The Dragon of Krakow – the Polish legend

Long ago in Poland’s early history, on the River Vistula, there was a small settlement of wooden huts inhabited by peaceful people who farmed the land and plied their trades. Near this village was Wawel Hill. In the side of Wawel Hill was a deep cave. The entrance was overgrown with tall, grass, bushes, and weeds. No man had ever ventured inside that cave, and some said that a fearsome dragon lived within it. The young people of the village didn’t believe in the dragon. The old people of the village said that they had heard their fathers tell of a dragon who slept in the cave, and no man must dare awaken it, or there would be dire consequences for them all. Some of the youths decided to explore the cave and put an end to such foolish talk. They thought that they knew better and dragons were just old stories from the past. A group of these young people took some torches and went to the cave. They slowly entered the cave until they came to a dark mass of scales blocking their way and the sound of heavy breathing. The boys ran as the dragon awakened and roared. Fire came from its mouth warming the boys heels and backs. When they were far enough away, they looked back and saw the dragon at the entrance of the cave, very angry being awakened from its sleep. From that day on, the people knew no peace. Every day the dragon appeared and carried off a sheep or
preferably young virgins. The populace made many attempts to kill the dragon but nothing succeeded and many of those that attempted were killed. The hero in this part of the story differs. In the village lived a wise man, or a shoemaker or a shoe makers apprentice named Krakus or Krac. He got some sheep and mixed a thick, yellow paste from sulfur. Krakus smeared it all over the animals. Then led them to a place where the dragon would see them. The dragon came out as expected, saw the sheep, roared, rushed down the hill and devoured the sheep. The dragon had a terrible fire within him, and a terrible thirst. It rushed to the River Vistula and started drinking. It drank and drank and could not stop. The dragon began to swell, but still it drank more and more. It went on drinking till suddenly there was a great explosion, and the dragon burst. There was great rejoicing by the people, and Krakus was made ruler of the village.

The Golden Duck – The Polish legend

Once upon a time, there lived a boy called Lutek. He lived in Warsaw for an old shoemaker. He was very poor. One day he decided to check if there really was a magic golden duck in the palace near the place he lived in. The duck could give him a fortune. So he went into the palace and saw a pond and a golden duck swimming on the water. Suddenly the duck changed into a beautiful Princess. She gave him a big bag of money and said: “Go and spend it all in one day, I will give you another bag like this every day of your life. But you can only spend it on yourself.” The Princess then walked
into the water and changed back into a duck.
Lutek came back home and started thinking about how he could spend the money on himself. So he bought some new expensive clothes and diamonds. Then he went to the most expensive restaurant in Warsaw and then to the theatre. Finally outside the hotel he met a beggar. Lutek looked at him and saw a cold, poor, hungry man, so he gave him some money, forgetting what the Princess had said. When Lutek gave the man the money, there was a flash and the money, clothes and all the things Lutek had bought, disappeared. Lutek lost everything and he had no money. Then the beggar said: “You have something more than money. And with that you will have a good life”. Then the beggar disappeared.
The next day, Lutek went to work. At work, the old shoemaker said to him: “I am old man and I have no son to give my shop, so please, take the shop and make good shoes.”
Lutek was a good shoemaker, so he always had a lot of work. He was never rich, but he was happy with his family.

The Legend of Wars and Sawa

Long ago, when Poland was young, the lands were filled with forests, fields, and wild animals. Kings and mythical creatures roamed the land. Warszawa was not yet a town, let alone the huge, bustling city it is today. In fact, Warszawa was not yet even the capital of the Polish kingdom. It was just a hut owned by a fisherman on the banks of the Wisła river. This fisherman was called Wars and he was a great fisherman. He was also kind- he always threw back fish which were too small. One day, he saw a beautiful Mermaid by his home. She was at the sandy bank. Her name was Sawa. She was beautiful. Blonde, long hair. Blue eyes. Pale skin. And a mermaid’s tale. She was singing a song. Sawa had been watching Wars for many weeks after having travelled down the Wisła from the Baltic Sea. She knew he was kind, humble, not selfish at all. She had fallen in love. Wars
approached her cautiously, trying not to scare her. He sat down on the sandy bank and listened as she sang to him more. At the end of the song, she waved and disappeared under the waters. This happened at the end of the day between them for several days. Finally, Wars could not stand it anymore. He stopped her singing before she could leave him. "I love you. I don’t know how but I feel like I’ve always known you. Please, stay with me. Be my wife." Sawa looked at him with love in her eyes and said "And I love you. But I am a Mermaid and you are man. I must live in the waters or I will die. And you must live on Earth so that you can breathe and live on, for now. I will stay here in your river and will watch over you forever. And, I will watch over our children and our children’s children and so on. But our children must live on land with you." And so it was. They saw each other throughout the day while Wars fished and Sawa swam through the waters, keeping their children safe as they swam and played and grew. Years passed happily for them together, and then Wars passed away, as humans do. But Sawa still swims in the Wisła, watching over their children’s children. She guards Warszawa, which is named in memory of their love for one another.
The Polish White Eagle – The Polish legend

A thousand years ago, or maybe even more, there lived three brothers, Lech, Czech, and Rus. For many years they had been content in their villages, but the families grew larger and they needed more room to live.

The brothers decided to travel in different directions to search for new homes. Lech, Czech, and Rus traveled with their troops for many days. They rode their horses over mountains and rivers, through forests and wild country. There were no people to be found anywhere, not a town or tiny village. On the crest of a mountain top, they separated, each going in a different direction. Czech went to the left, Rus went to the right and Lech rode straight ahead, down the mountain and across vast plains.

One day Lech saw a splendid sight. He and his troops had come to a place where a meadow surrounded a small lake. They stopped at the edge of the meadow as a great eagle flew over their heads. It flew around in great swooping circles, then perched on its nest, high on a craggy rock. Lech stared in awe at the beautiful sight. As the eagle spread its wings and soared into the heavens again, a ray of sunshine from the red setting sun fell on the eagle's wings, so they appeared tipped with gold, the rest of the bird was pure white.

"Here is where we will stay!" declared Lech. "Here is our new home, and we will call this place GNIEZNO ... (the eagle’s nest).

He and his people built many houses and it became the center of his territory.

They called themselves Polonians, which means "People of the Field". They made a banner with a white eagle on a red field and flew it over the town of Gniezno, which became the first historical capital of Poland.

And, now you know how Poland began . . .