who doesn't know that? No, Paweł won't invite him!

Mommy is not happy. She practically promised Mrs. M. So, she invites Mrs. M's son herself.

And that... that was too much for Paweł's patience.

Today, a new bulletin board was hung in the dining room, made by the boys in the workshop. There are no announcements on it yet, but there will be! Paweł has hung out a note. He asks the family to convene an urgent meeting on a very important matter.

What's happened?

Marek and Zdzicho and Marysia, mother and father, all pester Paweł for answers. But he just clenches his teeth and says nothing. Not before the meeting. That's what it's for. They'll find out then.

* * *

That day, reading was put aside.

Daddy is also curious. For the first time, he convenes a meeting at the request of a younger member of the family council.

The chairman rings the bell and cedes the floor to Paweł. Please, we're listening! Paweł turns pale! His heart is pounding so hard it's practically in his throat, making it impossible to talk. He gets tongue tied and can't say what he wants to. The words flow from his throat of their own will, and not really the ones he had planned to say.

Daddy sees his nervousness. So far, he's been talking nonsense. But that's nothing. He'll get control in a moment. Doesn't the same thing happen to adults, before they get practice in public speaking?

Paweł got himself under control now. Everyone is listening carefully. He's making very serious accusations against mother. And of course, everyone will admit he's right. Mother has no right to impose friends on him. It's quite ridiculous, coming from her. Oh, Zosia, Zosieńka – daddy reproaches mommy in his heart.

And Paweł has started talking for good now. Grown-ups don't understand us. Our matters are silly things to them. At every step, they reproach me for being a child. And a child is practically like a pet dog. People pet it and joke with it, and they talk to me jokingly in many homes, like I was a savage of some sort or a dwarf. It makes me very angry when they talk to me jokingly, like I wouldn't be able to understand them.

Paweł finished and sat, very pale. Silence fell, until father broke it.

"I'm very glad that you spoke so honestly today, Paweł. Believe me, I understand you very well, and I am grateful for revealing your troubles to us. You are right about many things, but not all of them. Sometimes, you speak out of oversensitivity and you unjustly judge adults. The reason we have a family council is that we do not consider you or others to be 'pet dogs,' as you so unfortunately phrased it. No, I consider you to be a person, a small person. Children are small people who have weaker fists and shorter legs, but understand their matters well, just as adults understand theirs. And only because I considered you to be small people, I wasn't worried about speaking with you openly and honestly, although your mother warned me that you would become shameless and difficult to handle because of it. No, I wasn't worried about that because I believed that we could come to an understanding. Because you can always talk with reasonable people. And you can reach an understanding with small people more often than with adults. Truly."

There was a pause. Daddy's voice trembled suspiciously. He cleared his throat loudly.

"It isn't true, young people, as before – our life is not that bad. Today, things at home are better than a few months ago. A year from now, it will be even better. It's a matter of making it through the next few years in harmony. Because later, you will grow from small people into adults, and your mother and I will be old. And we will be glad to see that our small people have grown into decent members of society, who in the future, when they are parents, will be able to deal with and live with their small people a hundred times better. Because we started and we didn't know how it should be done yet.

Paweł is right. You wanted to hurt him, Zosieńka. We have no right to impose anyone's company on anyone else. Everyone chooses their friends according to their own preferences."

And then there was a very solemn moment, when mother admitted to her blunder and apologized to Paweł.

(TBC)

HANELE AND HERSZELE

I have been living on the same street for six years. That is a very long time for me – more than half my life. I have observed the life in our back yard very well.

The back yard wakes up at dawn. People get up; some go to work, others stay home.

I stand at the window. Through the frost-covered glass, I can barely see the plume of smoke rising from the chimney of the bakery. The plume slowly drifts into thin, gray swirls that soon cover the entire sky.

It is eight o'clock. The first arrival to the back yard is a thin bagel vendor, dressed poorly, but neatly in a slightly too-long coat – whitened with flour at the sleeve – and black shoes on his feet. He puts the large basket of slightly burned bagels and shouts at the top of his lungs: "Kokhedike bagel! Kokhedike bagel!"

After the bagel vendor, a thin Jew of advanced age arrives and shouts: "Umbrellas! Umbrellaas! Umbreeellaas! Umbrellas bought, sold, repaired!"

And then I know that the raven-haired Hanele waits for Herszele, who will come out to play with her soon.

Herszele arrives shortly, holding a pail in his hand – Hanele has a small metal shovel and wooden molds.

"Come on, we'll make mud pies, the dirt is good over there," Herszele says, pointing to black, muddy dirt in the corner of the yard.

Hanele collects the toys and together with Herszele, they head to the indicated place. They dig together enthusiastically. Herszele spits into the pail, "so that the dirt will be soft." They work perhaps for ten minutes. They have managed to make six mud pies in two rows. They are very satisfied. Herszele smiles at Hanele, who continues to dig in the dirt. From the opposite side of the yard, a shabbily-dressed boy runs out. He watches for a moment, and then stomps on the mud pies with laughter. Herszele starts crying. Hanele runs complaining to her mother, who shakes her fist at the bully. He, pleased with himself, runs out of the yard to brag to his friends.

The children go back to their game, but now, when they see someone nearby, they guard the pies with their bodies.

A young, beautiful woman has sat in front of the window on the first floor. A beautifully dressed, tall Gypsy woman with coffee-colored skin comes into the yard and raises her melodious voice:

"Fortune-telling, card reading," as if she wanted to mock the young woman singing "O'key, o'key!" in the window.

She hasn't left the yard yet when a ragged boy with a packet of newspapers under his arm passes her. And as every day, his voice echoes in the yard: "Fraynd, tseeeen groshen!"

But at that moment, a policeman stopped him and took his packet of newspapers, telling him "confiscation." With the packet of confiscated papers and the constable accompanying him, he headed for the newsroom.

Meanwhile, without a break until dinner, and from dinner until evening, Herszele and Hanele play together, relentlessly making mud pies. At 9 in the evening, the backyard falls to sleep.

In the spring, the children in the back yard abandon the pleasant game of making mud pies and spend entire days playing tag. And their mothers, as mothers do, always have to stand in their way. Sometimes they not only won't let the children play, but will give them a solid beating. Because today, while Chaimek was playing tag, he ran around and spilled Rajzla's pot of milk, so his mother is on him, yelling at him so much.

But neither beating, nor complaints or curses from the mothers can cool the enthusiasm for playing. And every morning, when the children gather in the yard, Chaimek steps out of the group and starts to count:

"Eeny, meeny, miny, moe, catch a tiger by the toe. If he hollers, let him go, eeny, meeny, miny, moe. My mother told me/says to pick the very best one, and that is Y-O-U."

And the "U" always seems to fall on Hanele. And then I see her, hidden in the corner of the yard, her face covered with her hands: she's "it" in the game. And I keep hearing Hanele's voice, asking "ready?" and the children's answers of "not yet... not yet... not yet... ready!"

Hanele is a dutiful "it." Not once does she sneak a peek at the children while they hide. And it just so happens that fat Szlamek is always "it" after her – the children say that he has "three strikes."

When the white snowflakes swirl in the air and the ground is covered with a thick layer of them, some children, Herszele among them, pull out their sleds from their hiding places. And then you can see Hanele, pulling the yellow sled that Herszele is sitting on. He drives Hanele on with a harness with bells on it, shouting "faster, faster, yes!" with a satisfied smile on his face.

Hanele dreams... She dreams of having a sled like Herszele does. She would sit on it like a queen, and someone would pull her along, and she would urge them on and call out, "faster, faster, yes!"

Nobody pays attention to them. The young woman still sits at the window, humming popular songs, seeming to look out onto the yard, but she doesn't see the small pair. Hanele pulls the sled and dreams... One moment, it seems that she has a real sled of her own, sits on it comfortably, someone pulls it along, sliding through the snowy space, and she drives them on and calls, "faster, faster, yes!"

And it sees that the sky, and the snow-whitened asphalt, and the toothy grin of the tenement, the whole world seems to call out an accompaniment for the young pair – Hanele and Herszele – in the snowy yard:

"Faster, faster, yes..."

Marek N. (12 years old)

READER UPDATES

TO THE PHILATELISTS

This is a request to the readers who collect postage stamps for an answer to this question:

I have an album that my brother-in-law Salek bought for me. I have stamps from twenty countries. I only don't know how they should be put into the album, what glue I should use, and whether I should put glue on the whole stamp or only on the edge?

Miecio from Miła Street

ANIMAL FEEDING SOCIETY

We have founded an Animal Feeding Society. Along with me, there were six children in it.

The society's work required us to collect leftovers from dinner and take them out to the dogs and the sparrows. The dogs grew to like us a lot, and we liked Lalka the dog the most.

Iwka from Sienna Street

AN EXAM

On Saturday, I had an exam with Mr. Lefeld, a music professor. I was very curious to see how my exam would go and whether I would play well.

My teacher came to pick me up. I took the 0 tram to Okólnik to the Conservatory. I had to wait, because the professor was busy; there was a boy playing. I sat there on pins and needles.

Finally, I sat at the piano and played. I was very scared that I wouldn't do well. I breathed a sigh of relief when the professor praised me.

I came back home happy. I have to say that Mr. Lefeld is a very good and nice man.

Hala from Lubeckiego Street

HE WAS MY ENEMY

When I had a fight with my friend, he started calling me "crutchy," because I walk with a crutch. It wasn't pleasant, but I didn't say anything because I thought he would get tired of it soon and stop.

Nothing helped, though because he kept calling me names. I was upset, and I decided to talk with him about it. I met him on the street, so I went up to him.

"Say, friend, you are still young and something could happen to you that's far worse than what happened to me, so please stop calling me names."

And he said: "but I want to do it."

I knew nothing would help, so I stopped paying attention to it.

Until one day, on the way back from school, I heard that he had broken a leg. Although he was my enemy, I was very worried and I decided to visit him.

As soon as I came into his home, he looked me in the eye.

"You were right. I made a huge mistake."

Since then, we have lived in great harmony.

Mosze from Nowolipki Street

A SICK FINGER

During the break, I was sitting on a bench in the hallway. Then a 2nd

grade student jumped on the bench and crushed my finger. I soaked it in cold water and it hurt a little less. The bell rang. I had Hebrew class.

When I was coming into the classroom, my finger started hurting again. I asked the teacher to let me go put iodine on it. The teacher got mad and shouted:

"It seems like I didn't tell you all to get inside!"

So I stayed, although the other boys said that they wouldn't have listened.

After classes, my finger kept hurting more and more, and now I have pus in it and I have to go to a surgeon so he can take my nail off.

Józef from Nowolipie Street

HE KEPT FIDDLING WITH IT

I went to visit my uncle on Saturday. My cousin Lutek has a bicycle and he drove me around the rooms on it.

When everyone was sitting at the table and talking, I went up to the bike quietly and started fiddling with it. I kept fiddling with it for so long that I broke it.

I was very worried. My uncle cheered me up.

"Don't worry, if you hadn't broken it now, Lutek certainly would have."

Toluś from Muranowska Street

WILD AND TAMED

Daddy brought a big bag from the city. At first, we didn't pay attention to it, but after a few seconds, we heard cooing and claws scratching at paper from inside.

Curious, I put my hand into the bag and to my great surprise, pulled out a beautiful pair of white doves.

We made a temporary cage for them. Then we fed them peas, water, and wheat. They didn't want to eat and we had to put peas into their beaks. Later they became a bit more tame and ate willingly.

Once daddy tied back their wings and let them free. They walked around the roof calmly and didn't think about escaping at all. Then daddy untied their wings. The doves spent whole days out of the house and only came back to the cage in the evenings. They were so tame that they could fly wherever they wanted.

Until one day, the male ran away. The female missed him a lot and flew away, too. We were sad. Daddy brought us another pair, but they were so wild and badly behaved, that daddy let them go himself.

Elżunia from Sienna Street

MANEUVERS

I heard a rumble. Curious, I ran to the window. Soldiers were marching in the square in front of our building. Cannons rumbled and cavalry cantered.

I ran outside. I met a friend there. He said they were maneuvers. The soldiers were divided into the white army and the red – the enemy.

In the meantime, the army kept going. A car with pennants drove by. And then the shooting started. After that, it was quiet until the next day.

The next day, the army was marching again. The red army was retreating. Soon after came the front scouts of the white army. The scouts tracked the red army and reported back to their soldiers. The white army started the attack. Soldiers ran with rifles.

The army gathered in Kościuszki Square. From there, smaller units were sent out to attack. The cannons roared (only pretend) every few moments. Then the army moved on and the rest of the day was quiet.

The next day the rumble came again. The red army was coming back. It turned out that the red army won, even though they had retreated from Łomża. Two regiments of the victorious army passed through Łomża.

Bunio from Łomża

BRAIN TEASERS

CORRECT SOLUTIONS TO BRAIN TEASERS WERE SENT BY: Elżunia B., Lulek Berkowicz, Jakób Bichman, Edzia from Słonim, Kuba Grünbaum, Hela Grynberg, Krysia Grynglas, Marek Krewer, Motek Lederman, Hadasa Lewinsztein, A. Majblat, Samek Majeran, Emanuel Mazelman, Moniek Najman, Kielcia Ogórek, Chylek Ostry, Oleś Perle, Dusia Pir, W. Rajchman.

JOKES

DISHONORABLE

Count X has an American duel: he has drawn a black marble, and so he has to kill himself. The letters have been written, the last will and testament composed. His friends, his seconds, give him a revolved and lock him in a room. After a moment, there is a gunshot, and everyone rushes into the room. The count sits in his chair with a smoking revolved in his hand, and smiles at the people coming in.

"What's happened?" His friends ask him in surprise.

"Nothing... I missed."

"But no nobody will shake your hand!"

"And if I was dead, who would?"

THE BEAUTY OF DEAD THINGS

Little Jaś saw his grandmother's dentures in a glass with water.

"Grandma," he called out. "Grandma! Something's laughing at me from inside the glass."

MECHANICS

"How is that watch you got as a present working?"

"Incredible. It covers an hour in 45 minutes."

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