

HEY, SATURDAY, SATURDAY - NIGHT IS SHORT, LONG IS DAY

Bronisław Łacek

This is the chorus of the song that was sung in Krakow on Saturday, June 23, before the coronavirus. The annual Festival of the Świętojańska Night, organized by the Union of Kraków Culture, was held there. The stalls with food, drinks and various souvenirs were set up since the early morning. In the afternoon, a crowd of people began to gather on the banks of the Vistula River, the families with children and a lot of young and elderly people.

The girls dressed in white dresses attracted everyone's attention. Each girl wore a wreath of colourful flowers on her head. At dusk they threw those wreaths into the water, and the boys standing further away tried to catch the wreaths from the water. Now it is regarded as a joke, but in the past it was believed that whichever girl's wreath the boy catches, she will become his wife. "And I believe this fortune telling with wreaths," said a young mother of three young children. "Ten years ago my husband, then the boy with whom I came here, fished out my wreath from the Vistula river". The amused husband exclaimed, "You know that even if I hadn't fished that garland, I would have married you anyway".

Bonfires were not allowed in the city. So, the second part of the feast day festival was held in a forest outside Kraków. A group of young people also gathered there. After sunset, a huge fire was lit. The boys jumped through the fire to show how athletic they were. The girls and the elderly were throwing forest herbs into the fire, which set an unusual aroma. In the old days it was believed that fire and herbs would ward off disease and all evil spirits, and that people would be healthy and happy, and that has not changed. Now we also want to be healthy and happy. And the smell of herbs is very pleasant.

Someone said that two brave boys went to the forest, each in a different direction, to look for a fern flower. They had listened to a beautiful song sung by the ensemble Alibabki about a fern flower that blooms on the Świętojańska Night. It has magical powers. The boys believed that whoever finds the flower, his every wish will be fulfilled. I wonder if they found it. After all, we know that the fern does not bloom. Dancing, fun and joyous singing continued almost all night long. And this is the shortest night of the year. "See you next year", the participants waved goodbye.

Translation – Abigail Latecki