

When Heaven touched the Earth!

(a Short story, experienced and written by Heinrich)

“Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn’t he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? ” (Luke 15, 4+5)

We all are all used to living our everyday lives. There is nothing special about it. It is simply human. But sometimes life gives us a pause or time-out. Nothing special about it. But sometimes, in our everyday life or during a pause something extraordinary and totally unexpected happens. Maybe, as in the following story, fate has decided to give us a lesson.

At the age of 12 my parents registered me for a boy scout vacation in beautiful Austria, a country of high mountains, great lakes and wonderful forests. There is no better place on earth for spending your holidays. I remember it vividly. Fifty kids and our attendants lived in a big wooden house next to a great lake for two weeks. Behind it, two big snow-capped mountains stretched up to the sky.

We spent there three sunny weeks with much fun and noodles, the Austrian basic food. And in review there surely would have been nothing left than the impression of a good time without special incidents or events. But there were two days in the last week of the holidays when heaven started to touch the earth ...!

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For the last week was planned a two-day-bike trip to another lake in some distance of our camp, with camping in tents and sleeping bags. Naturally I had registered for that event as 24 other boys had done also. Such an adventure I did not want to miss, especially as that expedition would be leaded by Thomas, my favourite attendant.

So, on Saturday morning, Thomas and 25 good-humoured boys went over to the nearby village, on our backs rucksacks filled with sandwiches and bottles, and a sleeping-bag under the arm. In front of a hire service for bicycles we stopped. A middle-aged man came out, greeted Thomas, and leaded us into a backyard. There were set up 25 youth bikes, and one for an adult, in a row. The man smiled and said: “These are yours! Good luck!” Then he went off!

Immediately the first of us rushed forward, grasped a bike and got on it. Others followed quickly and after some moments everyone sat on his chosen bike. I don’t know why I had stayed on my spot near Thomas. Perhaps because I did not like muddles? Or because I was a little bit slowly in general? As a result of my hesitation I stared now at the bike that hat been

left. It was the smallest and worst one of all!

My eyes went with an urgent appeal to Thomas. But he shrugged only his shoulders and said with a helpless smile: "So, Heiner, that's yours!" Some of the guys laughed! One of them said: "A mosquito bike for the Mosquito!" Now all laughed and I blushed! Mosquito had been my nickname the year before. I had been very small and thin, and Thomas had created it. Although I had grown up since that time, I was now of normal height and thin, Thomas still used it. Finally I took my bike and fate its course!

Some minutes later we were underway along a big road, In some distance right and left hand we were accompanied by big, majestic mountains. But only a few cars passed by, and so we were the most of time among ourselves. Fortunately I had no problem to keep pace with the others, as far as the tempo of our column was not so high and I was well-trained and in good condition through playing soccer and table-tennis at home.

So, it was a nice trip and in the late afternoon we let the road behind us and took a windy mountain path. Have an hour later we reached our aim, the *Milchstaedter See*. It laid calmly and smoothly in front of us. No one else was visible. Thomas decided to take just here our night camp. We built up some small tents and then several of us went into a nearby forest. "We need much dry wood for our camp fire tonight!" , Thomas had said, and we were now busy carrying it together and creating a big amount of branches and twigs.

"Well done, guys!" said Thomas with a satisfied grin. " So half an hour till sunset! Who wants can use the time for bathing. The others can recover a little bit or help me enlighten the camp fire!" I was among those who run down to the lake. The sun stood deep above one of the mountains on the other side. The water felt clear and fresh, when I jumped in.

Returning from the lake I noticed that the camp fire had already been enlightened. A pot with soup was steaming at one edge of it. Most of us had eaten up their sandwiches during the ride, so the soup was welcomed for supper. Some minutes later we all sat around the fire, our cups filled with hot soup. Some of us hold big potatoes, which they had taken from a nearby field, on a stick into the fire. Meanwhile the sun had completely gone and now the moon had risen up above the lake and gave it some silver shimmer.

After supper Thomas said, " Well, before starting with our camp fire evening we have to clear the point of breakfast. We need breads, butter and marmalades. So, who will go for it tomorrow morning?" He looked challenging into the round. Someone asked, "Where should we get it? We are here in the wilderness!" "No", said Thomas, "nearby must be a small village. I can see it here on the map There surely will be a bakery!" He looked at his map. "There is also a bigger one on the other side of the lake. But that is too far away."

One of the bigger guys raised his hand and said, "Okay, I am in!" Thomas

nodded approvingly and said, "Who else?" No one said a word, some looked embarrassed down. "No one?" Thomas insisted. "Well, Mosquito, would you go?" I was a little bit surprised that he addressed me so directly but had already considered this possibility in my mind. "Okay", I answered, "I am in, too!" "Well", said Thomas, "then we can start now with the funny part of the evening!" Approving chattering and cheers were the answer! Thomas took a mouth organ out of his pocket and began playing the melody of a popular youth-fellowship-song. Enthusiastically we joined in with singing. Our "camp fire evening" had started.

It went on with singing and playing well-known group games, and we really enjoyed it. Normally we were divided into two groups, those from the orphanage and us "normal" ones. But this magic night near the silver shimmering mountain lake we forgot all prejudices, animosities and rivalry, and became for some hours an unity.

Then Thomas opened a book read and aloud a funny, fictional short story from a book. When he closed the book we all knew that now the end had come. "Well, guys, we have tomorrow a hard day in front of us. "So, you wants to stay for a while here at the camp fire, can do. But I will go sleeping! Have a good night!" With this words he raised up and went to his tent. Most of us decided also for sleeping, but I fetched my sleeping-bag and laid down near the camp fire. Some others did also!

For a long time I looked to the stars above, which were shining very clearly. Alone in a foreign country among some other lonely guys. But I felt sheltered! Was there someone above watching us? Sometime far beyond midnight I fell asleep.

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Next morning I got early out of my sleeping-bag. It was a clear, fresh summer morning with blue-white sky. I was in a good mood. It surely would become a good day! Everybody else seemed still sleeping. The fire had got out during the night, and the pot with tea was cold now. Nevertheless I took a cup of tea from it and went down to the lake. There I sat down for a while.

When I returned I remembered the "job" Thomas had given me. So I went to the tent, where the other guy was sleeping. I was a 3-men-tent and he was laying on the right side. Carefully I wakened him. "Hi, time for our job!" For a moment he stared slightly irritated at me. Then he said, "Ah, yes! Wait, I will come out!"

Some minutes later we were ready to start with our bicycles. Suddenly he looked sceptically at my bike. "Well," he said, "take a better one!" So I inspected the other bikes and chose one with 5 gears. My small one had only one. What a difference that made! I really enjoyed riding fast at the side of my comrade.

A quarter of an hour later we reached the nearby village, Thomas had spoken

about. It seemed still to be in sleep. Nobody was to see in the road. After some minutes of search we found a store with a bakery sign on it. But it was closed. I read aloud, "Opened from 8h to 18h. Sundays closed!" I looked at my watch. It showed 8.15h!

"It is Sunday today, isn't it?" I asked my comrade a little bit unsecure. In summer holidays I always lost a little bit my time orientation. He nodded, "Yes, it is!" For a moment we both said nothing. Then I said, "And now, what shall we do now?"

After a short discussion we decided to ride to the village on the other side of the lake, Thomas had mentioned the evening before. "It is too far away!", he had said, but there was no alternative. Coming back into the camp without food would be too frustrating.

It was a nice, sunny morning and we rode through forests and along fields and lovely meadows. After an hour we finally reached that village called Milchstaett, from which the lake had its name. And, luckily, we found an open bakery. We bought fifty-two rolls, 2 for everyone in the camp, and enough butter and marmalades. After we had all stowed away in our rucksacks we immediately started again. Though we were just on the opposite side of our camp, we decided to surround now the lake completely. So, after another hour, our camp came in sight and when we reached it, we were welcomed with loud cheers. We felt like "heroes" coming back to their folks.

After we had emptied our rucksacks the preparations for breakfast were made. A pot with coffee had been already set above a small fire and rest would be soon done. So my comrade and me went to refresh us shortly in the lake.

Maybe seven or eight minutes later we came back into the camp to participate in breakfast. But to our surprise no one was sitting around the fireplace. More than this, the fire was out, the coffee-pot removed and no rolls, butter and marmalade visible. In some distance all were busy packing up their things. Thomas came up to us and said, "Hi, guys! You should also pack up your things. We shall start soon!" I stared at him with big eyes, "where is our breakfast?" He looked a little bit surprised around and then he answered, "Well, it looks that nothing is left. You are too late!"

I was totally upset now. "What! You tell us that our rolls have been eaten up? Why didn't YOU take care that our rolls were spared up? We have a morning trip of more than hours behind us for the welfare of all here, and now we have to start with an empty stomach! This is not acceptable!" The last words I cried, so that some of the guys looked over to us. Thomas shrugged with his shoulders. "You should have taken better care of your breakfast. Now it is as it is! Come on, pack your things up!" And with this words he turned around and went back to the others.

When we left our night camp I felt deeply disappointed. Again and again I reapeated one thought in my mind: "How could they do this? We rode around the whole lake for their sake, and they ate up our rolls! And Thomas didn't hinder it!" I really couldn't believe it. I was again riding on my small bike and temperature increased quickly now. After some kilometres I felt that I was not in a good state. Pedalling became difficult. I was forced myself to keep on with the others, who obviously were in a good mood and wanted to be home as quickly as possible.

After two hours of riding I felt completely exhausted. I rode up to Thomas and said: "Thomas, I need a pause!" So he a sign to the others and said: "OK, guys, we make a short pause!" I really had hoped that I would recover. But the sun were now burning merciless on us, no shadow to hide and my last gulp of my tea bottle had already be done.

After 10 minutes Thomas asked me: "Better? Can we go on?" I felt his impatience, and that of the others, and answered: "I need a little bit more time. But you can ride on. I will follow later and make up with you." He looked scrutinizing at me: "Are you sure?" I nodded: "Yes! Go on!" So he gave the starting sign for the others and after 2 minutes they were completely out of sight. Now I, that 12-year-old boy called "Mosquito", was really alone with my small, shabby bike under the burning sun in a foreign country!

Although I had agreed that they rode on I now was deeply disappointed. "How can they get done it after all what I have done for them this morning? How could Thomas accept my offer knowing my bad state and the reason for it?" Ten minutes later I gave riding a try, but after 100 meters I stopped again. It was senseless! The sun was burning hot and I felt totally exhausted. What should I do? I put my bike down and laid beside it on the ground. Alone in a foreign country I only tried to sleep on that spot.

Maybe again ten minutes later in a half-aware state of mind, I felt that someone touched my shoulder. "Hey, what's up with you? Did you have an accident?" I opened my eyes and looked into the face of a middle-aged man, who had bowed above me. "Ah, yes!" I said, "I'm okay! Only make a pause!" "So, you cannot lay here," he insisted. "I can take you with my car, if you want!" Now I saw his car with an open door standing on the road. "No, thanks!", I answered, "I am okay and will soon go on!" He seemed not convinced, "Are you sure? It is no problem. I can take you and your bike with me!" I raised up, "No, no, I am okay! Thanks!" He looked again sceptically at me, then he said, "Good luck! But you should hurry. It looks that a thunderstorm is coming up!" Then he turned around and went back to his car. After half a minute he was out of sight.

The wake call of that man had brought me back on my feet. But I still felt terribly weak and my head was aching. Nevertheless I got on my bike and

started, very slowly, riding again. Maybe after fifty meters I felt the first raindrops on my skin. I looked to the sky, and only now I noticed that the sun had completely disappeared. Dark clouds were hanging above me! I remembered the man's last words, "A thunderstorm is coming up!" Indeed, a bright lightning followed by a loud thunder confirmed it now. And as if that been a command heavy raining started immediately. Within a minute I was drenched to the skin.

But in the same time there happened a complete change with me. My body and soul seemed to have completely recovered, and inside me I felt a power I never had felt before. Really surprised by it I started riding faster. And faster, till I flied like a bird along the road with only one thought in my mind, "*I will show them the Sting of the Mosquito!*"

Try to imagine the following scenario! A lonely, straight road in a picturesque mountain landscape. Dark clouds, heavy raining, flashes of lightnings followed by thunders a small boy on small bike flying like a bird over the asphalt.

Maybe it was the strong tail wind that supported in my efforts. But mainly it was my new inner energy that drove me forward. I felt like a hero on his horse, risen from death, on his way taking revenge for all that injustice he had experienced. My heart was filled grim and joy, deep determination and singing in the rain! And then suddenly, after half an hour I saw the first of them! They had searched for shelter under the rotten roof of an old bus stop. Thomas was among them. I passed them without giving them the simplest look!

Maybe they first had thought that a "ghost" on a bike was underway. But now I heard Thomas calling my name. I didn't react. Then I heard his command, "Come on, guys! On the bikes!" I didn't turn my head around. My eyes were fixed on the road. I was a guy with a mission, the others somewhere in front of me should also feel the sting of the "Mosquito"!

During the next hour I passed most of the other guys, who were scattered in small groups underway. I totally ignored them but inside I felt a deep satisfaction! But some guys were still in front of me and we were now already in the near of home camp. So, I intensified my efforts once more! And actually, after a while the four leading ones came in sight. It looked as if they made a race among themselves to be the first in our Camp.

Although I mobilised now my last energies I didn't succeed catching up with them. Half a minute after them I reached our home camp. I felt totally exhausted but also very happy. So, the Last had not become the First but I had shown them the sting of the "Mosquito"! I felt that something really extraordinary had happened. I had been totally down and then came that miraculous recovery. Yes, I felt that it had been a miracle. I had been totally down lying on earth, but then – from one moment to the next – it was as if

someone had activated an *inner energy button* and had given me new powerful strength. Heaven had touched the Earth!

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20 years later I was also underway on bikes with a small group of young guys. One of them, a red haired orphan, became weak and couldn't follow the pace of the group. So, as far it was a bicycle race against other groups allowed my guys to go on in that race. But I stayed with that weak, red haired guy and accompanied him over hours without any grudge. I only felt pity with him and the deep desire to bring him home.

Well, I am not sure whether I would have acted in same way without that experience of totally breakdown and loneliness on the Austrian road. I think that experience gave me the heart for that weak guy. And this was surely God's work, too!

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