

[A Poem]

FOLKLORE

NEW YORK [??] Forms to be Filled out for Each Interview

FORM A Circumstances of Interview

STATE New York

NAME OF WORKER Wayne Walden

ADDRESS 51 Bank St. [NYC?]

DATE November 17, 1939

SUBJECT [A POEM - AND AN ANECDOTE

1. Date and time of interview November 14, 1938
2. Place of interview 198 Richmond Terrace, S.I.
3. Name and address of informant Mrs. R. Ivanoff Stony Point, N.Y.
4. Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant. (Second interview)
5. Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you
6. Description of room, house, surroundings, etc. ([?] information [?] informant was [?] [?] A and B [accompanying?], interview of October, 11, 1938. "He-Man From the West")

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Informant: Mrs. Rose Ivanoff, Stony Point, N.Y.

(Wayne Walden,

Nov. 15,1938.) 11/17 [?]

Subject: To lure and maybe to lament.

A few weeks ago, Mrs. Ivanoff had given me the story of a saloon fight as related by her brother-in-law, and which was submitted under the tentative title of "He Man From The West."

"I'm not so sure," said my informant, "that you'll want this poem. It was written by my brother-in-law about a dozen years ago, in something of a facetious mood, as a sort of warning to a girl who seemed an awful flirt."

Her name was then Caffuzzi, Lena Caffuzzi, but now I dont know what it is, as she got married and I havent heard of her for years.

She was born and raised in New York City and, as a girl had all the flapperish ways that older people predicted would be the doom of womankind. She wasn't really bad, nor was there any actual scandal concerning her. But she did seem wild and a bit too interested in boys and her conquests over a continual stream of them. So my brother-in-law used to kid her as to the probable consequence of her behaviour unless she toned down a bit. And to drive home the lesson, to better impress her with what it might lead to, he wrote this poem. But the funny part of it was that when Lena read it she thought it was great stuff. She seemed proud to know a living person who could write such great stuff. She knew it was what you would call real poetry, because it rhymed-and that's always a sure sign of genuine poetry. So tickled was Lena over having real rhymed poetry written of her that she seemed to be wholly indifferent to the awful prophecy of the poem. In fact she gladly gave me this copy of it."

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But shall we let the “poem” speak for itself? Here it is! [Furthermore [are?] [?]

1- Among the myriads of Gotham's fickle flappers, Saucy in manner, and in feminine ruses schooled, Pursued each night by would-be trappers To elude their profane grasp, and leave 'em fooled Is little Lena Caffuzzi from Fordham [Who, when seeing a man, runs?] toward him.

2

Yes, Lena she loves to lure 'em and leave 'em All trembling with anger and passion intense; She gets a huge thrill when she thus does deceive 'em Notwithstanding there's one she'll someday incense To the point where he'll grab her, and woe betide her! She'll find, soon enough, a stirring inside her.

3- Then poor little Lena, lamenting her tricks Will find herself caught in one heck of a fix, And may her poor mother persuade to believe That she was immaculate when she did so conceive. But Mom will tell Pop, an excitable Wop, Upon whom this version will be a sad flop.

4- No, indeed, not her father, will the story mislead. He'll know, for he's wise, that some beau did the deed, And with a gun, and a knife, and a loud cry of rage, He'll start out at once on a bloody rampage. The while, the said beau, discreetly may soar On a plane that will take him to a far distant shore.

5- So at last we see Lena in a squalid dark flat, Alone, all alone, with her loud squalling brat. While its daddy, still free with the boys “over there”, Has forgotten long since the maiden fair, Poor, foolish, young Lena, who out for a lark, Was pursued and subdued in New York's Central Park.

Informant: Mrs. R. Ivanoff of Stony Point, N.Y.

(W. Walden

Library of Congress

Nov. 16, 1938)

Subject: She no savvied the question.

"Maybe that poem will be a bit too hot for you to handle," continued my informant, "maybe your boss will think its rotten. Anyway, here's one that if it isn't rotten, is at least not so hot. But it isn't poetry..."

*1

My sister Marie, whose husband was doing some work for a movie outfit, took him into a neighborhood/ of Philadelphia where she thought he would be able to film a goat. The neighborhood was Italian, mostly poor people, and here, Marie thought would surely be some one who owned a goat. My sister's ability to speak Italian was never very much, in fact it, was the poorest Wop language that any of us spoke. (Mrs. Ivanoff, formerly Miss Fusco, is of Italian parentage.) "So Marie and Jimmy, her Irish husband, walked all over to find some person who either owned a goat, or could tell them of someone who did. [??*1]

Well, finally they see a very untidy, slattern, middle-aged woman coming down the street toward them. Jimmy says to Marie, ' that woman looks dirty enough to be a goat keeper, and she looks like a Wop, so you ask her. '

Marie goes up to the lady and in her very best Italian asks, ' La tini ne NA capra? ' The question bringing no answer she repeated , ' La tini [no?] [?] cappa? Again she tried it, ' La aveta una capra? ' Of course, what she was trying to ask was 'Have you a goat?' Looking [?] at Marie all the while, without the slightest notion of what she was trying to say, the big woman finally said, ' Ah choild, shure an' I dont know what/ in the hell you are talkin' about. ' " child