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June comes closer, hand-over comes closer; which means I'm in the middle of a big tidy-up. If you know me you'd know that I'm much better at creating chaos than at tidying up. Anyway, in one of my efforts I came across a story by Peter Bichsel, a Swiss writer; a friend had found the story in her parish newsletter. I've translated and adapted the story; don't blame Peter Bichsel if it doesn't run smoothly; I thought it was an important story and should be accessible to all.

One day an elderly lady, a pensioner, enters a fast food restaurant, let's say Macdonald's, or a Migros restaurant. She is a bit disoriented, but then manages to join the queue. She buys a big bowl of soup, goes back to a free table. Oh, she forgot the spoon. So she goes back and gets a spoon. When she comes back to the table she finds that a tall young African is sitting there - and is eating her soup! The lady sits down, a bit flustered, and tries to talk to the young man, but he obviously doesn't understand Swiss. She reaches over with her spoon and eats from the bowl, too. Now the African pushes the bowl to the middle of the table, and they both eat from the bowl, smiling at each other from time to time. The guests at the surrounding tables watch the strange couple eating from the same bowl.

Then the young African gets up and comes back with a plate of schnitzel and chips and places it in the middle of the table, too. The pensioner and he share the plate, smiling at each other, and all is fine. When the plate is empty, the young man gets up, smiles at the lady and leaves.

After a few seconds the elderly lady cries: "My handbag! And my coat!" Some guests get up and run after the young African, but he has disappeared. The police are called, everybody is upset, the lady is desolate.

Then somebody says: "Hey, at the table over there is a handbag, and a coat!" and it is really the pensioner's handbag and coat, and on the table is a bowl of cold soup. She had gone to the wrong table - and rather than the young man eating the lady's soup, it was his soup she had eaten.

Perhaps it was that he had grown up in a society where sharing was natural, and you don't see an enemy in every stranger.

Tudr

And I also found the following story - and thought it was written for me.

Was ist Glück?

Es war einmal ein Schaf.
Das frass jeden Morgen bei Sonnenaufgang Gras,
lehrte bis Mittag die Kinder sprechen,
trieb nachmittags etwas Sport, frass dann wieder Gras,
plauderte abends mit Frau Meier
und schlief nachts tief und fest.

Gefragt, was es täte, wenn es mehr Zeit hätte, sagte es:

"Ich frässe bei Sonnenaufgang etwas Gras,
ich würde mit den Kindern reden bis Mittag,
dann etwas Sport treiben und Gras fressen.
Abends würde ich gern mit Frau Meier plaudern
und dann nachts tief und fest schlafen."

"Und wenn du im Lotto gewinnen würdest?"

"Also: Ich würde viel Gras fressen, am liebsten bei Sonnenaufgang,
mit den Kindern bis Mittag viel sprechen,
dann etwas Sport treiben und Gras fressen.
Abends würde ich gern mit Frau Meier plaudern
und dann fest und tief schlafen."

Jutta Bauer

Swiss Society of New Zealand Inc.

Patron	H. E. Dr Marion Weichelt Krupski
President	Roland Schütz, 35 East Street, Petone, Lower Hutt 5012. Ph h 04 568 6772, w 04 568 5737. Email: moehau2@gmail.com
Vice President	Marcel Rüedi, PO Box 40558, Glenfield, North Shore City 0747. Ph 09 551 5830. Email: ruedi@orcon.net.nz.
Secretary/Editor	Trudi Brühlmann, 401 Marine Drive, Mahina Bay, Eastbourne, Lower Hutt 5013. Ph 04 562 8019. Email: bruhlmann@xtra.co.nz
Treasurer	Heidi Amelung, 32 Hinau Street, Eastbourne, Lower Hutt 5013. Ph 04 562 7568. Email: gravure@xtra.co.nz
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