



*Polish
Legends*



Each country has its own language, history and culture passed down from generation to generation.

Our cultural heritage includes tangible culture, for example, buildings, monuments, landscapes, books, works of art. All objects we have created.

Intangible culture includes folklore, traditions, language, and knowledge we have inherited from our ancestors.

Folk tales full of adventures and legends are an important part of our cultural heritage. They represent our dreams and values we hold dear, they glorify heroes or heroines and their deeds.

Some nations have Dracula or King Arthur, others ancient myths and Gods, but Poland isn't left behind - our legends not only enchant children, but also elderly people.

Each region in Poland has even several legends that teach us what values to follow in our life and how to live our lives.

We will relate some of them to you.





*The White
Eagle & Lech*



A long time ago Slavs lived in distant lands. They lived in prosperity and in harmony with each other. At the head of the three largest and most powerful families stood three brothers Lech, Czech and Rus.



People enjoyed the great wisdom of their leaders, and the prosperity which came for their rule caused that the Slavic tribes widened. Unfortunately, with the increase in population came a shortage of grain from nearby fields, animals in the forests and fish in the rivers.

People began to fear hunger. The brothers noticed this problem and thought how to solve the problem. They debated long and finally decided to look for new lands



All the people spent the next few days preparing for the expedition. They packed their belongings and raised their prayers to their gods for the success of that search for new lands. Finally, the day came to leave their home.

The journey was exhausting. Sometimes they had to wade fast through the flowing river, sometimes they were attacked or chased by a pack of wolves or wild tribes.

After many weeks among the endless, fertile plains, many rivers they stopped for a break. Rus said to the brothers:

- My people are tired of traveling. We feel that these steppes are meant for us and it will be our home. We will stay here and build our village..



Lech and the Czech said goodbye to his brother and swore to get together some day, but then headed onward. After many days of travel they reached the great mountain. They camped at its foot. Czech came to Lech and said:

- You know how much I love the sun, and from the mountains I will be closer to its rays. The lands here are very fertile. We will stay here and build a settlement for my people.



After a few days Lech said goodbye to Czech and continued his journey. Many days passed when they camped and began to prepare a meal. Lech looked around. He saw a river full of fish, forests full of animals and land not less fertile as the Czech's and Rus's. He looked at his people, saw their tiredness after the continuous journey and spoke to them:

- This is the end of our trip. I feel that this is our place, and we should settle down here and here we will build our village.





The Dragon

of

the Wawel Hill





Once upon a time when Polish lands were ruled by the King Krak in the city of Krakow a dragon appeared. It was a huge animal, with green skin, a long tail and the mouth full of sharp teeth. The dragon lived in a cave under the castle. He wanted a cow once a week as a sacrifice. If he didn't get it – he would snatch and devour the people..



The citizens of Krakow were very afraid, but there were a few brave souls who wanted to kill the dragon. Unfortunately, none of them returned from this trip to the cave monster.

The king and people were beginning to lose the last rays of hope for the rescue. Every week, a herd of cows decreased because the dragon wanted more and more. Everyone was afraid what would happen if they ran out of cows.



When it seemed that everything had been lost and the people of Krakow were doomed, a poor shoemaker appeared at the royal court and he said:

- My Lord, I think I'm able to kill a dangerous dragon!

King Krak was a wise lord, and he knew that couldn't waste any chance for his people to free themselves from a dangerous beast..

- Well, shoemaker. Defeat dragon, and you will be highly rewarded!



The shoemaker bowed and walked away, devising his plan. He killed the best sheep, which he was able to find, then stuffed it with sulfur and thoroughly stitched. He took it into the dragon's cave. The Shoemaker sneaked into the dragon's lair, left a stuffed sheep and ran away quickly.



Soon the dragon came out of the cave, because he smelled fresh meat. He ate the sheep greedily. The sulfur hidden in the animal immediately began to work, making the dragon extremely thirsty..



He threw himself in the direction of the river Wisła and drank, drank, drank, drank.. It seemed as though in just a moment he would drink all the water from the river, Wisła! And then suddenly there was a huge bang! The dragon had drunk so much water that he just exploded.



The ingenious cobbler became the hero of the whole city, and the king rewarded him giving the Shoemaker his daughter as a wife.



In Krakow today, at the foot of the Wawel Hill, you can see the Dragon's Lair and fire-breathing dragon statue, commemorating the heroic act of the Shoemaker.





Warsaw

mermaid





A long time ago amid the ancient forest on the bank of the river, there was a fishing village. The villagers often heard the legend of the mermaid who lived in the depths of the Vistula river, but this mysterious creature had never been seen. Sometimes fishermen only heard her singing as they returned from the night fishing. Some said it was the sound of the reeds, but others heard her singing quite close and knew she was blessed with a wonderful voice.



One day, three fishermen met on the bank of the river.

- *If we catch a mermaid and we will take her to the prince, we'll get a lot of gold* – one of them said.
- *We'll have to sail the river at night and hide our boat in coastal reeds. But we will need to bring a torch, because in the dark we will not see anything* - said the other.
- *Shall we wait for the full moon? Then it will be clearer and we will not need the fire* -said a third.

They nodded and agreed to set off in a few days when the moon was full. When the night came, they hid in a boat near the bank, holding a powerful net in their hands. They did not have to wait too long.



The Mermaid emerged from the waves, and sat down on one of the boulders, then began to sing. The fishermen were so captivated by her voice that for a long time they were not able to move, and finally the oldest of them recovered and pulled out the wax he had hidden in his pocket.

- *Clog your ears* - he said, handing the wax to his comrades.

The fishermen could not then hear the enchanting singing of the mermaid so she couldn't cast a spell on them. They threw a net over her, then dragged her to the shore and carried to one of the huts. The fishermen were so captivated by her voice that for a long time they were not able to move, and finally the oldest of them recovered and pulled out the wax he had hidden in his pocket.

- *Clog your ears* - he said, handing the wax to his comrades.

The fishermen could not then hear the enchanting singing of the mermaid so she couldn't cast a spell on them. They threw a net over her, then dragged her to the shore and carried to one of the huts.



They put on guard the youngest fisherman and they went to prepare the cart in which they wanted to take the mermaid to the prince. The young fisherman watched a mermaid curiously, so when he saw that she opened her mouth, he uncovered his ears to hear what she was saying.

- *Let me out, please.*

- *But how come? Should I release you ?* - He asked, surprised.

- *Yes. Release me and come with me* - answered the mermaid and began humming quietly one of her songs.



Enchanted by her voice the fisherman took her in his arms and carried her to the bank of the Vistula. At that time, the other fishermen returned to the hut for the siren. When they saw that the house was empty, they chased their young friend to the river banks. But it was too late. The Mermaid managed to plunge into the river.



The young fisherman jumped into the water after her and reached the mermaid, despite the pleading of his friends. The Mermaid paused for a moment and called angrily to the fishermen standing on the bank:

- I used to sing for you every night, because I liked you! I wanted to accompany you, so that, if necessary, I could warn you of dangers! But you caught me like an ordinary fish and wanted to sell for a handful of gold! That's why I am leaving you. If I ever come back, it will be only with a sword and shield in order to defend you. But I will appear only when the danger is so great that you will not be able to cope.

After these words the mermaid disappeared forever. No one had ever seen a young fisherman who followed her. Today, on-site of the fishing village there is a great city - Warsaw. The residents has not forgotten about their mermaid. On the bank of the river there is a statue of a mermaid with the shield and sword raised up who guards the security of the city. But until now, despite the troubled history of the city, Warsaw, she has never appeared. This means that the time to fulfill her promise has not come yet.





The Dumping

Gate





Since time immemorial Upper Silesia has been famous for its dumplings. You can heartily eat them at every home, but the most delicious dumplings ever were cooked by Agnes, the housekeeper in one of the villages near Wrocław. Her husband Konrad loved dumplings prepared by her.

Unfortunately, Agnes suddenly fell ill and died. Many sympathetic neighbors gave Konrad food, but he didn't want anything to eat. None of the housewives could cook these delicious dumplings like his beloved wife. The man became gaunt and lost weight, but nothing could persuade him to eat.

One day, Konrad went to the market in Wrocław to sell some vegetables. When he was going past the river Oder, he was so tired and hungry that he decided to rest. He sat near a small church, and quickly fell asleep.



He dreamed of his wife who looked really worried. She said she couldn't bear seeing Konrad so gaunt and therefore would give him a magic pot in which every night the large serving of dumplings would appear, but under one condition.

- *Remember, Konrad, that you must always leave one dumpling. You must never empty the whole pot* - said Agnes.

When the man woke up next to him stood a pot with a lid. Konrad lifted the lid and an amazing smell of the freshest dumplings reached him. Quickly, he began to eat and, finally, at the bottom of the pot there was only one dumpling left. He watched it for a moment and thought that the wife had only been joking. He took a dumpling with a spoon, but when he lifted it to his lips, the dumpling slipped and fell to the bottom of the pot. Whenever he tried to grab the dumpling, it slid out of the spoon. When Konrad wanted to catch that dumpling for the third time, it flew into the air and landed on the fence connecting the church with the wall next to the building.



The greedy man climbed the gate, but as soon as he reached the dumpling, it petrified. Never again did the pot fill with dumplings , and Konrad long wished he had listened to his wife. The people who had seen it all called the place The Dumpling Gate. A petrified dumpling is lying on it today.





The Poznan

Goats





Long time ago, Poznan was the largest and most beautiful city in Wielkopolska. People lived prosperously, and municipal councilors were proud that the city was growing. Within a few years, they'd built a stately town hall, repaired roads and strengthened river embankments.

One day, the mayor of Poznan had an idea – he decided to put the clock on the tower of the town hall, which was to strike hours loudly. So, he set the date of the ceremony, ordered a sumptuous feast at the “Under the Goose“. They invited the province governor and many other distinguished guests. The most important dish on the entire feast was to be a great roast in which the innkeeper, Mr. Goose, specialized.



When the appointed day came, the crowd gathered at the market where the orchestra played. Curious Mr. Goose decided to look outside for a while and so he commissioned the cook Peter to keep an eye on the making of the roast. Peter had been running around the kitchen from the early morning, meeting all requests and filling orders. He hadn't even had time for breakfast!

When he was alone, he placed the skewer with the roast meat over the fire and ran to the table to get a slice of warm bread.



And then ... wham! The meat slipped and fell into the fire. All the tavern wafted the scent of burning meat.



Terrified Mr Goose ran into the kitchen and saw that the roast was no long suitable for anything.

- *What did you do? What am I going to regale the province governor with?* - He yelled at Peter. - *You' ve got to bring me meat from the butcher, now!!*



So, the cook dashed out of the kitchen. On the way, he passed a bakery and a workshop closed because of the ceremony. He thought that it just might be like the butcher's, but he had no choice - he had to go and check.



He passed a poor widow's house, in front of which there were two beautiful, snow-white goats. Peter stopped and looked at them intently.

- *Probably at the butcher's I will not get anything, and these goats look pretty appetizing* - he said to himself, then untied the goats from the stake to lead them to the tavern.



However, the animals dug their hooves into the ground and refused to follow him, so he had to pull them. When he finally reached the market, he heard unbearable noise of music played loudly and people laughing and shouting at each other happily. The frightened goats began to struggle and then broke the rope.



Peter tried to catch them, but the poor goats charged into the colorful crowd, knocking the people down and then rushed straight through the open door of the City Hall, and then climbed the stairs to the tower.

A few minutes later the midday came and the mayor prepared to officially start a new clock mechanism. Everyone looked up expectantly, but instead of a resonant twelve o'clock chime, all the merry crowd could see two frisky goats and hear a loud thud of two goats which butted each other with their horns.

The province governor and town councilors dashed out of the City Hall. But before anyone could speak, the widow ran screaming at the governor:

- *The thief! My goats! There! on the tower!*

- *The thief on the tower?* - the province governor asked.

It was only when he looked up, he realized what all the fuss was about.

- *The goats have to be given back and the thief punished. Who had done it?* - He asked menacingly, barely hiding his laughter.

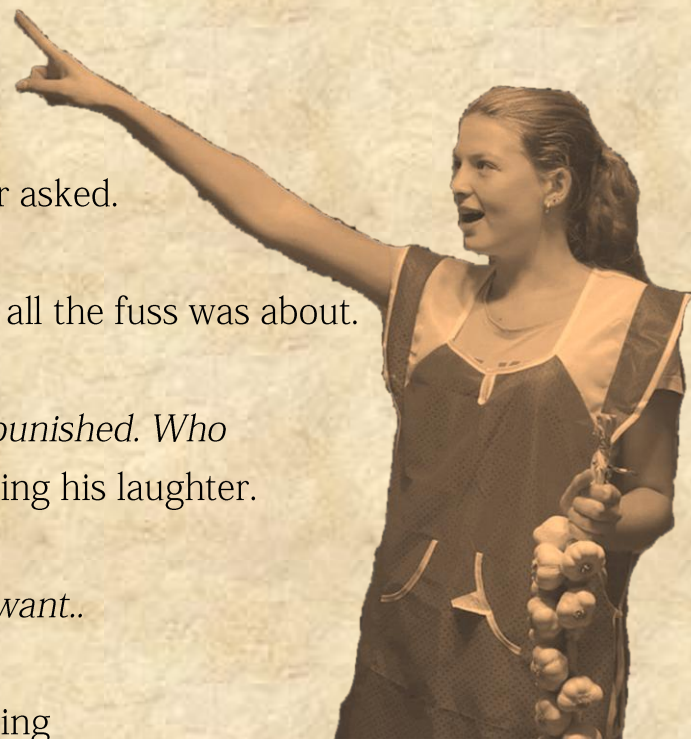
- *It's me* - Peter said quietly. - *But I really didn't want..*

The province governor was a good man, and seeing the frightened boy, let him tell the whole story.

- *You deserve to be punished, my boy, but because today we have a holiday, it will be mild* - he said.

- *You will sculpt two such goats, which will be placed at the town hall tower to commemorate this event. I will settle for broth and roasted chickens - this probably will not ruin Master Goose?*

Thus the story ended. Since then, always at noon, we have enjoyed the show of two white goats butting with the horns, a reminder of the event from the past of the City Hall in Poznan





The Treasurer





Long time ago, many miners worked in the Silesian coal mines. It was an extremely difficult job. All days miners chipped coal with picks and then loaded it into the trolleys, and finally carried it up onto the surface. Mines were also dangerous. In fact, it often happened that the wall fell off the rock as it contained too much carbon. Not once the light went out, so the miners were lost in the tangle of old galleries. It was when the Treasurer appeared - the good ghost of the mine.



He could be found in all mines. It was always a figure of a bearded man smoking a pipe, with a small pickaxe in his hand and a candle attached to a headband on his forehead. He warned miners against dangers and helped them if necessary. However, only good people and hard-working did not have to worry about the Treasurer.

Crooks and hooligans could not count on his favor. Once, the main mine foreman was asked to hire a young boy. His father died and his mother was unable to feed the family. The foreman had long resisted, claiming that the boy could not do the work. When he finally agreed, he set one condition - the boy had to work as well as the older miners and extract to the top the same amount of coal. If he could handle the task to keep up with the others for a week, he would be offered permanent employment.



On the first day, the young man himself knew he would not be able to keep the pace with the elders. He was about to go to the foreman and say that he was going to give up, when suddenly an old miner appeared beside him.

- *What's bothering you, boy?* - He asked, seeing his worried face.

When the boy told him the whole story, the miner said:

- *I'll help you, but you have to equally share with me the pay you receive for your work.*

- *Agreed* - said the boy.

And so, day by day the old miner came to the boy and helped him dig the coal, and then load it into the carts. After a week the amazed foreman hired the boy on a permanent basis and paid him the agreed amount. The old miner was waiting for the boy at the pit.

- *I came for my part* - he said.

- *I will leave for myself only what I've earned. The rest of the money is for you. Thanks for your help* - said the boy, handing him a bag full of coins.

Then the old miner laughed heartily and put on his real character. The Ghost of the mine appeared in front of the boy

- *Take all the money, boy* - said the Treasurer.

After these words he disappeared. The Treasurer roams the galleries of the Silesian coal mines, but apparently he also visits the Wieliczka salt mine.





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