

Baltic Bride (5)

Telling Andrew of my decision to return permanently to Poland was probably the hardest thing I ever did in my life. I wasn't sure how he would react but he accepted the sad news without saying much. I suspect that he had been prepared for such a possibility, after all, my visit to Australia was only a



trial, with neither party committed to a permanent relationship. But I could tell that deep inside he was extremely upset.

I left Sandy Downs a few days after announcing my decision. I think the manager understood how Andrew felt because on the day I was due to leave he sent Andrew on an early morning windmill

inspection task. Bluey was assigned to pick up supplies in Tennant Creek which meant that I could travel into town with Bluey. Andrew would not have been able to bear putting me on the bus. 'Ok,' said Bluey, 'Lets go', and he started the Landcruiser. As we were leaving the homestead I noticed that Mabel and Lucy were crying. I shed a tear as well, knowing that I would never see Andrew or Sandy Downs again.

After a few hours on the rough roads we finally reached Tennant Creek. As Bluey drove down the main street I saw a Telstra van and two men standing beside it. They were John and Bogdan. 'Stop,' I called to Bluey. I climbed out of the Landcruiser and told them that I had decided to return to Poland. 'Perhaps Australia just isn't for you,' said John. Just as I was climbing back into the Landcruiser, Bogdan spoke in Polish. 'I think you are making a mistake. Australia is a wonderful country once you get to know it.'

Bluey was a tough bushman but I detected a faint tear in his eye as he put me on the bus. 'What did the Polish man say back there,' Bluey asked,

probably trying to avoid a long goodbye. 'Oh, he just wished me all the best,' I lied. 'Well, all the best from me also. You know, your stay at the homestead certainly cheered the place up. I don't think you have made the right decision. There is no better place to live than Australia.' I was somewhat surprised at this remark. Bluey rarely gave an insight into what he was really thinking. But I quickly replied, 'I'm Polish' and boarded the bus.



The bus trip to Darwin and the flight back to Kraków were uneventful. I went back to my job as a legal secretary. Andrew and I exchanged an occasional email but gradually they became increasingly infrequent and we stopped writing completely. I often met Agnieszka for coffee and even went out on a few dates with men I met at

work. After a year in Kraków my visit to Australia began to fade into the past. But then one day Agnieszka rang me to reveal that that her husband had been transferred to Gdansk with his work and that they would be moving there in a few weeks. I didn't have many close friends, actually Agnieszka was the only really close one. After the call I sat down and took stock of my life in Poland. I still had not been promoted, I had not found a husband and I was lonely. I took out a few photographs from the drawer and started looking through them. I found one of Andrew and I at Sandy Downs. 'Perhaps Australia is not such a bad place,' I thought, 'Perhaps I could be happy there'.

By coincidence, the next day at work I received an email from the personnel section at work advising that I had excess leave and that I must take it or lose it. I decided to return to the Northern Territory for a holiday. I didn't tell anyone in Australia that I was coming because I wanted my visit to be a surprise. When I arrived at Darwin airport I was much more confident than I was the first time. I found a public phone and rang the manager's office at Sandy Downs. Patricia answered and immediately recognised my voice. 'Is Andrew there,' I asked in an excited voice. However, I could tell by the tone of her voice that something was wrong. 'Well, um, err, no,' said Patricia, 'He

doesn't live here anymore.' She went on to explain that Andrew had met a woman through the internet and had moved to Victoria to be with her. Apparently they were engaged to be married.



I can't explain the emptiness that I felt as I put down the phone. I was stunned. I had always assumed that Andrew would be there waiting if I ever changed my mind. I wandered aimlessly through the streets of the Darwin CBD. Then I came to my senses. 'I came to Australia for a holiday so I will enjoy my stay in Darwin,' I

resolved. I booked into a hotel and over the next few weeks visited various sites around Darwin, including two famous national parks. During my third week I passed a big government building at lunch time. There was a coffee shop on the ground floor so I went in for a coffee. Smartly dressed public servants were coming and going from the coffee shop. Suddenly I heard a man's voice behind me say 'Dzien Dobry'. I looked around and there was Bogdan. He joined me at the table and told me that he had left the Telstra job because Tennant Creek is too remote. He had joined the map drawing department with the Northern Territory Department of Land Management. He had also commenced study at a technical college to gain map drawing qualifications. I told him that Andrew had moved to Victoria to be with another woman and he said that sometimes life works out that way.

Well, to cut a long story short, I decided to apply for an Australian working visa and later for permanent residency. I now work with a legal business in Darwin. Bogdan and I see a lot of each other and I can even see us marrying in the future. I sometimes get snippets of information from Patricia about Andrew. Apparently he is married with children. But I don't mind. Good luck to him. I am happy in Australia and I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for him and the Baltic Brides agency.

End of the story