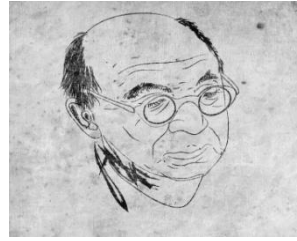


(...) I remembered him from before, when he was selling pretzels here on the corner, by Drobnerówka, in the beautiful, wooden pavilion which used to exist back then. That must have been in the early 50s.



<http://tinyurl.com/stoberskiada>

And I remembered him selling those pretzels because he was a **real character**, a short guy in glasses, with blue eyes.



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He told me that he gave up middle school before the war, because **he wanted to train his body and soul** — he was living in Krzemionki, in some cave, and he carried people across the Vistula River in his own flat-bottom boat. He was doing that until the residents of the Dębniaki area came and attacked him during the night, because **they thought he was a sorcerer practicing some sort of magic**.

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(...) before the war he made a trip around Poland, on foot, because he rejected both the tram and the train.



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He took to his backpack rice and a spirit cooker, but at one point the cooker broke and he had to eat the rice raw — this gave him volvulus and he was lying in bushes, somewhere in the Pomeranian region, until it passed.

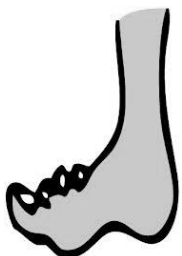


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He went, on foot, also to see his fiancée in a village, during the occupation, he even **walked to Zakopane** — two nights and one day, or one night and two days, **sleeping where he could**, by the roadside.

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Once he came to Zakopane bathed in sweat, he had passed through an icy stream, got **leg cramps**, the highlanders pulled him out, laid him in the attic and **he was lying there hungry for a few days** until the cramps passed.



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He often told me such stories about how tough he was because he had a complex about his manhood. **His masculinity had no outlet**, because he was ugly, and the girls only liked him because they could take his money, but none wanted to stay with him.



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He smelled bad because he was a diabetic. **The stink in his apartment was awful**, he tried to temper it with tree branches and juniper, but nothing worked. **The dirt, the stink, the darkness.** And there he sat, covered in rugs, because he was always sick, he would doze, write, doze, write, then go out, visit his friends' apartments, mostly beautiful married women (**he was drawn to feminine beauty**).

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(...) **great quantities of filthy sheets** on the bed, where he reclined or lay and wrote, in the winter he kept his legs moving for warmth, he also **warmed his legs with newspaper**.



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I remember a **reading he gave at a dorm**, I was sitting there with him and Czycz — and I noticed that some **girls were staring at our legs** under the table and laughing, nudging each other. It was Jaś sitting between Czycz and I, **wrapping his legs in newspaper**.

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He was walking down Krupnicza Street in an unbuttoned overcoat and a hat — his gaze terrifying — and in front of him was a very famous professor from a local university. The students nodded at the professor on their way into town, the professor was too haughty to nod in return, but Jaś nodded, because he wasn't certain if they were nodding at him...

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He was down-at-heel. His friends once wanted to give him a shave and a haircut — hair grew from his ears and nose — but he had no desire to tidy up, **he believed that it was talent, not clothing, that was important.** After he dropped in we had to air the apartment.

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We always gave him tea, bread, soup, he lived off what people gave him, because he refused to cook for himself.



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He always had a bun in his pocket. He was very firm with himself — he was a non-believer, but a saintly non-believer.



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Jaś had practically **no need for money**, he lived off the coffee, tea, and milk, clothing given to him, so **he gave his money to girls**, who loved him for it: because **he was good**, and because he gave them money.



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He lived among women and married couples, so he spread rumors, not malicious ones, just about human failings, and about himself. He kept saying he would **write the whole truth about himself, the whole truth.**



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It was about his sex life, which didn't exist, but which he dreamed of having.

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There were two owners of second-hand shops on Grodzka and Sławkowska streets, the richest folks in Krakow, who liked to hold little orgies. Jaś joined in once. He said that the girls undressed one of the men, in a fog of alcohol, **but Jaś would not allow himself to be undressed.**

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He longed for contact with women, which is why he walked around kissing them, even my wife: "Just on the cheek." **He longed for the feminine body.** He seldom spoke, and when he did, he stuttered.

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He would appear around eleven in the morning, enter, sit down, pull out some bread.

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"Jaś, have some soup." "Just a touch, because I was visiting what's-her-name, her husband liked me, no jealousy; she was so pretty, once they used to paint her, and now she's got a belly."

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He worked out, he exercised his body, because **he wanted to be forever young.**



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When girls were around he stripped to the waist and showed off his build — he had a strapping chest, speckled with gray hairs.

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Jaś never studied, he only exercised, and **before his exams he gave up and lived in a cave**, where he worked out by lifting stones.



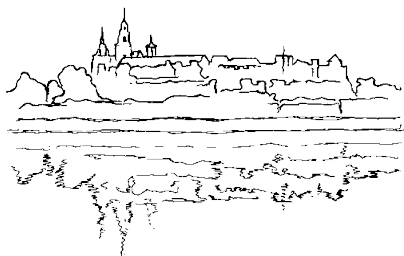
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At the end of his days he walked very badly, always stumbling; he had a limp.

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(...) he described Krakow's families, so **his work is a mine of information about life in Krakow in the 50s and 60s.**



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He heard many hurtful things from his **sister**, who once told him: "I was the only one in our house who was a man"; but **what saved him was that they published his work**, he was a writer.

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He came to have a talk and to meet a girl. "So, I'm Jaś, Adam will tell you" — he lowered his eyes...

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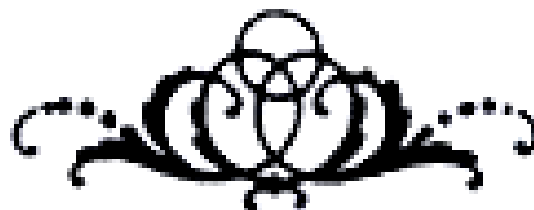
(...) I knew what would come next, they were all somehow similar. This one was a bit too gossipy, spreading word that someone had cheated on so-and-so, or beaten someone, that she didn't like her, and this one doesn't like the other — **a provincial, small-town sort of atmosphere.**

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He wanted to be a bit like a hermit who would **come down to the people to help them.**



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He began his route in the morning, and it took him more or less all day. He would start conversations like: "You know, that girl..." — with whom she had drunk coffee, whom she had met.

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He often also asked his trademark question: "Well, you need a little money? I can lend you some."



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Jaś sometimes spoke, sometimes he nodded, then he'd wake up forty minutes later and say: "As long as I'm in the neighborhood, I might as well pop in so-and-so."



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He wasn't the talkative sort, something had to really intrigue him to get him going.



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He was introduced to me in 1960, on Krupnicza Street, in the Writers' Home, as **the oldest member of the Young Polish Writers' Circle.**



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He acted as though **he were excusing himself for living**, or at least that he was taking up anyone's time with his meager person.

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He was considered a **weirdo**, but he was one of **the nicest weirdos I've ever met.**

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He was defenseless: **he wanted to live, to write, not to bother anyone.** In general he never announced his visits to friends. He came, entered, and said: "Well, here I am." And he sat down.

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Most often he said nothing, and then some effort was required to get a conversation going. **The best thing was to wait it out.**

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He spoke about the simplest everyday events and most enjoyable gossip, that he had been at someone's house the previous day and there he heard such-and-such.

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For him life, including literature, was something in between reality and gossip.



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The way that he, as a timid sort of man, showed his interest in life and people, brought him close to them.



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He circulated among them, listened to opinions about them, had his own opinions, but it seems he thought it was indecent to devote too much attention to his loved ones, it would be a kind of incursion.



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His observations on those near to him were apt, and he had a certain fondness for rumor-mongering, in the sense that he spread gossip from place to place without minding the consequences.

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It was like he tried to buy his way into a new conversation with the coin of what he had just heard.



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One of his traits was total indifference to political and public life — he just negated it.

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His was a psychological realism, he saw people through their details, through their impulses, often through the words that slipped out.



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He was a very scrupulous observer, to the extent that it sometimes became a kind of vivisection.



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Recognizing themselves, often correctly, as the sources of some of his tales or prose, some saw this as malicious, but this was generally a sort of kindness. As if **he didn't realize that something he had heard, something he passed on, could ever harm someone.**

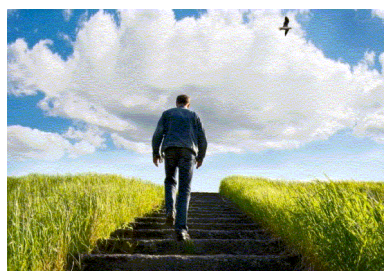
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He thought that since **he loved the world, the world should love him back**, and he didn't stop to wonder if someone was pleased with his behavior or not.



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(...) he felt at **ease**, he was **grounded, comfortable**, he always walked the same paths, among the same people.



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He showed up a bit breathless, without notice, and said: "Well, here I am."

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If he came across someone more forthright he was sometimes refused entry, but this didn't bother him.

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His world was his, absolutely his own, autonomous, though **his loved ones were allowed to enter.**



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They were a context of sorts, mainly a psychological one, for his personal feelings. I would say that **he needed his loved ones as sparring partners in his everyday life.**



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It was thought to be a waste of ink to describe the community of artists, but **he was undoubtedly a writer from such an environment.**



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He only really wrote about his relationships with various people, **he discovered a world right under his nose** that was peopled with protagonists everyone knew, and who spoke of what everyone else did.



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