

THE LEGEND OF THE FOUNDING OF RZGÓW

The sun was about to set. Jaško and Bolko, sons of the old knight Zbigniew whose kin have been living in the nearby castle named Grodzisko for a long time, were returning from a successful hunt. Jaško was carrying a few hares while Bolko was proud to have hunted a beaver, the fat of which would be used to heal sword and arrowhead wounds. The two young men were talking about the supper which had already been prepared by Pietrek, the most faithful servant of theirs.

Suddenly, two great wagons pulled by stalwart horses came from behind a winding in the woods. The wagons were followed by a majestic procession of knights wearing shining suits of armor. When the newcomers took notice of the brothers, one of the knights rode ahead of the wagons and, with a sword raised in his hand, moved swiftly towards the surprised youths. The thought of a retreat crossed the boys' minds, yet it was too late for that desperate move. The knight withheld the horse abruptly and, swinging the sword above his head, called out with all his might: "Who are you? What sort of evil brought you into this God-forsaken place?"

Although Jaško and Bolko were paralyzed with fear and were standing there like stone pillars, they recovered after a few moments and were able to speak again.

"We're going back to the castle in Grodzisko where our father is awaiting us with a hot meal," said Jaško, the more daring brother, in a quick breath.

"And where is this castle?", asked the knight more calmly. He put the sword into the sheath but his eyes were staring malevolently at the young men. "I'm Sir Sędziwój from Kraków and those are noble merchants who supply pelts and amber for His Majesty the Prince and his wife," he continued and pointed his hand at the wagons standing in the distance. "We're looking for a place to rest because the night is falling and it's time to get some sleep," explained Sir Sędziwój.

"Sir, there are a couple of streams and a small settlement of wood-distillers not far from where we are," said Jaško, "and we will lead you there in less than no time."

Soon, the procession with the wagons headed towards the river. Jaško and Bolko walked at the front with the knight to their side, followed by a few other knights and squires. They were moving slowly because the loaded wagons had difficulties with traveling on the sandy path.

"This is it," Jaško proclaimed and pointed to the river which visible through the trees. The procession came to a halt and immediately after, a few squires started a bonfire. Sędziwój was giving orders, explaining something to one of the knights who was wearing a shining black and gold suit of armor. At the same time though, he was carefully monitoring the surroundings.

When Jaško and Bolko decided to leave in order to reach home before sunset, one of the knights who had been watching them for quite a long time spoke to them in an exceptionally calm, dignified manner. It was clear that he was undeniably a nobleman.

"Stay. We shall pray together because you shouldn't be going back home in the dark across the marsh and deep waters. God forbid, Lucifer would show up and plunge your souls into the wetlands."

The sun was setting fast, that's true. The great forest, which had seemed so hospitable, now began to look ominous. And when the beams of sparks went off into the sky and illuminated the nearby pines and stout oaks, Jaško was trembling with fear when looking at the black wall of trees. It seemed to him as if glittering eyes of werewolves and bears were following him from behind each and every pine.

Meanwhile, the weary travelers were offered the animals hunted by Jaško and Bolko. Soon enough, there was the smell of roasted meat, with juniper berries which served as a spice. When everybody ate their fill, a few of the knights took guard and silence fell around the camp. Jaško and Bolko had trouble falling asleep late into the night because they thought a huge animal was approaching from the river; the animal about which they had heard a lot of tales from old Wojciech.

Early in the morning everybody was up and awake. Sędziwój was once again giving out orders and instructions. When all of them were ready to leave, the knight called for a short gathering.

”We'll soon be heading to Piotrków but first we need to give thanks to God Almighty for the food and a peaceful night. We also thank Jaśko and Bolko. Finally, we must thank the Lord of Grodzisko for bringing up these wonderful young men who led us to this beautiful place and shared their meat with us. Today, right when the sun rose I took a ride to look around the area. I think there's no better place to build an ample castle. The water here is as clear as crystal, the fish come in abundance. Thus, I ask my son to stay here and build a new house for our kin. When I am back from the Prince in a few weeks, I shall have a place to finally repose for the rest of my days, thereafter pass, and lay my bones to rest.”

A young knight left the procession – he never spoke but was watching closely as Sędziwój was making his speech. It was Piotr, Sędziwój's oldest son. He was followed by a small group of women and servants. They all went up to the riverbank and nodded their heads as if they were saying “Thank you” or expressing greetings.

The moment the wagons and the procession were ready for the journey, Piotr fell down to his knees at his father's feet. Silence fell and everybody watched this unusual scene. “Father, this is a great place for building a castle. When you come back, here at the crossing of the rivers and streams, at the corner, on this gentle slope that you have found so attractive, you will find a castle.”

Long after the column of wagons and people disappeared into the forest, Piotr, together with his family and servants, were standing on the path and stared in the direction of the procession. He was thinking about his future and about this wonderful place his father had ordered him to take care of. On the one hand, he suffered from parting with his kin, on the other – he felt extremely proud.

“This place here, at the corner, we shall call Rzgów. The name will come from the corner (róg in Polish) on the gentle slope. Here is where we will build our castle, our home.”

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