

Czarnina Kid (Lincoln Ave.)

This is the city: Milwaukee. My name: Kaszuba¹ Michaels. My job: I'm a cop.

A chief called me early one morning with a choice of assignments. I had a choice in checking new recruits in musket repair, check the con men who were spiking the parking meter on Mitchell's Street, where the streetcar bends the corner around, or play drop the *kiszka*² on Lincoln Avenue. My choice: Lincoln Avenue.

Lincoln Avenue... from 6th Street all the way to 16th. The world's loneliest most heart-breaking mile. All kinds of people—big and small, good and evil—I knew them all on Lincoln Avenue. It was Friday, September 13th, I was following up a complaint from the store, that someone was sabotaging his business. The same old story: some con-man trying to work the protection racket on Mrs. Olajowski's *czernina*.³

There I was at Kuzmatka's browsing through the latest issue of *Nowiny polski*,⁴ when in came Stanley Kołeczowski and Kazimier Indrzejewski, As they approached, they shouted, "Dzień Dobry!"⁵

I looked and said, "Dziękuję!"⁶ And they answered, "Gene Autry!"

There we were, three Polish cowboys. We put our heads together and tried to trade them for one good head on a tall glass of beer. It didn't work, so I went home to sleep on it... uh, the problem, not the beer. "How could I catch the Czarnina Kid?" I'd know him anywhere. I knew the type: small beady eyes, breathing fire and smoke.

¹ Kashubian

² liver

³ duckblood soup

⁴ *Polish news*

⁵ "Good morning!"

⁶ "Thank you!"

And then as I turned the corner around, I found myself behind two pedestrians returning from market. The one was saying, “Did you see my new glasses?” “Bi-focal?” And the first answered, “No. By Schusters!”⁷

The next morning early, I got from under my *pierzyny*⁸ to go to the store for some schnacks, ‘cause there was some kielbasa and some bagel on the stove. Stella, that skinny devil, was shaking the carpets. And when I left, Wanda, that lazy rascal, was making tunis in donuts [[unintelligible]]. “How could I catch the Czarnina Kid?”

I stopped by the store to get 10-cents lunch meat, easy on the boiled ham. The grocer was waiting on the lady ahead of me. “How much are schnacks?” “Two for five.” “Well then, give me.”

Just then Kołeczowski and Indrzejewski, my two able assistants, came in. “Dzień Dobry!” “Dziękuję!” “Gene Autry!”

As soon as the formalities was over, I turned to the grocer to give my order. Suddenly, I caught something out of the corner of my eye: there was a hair in the *kiszka*!

The Czarnina Kid was here. I looked at the customer ahead of me. There was something suspicious about her, about the clothes she wore. And then suddenly I knew, that she was the Czarnina Kid!

“How did you know that copper?” “Because you dress formal. You got sequins on your tennis shoes and rhinestones on your blue jeans.

“Dzień Dobry!” “Dziękuję!” “Gene Autry!”

⁷ local department store chain in Milwaukee

⁸ down-filled duvet

The Czarnina Kid was brought to trial and convicted on two counts of confidence racket and one count of overeating, and was sentenced to three years of hard labor, gathering empty *piwa*⁹ cans in Kaszusko Park. This closes the case of the Czarnina Kid!

Transcription and translation by Julia d'Anderle de Sylor

⁹ beer