

Madmen

In Częstochowa, just as in any city, there were also madmen, each of whom had his [or her] own unique idiosyncrasies and notions:

Mechel “Meshigener” [Madman] set fire to his own house and yelled, “*The river is burning!*”

“Tzimmes”¹ – his real name was Jehoszua [Szyja]. His mother died when he was young and he became mentally ill. He ran about in the summer and winter, in the greatest frosts, almost naked, his body covered with a few torn rags. In the great frosts of 1929, he slept in the attic of the house of Jankel Dawidowicz (a coal trader), without any bedding or clothes. He was strong and tough, enduring cold and hunger. Like an animal, he ate the rubbish that he found in the greens market.

On “Bloody Monday”, the German gendarmerie herded the Jews to Zawodzie and, as a mockery, made them parade before “Tzimmes”. In the harsh winter of 1940-1941, “Tzimmes”, despite his strong constitution, perished of hunger and cold.

Moritz Dawid² was a water-carrier for the baker Kornberg at ul. Narutowicza 11 and slept there in the bakery.

Rude’le was the wife of Moritz Dawid the water-carrier. Their marriage was arranged by the *Hachnuses Kalleh*³ Society. However, she did not live with him, because she was fond of Gode’le.

Gode’le worked for a brush-maker. Every evening, he would come to the First Aleja to meet with his sweetheart Rude’le.

Little Riwe’le⁴ did her rounds on the First Aleja, holding up every person in the street, above all the women, that they should give her something. Children were afraid of her due to her physical deformity.

“Meshigene” Ruchel ran about in the streets screaming.

Hercke, Awrume’le and Gerszon were mentally ill, but peaceful. To earn a living, they worked as water-carriers.

The Catholic was a deranged woman, who would make the children gather round and speak to them.

¹ [TN: *Yid.*, a type of sweet carrot-based stew;

² [TN: As both Moritz and Dawid can either be given names or surnames, it is not clear which was which in this case; we have found no record of him or his subsequently mentioned estranged wife in the official records.]

³ [TN: *Heb.*; *lit.*, “bringing the bride into (the chuppah)”]; this type of organisation provides charitable support for poor young women to be wed.]

⁴ [TN: As mentioned in *Sefer Częstochowa*, Vol. I, in the chapter “Our City’s Characters”, Little Riwe’le was a dwarf.]

Nuse'le "Pijak" [Drunkard] was a specialist at coming to weddings to have a couple of drinks and eat.

"Kole Wole" [?] followed the same path as his colleague Nuse'le "Pijak".