

THE MARTIN FAMILY

CARMENSTRASSE, 48

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SWITZERLAND

May 29, 2011

Dear Reader,

I hope that you are well and happy. Here in Zürich, we're celebrating the (generally) successful conclusion of on-going functional challenges at The Martin Family residence. It began, as many things do, in the bathroom.

Flashback: 2010

"My feet are wet!" Nazy shouted.

"Of course they are," I replied. "You're taking a shower."

"No. I just turned on the water. The faucet is dripping on the floor."

"Hmm," I noted as I examined the problem. "Nazy, my dear, 'dripping' is not an appropriate word to describe this debacle. I'll go to the garden shop to get some dirt."

"Dirt?"

"I need to construct a levee. That's what the Corps of Engineers did on the Mississippi."

"Levees didn't work on the Mississippi River. Maybe you should just turn the faucet off."

"That would be easier," I conceded.

During the ensuing months and after consultation with our landlord, Nazy hosted several visits from a variety of plumbers. A typical interaction is described below. Note: In each case, the plumber could speak English when he arrived - an ability lost as he grasped the issue. To ease comprehension, I have translated all sentences spoken by the plumber..

Spousal Interrupt: "You have translated? You?"

..eh, all of the sentences spoken by the plumber have been translated into English, and I have displayed the results in a special font representative of the German that was used.

"And, I will take a picture of the faucet with my digital camera," The plumber said.

"Why?" Nazy asked.

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"I need to order the part from Germany."

"I'm going to spend the summer in China, Dad," Darius explained.

"Do you have a visa?" I asked.

"I will get it on Thursday," Darius replied.

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“Do you have your China Visa?”

“I will get it on Tuesday.”

“Can you replace the entire fixture with a Swiss part?” Nazy asked.

“I don’t understand you.”

“Dummkopf.” Nazy muttered (almost) under her breath.

Finally after I threatened to blast 5 (kilotons of TNT would suffice) a drain hole into the bathroom floor, a **Swiss** replacement was authorized and installed.. Naively, I expected Nazy to be pleased with my problem-resolution skills. However...

“It does not leak,” Nazy conceded, “but we need a painter to complete the cosmetics.”

“Call the landlord.”

“I did. But the ‘white’ in the bathroom is a tint that is only manufactured in Germany..”

“Nein!”

“... and the company that made that paint has gone out of business.” Apr 2011

“Did you tell them that *any* white will do?”

“.. and your visa to China?” I asked.

“Yes, but he took a picture with his digital camera...”

“Picking it up next week.” Dar replied.

On the theme of fixing dangling items, Nazy returned the Apple TV this week because: “You, Dan, couldn’t get to work.”

Note: I did get **four** of them to work... for a while.

“Because, Dan, you refused to use the Apple-supplied cable.”

Note: Our TV did not have a receptacle for the Apple-supplied cable...

“So Dan, you used a complicated set of wires that broke the Apple TV.”

Reader Interrupt: “I have heard far too much about the Apple TV in these letters.”

Subject Change: As I compose this issue of The Weekly Letter, I am ensconced, alone, at Casa Carmen. Nazy has flown to Lebanon to visit Darius before his pending trip to China.

In preparation for her journey, Nazy prepared extremely detailed directives, instructions, commands, suggestions, decrees, stipulations, mandates, orders, schedules, edicts, and injunctions sufficient to cover every eventuality. A sample:

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“On sunny days, bring down the outside shades at 10:00, bring down the inside shades at 5:00PM, bring them up before bed. Recycle the newspapers on Tuesday, water the orchids on Wednesday, take your Vitamin tablets every day and do not forget to eat fruit and vegetables daily. Meals that are easy, even for you, to prepare are described - with instructions - and have been taped to the refrigerator, Cherries are in the bottom drawer of the refrigerator, the dishwasher doesn’t work unless you add dishwashing soap, the outdoor plants need to be watered if the weather is sunny, cardboard recycling is on Thursday, you

“My trip to China has been delayed.”

“You didn’t get your visa?”

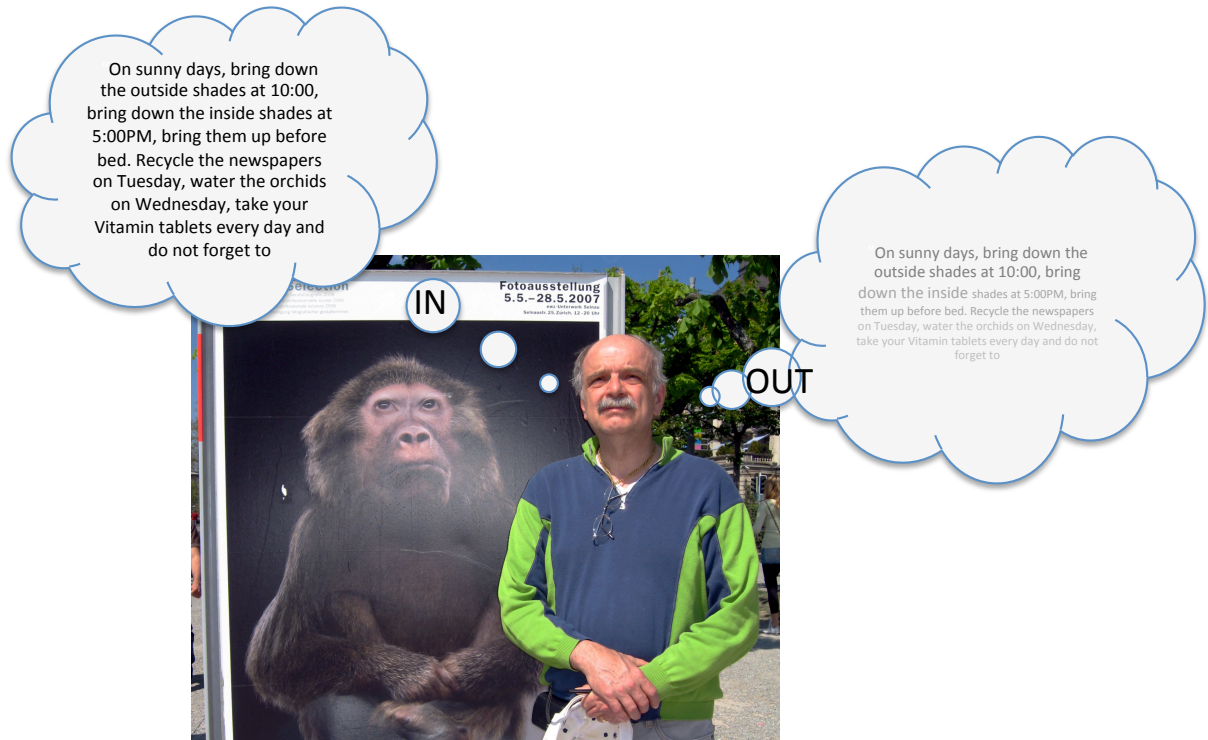
“The website said 4 days, but it’s 15 days for Americans. Why didn’t you warn me?”

Readers interested in my own China Visa experience are directed to:

http://www.seat26b.com/Seat26b/I_forgot_my_visa_1.html

have to wash the strawberries before you eat them....

Regular readers undoubtedly imagine something like the photo below:



However, your imagination has led to an incorrect conclusion. *Today, after consulting Nazy's instructions, I extracted pre-prepared spaghetti and cooked (well, heated-up) a dinner, complete with salad and a dessert of fruit and yoghurt, all by myself.*

Reader Question: "Is Nazy going to read this week's edition of The Weekly Letter while she is visiting Lebanon?"

Answer: "Yes, but I fail to see the relevance of the question."

Reader Reply: "Exaggeration is a standard feature of The Weekly Letter."

Answer: "Exaggeration? Surely you jest."

"Ready Reply: "Okay. Misrepresentation."

Answer: "I won't dignify your daft aspersion about dishonesty - indeed questionable integrity with a response because I have to bring the shades down and recycle the wine bottles." Note: The *italicized* sentence does not say anything about eating the spaghetti.

Nazy will return next Thursday.

Take care and Cheers,