**Poland and me.**

Poland and me started when Lala dropped me on the ground.

In 2013 was planning my summer holidays. I was thinking that it would be nice to spend the holiday abroad to learn more about other cultures. A good way to do this, is doing volunteering work. I signed in on a volunteering project in Ukraine and so it happen that I arrived in the late evening in July on the airport of L’viv.

On the airport I met two other Dutch girls and the contact from the project. Together we travelled to the location of the project where we arrived at night. After a sandwich and a cup of tea we went straight ahead to bed. The next day we came together to meet father Igor and the other volunteers. Our group was a mix of people from Ukraine, Holland, Germany and Poland.

Father Igor and his organization take care of homeless addicted people. The organization helps them to rehab and to take them out of there isolation by giving them social, psychological and physic support. Father Igor was get from the Ukraine government a big house with buildings around located in a forest. They was start renovate the buildings and the house to give a home to the people he was taking care of. There was still much work left.

We worked every day on renovation rooms and making new sheds for the animals. There was a small farm for the residents so they could make some money with selling products or to be more independent.

In the evenings we were sitting around the campfires playing games and singing songs, or we went fishing. We spend 24/7 together with our group and every day we got to know each other better. I was start very much like Piotr from Poland. We both like to ride horse so one evening we decided we could go together on a small trip through the forest. There was only one horse named Lala. She was strong and big enough to caring us together.

Riding in the forest went the first part very well, until there cracked a branch and birds start flying. Lala was scared and pranced. We both fell on the ground and Lala ran away. We were very shocked by this adventure and much worry about Lala. We went fast to the home for help. After three hours Piotr and one of the residents finally found her. She was luckily in good health without any injuries.

This evening we was till late much talking and figured out that we like each other. Unfortunately this happened on the last night before the volunteering project was ended. Piotr went back to Poland and I to Holland with over 1200 kilometres in between.

Back home we kept in touch. We realised it was not just a summer flirt but we really liked each other. Fully in love I decided I had to learn Polish. The idea was that when I will see Piotr again I good tell him something in Polish. Off course the polish people was learn us a few words in Ukraine, but this where not the best words. I bought an e-course and started enthusiastic. With listening the first lesson my enthusiasm dropped on the floor. I was not even able to hear the separate words! It was sound like one big sentence! And it was just a simple conversation about introducing yourself.

The first time I visit Piotr was the first time for me being in Poland. My plane had a few hours delayed and I arrived late in the evening on the airport of Warszawa. I was little in stress because I needed to hurry to catch the last train to Lublin. And to be honest I was little afraid to be in the evening on a train station in for me a unknown country. Happily some friendly Polish helped me to find the train and everything went well. My first visit I was surprised of the beautiful buildings and the rich history in Lublin. I understand that the history for Polish people is very important. What I like much, are the small kiosks everywhere. And the kiosk are open from early in the morning till late in the evening. This is something we don’t have in Holland. It’s funny to see that Piotr was surprised that we don’t have the kiosks and time tables from the supermarket are much smaller. He is still not used to it. After visit each other regularly we soon decided to live together in Holland.

Last year our Polish friends married. After the ceremony in the church all friends and family threw coins to the bridal couple to wish them much luck, prosperity and wealth. In Holland we throw dry rice. throwing rice symbolise to wish the bridal couple enough food, prosperity, wealth and good fertility. I like that the Polish wedding have much traditions like the traditional Dutch wedding. One thing what I was not use to, but I really like, is how often friends and family bring a toast on the bridal couple with a shot of vodka. The next day I was still feel the benefits of it.

At this time we are over five years together. We learned much about each other’s cultures, foods and habits. I love the Polish dishes and many times cook a Polish dish. (some dishes succeed better than others ;-)). And I did not give up on learning the Polish language slowly I am making progress every day I learn at least 30 minutes. I am really motivate to learn Polish. At this time I’m able to understand the subject and can follow simply conversations. We are also members of the Polska Szkoła in Groningen. At the szkoła we celebrate the traditions, meet people and I learn Polish.

Last summer we become parents from a lovely and beautiful baby girl. Her favourite toy is a doll named Lala.

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