

# The Martin Family

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## SWITZERLAND

21 February 2011

Dear Reader,

I hope that you are happy and healthy. In Switzerland, Nazy and I are celebrating a miracle. The situation began ominously:

“Look at this, Nazy,” I whimpered. “A letter in a **gray** envelope, from the Zurich Stadtpolizie.”

“The Police have sent us a letter?” Nazy gasped.

“*Actually*,” I thought. “*The Police have sent me a letter.*” “Yes!” I replied.

“What did you do?”

“Maybe it was you, my dear.” I replied. “You triggered a speeding camera when you went to Lynette’s party.”

“The speed limit was 30 kph, Dan. I was only going 36. And they don’t send letters in **gray** envelopes for minor speeding offenses. **Gray** is **special**. You did something really bad.”

“Do you think we should open it?”

“Maybe after dinner, Dan. I don’t want to ruin my appetite.”

“Do you think that they’ll storm the house?”

“Aren’t you being overly dramatic?”

“It is a **gray** envelope, Nazy. The only official document that I’ve received in a gray envelope was the one that rejected my tax return and asked, eh, demanded substantially more money.”

Later - much later - I cautiously pried the envelope open. A single page fluttered onto my desk. The official document was..

“In **German**, Nazy. It looks like a bill. 40 Francs. But I can’t tell what we’ve done wrong.”

“What does the letter say?”

“It is in German, Nazy. I don’t know what it says. You read it.”

I saw a smile forming as Nazy perused the document. “*They are paying you, Dan,*” She exclaimed.

“The police are paying me?”

“Absolutely. 40 Francs.”

“It’s probably a volume discount for all of the parking and speeding tickets that you’ve, eh, we’ve endured.”

It was, in fact, a letter of apology! We concluded that the Police were refunding the 40 Franc fine that we had paid for an ‘unfair’ parking ticket written by an over-zealous vigilante. [Note: In the interests of transparency, I confirm that the letter did not provide any reason for the repayment. Friends have suggested that perhaps *someone* paid a single fine twice. Since that ‘someone’ would have been stupid and, more to the point, would have been **me**, I totally reject this explanation.]

I will, however, respond to reader questions:

Q: Is it true that your wife’s site

<http://www.paintingadventure.com/paintingadventure/Welcome.html>)

gets more ‘hits’ than your site?

A: The number of ‘hits’ received is not a failsafe, totally accurate mechanism for measuring the popularity or relative quality of the pertinent site. I note, moreover, that your question contains a ‘plug’ for Nazy’s website - which means that my website will be generating ‘hits’ for hers.

Q: Are you aware that you did not answer the previous question.

A: I believe that the “A” in a “Q&A” section stands for “Answer”.

Q:... the previous two questions.

A: Have you considered the possibility that the ‘A’ stands for ‘Avoid’? (And, by the way, your last “Q” was not a question.)

Q: How did the spring cleaning go?

A: When I noticed rapid depletion of the household cleansers...

Q: **You** noticed the depletion?

A: ...., I confronted, well, I discussed the situation with Nazy. I explained with consummate accuracy that a February Spring Cleaning made no sense whatsoever.

Q: And?

A: And, she handed me a mop. I can report that **Casa Carmen**, The Martin Family residence in Zürich, is now spotless. But..

Q: But?

A: But, I also know that we will embark on a similar adventure in April - when Spring actually arrives.

Q: Did you forget **Valentine Day**?

A: No.

Well before the 14th (i.e. the 12th), I purchased a card and a gift. Hiding both, I didn't mention anything to Nazy. Equally crafty, Nazy didn't say anything about the upcoming holiday. I suspected that she was hatching a nefarious plot. I concluded that her silence was a devious scheme to expose husbandly ineptitude. It was, of course, a wretched, abject failure: i reign supreme over husbandhood. (Later, Nazy confirmed that she was 'sure' that I would forget.)

The night before **Valentine Day**, we were having dinner with friends. The holiday was mentioned.

"Hmm," I replied. "I should leave now. I still have 34 minutes before the holiday. Maybe I can find a 24hour shop."

"In Zürich?" Heinz was gobsmacked.

"*Gotcha!*" Nazy thought.

I quickly altered my plans and presented my gift at breakfast. (If I had waited, Nazy would have thought that I had somehow found time to correct my gaffe.) I confirm that Nazy, equally prepared, was completely surprised. We had a very nice day and a good dinner in Winterthur.

Take care and Cheers,

Dan

