



Poland 









Suddenly Yanek, that was sitting on Bright Star in silence, jumped up, lifted his hand and called:

- Look there!

Maria and Zeynep looked at that direction with interest. They saw a large city that was smothered with a thousand lights.



- It is Warsaw, the capital of Poland – said Yanek.

- This city is admired by all Poles. Do you know why? Because in the time of the Second World War, during the Warsaw Uprising, it was completely destroyed by German troops. There was nothing left here apart from ruins. Yet Warsaw rose from the ruins and it is even more beautiful now than it used to be in the past. It was reconstructed with the help of thousands of Polish people.



- Look! We are just flying over the Warsaw Old Town Market Square! Bright Star, shine brighter, please!

So Bright Star glittered the place which was pointed by Yanek. The children viewed the Warsaw Mermaid Statue, which is located on the bank of the Vistula River.

- It is the Warsaw Mermaid – the symbol and emblem of the Polish capital, explained Yanek.



- It is an extremely amazing city, said Maria and Zeynep – It is such a huge city and there are a lot of beautiful bridges which combine two banks of the Vistula River!, exclaimed the girls joyfully.

Yanek was very delighted with the impression Warsaw made on the girls. He wished they could stay here longer to show dozens of other marvellous places in the capital. However, Bright Star moved up and took to the air further.

The kids managed to wave goodbye to Warsaw and shortly after they turned up over the Białowieża Forest.



- What is this? – the girls asked with astonishment.

- Dear Bright Star, could you land for a while? Bright Star landed and shortly after the kids were riding on a glittering bicycle through a forest track.

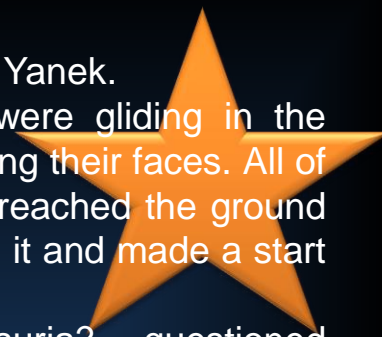


- The Białowieża Forest is the most precious natural primeval area covered with deciduous trees. These giant trees around us are called oaks, and those huge animals are wisents – they are the symbol of this place. Yanek went on explaining to the interested girls: In days gone by this Forest belonged to the kings of Poland and they were the only ones to hunt here. Thus the natural environment was protected and it has remained undamaged to the present times.





- Bright Star, could you take us to the Masuria now? - asked Yanek.
- Surely, replied Bright Star with a smile. The children were gliding in the morning sky on Bright Star, feeling a gentle wind overwhelming their faces. All of a sudden Bright Star began to descend. The moment they reached the ground Bright Star turned into a glistening bicycle so the kids got on it and made a start of their journey happily.
- Would you like to see the most famous lake in the Masuria? - questioned Yanek.
- Of course! - answered the girls and Maria added:
- What's its name?
- The Śniardwy, answered the boy. When they arrived at the lake, Bright Star stopped so the children got off the bicycle and took a place under a tree.



- Yanek, could you tell me if there is any fish in this lake? - Zeynep required.
- Surely, there is a lot. If you dived for a while, you would see a lot of smaller and larger fish - said the boy.
- Is the Masuria the official name for this region? - Maria asked.
- Maria, you put the right question. Yes, the Masuria is a geographical name. However, this area is frequently called "Land of a Thousand Lakes".





- Do you know that here, in the Masuria, there was a huge knightly battle called “The Battle of Grunwald”? - asked Yanek.
- Really? Poland suffered much loss, didn't it? - Maria questioned.
- That's true. It lost a lot - answered Yanek.
- How many knights took part in this battle? - Zeynep put the question curiously.
- About fifty thousand knights and warriors participated in this battle- answered Yanek.
- And what was the motive to this conflict? – Maria questioned.
- The Teutonics challenged Poland. In 1410 in the fields near the village of Grunwald two giant and powerful knightly armies of contemporary Europe met. A very famous painter Jan Matejko eternized this historical event on his oil painting titled “The Battle of Grunwald” – Yanek explained.





- Yanek, I'm a bit hungry. Can we eat anything? - asked Zeynep.
- Of course, we can. There is a nice restaurant near the lake. Let's go there! - said Yanek.

The kids took a place in the restaurant and called a waiter. The man gave them a menu and gently asked what they wished to order.

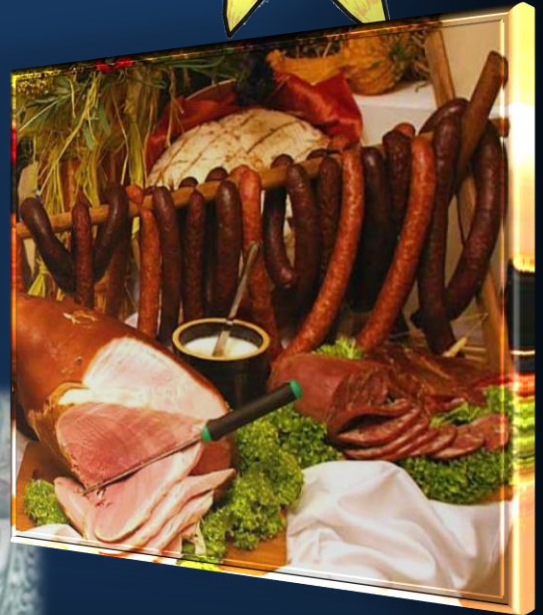
- What would you recommend us? - asked Yanek curiously.
- I recommend the today's main course. It's fish with chips, salad is free of charge", the waiter quickly answered with a smile.
- So we'll take today's main course" - Yanek made a decision.

The waiter took the menu and went to the kitchen. Few minutes later he was back carrying three plates of delicious fragrant fish with chips. The kids ate heartily.

- Oh! This fish is so tasty, and what delicious salad! Yummy! It's just melting in the mouth!, Zeynep said smiling to both kids.

Then Yanek called the waiter:

- Could we have the bill, please. How much is it?
- That's 45 zlotys - answered the man.



The boy paid the bill and the kids left the restaurant. Shortly after they got on Bright Star which rose high into the sky so the children could visit farther regions of Poland.



Bright Star was flying over the Masuria. Then Zeynep called:

- What is this place, Yanek?
- It's Malbork, answered the boy and started his explanation: This is a wonderful town located on the Nogat River. Each year thousands of tourists come here to visit the Malbork Castle.



Then Yanek pointed to the old castle walls. The girls shouted with amazement so the boy grinned with satisfaction. I will observe their reaction when they visit the place, thought the boy.

- You've said that it is the Teutonics' castle - said Maria who has been silent so far – Who are these Teutonics?

- Not 'are' but 'were' – Yanek stated – Teutonic Knights, or the Knights of the Cross precisely, were monks – knights of one of the largest chivalrous orders that were formed in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Their name referred to black crosses that were sewn on their long white overcoats. The full name was: Order of the House of St. Mary of the Germans in Jerusalem. The Teutonic Knights conquered lots of areas, for example the present-day territories of Latvia, Estonia, Poland and Lithuania. In the period 1309-1457 the Malbork Castle was the seat for Grand Master of the Teutonic Order that was so – called superior general. What's more, the town of Malbork was the capital of the Teutonic Order. I suppose you would like to visit the Castle, would you?

- Of course! - Zeynep exclaimed.



Bright Star began to descend towards the amazing castle.

Maria pointed out the Castle with her finger and asked:

- Yanek, how have you learnt so much about this place?

The boy specified: Poland is my homeland, it is the country where I was born and I must admit that I get a lot of pleasure when I can learn more and more about my country. At the end of the school year I got the grade six on History and..., at that moment he stopped short and drooped his head modestly.

- And...? - the girls asked at the same time.

- And I have won a country-wide competition titled „Poland – My Homeland”.



The girls started to applaud and Yanek spectacularly bowed low to them. While the kids were laughing and talking they reached the place. Bright Star turned into a bicycle and the three children took the way to the Castle. The Castle was both wonderful and mysterious for them. Yanek stood in a queue to a ticket office and had a look at a price list. When it was his turn to get entrance tickets he called the girls and said to a clerk:

- Three half-fare tickets, please.

The woman in the ticket office scrutinized the children's faces as if she had thought: What are these toddlers doing in Malbork without their parents?. However, she only said:

- Could you give me your identity cards... I mean your school identity cards.

The three children stood speechless for a while as if they had not known what to do next. It was Zeynep who said first. It was in Turkish:

- Madam, we have to enter the Castle.



Zeynep came from Turkey and Turkish language is definitely incomprehensible for Polish people. Our characters – the three children communicated perfectly due to some extraordinary magic power. Thus, when Yanek saw the clerk's strange look he burst out laughing. Both girls and Bright Star were laughing, too. The moment the clerk saw the bicycle that was laughing she immediately jumped over a counter screaming at the top of her voice and leaving the three tickets on the counter.

- Off we go!, said Yanek who took some banknotes from his wallet, left them on the counter and took the tickets. The kids went towards the Castle. They visited its all three parts: the High, Middle and Lower Castles. They viewed all apartments, corridors, nooks and corners.



When the kids were at the Castle Tower they admired breathtaking views: a blue band of the Vistula river, the sunset and an amazing panorama of Malbork which was deep in the evening dusk. The moment the children arrived at the Castle Courtyard Bright Star was waiting for them. Then Zeynep said:

- I wish I could come back here some day! This Castle holds some kind of mystery and wants someone to uncover it.

- You'll certainly come back here! All of you will be back. You are just here to explore different countries and see how beautiful the Earth is! The three kids stayed calm for a while. Yanek smiled and told Bright Star:

- We would like to know the place you are going to take us to, dear Bright Star!.

Few minutes later the kids were travelling on Bright Star. Suddenly Yanek called:

- Bright Star, stop, please. I would like to show you Tricity, in Polish 'Trójmiasto'!
- What is 'Trójmiasto'? - Maria asked curiously.
- Tricity consists of three cities: Gdańsk, Gdynia and Sopot.

The children jumped out of Bright Star and Yanek started to show Sopot to the girls.

- Let's go to the beach. I'll show you the longest pier in Poland.



The girls liked the beautiful seaside. Yanek guided Maria and Zeynep to the pirate ship. They set out for a short sea voyage. Everybody had a good time.

- I'm hungry- said Zeynep.
- Let's go! I know a nice restaurant. It's called 'Lopsided house' - said Yanek.

Children decided to eat fish. It was delicious. Then they paid the bill and left the restaurant.

- Bright Star! Can you change into a bike and take us to Gdynia - asked Yanek.

Bright Star agreed and took them to Gdynia.

- Now I will show you the seafront where we can ride a bike. When the children felt tired they went to the square-tourists' favourite place for walking.



- Bright Star! Take us to Gdańsk. This city is very interesting - said Yanek



- Look at Gdańsk! – the boy shouted.
- Wow. It looks beautiful-said Zeynep.
- I'll tell you some interesting facts about the city. It is one of the largest seaports on the Baltic Sea. Gdańsk is an important industrial centre. There is also an international airport.
- Indeed, it's a wonderful city but the first place we want to visit is the seaside-said the girls.
- Ok. Let's go to the beach-shouted Yanek .While they were admiring the sea and the clear sky above their heads , the white and grey seagulls were flying. next to them.



They felt hungry and everybody quickly decided to go to the Long Market. While they were walking they were admiring the Neptune Fountain and beautiful old tenement houses. They went to the bar. The smell of tasty meals was in the air. They ate and continued the trip.

