

Iga Maj

THE MAP OF MEMORIES



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At the Gałczyński's home

– Emily, if you don't leave soon, you'll be late for the bus – Magda's caring voice resounded through the house. She had been bustling for two hours to make sure that her daughter and mother did not miss something so important.

All morning, there had been a commotion in the Gałczyńskis' Edinburgh flat. It had been the first time in six months that Grandmother Julie had come to visit. She had spent the last few months travelling, visiting friends abroad and family living in the countryside. Despite that, she had to be at her only daughter's house, on such an important day; so, she sat in an armchair with a cup of tea and watched all the commotion around her with a certain calmness and thoughtfulness about her.

– Are you sure your phone is charged? Remember to take photos! I wish I could go with you. I haven't been there in years! – recalled the girl's mother, as she packed a third yogurt and a spare pair of socks into her bag. – Do you have your water bottle? Do you? What about your glasses? – She made sure.

– Yes, yes, I've got everything, don't worry! I'll be sure to take lots of photos, I promise! – the girl answered while putting on her jacket – Let's go! Granny come on: we still have a ten minute walk to the meeting point.

The walk was surprisingly pleasant. The weather was splendid – not a single drop of rain! Emily was well acquainted with the streets of Edinburgh – she had been born and bred there.



Her Scottish grandmother was not a fan of cities; she much preferred the country, being surrounded by nature. She did not enjoy the noise and chaos; she would much rather spend her time in peace and quiet, which is why today's trip was so special and brought her a lot of happiness.

The destination of the trip was The Great Polish Map of Scotland in Eddleston. Emily had never been there before, even though the place was closely entwined with her family's history: Grandmother Julie got her first job in the Barony Castle Hotel which is right next to the Map. There were no secrets between her and the Map, which is why she was asked to be the guide on the trip with a Polish Language Academy.

– When was the last time you visited the Map, Grandma? – the girl asked curiously.

– Four years ago. I went for a picnic with your grandfather. It was our last trip; he passed away a month later – added the grandmother, with a visibly sad gaze.



The trip

Since the previous day the older woman had seemed consumed by thought. She spoke very little, ate even less. Emily was worried: she hoped that once they arrived, everything would be better. They were getting closer to St Mary's Street, where a meeting point had been organised in front of one of the academies.

Thirty people were going on the trip – Emily knew everyone well. She had been attending the Polish Language Academy in Edinburgh for many years – her best friends were also pupils there. For a month now she has been waiting impatiently for the moment her grandmother meets her friends.

The meeting point was very crowded. Emily noticed that David and Anna were already there.

– Hello! How are you? – she asked. – This is Julie, my grandmother!

– Hello – they responded.

– Do you speak Polish? – asked Anna.

– Of course! – the grandmother laughed, after which she added – my husband was Polish. He taught me his native language and I helped him perfect his English. We met in the exact place that we're going to visit today! – she answered excitedly.

The coach arrived. The pupils instantly started filling up the back seats and the teachers sat at the front. Julie sat in the middle, on her own. Her previous excitement disappeared as quickly as it had appeared. She seemed sad and thoughtful, the same as in the morning. Emily was not sure what to think of it. She was not used to her grandmother behaving in this way: as far back as she could remember, Grandmother Julie was always a rather cheerful person, who always looked at

the world through rose-coloured glasses. The girl was hoping that everything would get better once they had arrived.

– Everyone, attention please! – said the teacher, Sophie, right after the coach departed. She had been Emily's teacher from the very beginning of her education at the academy. The girl liked her very much; Sophie had a lovely voice and often told them extraordinary stories that everyone listened to with fascination. She had an artistic soul; she always drew flowers on the blackboard, often hummed under her breath, and added a nice poem to the comments when she was assessing her students' homework. – Today we are going to visit a very special place for Polish–Scottish heritage. Julie, who had the pleasure of watching it being created, will show us around the area and tell us some interesting facts about the Map itself. Please focus on what she has to say to you! This lesson will not happen a second time!

The excitement of the excursionists could be seen with the naked eye. The atmosphere of adventure spread to everyone; the students were excited about spending the whole day outdoors with their friends. They knew that the teachers had planned mysterious entertainment, which they would only find out about on the spot – nothing is more fun than surprises!

Emily spent the whole journey deep in thought. She admired the beautiful surroundings of Eddleston; the gentle hills and green fields attracted her eyes. She did not believe that her grandmother grew up in this area. It must have been such a beautiful childhood! She wondered if she would find out anything new about the Map from her grandmother. She rarely mentioned the time of its creation, although the girl had wanted

to hear about it many times. She usually dismissed her granddaughter's intrusive questions with a wave of her hand; Emily was surprised that she even agreed to being a guide! It was not like her because she always avoided the subject.

– Em, what exactly is this Map supposed to look like? Is it made out of plaster or something? Like a sculpture? – David interrupted the girl's thoughts.

– I have no idea! Believe it or not, I've never been there. I only know that it's very large, and that it took many years to make – replied Emily, disappointed with how little information she could give her friend.

– Why did someone even make it? It must have been a lot of work! So many hours of planning, carving, painting... – Anna thought.

– I don't know that either ... we'll ask my grandmother as soon as we get there! Now let's not disturb her. She seems to be gathering energy for the rest of the day – Emily replied firmly.

Disappointed friends returned to their hushed conversations. While Emily was worrying about her grandmother, her friends were wondering if the girl was okay. She was usually very outspoken and cheerful and entered discussions with everyone, always having something to say. She could not even sit still – she was always wandering from corner to corner looking for something to do. Books and her smartphone quickly bored her, she always had to be on the move. Her pensive and calm expression did not bode well for her – or at least that was the conclusion that her friends reached.



The journey was not long – it took less than an hour. The young students, however, managed to get bored of sitting in one place, so when the second teacher, elegantly dressed Agnes, announced in her calm voice that they had arrived, everyone rushed towards the door. The scuffles lasted until only two people remained on the bus – Emily and her grandmother. The girl sighed and headed for the exit.

– Grandma, are you coming? Everyone is waiting for us.

– I’m coming, I’m coming, I was just thinking – the old lady defended herself.

The Barony Castle Hotel, outside of which the bus had stopped, made a great impression, even though it was rather small. Emily wondered what it must have been like working there. Its picturesque location only added to its charm. The students, however, were curiously looking for a completely different object...

– Where is this Map? Inside? – asked Marcel, one of the other students. The boy was not famous for his patience. During breaks he would run from corner to corner, during lessons he would wander from his place and interrupt others – even teachers!

Not only Marcel was intrigued. The whole group began to nervously look around the area, looking for what they couldn’t even imagine yet. Emily’s grandmother was also looking around – not nervously, but with tenderness. The sight of a place so close to her heart was extremely nostalgic for her. For a moment she forgot that it was 2021 and that she was there with her beloved granddaughter and her friends. The summer of 1976 overtook everything else; memories flashed before her eyes as if she were watching a movie about her youth. Sophie’s voice brought her back to reality:

– Julie, why don’t we start right now? Will you please take us to the Map and tell us a little bit about it? – the teacher asked.

Grandma Julie sighed. She would have liked to spend some more time with her memories, but they had a schedule to stick to.

– Everyone, please follow me! She called the young explorers to order and followed the path leading through the trees. The walk was very short as the Map is just behind the hotel. The day was exceptionally clear, so there were many tourists there. Most of the visitors came from Great Britain, but there were also a few Polish voices. Many people posed for photos in front of the monument, which was slowly appearing in the distance.

– Wow! It’s huge! – every now and then you could hear the voices of students that went ahead of the group and had the pleasure of seeing the reason for all the fuss.

– It looks just like Scotland in satellite imagery! Look, there’s even a sea – like pool here! David’s eyes lit up with excitement. He was always interested in geography, so it was a particularly special experience for him.

– How long did it take to build the Map? When was it? Who made it? Why should you, who are not a guide, tell us about it? – Those students who had not yet scattered around were bombarding Julie with questions.

The older woman had been wondering for over a week how to tackle this topic and tell the students everything she considered important. Although her first ideas had not been great, as soon as she saw the Map, everything became clear. The narrative came to her, she summoned the intrigued students and in beautiful Polish, she began to tell a story about her youth, love, miracles, ambitions, and talent...



PART TWO

Summer job

It was July 1976. The weather was favourable for long walks and picnics in the forest. I was only 18 at the time and I had just landed my first job – I started earning money as a maid at the Barony Castle Hotel. I lived in a village nearby; I commuted a few kilometres by bike to work every day. To this day I'm very fond of those mornings – the Eddleston area is very picturesque! Back then, it was even more so – there were fewer houses and many more scruffy bushes and sheep grazing by the side of the road. Every day I admired the green fields stretching to the horizon and the trees bravely resisting the strong Scottish winds. There wasn't much more that I needed to be completely happy; although I had a loving family and a great job, I was rather sad about one thing. My best and only friend had moved to Germany – her aunt lived near Berlin, and they moved in together for the duration of her studies. I missed her so much. We had spent the whole school year planning to work in the hotel together! It was entirely her idea. Paulina was half Polish and her family knew the owners of the hotel very well. If it weren't for her, I wouldn't even have known that such a place existed! Her decision to go to study in another country took me by surprise. Although I knew beforehand that she was considering it, I never thought she would do it. Our contact was limited, and I had to deal with the fact that we sent each other letters less frequently.

I decided I would not let loneliness ruin my summer. I quickly got into the whirlwind of work; fortunately, there was plenty of it – the hotel was quite crowded during the summer holidays.

During my first shift, I was very nervous. I was not very good at dealing with new situations and with new people. When I went to work for the first time, I thought a lot about the fact that most employees would communicate in a language that I had very little idea about! I only knew a few completely random Polish words that Paulina had taught me; my favourites were „bąbelki”¹, „szermierka”² and „wata”³, but I couldn’t build a meaningful sentence out of them. What a pity!

When I got there, it turned out that my fears were completely unfounded. At the entrance, I was greeted by the daughter of the hotel’s owner, Jan Tomasik.

– Good morning! You must be Julie! Paulina has told us a lot about you. Come on, everyone is waiting for you!

She led me to a cosy staff room. There weren’t many employees, but they had one thing in common – they could all speak Polish! However, I was wrong in believing that I would be left out on that basis.

– Hi! Finally, how nice to meet you! – Enthusiastic shouts in English greeted me. My co-workers spoke my mother tongue perfectly.

They greeted me so warmly that it took my breath away. I couldn’t keep up with their questions.

– How old are you? Why did you choose this job? – inquired Martin, an elderly citizen of Gdańsk, who was responsible for ensuring that the hotel’s documents were always in order.

– Do you like walking in the mountains? We often go hiking!

1.....Bąbelki – bubbles
2.....Szermierka – fencing
3.....Wata – cotton

Asked Florian, a twenty-year-old, extremely energetic gardener from Cracow. He never stopped moving; he just couldn’t sit still! – Where are you from? – In those words I heard a well-known accent. They came from the mouth of the only Scottish woman currently working at the hotel. Liz was very peaceful. She was 40 years old; Polish was not her forte, although she could understand the vast majority of what was said to her. She laughed at the fact that she couldn’t hear the difference between many words, and a lot of others sounded like crackling and hissing to her!

– How did you meet Paulina? I miss her very much – asked Hannah, a girl of a similar age to me, who was born in Elbląg. I recognised her from the stories my friend had told me. The girls were very close.

I was glad I had showed up early for work – I had to answer so many questions!

Hannah was responsible for training me. She showed me around the hotel – it was beautiful. I wasn’t surprised that so many guests came back every year. While the rooms, halls and the dining room were all delightful, what I was most interested in was the view from the windows. At that time, a structure was being created in the garden, the shape of which puzzled me from the very beginning, even though I couldn’t tell what it was. It was covered with a huge tarpaulin, so it remained only a mysterious shape to me.

Hannah taught me how to properly Hoover behind the sofas in the rooms, where to look for towels and how to address guests. Many of them came from Poland and didn’t know English that well, so it was quite a challenge. Their language was so difficult! I liked it very much, but these varieties,

Mr Tomasik

exceptions, and random lines... I had long decided to master this skill one day – nothing could stop me. I planned to study every free evening I had, and when I made up my mind on something, it had to come true.

I quickly became friends with Hannah. Even though practically all the employees treated me kindly, I got on with her the best. It was impossible to get bored with her – if she wasn't trying to play a prank on one of her co-workers, she was planning crazy bicycle trips, mountain walks or trips to Edinburgh, during which she tried to watch as many films in the cinema as possible. Luckily, she liked taking me with her! I was bursting with energy, as I wanted to see new places and meet new people all the time – although I liked my own company, I felt best among others.



The hotel was beautiful, and the work was extremely satisfying. What interested me most, however, was outside its walls... During each break I walked around the gardens with Hannah and Florian. The reason for our curiosity was the mysterious construction site nearby. I waited impatiently for the tarpaulin to be removed and for the secret to be revealed. I was wondering what I would see – Hannah mentioned the words „great project” and „something amazing” several times. The owner of the hotel, Mr. Jan Tomasik, spent a lot of time on it. Anyway, that's where I met him. When Florian decided to show me more closely around the property after I had been there a week, we ran into a pensive Mr. Tomasik behind the hotel. Previously, I had only seen him in the photos hanging in the office where his daughter worked. He was a very busy man; he travelled and worked non-stop. He ran a few hotels, but he spent all summer in the Eddlestone area.

– Good morning! This is Julie; she has recently started working with us, I'm showing her around – Florian's voice snapped the owner out of his thoughts.

– Ah, good morning! How nice to meet you! How are you? Are you enjoying your work? – asked Mr. Tomasik pleasantly. He looked friendly, though he straightened and grew serious at the sound of Florian's words. The serious attitude contrasted with the gentle, joyful eyes of the man.

– I like it very much! Paulina was not joking – this is the loveliest place in the area. It's so interesting! I have millions of questions – has the hotel been yours for a long time? How did it happen that it ended up in your hands? Why did

you move to Scotland at all? Is it because of the beautiful views? Or maybe you like our weather? Or is it perhaps the flocks of sheep? I love sheep! This is by far the best reason to move here, and you seem like a reasonable man to me. Anyway, I also want to have my own hotel some day! – Out of excitement, I always spoke very quickly and a lot. My employer smiled politely, and I saw a gleam in his eye.

–Young lady, these are all excellent questions. Allow me to answer them tomorrow at the workers’ dinner; now, unfortunately, I must go – he sighed. – Very special guests are coming today, and I have to pick them up – he added quickly, which only increased my curiosity. The smile never faded from his face; he suited this place so perfectly!

– Oh no! Do I have to wait until tomorrow? – I thought about it. Patience was not my forte, as I found out many times; I was constantly burning my tongue with hot soup or leaving footprints on the floor, which I never allowed to dry completely...

The man said nothing; he neatly folded the documents, plans and other notes that were still lying on the bench next to him, and which he had been studying so intensely a moment earlier.

The arrival of the mysterious guests

When I came to work the next day, Hannah came to me straight away. She quickly told me about the new guests that had been brought by Mr. Tomasik the day before. She gave them their keys when they were checking in.

– Who are they? The owner’s family? – I asked, while getting ready for work. I didn’t focus on my friend’s words; it didn’t really matter to me who the new guests of the hotel were. I just wondered what time I should bring them their fresh towels and toilet paper.

– No! They’re geographers from Poland! – Hannah replied excitedly. Geography was her greatest passion. She could spend hours studying maps and atlases. I figured they were extremely exciting guests for her.

– That’s so cool! Why have they come here? Do you know anything else? – I asked politely.

– Yes, I know two of them! They were here last year, when I was just beginning my work. They were very busy with work throughout their stay here; they were constantly poring over maps, drawings, plans with Mr. Tomasik... Additionally, they were constantly going north, exploring the Scottish landscape! Florian was very lucky. They took him on such an amazing trip to help them carry maps and their gear! How I envied him ...– my friend continued the story with bated breath.

– What are their names? – I asked out of curiosity. – One of them is Kazimierz Trafas, and the other is Roman Wolnik. I don’t know the rest; they weren’t here last year. Anyway, back then there were fewer people here. Now there’s a crowd!

In addition, more of them will come tomorrow – muttered Hannah, who was ready to sweep the hall every day. It was only when she ran off that I had realised that I hadn't even asked what they were all doing here and what was this mysterious job that had so consumed them last year.

Mr Tomasik's story

The hotel was very crowded. Mr. Tomasik walked around it and talked freely with people who might have been mistaken for his old friends. He was like that – he talked with everyone, always in a good mood and with a polite smile.

At first, I thought that the newcomers would use the hotel as a base for their onward journey – so how great was my surprise when I saw that before breakfast all the new guests had gathered outside, at the mysterious site. They watched with interest something that I was completely baffled by. They were still laughing, their eyes lighting up with excitement. They looked like a group of old friends who finally – despite many adversities – managed to find time to meet. They spoke only Polish among themselves. My studies didn't go to waste; with each passing day I understood more and more of these difficult foreign words that sometimes sounded like mysterious spells...

My shift was short that day. In the evening I returned to the hotel for the monthly employees' dinner. Only Polish specialities appeared on the table; I knew many of them, because Paulina's mother cooked a lot and often. She offered me, among other things, dumplings and sour soup, which I recognized

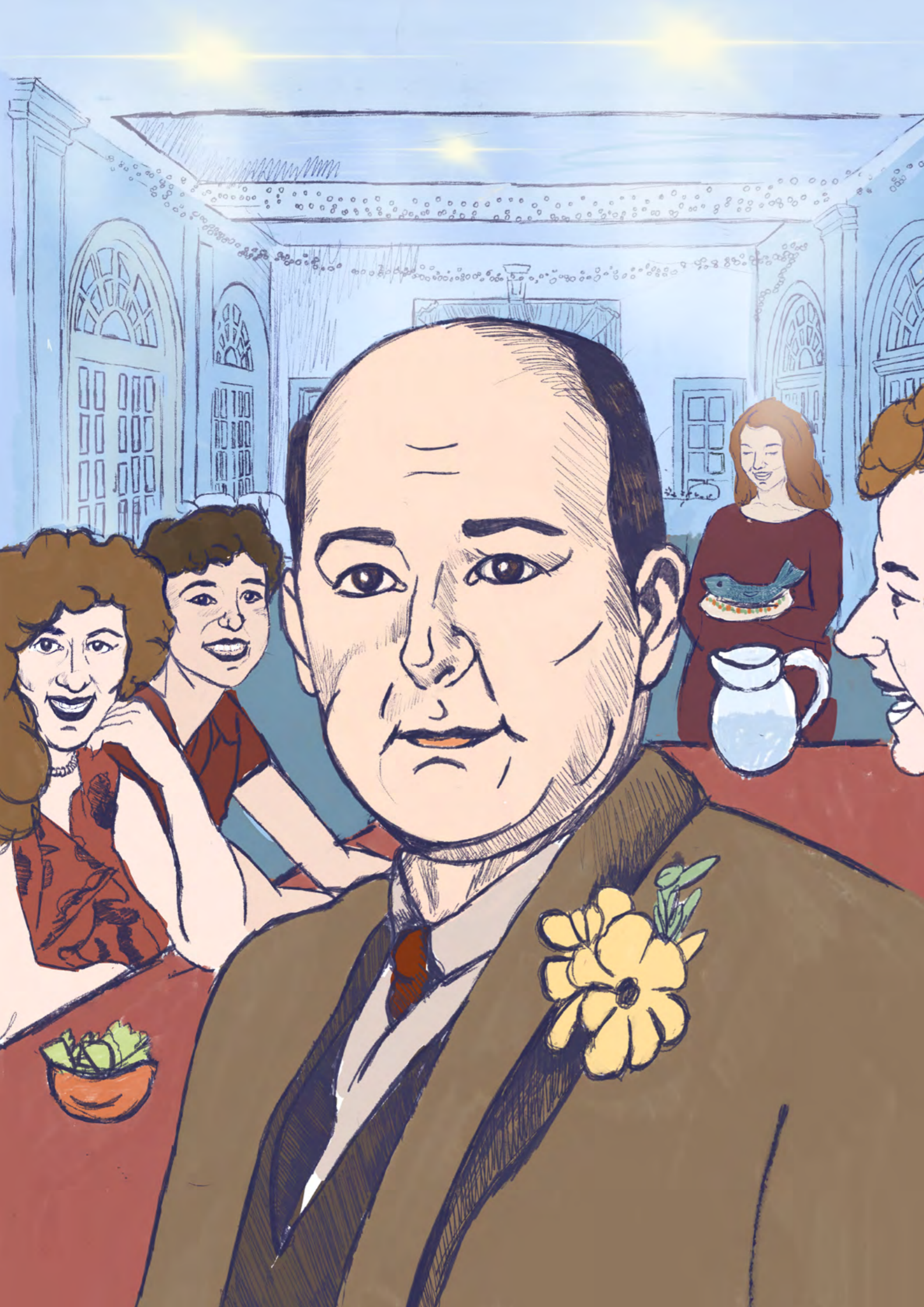
immediately on the hotel table. Beside the usuals, I got to try bigos, stuffed cabbage rolls, vegetable salad and poppy seed cake. What a delight! Even though I had two left hands for cooking myself, I promised myself that I had to learn to make at least a salad. So far, my signature dish was porridge – and not always successfully, because I had a great talent for burning it.

The atmosphere at dinner was amazing. I felt very comfortable among my new friends. For my and Liz's benefit, they all spoke English, for which I was extremely grateful. Mr. Tomasik was sitting at the head of the table, and his family members sat next to him. They gave the hotel a lot of care and attention and the staff respected and liked them.

– Dearly beloved – my employer began seriously. He straightened up to make himself even more audible – I'm glad you're all here today. I am touched by the wonderful community we have managed to build. A particularly warm welcome to Julie, our new arrival! – He turned to me, then raised a toast with his black tea, which he didn't usually part with at any time. – I'm glad you have welcomed her so well.

The smiles of my new friends and the words of my employer gave me confidence. I felt so good here! We spent the next two hours together eating and talking. I perfectly remembered the promise made to me by Mr. Tomasik the day before; emboldened, I wanted to ask for my answers, but then he spoke again:

– I promised Julie yesterday that I would tell her the story of this place today. Many of you know it perfectly well; if you don't want to, you don't have to stay and hear the same thing again. But if you want to listen and improve my memory, that's even better! – Nobody moved from their seat. Mr. Tomasik



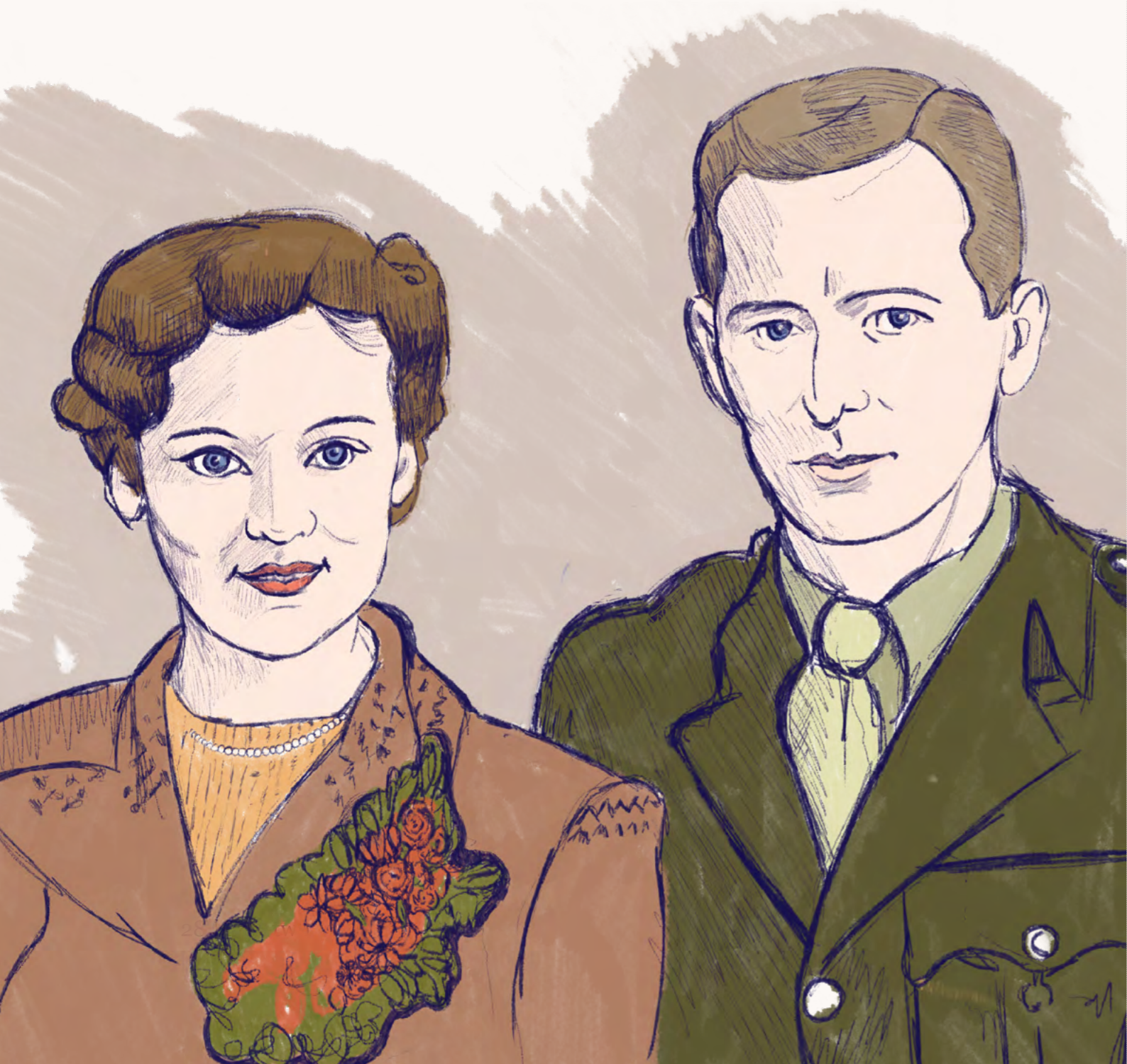
shifted towards me and rested his head on his chin. In full concentration and with an undisguised emotion in his voice, he began telling me his story.

– Julie, you asked me yesterday why I came to Scotland. It all started during the Second World War. I was a sergeant in General Maczek’s 1st Armoured Division, stationed for some time in Galashiels. Sometimes it’s hard for me to understand how it’s possible that the happiest time of my life was associated with such tragic events... Nevertheless, it is what it is. It was through the service for my homeland that I found myself in Scotland. I quickly fell in love with this country, what’s not to love about it? I met wonderful people who were stationed with me. I have never encountered such an understanding nation! We had the same values, dreams, goals...– When he mentioned his companions, I noticed a gleam in his eyes. – This is where I met my wife, Catherine. We got married in September 1942. Since I was in the army, I had to return to the front. It wasn’t until 1945 that I settled permanently in Scotland and started building a life for myself and my wife. At the beginning it was very difficult for us to support ourselves. We worked in several hotels in Edinburgh, all the time dreaming about having our own place. We put aside every penny until finally, after 3 years of hard work, we managed to buy our first hotel! We worked on it so intensely that we turned it from a complete ruin into one of the most popular spots in the area. We realized that we had a flair for hospitality. We loved being able to welcome guests, create a homely atmosphere and chat with people from all over the world. After several years of work, I became the owner of many properties in Scotland, but it still wasn’t enough. I found this place in 1970, during

a trip with Catherine. We fell in love with it right away.

– You could hear in his voice that he was being completely serious.

– I have always loved geography. I try to get to know the places that are close to my heart as well as possible. My friend, Professor Mieczysław Klimaszewski, who visited our hotel a few years ago, knew about it very well. So, we came up with an idea to build a map that the world has never seen before. – He thought for a moment.



– What map? Of what? – I asked.

– Of Scotland! – Marian answered quickly, as if it were the most obvious thing in the world.

– Where's the map? – Although Mr. Tomasik was deep in thought (which happened to him extremely often), I didn't give up. – Can I see it?

– But Julie, you've seen it before! – Florian replied. – You were next to it when you met Mr. Tomasik!

I was speechless. Did he mean one of the paper maps my employer had with him at the time? I didn't look that closely at them, but they didn't seem that special to me...

I started thinking about where this unusual map could be. Everyone, including Mr Tomasik, were looking at me with some sort of expectation visible on their faces. I slowly started connecting the dots. I remembered where the geographers that came from Poland meet and what they are interested in:

– It's the construction site behind the hotel! This will be a map of Scotland! – I almost shouted these sentences, and my co-workers burst out into loud laughter. I felt my cheeks turn red with embarrassment. How could I not have guessed it sooner? I wanted the ground to open up and swallow me.

– Exactly! We still have a long way to go, but we've been working on it for two years. No wonder you didn't guess it earlier, the whole structure was covered up. Today Kazik and Roman formally removed the cover and started the construction season – Mr. Tomasik chuckled.

I wanted to see it as soon as possible, but it was already dark – I wouldn't have been able to see anything. I planned on doing it the following morning.

– But where did this idea come from? Why do you need a big map of Scotland in the garden? – I asked and immediately regretted it. Wasn't that too nosy? Fortunately, my employer was not angry.

– Just out of love. For geography, history, Scotland, Poland... This idea has haunted me for many, many years. In the 1940s, in one of the military camps in Douglas, I saw a large map of Poland, made by other soldiers. I think that's when my fascination began. Since then, I've been greatly impressed by various miniatures, maps and plans that went beyond paper. I really liked the miniature of Belgium, which I saw in Brussels in 1958. I knew that I wanted to create something similar one day, but with even greater momentum at even greater scale – the man spoke faster and faster and with more and more enthusiasm. It was clear that he treated this venture as a project of his life.

– Why do I need all of this... that's an excellent question. Most of all, I hope we're not just doing it for me. Through this map I would like to express my gratitude towards the Scots. They accepted me as one of their own, they gave me a home and opportunities. I have never lacked anything here and I do not want to part with this earth and these people. Julie, this map is one big thank you – a gift from a grateful Pole who found his place on earth here. I want this map to show the relationship that Poles have with Scotland. When I was stationed at the shoreline, I was constantly wondering what secrets this island still hides ...

His composure made a great impression on me. I admired him even more than before. I saw emotions like mine on my colleagues' faces. While I was sure they knew it all, and had

heard the story before, it must have been important to them too. Although I was not Polish, I had never felt so „at home” before.

Scotland in the garden

The events of the previous day gave me a lot to think about. I went to work with a completely new energy – I was looking forward to the break when I would have time for a short walk. The commotion at the hotel that day was extraordinary. In the morning, new guests arrived – students from Poland who had come to Scotland on an exchange. They had found out about the project from friends who had stayed here in the past. Fascinated by it, they decided to see if they could be of any use. When they got there, I was at the reception desk.

– Good morning! – said the three young students in Polish – How are you? We came to work on the map, they continued.

– Welcome! Mr. Tomasik is behind the building, so you should talk to him – I replied in English, not sure if I understood their words correctly.

They nodded and smiled. They introduced themselves to me – the tallest and eldest of them, Rafał, led the group. It was he who had organised the entire trip and contacted the geographers working on the site. He studied geography, but had also graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts in sculpture. He seemed very serious to me, and at the same time very polite. He spoke little, smiled even less. He had been here a year ago, when help was first needed on the map; Bartek, was a year younger than Rafał, and was his opposite – he was always smiling, he reminded me of a very happy and enthusiastic

Labrador. It turned out that he had met Paulina! The last newcomer was named Szczepan, which I found a complete nightmare to pronounce. Stephen? I had no idea. Who even came up with such a name? He made up for the unpronounceable name with a smile that seemed to be the most sincere thing in the world. He was the youngest of the three boys – he had just started his studies and he hadn't been in Scotland for long. I wondered why, despite such a young age and so little experience, he wanted to get involved in such a large project.

The students left their belongings and went in search of Mr. Tomasik. I didn't see them again until much later, when I was spending my break in the garden with Hannah and Florian. The geographers, the students and the hotel owner were kneeling in the grass beside what now appeared to be a huge swimming pool. Immersed in conversation, they didn't even notice our arrival. We decided not to disturb them; we were more interested in the map itself.

The uncovered structure, without the grey tarpaulin which I had seen for many days, made a great impression. The shape of Scotland was laid out in a huge pool. I wondered how it was done – I couldn't identify any of the materials that were used. As far as I was concerned, it had been created by magic. I walked around the pool with delight – although the shapes didn't look finished, it was already clear that the work so far had been done with remarkable precision, you could even say with mastery. The country was presented so accurately! Its precision was most noticeable. When I looked at the map, I was reminded of so many childhood memories – when I was a little girl, once a month, my parents would take me on trips to different parts of the country. I knew the Highlands best, as

we travelled there the most. We took boats on the great lochs, visited old churches, walked in the mountains and visited old castles. Those were great moments that brought us closer together. I haven't been up there since my 16th birthday – we are all too busy now to continue the tradition. What I saw in front of me evoked the strangest memories, and I was extremely moved. After returning home, I decided to persuade my parents to go on a trip – maybe to the Isle of Skye? We were near it once; It looked inviting and I have only been there once, when I was 5 years old.

I was amazed. Scotland in the garden! Mr. Tomasik had his own Scotland! Even though his idea had seemed strange to me when I heard it, I couldn't stop thinking about it. When I returned to hoovering after my break, I couldn't concentrate on my work at all. I was already dreaming of another walk around the hotel and another visit to the map.



The Importance of Memories

That day seemed special from the very beginning. After returning home, I felt a strange urge to write down my thoughts that had been swirling around in my head for hours. The memories that came back to me, as well as the emotions related to Mr. Tomasik's extraordinary story, meant that I could not think about anything else – only the Map. I grabbed a new sketchbook and started sketching without much thought. Slowly, on the page, the shape of an island started appearing, an Island that was occupying my mind. I started to look at places from north to south – I remembered how important these childhood trips were to me. On the following pages, I drew places that I remembered from those trips – the Falls of Falloch, deer at Glen Etive, Eilean Donan Castle, the valley of Glencoe, Tobermory and many, many more that have stayed with me for so many years. I was drawing for a very long time, lost in thought. Over dinner, I asked my parents what their best memories of our trips were.

– It's simple – my dad said – trekking in the Grampians! Remember when you didn't want to go anywhere on the second day? We couldn't get you out of the tent!

– Oh my, that was horrible! I was convinced that we would have to go home, as we thought you wouldn't go anywhere with us – added my mother.

I had completely forgotten about this adventure. I was about to reach for my sketchbook when my mother added:

– I think my best memories are of us visiting the Inverness area. Your aunt was with us, remember? We saw a lot of cows and sheep then; you were fascinated by them.

– I don't remember the animals, but I do remember the hotel that we stayed at! There were strange drawings of the Loch Ness monster on the walls, I was very scared of them... – I added after a moment's thought.

– It's a pity we don't have any photos from that trip. I would like to experience it all again ... – Dad recalled, but I was already drifting away with my thoughts.

– Actually, why not do it again? – asked mum – How about a winter trip? I smiled, as I had something to look forward to.

The days at work passed quietly. There were no new visitors, and those that were here were consumed by their work. They spent days staring at calculations and intricate drawings. They looked at the individual fragments of the map. It looked as if nothing was happening. Nevertheless, my curiosity was endless, so I visited the construction site every day. At the beginning, Hannah went with me, but after a while she said that it was pointless.

– Julie, I don't know what attracts you to that place so much. After all, nothing big is happening there! I wonder if they'll ever get it done – my new friend doubted the project.

Such a thought never even crossed my mind, so she couldn't discourage me. The commitment of the geographers was evident in their eyes, and you could tell that they wouldn't just give up overnight.

–Come on! Such work simply requires a lot of planning. Everything must be done very carefully. It's a good thing that they are taking their time; the result will be that much better! – Florian didn't give up, and neither did I. He told me once that he didn't want this job to end. He felt amazing among such a large number of Poles; just listening to the language

was very soothing. His parents still lived in Poland – he hadn't seen them in years, and he missed them very much. Now he wasn't alone. Spending time among his countrymen brought back many good memories, and his mood kept getting better.

– You know – he told me once – when I look at them, joking, working, drinking coffee, it reminds me of home. There were always a lot of us, as my mother had five brothers. We spent a lot of time together. This Polish commotion does me a lot of good, as it reminds me of my family. I would love them to be here with me – His eyes showed longing and sadness. He showed me a photograph of his dad building a swing in the garden. Although it was very small, Florian kept it as if it were his greatest treasure.

Accident at work

One Wednesday afternoon, I didn't go to the construction site during my break as I had just tripped sweeping the stairs and cut my leg. I stayed inside and Hannah helped me with the wound.

– How did you do that? I've been through there a thousand times and never got hurt! After all, the stairs are in good condition, not even that steep! – my surprised friend analysed the accident. I didn't want to admit the reason, I stumbled because I was leaning too much towards the window, as the view was more interesting than the floor in the stairwell.

Outside the window, the exchange students were bringing some sacks with wheelbarrows to the construction site and putting them in the shed. I wanted to look at them – something

was finally happening! I forgot about sweeping and my other responsibilities. I was staring at what was happening outside the window. It seemed to me that their work was endless – they kept turning up with new bags. When Szczepan suddenly turned and looked straight at me, it surprised me so much that I slipped and fell! The boy obviously found it very funny, as he continued working with a big smile on his face as soon as I signalled to him that I was fine. What an imbecile I am! I started blushing. Oh no, I definitely didn't want to admit it to anyone!

Although my injured leg hurt more and more, I went to see the Map after the shift was over. All the geographers were now in their rooms, or so I hoped. I didn't want anyone to catch me watching their work. While it was easy to justify my visits during a break, spending time at work after the end of my shift would be a lot more difficult to explain. I only just thought of what a shame it would be if someone saw me there, when I heard:

– Hi. How are you?

Szczepan's voice snapped me out of my thoughts. For the second time that day, I felt a blush appear on my face. Oh no!

– I see that you enjoy scaring me! I replied pointing at my bandaged shin.

The boy laughed, but then said immediately:

– I hope that it's nothing serious. Sorry, I didn't mean to scare you – It sounded sincere.

– It's fine. Besides, you can make up for this nasty wound

– I replied.

– Yes? How? – The intrigued boy waited for my answer. You only live once, I thought.

– I want to know more about what you're doing here. He was confused.

– Well... we're making a map of Scotland – he said, as if he wasn't sure if I was okay.

I laughed.

– I know that much! I mean the details. Why are you constantly staring at paper maps and hardly ever moving on the construction site? What was in the wheelbarrows today? To what extent does this project present the true image of the country? Is it accurate? – Question after question blurted out.

The boy seemed completely surprised by what I wanted from him.

He looked around and announced:

– I must go now. We are going up north for a few days, to explore the area more thoroughly; we lack data – he replied, and I became sad. He must have noticed that as he added very quickly – Don't think I'm running away from questions! I will happily answer all of them when I return. You have Saturdays off, right?

I nodded my head. This time I was intrigued.

– Great – he replied – let's meet here next Saturday at noon. I'll tell you everything then. Now I must run because the rest are waiting for me. Take care. And be careful! – He said with a big smile.

I blushed again. It seemed to have become my new reaction!

Is it a talent?

I hated waiting for anything. My dad always said that I spend my life repeating one question over and over again: “How much longer?” He was probably right. There were very few people left in the hotel, so the rest of the staff and I played a lot of card games and gave each other fun challenges. Even though I was having a good time, every time I walked past the window, I peeked through it with hope.

The geographers didn’t return until Friday. Mr. Tomasik was the first to enter the hotel.

– What a trip it was! Julie, do you know how beautiful your country is? The man asked, genuinely interested in what I had to say.

– Yes, sir. I’ve travelled all over Scotland with my parents! Please, take a look at my drawings; These are all the places I’ve been to – I handed my sketchbook over to him.

Mr. Tomasik’s eyes widened

– Did you draw these? – He asked.

– Mm-hmm – I muttered, embarrassed.

– You have a great talent! Have you had any lessons?

I smiled. I’d heard it many times before – my friends at school always envied my drawing skills. I didn’t pay much attention to it as it was more important for me to plan my future wisely. Drawing was just a distraction from the rest of the world.

– No, sir. I don’t really know much – I admitted.

– Nonsense! – He was indignant. – Believe me, I can recognise real talent when I see it. Don’t neglect it! – He said, then went in search of his wife, who was waiting for him with

a delivery of new books that had just arrived at the hotel. I find peace with paper and pencil, Mr. Tomasik with books and work; in that, I understood him completely.

What a strange conversation! What was it that I shouldn’t neglect? What could I do to be better? Anyway, what for? I was left with dozens of questions. I was pensive when Rafał and Szczepan approached the reception.

– Hi! I hope you didn’t get any new bruises while we were away – Szczepan joked. Rafał looked at him surprised; apparently the boy didn’t tell him about my little accident at work. Excellent!

– I don’t have any new bruises, but look, I burned myself with broth– I showed him my left wrist.

The boy laughed. Together with Rafał they went upstairs, but Szczepan turned back:

– Tomorrow’s walk is still on, right? – He asked.

– Of course! – I replied a little too quickly. And too loud. And too joyfully. Eh, he must have thought I was a weirdo!



Szczepan's story

I was drawing all morning on Saturday. Ideas were creeping into my head one by one, not allowing a moment's rest. Hannah's smiling face, Marian's pensive face and even one hairy cow appeared on the pages of my sketchbook. When I was just starting to sketch my beloved dog, I noticed that I was late for my meeting with Szczepan. I ran out of the house and jumped on my bike. I'd never ridden that fast before! I only got there half an hour late.

– Sorry! – I was shouting from afar. – I have no idea how it happened!

Szczepan looked at me. I noticed that he was holding a book in his hand. It seemed that he wasn't angry at all. What's more...

– But what happened? – He asked and looked at his watch.

– Oh! Don't worry, I haven't even noticed what time it is. I was reading – the boy replied, embarrassed.

– What are you reading? – I asked, trying to catch my breath after my mad journey, grateful for his distraction.

– Leśmian's poems. You won't know him, he's a Polish poet. Anyway, he passed away many years ago – he added. – What do you have on your hand? – He asked.

I had pencil smudges! How did I not notice it?

– Mr. Tomasik said that you are very good at drawing, but I didn't know that you are so devoted to it! – The boy laughed.

– Because I'm not at all – I replied. I wanted to move on quickly – I can see you haven't done anything on the site today. Why?

– We have, and a lot! Look! – He showed me some strange plans, drawings and calculations he kept next to him.

– I don't understand any of this. You'd better tell me what I'm looking at. The boy sighed.

– The Map is a very complicated project. I know that Mr. Tomasik told you about it, but he doesn't like to brag, and he probably didn't mention many aspects. The calculations themselves took a very long time. Anyway, look at how big it is! The pool circumference is 142 metres the map itself is 50 by 40 meters. This is the largest outdoor 3D map in the world! – the boy said very excitedly – just drawing the shape of the country, on the ground was very difficult and required great precision. Scotland is shown here on a scale of 1:10,000, and its different heights are spread over many contours. It is all carefully calculated, there is no room for error! You asked what we were carrying in the wheelbarrows – it was cement. We need to fix a few places which have cracked and crumbled since last year. Look, here – he pointed to the vicinity of Glasgow – pieces of land are missing.

He spoke with real fascination. He kept showing me hills and valleys that were extremely difficult to make.

– How did you find out that help was needed here?

– From Bartek. We've known each other since childhood, we came to Scotland together. Rafał recruited him in the library; he had seen his projects and heard about him from lecturers. He talked to him, and Bartek got me on board. It wasn't difficult – he laughed – I'm sure that every Pole in Scotland would like to be part of such a project.

– Why? – I asked. A lot of calculating and carrying around heavy materials didn't seem like tempting work ...

– It's very important for us to show our appreciation. Mr. Tomasik gives us a chance to give Scotland something

from us, from Poles. Scotland gave a home to many people after the war. Why shouldn't it get a monument from us? After all, it deserves much, much more! His voice was calm as he spoke about this complicated topic.

I was pondering. Before that, I hadn't thought about the country I come from in such a way. I have always taken for granted the beauty that surrounds me and the people who have made a positive impact on my life. The vision of leaving Scotland a gift in the form of a map suddenly struck me as touching. I also wanted to leave such a wonderful gift for the world that I love so much. In order not to be completely immersed in my own thoughts, I asked:

– What are you going to do now? Do you have to do calculations all the time?

– No, no, – he laughed. – Now comes the fun part. We must first complete the topographic details. The terrain must be spotless. When everything is perfect, we will start painting the solidified concrete with a primer.

– When are you going to finish? – I asked.

– In just a few years! – he replied happily.

I abruptly interrupted our walk around the construction site.

– Few years? You're kidding! I have to wait that long for the result?!

Szczepan laughed.

– I have already heard that you are not famous for your patience. Anyway, how is your leg?

– Very good, although my relationship with the hotel stairs is rather tense right now – I pouted.

The conversation was pleasant and long. I listened for hours to what Szczepan had to say about the project, which was so

close to most of the people now staying in the hotel next door. Watching their involvement gave me a lot to think about; more and more often I wondered about my future and what fascinating things I could do with it.



All good things must come to an end

There was very little work in the hotel in August – most of the guests were members of the map team, and they were outside all the time. Together with Hannah, we spent more and more time on the construction site – now, when the physical work on it began, my friend regained interest. Mathematics bored her but watching as more mountains and lakes began to appear in front of her fascinated her even more than me. One evening I wrote a letter to Paulina in which I told her about everything that had been happening. I attached drawings of the Map, which I managed to draw in secret during my breaks from cleaning the hotel rooms. My friend was delighted – not only with the map itself, but most of all with my drawings. She wasn't the only one.

During one of the breaks, I was sketching Aberdeen from memory and Rafał looked over my shoulder. I had heard his voice maybe three times so far – he was the calmest man I've ever met; therefore, I was surprised by his statement: – Julie, you've got to do something with this! You draw so well! Such a talent cannot be wasted. This is amazing. Have you ever thought about studying in this field? Thus, he planted a new dream in my head: it was to studying at the Edinburgh Art College. From then on, I created my portfolio day and night. I wanted to become a fully-fledged artist and leave something behind in the world; something that could be a gift, a Map of my own.

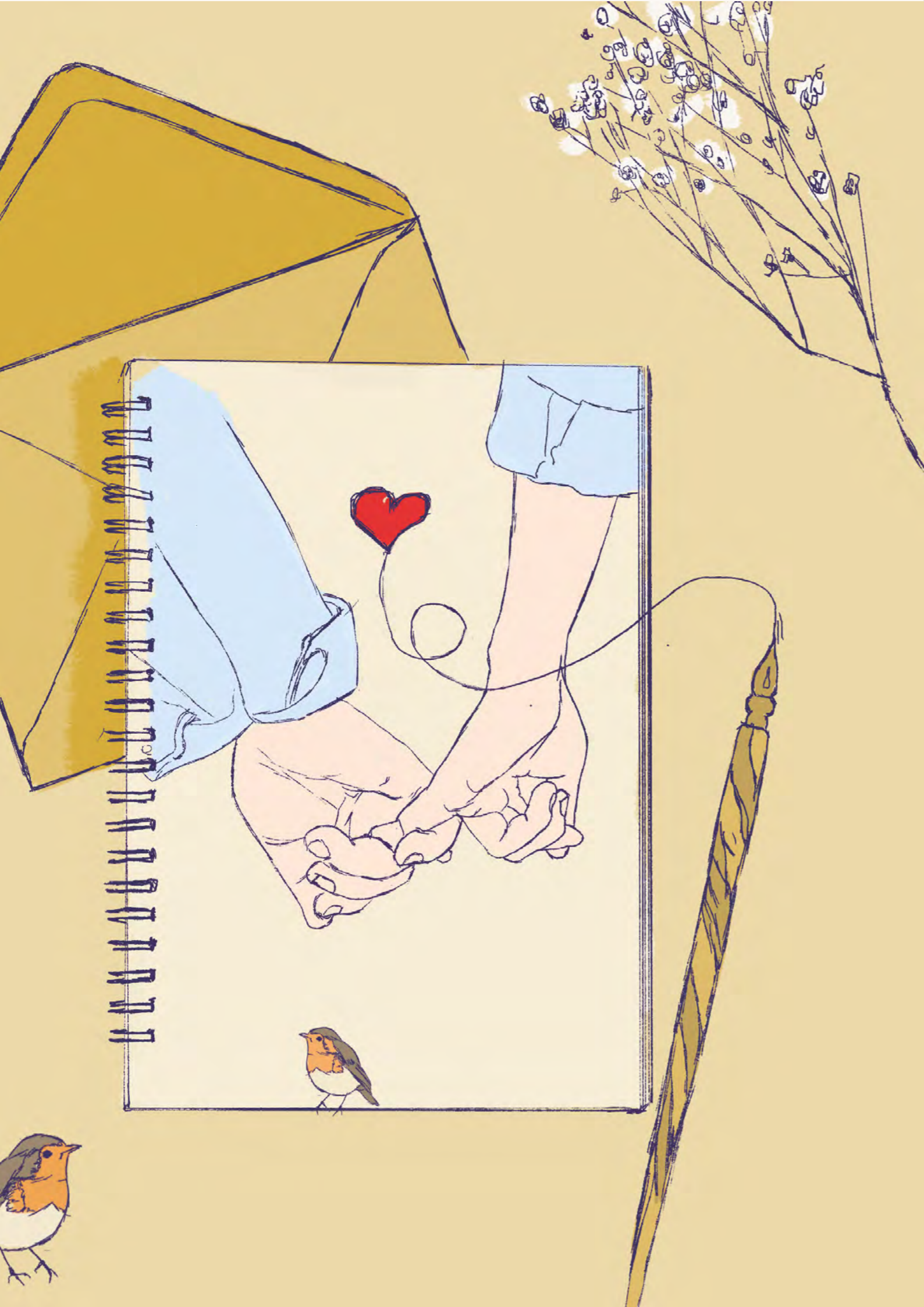
Taking the job at Mr. Tomasik's hotel during the summer holidays was one of the best decisions I have ever made. I've never seen people so engaged, sincere, open and inspiring.

Nothing was impossible for them; a shared motivation and a clearly set goal brought them together even more than it seemed possible. Observing them at work allowed me to appreciate the country where I was born. Every hill, valley and smallest path was unique to me now. In my sketchbook, apart from the pictures of places from my memories, many faces appeared: Mr. Tomasik, his daughter and her husband, Mr. Trafas and other geographers, my colleagues and the exchange students. They all made this summer wonderful; I received an amazing gift from them: I learned how to appreciate the beautiful things in my life. Watching how Poles and Scots worked together to create a significant project for both countries turned out to be one of the warmest memories of my life.

While I was working on my portfolio, the construction season on site was coming to an end. The summer passed quickly, and the building work had to finish. The geographers were slowly leaving, returning to their regular activities. Students had to return to their universities. I regretted that even more than the work coming to an end – I had really come to like Szczepan over the summer. We had become very close, and I didn't want him to leave. We spent many hours walking around the neighbourhood together. His portrait that remained with me was by far my best work.

– See you soon. I will come to visit you, he said as we said our goodbyes before he returned to Edinburgh.

– Of course. And I will let you know as soon as I am in town – I replied calmly, although in my heart I wanted to cry. I thought that he looked rather sad too.



PART THREE

More questions than answers

– As you know perfectly well, Emily, we kept our promises – Julie looked at her granddaughter and ended her story about the summer of 1976: the first summer she had spent there.

A lot of questions appeared in the girl's mind. It was the first time she had heard the story of how her grandparents met. She never even thought for a moment that it was so romantic!

– What happened next? When was the map finished? Did you go to college? What is happening with Szczepan today? Did Paulina come back to Scotland? – Apparently not only Emily had questions; her fellow-students' voices overlapped; everyone wanted to know the answer to their questions..

– Oh yeah, I went to college. I studied drawing and then I earned my living by illustrating textbooks and books for children. I can't imagine a better job; and to think that if I hadn't ended up in this hotel then, I wouldn't have been sitting here with you today ... I'll let you in on a secret; in every book I've ever illustrated, at least one character had the face of Liz or Florian. I used to draw them so often during quiet moments at work that I find their faces the easiest to draw! Grandmother Julie laughed.

– The map was completed a few years later, in 1979 – she continued– Unfortunately, Mr. Tomasik was ill and did not have the strength to look after the property properly. Although everyone did their best, the map deteriorated more and more. Such a large and fragile object requires constant care, otherwise all the work will go to waste. In 1990, the Tomasik

family sold the hotel and its lands. For many years no one paid any attention to the map, and it was heartbreaking both for Szczepan and me. When we found out about a major map renovation plan in 2010, we jumped around the kitchen with joy! Someone finally saw how unique this place is. Julie's emotions were evident from miles away. She looked at the map and took in a deeper breath. Emily walked over to her and hugged her as tightly as she could.

– What about Szczepan? Did he come here too? – David asked.

– Of course! He spent a few months each year here. We even got married in the area, a few miles away. After which, we celebrated in the hotel that we both knew and loved. This is one of my favourite memories. All the geographers and my colleagues, that spent the summer in the hotel in 1976, came to the wedding party. We told each other stories from our time here for hours; I didn't realise that this event was so significant to others, until I listened to the stories of my friends. Each of them had something to say; what connected all the stories were the memories of our work together.

Emily had seen the photos of the wedding, although she did not remember them very well. One detail remained in her memory: the big smiles of the group of people that posed in front of the hotel.

– I always tried to come here with Szczepan, although I didn't have as much time as he did – after the birth of our children, I devoted every free moment that I didn't spend with them on drawing. I had many orders for my drawings, and there was never enough time. Even if we were both very busy, we always tried to come here at least once a year – in July. We have lots

of beautiful family memories from here. This is where our daughter took her first steps!

Julie stopped the story.

– I have never seen Paulina again. Our contact broke off even before my wedding. Now I think that her purpose in my life was to bring me here – if it weren't for our friendship, I would never have met Szczepan, I would never have got to where I am today. We are still friends with Hannah and Florian. We even live next to each other! Their engagement probably shocked all their friends. Although they didn't seem to fit together at first glance, they turned out to be great partners. They got married in a little ceremony and didn't tell us about it until afterwards. They went to Poland for their honeymoon, and they sent me a lot of postcards from that time. I keep them in my album which holds an important place in my house. – Julie took a deep breath – Such friends are a real treasure. Although we are of different nationalities, nothing can separate us. Who would have thought that such a simple job could bring me so much happiness?

The pupils were delighted with the story. Many of them did not know each other well yet; some had just arrived in Scotland. Each of them dreamed of a true friend, one with whom contact would never be lost. They wondered about their friends that stayed in Poland – will it be the same with them as it was with Paulina? Emily doubted it. After all, times have changed! Telephones and computers now allowed people to stay in touch and flights are more frequent and safer.

Those who have broken away from their dreams of true friendship have noticed that something is still missing in this story. When David was about to ask for an answer, Julie continued.

– As I told you before, Emily, the last time I was here was

Old drawings, new emotions

four years ago, with your grandfather. He passed away shortly after that – he had been ill for years. I was afraid of coming back here as I was afraid of memories that this place might bring back. Our last trip here was a wonderful farewell. Szczepan sat down exactly where I am sitting – she pointed to the bench – and talked for hours about how he taught me Polish in this exact place. He liked to tell anecdotes about it at every possible opportunity. He was extremely proud of how great my Polish was, but never missed a chance to tell someone how I almost went crazy learning the pronunciation of the word *filizanka* – she said in a strong Scottish accent.

– Grandma, I had no idea you were so afraid of coming back here! If I had known, I wouldn't have asked you to come. I'm sorry – Emily said with a lot of emotion in her voice.

– But Emily, don't apologise! I'm very grateful to you for that. And to all of you – she pointed to the students and the teachers – I also thank you. Sharing this story made me feel better. I hope that you found it interesting.

The pupils and the teachers got up and applauded. The place where they were standing suddenly seemed magical; filled with colourful characters and anecdotes told by Julie, it became very unique.

The time to return to Edinburgh was approaching, but something was still haunting Emily. She wondered if the question would make her grandma sad. During the lunch which they were all eating outside, she decided to take her chance:

– Grandma, what happened to the sketchbook in which you drew the map for the first time? – The girl asked. Her grandmother's pictures were hanging in her parents' house, but none showed a map.

– I have it here with me – said the old lady, and pulled out an old, disintegrating sketchbook out of her bag. The pages were taped together, and the whole thing was covered with foil so that it would not fall apart completely. Suddenly there was a crowd around them. Everyone wanted to see what had changed the life of the woman who had spent so much time with them that day.

Emily picked up the sketchbook very carefully. She put it on the table and opened it on the first page.

The sketched map looked inconspicuous—you could only see the shape of Scotland there. Emily knew that her grandma was a great artist, so she was rather surprised

– I never tried drawing the Map again. Each time I thought about how perfect and accurate it was – she pointed at the structure – I felt powerless. Nothing can imitate it and reflect the commitment that accompanied its construction, which was so important here. The drawing will also not show what touched me the most in the whole project – the union of people from two nations who suddenly became close to each other. I didn't know how to draw my friendship then – she smiled.

Emily was turning the pages. The other sketches were captivating. The portraits at the end of the notebook attracted everyone's attention. Each of them was signed. Mr. Tomasik's smiling eyes were lifelike, and Rafał's frowning eyebrows spoke more than a thousand words.

The portraits of Hannah and Szczepan were the most popular. – Grandma, but you knew how to draw friendship! – Emily shouted. In fact, Hannah's face was exceptionally radiant. She stood out from the other drawings. It was immediately obvious that it was someone important to the artist. The smile of the young girl seemed to have a magical power to cheer everyone up.

– Hannah became a geographer. As she loved people, she taught at school all her professional life. Her students loved her very much! She is still in touch with many of them – Julie recalled.

– I know her! – sighed one of the teachers, Sophie – I was in her class! A wonderful woman. It was she who told me about this place – she said delightedly.

An even bigger smile appeared on the old lady's face. There is nothing better than hearing someone praise our loved ones.

The portrait of Szczepan was the total opposite of the teacher's. It was consumed by sadness and blurred in some places

– These blurred parts are my tears. Don't laugh at me! I was upset when I drew him as he was leaving for university that day. When I missed him later, I would look at this portrait. I did exceptionally well, look, you can even see his dimple on the left cheek! – She laughed.





Sweet dreams

Long afterwards, Emily thought about her grandmother's story. On the way back, they sat cuddled and said nothing – nothing needed to be said. The girl dreamed of a friendship like the one that her grandmother and Hannah had; about the love experienced by her grandparents; about whether she would ever be as devoted to something as Mr. Tomasik, for whom the Great Polish Map of Scotland was a project for life. She was not likely to become a great illustrator, as she had no talent at all. She could not sculpt, so she could not be equal to Rafał. She wondered when she would discover her own calling.

The rest of the participants fell asleep thinking about one thing: where was their place? Is there a special place for everyone where they can feel at home? Some concluded that their home was a special place, others said that it is their grandparents' house. Others believed that in fact it is not about the place, but about the people with whom you spend your life. While many felt they had everything they could wish for, others decided to wait for a summer as special as Julie's in 1976.

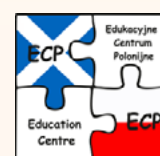
The old lady was falling asleep peacefully. As she was drifting away, she could see the faces of her loved ones; everyone was smiling at her. Julie wondered if Emily had already found the sketchbook with Julie's drawings in between her books – she tossed it into the girl's backpack when she wasn't looking. She didn't need it anymore – all she had to do was close her eyes and her loved ones were right there with her.



This book presents the fate of the heroes intertwined with the history of the construction of the Great Polish Map of Scotland, which was created in the 1970s in the grounds of the Barony Castle Hotel, in the Scottish Borders. This map was built as an expression of the Polish people's gratitude for the help and hospitality given to them by the Scottish community during World War II.

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