

The Martin Family

Carmenstrasse, 48

CH-8032 Zürich

SWITZERLAND

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Dear Reader,

I hope that you are well and happy. Here we are..

Reader Alert: Departure from normal complaint

... enjoying spectacular and wonderful (and unusual)...

A complete departure was too difficult

... February ('winter?') weather. The days are warm (60°F) and sunny, the nights are cool and clear. The normal gray, dank, dark, dreary days are a distant memory. We are enjoying Los Angeles weather - without the smog, but with the Alps.

As you may recall from last week's note, items that Nazy purchased during our visit to San Francisco arrived. Over the course of several weeks, Nazy successfully convinced Swiss tax authorities that taxes were not applicable. When the items finally received customs clearance, a Basel transport company agreed (in return for a substantial fee) to bring the items to Zurich. Short-lived excitement reigned at Casa Carmen when the truck arrived.

I watched from the 4th floor window as the driver extracted a very large crate from an even larger truck. I noted that the driver was by himself and likely unaware of the narrow and steep stairway strategically placed between his forklift and our front door. Correctly sensing danger, I dispatched Nazy, as German-speaker extraordinaire, to talk with the driver.

Several minutes later, as I watched 'our' crate being reloaded onto the truck, Nazy returned to the apartment.

"Well?" I asked fluently and perceptively.

"He says that he is a driver, not a porter."

"The shipping company said that they would deliver to our front door, Nazy."

"The driver says that our front door is the front door of the apartment building. Not the door of our apartment."

"Clever chap..."

"He was willing to leave the crate in the street - in one of the blue parking spaces."

"That's great! The parking police vigilantes would have a field day..."

"That's why.."

"... and I'm sure it would start to rain."

"... I told him to bring the truck on Monday. I'll call Mr. Pfister and get someone to help with delivery."

"I just got an email from Penelope at the shipping company, Nazy. They will charge us an 'extra fee' because of the failed delivery."

"They should have sent a delivery team with the shipment."

"I know, Nazy. Penelope is so stupid that she couldn't answer a call of nature. She the kind of person who pours acid on the planetary tree of life."

"Been watching The Weakest Link, Dan?" Nazy asked.

As luck would have it, the 'extra fee' charged by the delivery company was dreadfully high while Pfister's estimate of charges associated with carrying things up the stairs turned out to be woefully low. And, when everything was (finally) inside the apartment, Melika's prediction ("There is no room for that stuff, Mom!") was proven to be pointedly perceptive. Counting on the experience that can only be gained after decades of marriage, I asked the obvious question:

"Why did you buy all of this stuff, Nazy?"

My reasonable query was met with a glare. Aware that retreat - rapid retreat - had worked in the past, I reconsidered my position.

"Where do you want to put this stuff?"

Noting the silence in the room, I tried again.

"Can I help you unpack, my dear? I can't wait to put these precious purchases on display." (This approach mostly worked.)

Nazy had planned to make a simple furniture exchange that would result in the relocation of one piece of furniture. But:

"Have you heard of the domino affect?" I asked when informed that '*the only place*' the new credenza would fit was already occupied by my large (and **heavy**) bookcases. As we dismembered the bookcases, I ignored subtle suggestions about relocating my 180 liter aquarium. "*But,*" I thought. "*Everything else will end up somewhere else.*"

My assessment about furniture was almost completely accurate. I say 'almost completely' because there was a single item in my study that ended up exactly where it had begun. Nevertheless, I am reluctant to classify this item as 'nor moved' since it was returned to its previous location only after it had been 'tried out' in several other locations.

I didn't (but should have) realized that modifications in my study would percolate throughout the apartment. Nazy rearranged the guest bedroom even though no furniture was moved in (or out) of that room. She sorted, classified and shifted items between the

buffet and the Chinese credenza. She found new locations for all of the house plants. Bewildered, I watched in baffled bemusement...

"Why does a new painting mandate adjustments in the towel closet?" I asked.

"Dan.."

"And do we have to stack the towels according to their location on the color **spectrum**?"

"Move the piano, Dan." Nazy replied with impeccable logic.

As the week progressed, it became harder and harder to hold out. Although I was aware that Spring wouldn't arrive until late March, spring cleaning vibes were, like the crowds in Cairo's Tahrir Square, unmistakably signaling *change*. Not quite as clueless as Hosni Mubarak, I succumbed with grace and dignity.

"I'm going to sort through my desk drawers and get them organized," I explained to Nazy.

"Are you going through the top left-hand drawer?" Nazy asked.

"Yes," I replied cautiously. (That drawer was the designated 'general repository'.)

"The disinfectant is under the kitchen sink."

And, speaking of the kitchen, we got a new dishwasher this week. The predecessor unit, a Miele, had serviced Casa Carmen (The Martin Family Residence in Zürich) for more than 20 years. The new one was an Electrolux.

"I like Miele better," Nazy explained.

"I know, but the Miele sounded like it was inside a train speeding through a tunnel filled, top to bottom, with empty champagne glasses. It had to be replaced."

"It won't last 20 years."

Note: This prediction was accurate. We had a dinner party that evening. The seal that prevents water from flooding out of the dishwasher failed as we (and it) were cleaning up after the party.

Take care and Cheers,

Dan

One of the items in the shipment: The Samurai

