

The Adventures of GIGuś the Bebok





**My name is GIGuś and I'm
a Bebok.**

Yes, you heard that right –
B-e-b-o-k. In the past, people
in Silesia, Poland, used to call
that various spirits that roamed
houses, fields, and mine shafts.
Yet, I'm a little different to the
other ones. I don't scare children
or hide in dark corners. I'm
curious, helpful, and, as my miner
and scientist friends say, pretty
smart. Instead of frightening
people, I tell stories, observe, and
teach.

My fur is as black as coal, my eyes
as big as a miner's lamp, and my
shoes are red and beautiful, the
kind that even the Wrocław dwarfs
envy. I am wearing a miner's
uniform with shiny buttons
and carrying a "chako," a special
miner's hat with feathers, under
my arm. In the other hand, I am
holding an oak seedling, because
I know that every tree is
important, it gives us shade,
coolness, and clean air to breathe.



My origins.

My story began a long time ago in a unique place called the Experimental Mine Barbara in Mikołów.

It was there, in 1925, that I first came to life when miners and engineers transformed a regular coal mine into an underground laboratory.

They said: *We need a place to study fires and explosions, where we can learn how to protect people working underground.*

And then **I** came, not from a fairy tale, but from the very heart of the

earth: from coal, rocks, the whistle of steam engines, and the whispers of mining spirits.

Since then, I've accompanied people in their work and research. I always listen to their conversations, investigate machines, sometimes offer hints, and sometimes just tap my shoes and mumble silently when things aren't going well.



The Experimental Mine Barbara and flames.

At the Experimental Mine Barbara, I learned that safety is crucial.

I remember one day, long time ago, a strange smell spread through one of the underground galleries. Methane! You know, it's a kind of gas that has no colour nor smell to humans, but to me, it smells like sparks and roasted chestnuts. I saw a young miner lighting a lamp, and the flame suddenly began to dance restlessly.

Watch out! I shouted, though only the Treasurer, the guardian spirit of the mine, heard me.

Luckily, an engineer was nearby supervising the tests. He stopped

the work and said quietly to himself: *That's why we're here. We need to study how explosions happen so we can learn to prevent them.*

From that moment on, I knew my mission was to help people of the mining sector, to teach and warn them when danger is near. I became Experimental Mine Barbara's guardian. Since then, I watch over fire, dust, and methane so that everyone who enters the underworld can return safely to the surface.



A new place.

After World War II, the world was tired and broken, but full of hope. It was 1945, and the Central Mining Institute (GIG) was established in Katowice. What a time it was! People came from all over Poland to work in mines and steelworks in Silesia, scientists, engineers, students. Everyone had a dream: to rebuild the region and the whole country from the ruins.

I walked the streets of Katowice, watching smoking chimneys and new buildings rise. I carried a small notebook in my pocket, writing down the important words I heard: “safety,” “modernity,” “technology.”

Sometimes I sat on the wall in front of the GIG’s building and listened to scientists talking:

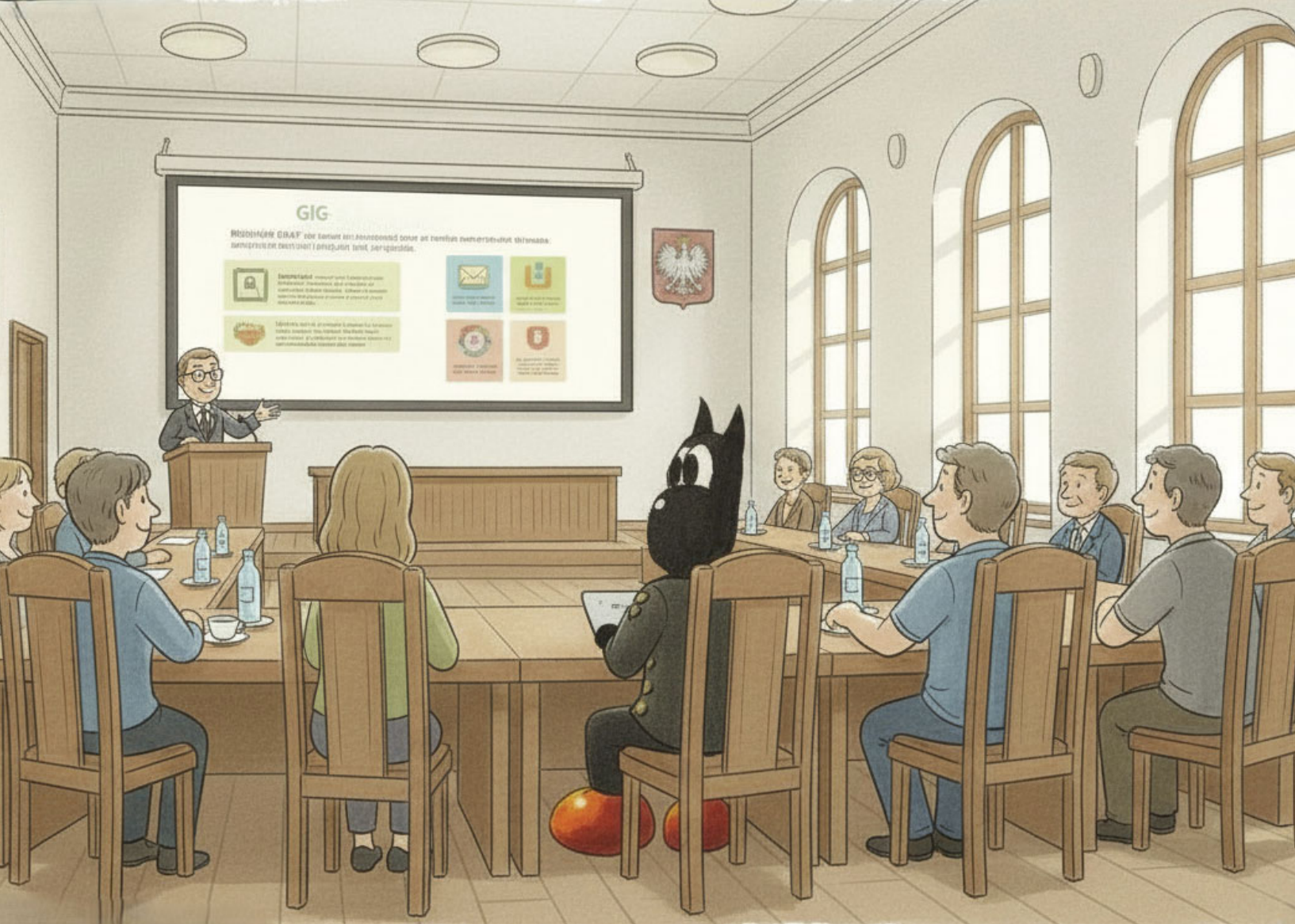
We need to investigate what threatens people at work.

We need to know how to protect miners.

Maybe we can create new technologies, ones that allow more mining activity, but in a safer way.

They installed sensors to detect earth tremors and built new machines to make work easier.

I nodded, though no one saw me, and whispered: *That’s wise, very wise. But remember to care for the land, water, and air too.*



Spirits of the mines.

I’m not the only spirit who walks the mines. I’ve met many cousins and friends, some serious ones, some playful. Some of them really did scare people, but I used to say:

Times are changing. It’s better to help than to scare.

One of the spirits was the old Haldyna, the spirit of the heap, a mountain of leftover materials from coal mining. Haldyna liked to sit on top of it and sighing about how everything around her was black and sad.

There was also the Treasurer, the spirit who guarded

underground treasures and warned miners, sometimes punishing them if they misbehaved. When I met him, he said:

You’re different, Bebok. You do have curiosity in your eyes, not anger.

And it’s true. I have always wanted to know more. That’s why I attended lectures at GIG and read books, GIG has so many of them! Sometimes I even fell asleep on the library shelves, and in the morning the librarian was surprised to find her volumes rearranged.



Green Silesia.

Eventually, Silesia began to change. Mines closed one by one. People asked:

What will happen now? Is Silesia still Silesia without mines?

I watched it with concern. The heaps turned green, birds and foxes reappeared. New houses and parks were built where mines used to be operating. It was beautiful, although also a little sad.

But GIG's scientists said:

We can study the earth, water, and air. We can help make these grey lands green and safe.

I met scientists who, instead of dust on their clothes, had

dewdrops on their sleeves from planting something in the morning on Haldyna's land. I helped them. I planted trees, like the oak I always carry. I checked water quality. I spoke to the spirits of the heaps and convinced them not to complain, but to act:
Look, I said, Where once there was a coal depot, there can be a playground now. Where once there was a heap, there can be a new forest.

Haldyna just shook her head, but her heart softened when she saw children running around on green lawns.



Modern times.

The world is changing, and so is my GIG. Today, it studies not only mining but also the environment. Scientists always invent new things to make life better and cleaner.

One day, I wandered through GIG's corridors and saw shiny new laboratories full of strange machines that glowed, blinked, and counted, as if they had minds of their own. In one lab, I met a young girl in a white coat. She had a computer on her desk and strange boxes that beeped and displayed colourful charts.

What are you doing? I whispered knowing only spirits can hear me. But she heard it!

I'm researching how to make the energy clean, she replied.
I'm making sure that there are no glowing particles in the air, water, or soil that could harm people.

Good, good, I muttered. *Take those measurements, I want my oaks to grow healthy and green!*

She smiled. I think she felt my support.



My mission.

I like walking around Katowice, watching people stroll along new streets. Sometimes I stop by the trees near the building and I listen to the leaves whispering some new ideas.

I sit on the wall in front of GIG's building and watch people come and go – professors, guests from faraway countries. Everyone comes here to learn, to find ways to make our life better. There's still so much work to do.

And me? I make sure they remember about one thing: that people, environment, and technology must go hand in hand.

When people learn from the nature, and technology helps instead of harming it, the world becomes a better and safer place. That's why I often remind scientists to listen not only to machines but also to birdsong and the rustling of trees.

Then I can tap my shoes, smile quietly, and say: *Okay, GIGuś – the work is going well!*



The mystery of green Silesia.

Today, Silesia is different than it was a hundred years ago. You can still see mine towers, but next to them there are trees growing, there are parks, green neighbourhoods, and new buildings full of life.

I walk along GIG's corridors and make sure everything is fine. And if something goes wrong, you can always put the blame on me and say: *I think the Bebok messed it up.* But don't worry, I'm just stirring things up to make them better!

Because there's no future without safety, innovation, and clean environment.

Together, we can turn Silesia into a green garden where everyone can find their place.

And remember, if you hear the soft stomping and see the shadow of a little spirit in a miner's uniform, that's me. Bebok GIGuś. Your friend, guide, and guardian.

And if you ever find an oak leaf on your desk... it's a sign that GIGuś was there.

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Katowice 2025

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