

**A Teardrop in the Rain:  
The Life and Times of an American in Europe.**

## May Day, Tuesday.

As usual I'm racked out on the sofa. What seems to be a rather continuing state of affairs here. The interesting question for you might be, where is here. Aha that is what makes this all so interesting, cause my here is probably considerably different than yours. One could consider the ramifications of that for a long time, but in this situation I mean physically. Well at least that's my first meaning. There could well be more, as we get into this, and I'm sure there will be, but for now, before this gets to complex lets keep it as simple as possible. I live in Germany. Springe, just out side of Hannover Germany to be more exact. And since a awful lot of things here are radically different than where you are probably reading this, well I thought I'd make it clear from the beginning.

Now at this point you're probably thinking how did this guy get there? ( or here depending on how you look at it.) Well that's a long story. I'm sure we will get to parts of it as this progresses, but one thing I've learned in Europe is, don't tell people the whole crazy story of how you got here and what led up to coming here all at once. It scares the natives. No really it does. They are nice people, but this kind of world rambling, career changing swashbuckling adventure approach to living really doesn't seem to grab them very well. Its a little... too much for German sensibilities, to be wandering the world like this. Germans tend to be a pretty straightforward bunch of people. Great thinkers, best in the world, curious, interested in the world, but when it comes down to it most of them are pretty stable, not terribly risk loving people. Mind you they seem to be ok with it if you are that way, and you are good at it, but they don't really like jumping in the deep end of adventuring.

This however has a curious effect on my own adventure here. Mainly in that, since Germany and Germans are fairly predictable and stable, it actually makes my adventuring here that much easier. And adventures are to be had for the asking in Europe. Just walk out the door every day, its assured something interesting will happen, if you keep your eyes and ears open.

So yea, as usual I'm laying on the sofa, its May Day, but its like a Sunday. And I don't have to go to work tomorrow until afternoon. Yea I got to turn in some paperwork and stuff so ill have to get moving earlier, but I got some time to chill on the famous red sofa, and do some writing.

Springe is a little town south of Hannover Germany, about 30 kms outside the main city. A suburb of sorts, if you will. I live in a little apartment behind the hairdressers on Rosenstrasse. Its a really small apartment, by American standards, but actually it has its advantages. Easy to clean, cheap to maintain and pay for, low power consumption etc. its a good base to operate from.

Springe has about 12500 people, in our town proper, and another 28000 in the surrounding villages. Technically its a city, but that's really stretching the definition. I

came here, cause when I got back here I worked in Springe at the Philips factory, and the factory manager helped me find an apartment here. That was 4 years ago, I just sort of stayed. I've made a lot of friends here, and now it's like home. My quiet little piece of the world. Weird place to find it.

So how did I come to Germany in the first place? Real easy. Tragic, doctor Zhivago like love story. Torridly romantic, tragic ending. The plot never changes much does it? I remember reading somewhere years ago that there are only 33 basic plots in life. Once you know them all they just repeat endlessly with endless variations. I'm sure we will get into that later. Not right now. My head still hurts from last night's adventures. Not ready to deal with that.

Oh there were other reasons. That was really just the excuse that finally got me off my mental rear end and caused me to leave. Good thing too, glad it happened. Life in the US today isn't what it used to be. It's become a very selfish, every man for himself country. I think it's a form of cultural narcissism. It's logical. Think about it, a country that's number one value is individualism is always in danger of going over the line and into narcissism. It's funny, a lot of left wing pundits talk about fascism, on the right being the problem. Yea that's a problem, but the deeper problems are rooted in American ideals of exceptionalism, entitlement, and individualism. That and the fact that the days of cheap energy are over. Add the two together, and you are talking a cultural and societal disaster. Well it's happening over there. And I'm very glad I'm not a part of it right now. It's extremely tiring to bang your head against this kind of cultural blind spot, and I got tired of doing it. It took me about 3 years to really recover from it, I was pretty upset about it when I got here but it faded with time. I guess I'd say that Osama bin Laden pushed everything over the line. Maybe he just accelerated the deterioration. What ever, between the greed and then the paranoid fear of anything Islam, America caught a bad case of narcissistic personality disorder. Oh eventually it will get better, but it's going to take about 10 years at least I think. There is too much of a mess to straighten out over there, and still far too little ability to accept the reality of the situation America finds itself in. Doing so would mean admitting that serious problems exist, and the standard answer of let someone find a profit making solution to the situation isn't cutting it over there any more. It would also mean admitting that American exceptionalism is a myth. Don't hold your breath, as far too many Americans still believe that stuff. Unfortunately it's just true, and the longer they live in denial of it the worse the problems will get over there.

5 pm. Didn't do anything much today, except start this. I suppose that should count as some kind of minor accomplishment. I still have paperwork to do this evening. After I eat. I got some time tonight.

So what do I do here? Well I teach English to business people. And a lot of other things. Like watch the world fall apart and rebuild itself around me. Study and learn German, my new home language. Write. All kinds of writing, from this, to stories, poetry etc. and paint, like a classic painter. And meet people and learn about how people think. It's a good life really. When I lived in the US I had a big house, two cars and a

wife. The wife lost her interest in life, and we grew apart. Intellectual boredom is a killer. In the end I walked out. I did return, three times. I won't go back for a fourth. Now days I try to put those memories behind me. It's just painful really, the sadness of it is that the potential for something marvelous was just completely wasted. I hate seeing stuff go to waste. Wasted potential is the biggest problem in life. If politicians would just sit down and start thinking about ways to actually see to it that everyone had a chance to reach their full potential, in a peaceful and sociable way, the world would be so much better than it is today you wouldn't recognize it. But that is a hypothetical, unreal condition as demonstrated by the use of the 2<sup>nd</sup> conditional. Yea, as one of my students once said, always the teacher. Which actually I rather like. I like really good, great teachers. It's a gift to be really good at it. And it's fun. Much more fun than many other jobs. No the pay is terrible that's true, but sometimes it's about the outcomes. You have to like people. Since I do like people, it's ok for me.

So that gives you some background framework. Basically this is about my life, and how I see the world. My observations on a world that is going through an enormous period of change. Most of it unwillingly. I was once told if god wants you in Chicago on Tuesday you have two choices, either you get on the bus and enjoy the ride, or you get dragged behind the bus all the way to Chicago. It would seem that large parts of the world have chosen option two, as option one would mean they would have to accept the fact they aren't as smart as they think they are. People rarely like to do that willingly in my experience. And in America the land of rugged individualism it's simply unthinkable. They simply cannot admit that their solutions to things just aren't working anymore and they are going to have to change how they live if they want to get along in the future. Well it isn't going to happen fast. I'd say, probably over the course of the next 20 years there will be massive changes there, but they will come slowly and probably unpeacefully. Me I'm avoiding the whole thing. That is the plan. Stay out of it. It's spiritually backwards to participate. Or maybe I am really just too old and tired for doing it. That has a bearing on it too. Right now I don't see any leadership in the states that really has a clue anyway. It's still a long long slog uphill to get to the point where change will even be considered. I decided, years ago, that the fight wasn't for me. I didn't have the skill set for it, or the desire to go through with it. So much for my career as Che Gravara. Never gonna happen. Not at this age. Maybe if I had started at 30 or something well that might be different. I didn't. And so I'm going to sit this one out, on the sidelines as an artist, writer and observer. Someone has to write it all down anyway, for posterity, might as well be me. And actually I am enjoying this more than being on the front trenches of the struggle. Yea ok maybe I'm getting older.

One of the things I've learned is just how myopic people can be, regardless of education level. It's really easy to get locked into a set way of thinking, and that is always people's downfall eventually. You have to keep developing, you have to be creative today, in order to make forward progress. It's a tough climate to accomplish anything, and following a specific set of procedures or ideals or whatever blindly doesn't lead to success for ever. Eventually you run into a problem that cannot be solved

my traditional means, and then, if you aren't flexible, you have a real problem. Arthur Toynbee wrote about it in his book the collapse of civilizations. Its well worth reading up on. Toynbee figured out the process by which human societies collapse. Basically they develop a fixed set of procedures and ideals that develop their world, and then after it peaks, something new comes along that cannot be solved by these same fixed ideas. That's the test of society. Can it evolve to overcome the new problem, or cant it. And if it doesn't eventually it falls back. Enough problems and it falls apart. People work the same way, from my observation. I've watched it happen to people who I couldn't believe couldn't come up with the right answers. Finally I figured it out. People do the same thing as societies. Makes sense really if you think about it, surprised I didn't see it sooner. If societies are simply groups of people then the problems of those groups are people problems. Reverse engineering. What a concept. People need to learn more about that idea. But then I think people need to become a lot more intellectually curious, if the world is going to become a better place. The question is, how do we bring that about?

I'm cooking dinner. Like I said, Cuban black beans and rice. Should be excellent. I guess I should feel bad, wasted the whole day inside and it was beautiful out, but hey, I was feeling a little rough, and needed a down day.

So who are the other characters in this little play? Good question you ask. There is Kassie, my friend from America, who speaks German well, but still has a massive lack of confidence about it. There is Richard, my best friend, fellow English teacher and expert on television shows. Especially comedies. Strange friendship, I'll get to that later. Stephan owns the pub in hannover where I like to hang out, its called Nordstadtbraut. Good guy, excellent English, working on his third degree in politics. Then there is an ongoing cast of minor characters. Various women and girls I meet along the way. Other Americans that drift into, and normally out of, my life. Bosses, coworkers. Students. Other Germans I meet along my way. And people from other parts of the world. Kassie is my only real American friend. She is the only one who even half way gets it, gets what it means to live here. That's a sign of American narcissism, the inability to adapt to other cultures. Been staring me in the face for years. Only figured it out a few weeks ago.

How honest should a writer be? I've always heard you should be brutally honest. I wonder can I be brutally honest. Brutally direct yea, I'm good at that. But can I be any more honest than the next person? We all have issues that blind us to objective reality. All of us. Id like to think I'm above average at sorting that stuff out, but I'm not so sure anymore. I guess we will find out.

Hmm brutally honest. Well I like it here. The thing I like most about it is I don't have to listen to bullshit from some rugged individualist that has no logical thinking process at all, has no facts to back up his ideas, and doesn't listen when you try to explain to him where the holes in his ideas are. That just really doesn't happen here. Its a big cultural difference. Idiots generally know their place here. At least that's my experience, your mileage may vary. Sure we have our idiots here like anyplace. Most of them try to keep their idiocy in check, as Germans aren't real big on ego driven idiocy. I

find it a nice feature of the culture. One of the reasons I want to stay.

Women are another reason. Women here are shaped like women, not like bricks with short squabby legs, or worse like little round balls that look like humpty dumpty. I remember the last time I flew from Amsterdam to the states, as soon as you got on the plane you could tell you were off to America. Just had to look at the people. I swear there was one woman that took up 3 seats. Incredible. Americans are the fattest people in the world, and women from America are, in far too many cases, no exception. European women still have curves in the right places at 50. not many American women do. I'm sorry I know its prejudiced, but there is something wrong with a culture that tells people its ok to be morbidly obese. An outward manifestation of an inner sickness. Sorry I like my women to look like women. And I don't really care about how you feel about it. Hmm very American of me...

honestly I don't really care anymore. I have heard so much crap about what I should think, what I'm supposed to think, what my values should be etc, I just don't really care at all anymore. Women should look like women. People shouldn't be promoted to highly important positions if they have idiotic ideas. No one should live homeless in the street period. Some basics. No not popular ideas in some parts of the world. But necessary ones. Its weird though, you cannot really convince large chunks of the American population of the morality of such stances. Doesn't work.

Enough on the individualism problems. There are more interesting things going on. Now I just have think about what they were before I got off on that tangent. The weekend was a bust. Didn't meet any new women. Oh well. Oh don't think so badly of me. I'm single, and id like to have a girlfriend in my life. The problem is finding one that thinks as much as I do and is also willing to take risks like I do. That's an unusual combo. I'm still lookin. I did have a nice evening taking to mike. Great guy, spent a lot of time in the states. He has interesting cultural observations. Most Europeans do, since they see so many different cultures.

What else happened? The bar slut at NSB tried hitting on me last night. No thanks. Not interested. She is one of those women you listen to them in any language for 2 minutes and you know she is bat shit crazy. Oh and its not just women, thank you very much, I am well aware there are guys like that too. Anyway she found some other guy sitting on the other side of her and disappeared off with him after about 45 minutes. Good for her, mission accomplished. Just not with me. I'm not interested in women with a case of the crazies. I dated a singer like that once. We had a band together. Amazing voice, amazing mood swings. Never want to do that again. Was not fun, and I threw away the t shirt.

Dinner is complete. There will now be a short pause while I eat.

Man that was good, I wish I had some dessert. I think I got an apple... I'll keep my thumbs pressed.

Hm. TUESDAY AFFFT ERRR NOON.. yup. A very quiet one. Yea reminded me of the song by the moody blues.

Friday, May 4<sup>th</sup>

Hmm well the weekend is here. Great. I've got a lot of chores to do, and little that seems really exciting this weekend. There is a middle ages festival in Hildesheim, that might be something to do, but probably only a day trip.

I'm tired of being alone. Very tired of it. But on the other hand, everyone who is interested in me, I'm not interested in them, and everyone I'm interested in , they aren't interested in me. I guess that's life. I cant figure out what to do about it. Nothing seems to click. And yea its damn hard meeting a person who is compatible with me at this stage of the game. But its still lonely.

I don't like loneliness. I guess no one really does, well no one who is a normal person. But then who is to say if I am normal or not. Probably not. But GF an extrovert. So yea one thing I am not big on is loneliness. On the other hand, I have NO patience for fools, idiots, or women with personality disorders. Well, women with personality disorders, who don't do something about it, and blame the world for their issues. Sorry, as they say in German, geht so nicht. Goes so not. Doesn't work for me. I tried that. I don't have the patience for it. It never works for me.

Whatever. I took a bath. Now I feel much better. Hats life. Sometimes its as simple as a bath. Or a meal. Nah I don't want a woman in my life just to have one in my life. That can be emptier than no woman. I want a soul mate. Someone who can see me for who I am. Someone who knows me and loves me for who I am. Hard to find these days. But then it always was. Comes from being to much of a thinker for my own good. Hmm. Finally made it to the bar. At least things are developing here a bit. Who knows. The night is yet young anything is possible. Got to get some alcohol flowing first tho. Otherwise no one will talk to anyone. Such is the way of life.

I wish I had some answers. Like how does one live a normal life. What the hell is a normal life anyway. I have no clue. Not sure I ever did. Probably part of what comes from growing up in a toxic dysfunctional family. Ah the curses of our lives. We all have them. And it seems sometimes as if its gods joke that we don't realize what those curses are until about 5 minutes to late to do anything about them. Why is that? Why aren't more people introspective? Why don't people think more about substance, rather than superfluous bullshit. Good question, no answer. Apparently that IS the reality of the human condition. It certainly isn't what people think it is. Life isn't as simple as simply doing the next right thing and it all turns out with a happy ending. Nope. Geht nicht. It doesn't work like that. Never did, really. Oh yea for specific time frames in specific places maybe it is true. But not generally. It doesn't happen in most cases. The reality that was expressed by the venerable Bede is perhaps more accurate: life is short brutish and hard. In so many ways that still seems to be the case today. Everyone thought

history came to an end in 1990, with the collapse of the Soviet Union. Nothing could have been more wrong. If anything that only marked the beginning of one of the most highly unstable periods in human history. A period marked by human greed, selfishness, and total lack of thought for the common good, the common welfare, social solidarity. Yea it all died then. Its strange to look back on that time. Most of the people were running thru the streets of Washington dc, celebrating a victory parade to mark the end of the first war in Iraq, and, by implication, the beginning of the end of history, the collapse of communism, and the rise of the endless American empire. Hmm where did I hear that before, the 1000 year Reich. That only managed to survive for 12 years. Lets see now. The American empire managed to function reasonably well for about 10 years. Then came the internet crash, and the first financial crisis. The empire stumbled along another few years, from 2001 to 2008, 7 to be exact, not breaking, but planting the seeds of its own destruction. Then in 2008 it all came unglued, with the beginning of the second great world wide depression. So what, about 17 years? So what does that mean? A highly aggressive culture of empire in the modern world can hang together for about 12 years. A less aggressive one, which functioned more on soft power than hard power held itself together for about 17 years. Hmm.. shitty lifespan. Shitty odds. And as Josef Stieglitz said recently in an interview with the European, the evidence is plainly clear. Nothing has really gotten better for the average citizen in the US in 30 years. So the reality is, the reality that no one wants to face, is that it was, in the end, a failure of epic proportions. How long will it take for the history books to admit that? A generation? 2? maybe more? Very hard to say. I know one thing. A country that has the largest influence on the worlds economy, a country that has the largest consumption of energy on the planet, that cannot function politically, is controlled by the richest people in the world, cannot function for long. Its coming down. It has to. As Hendrix said, castles made of sand fall into the sea, eventually. This one will too. Sooner rather than later. The continuing debt ceiling crisis over there are going to lead to a disaster, given the tea baggers and right wingers. That isn't going to last. No way. Its going to come unglued. The only questions are how and when.

Honestly it makes me rather glad I got here when I did, and that my world fell apart when it did. I think its easier if your world has already collapsed around you, if the rest of the world is going to go too. At least it isn't as much of a shock. Of course it doesn't really help you get yourself back on your feet firmly again either. That's life. Never seems to work out as planned, does it? At least not for people like me. Or you most likely if you are reading this and enjoying it.

At least there are still pretty girls to look at in the world. That seems to help. At least some. Somethings really are constants. Just not the things you think will be. The real constants, I think, you can see them early in life. And they aren't really very pretty. The main constant is inconsistency. And danger.

Good music helps too. No question about it. Again. Somethings stay constant. Others only look constant. In reality they are illusions. Phantoms, that we chase out of our lack of understanding of reality. Ghosts we pursue for our own instant gratification.



Nothing more.

I'm reading a news article on the tea party. What a bunch of idiots. Full idiots. That's the problem. Too many idiots have been allowed to develop in the world. Far too many. Selfish, self serving, greedy idiots. Secret service agents that fuck whores and then don't even pay their bills. Greed mongering business people who gleefully outsource jobs to china, and condemn the victims for their lack of work ethic. Politicians who care more about the money they can make than doing the right thing for the people they represent. Oh yea, its happening everywhere. All over the world. Sick. Sick sick sick sick sick sick. Yea it makes me sick. It really does. And people wonder why we are having a crisis... Jesus, sick world, it really is sometimes.

These people are idiots. Oh yea they got one idea right, its time to throw all the bastards out in congress. In every parliament and congress in the world. The problem is, they want to replace them with really stupid ignorant new bastards. Meet the new boss, same as the old boss. Yea we will get fooled again. Happens all the time. Sick. Really sick.

And there is no cure in sight. Oh yea I read all this crap about how things are magically going to get better. Bullshit. Ain't gonna happen. American exceptionalism isn't going to carry the day. Not this time. Cause the ground conditions are different this time. Yea in the past there were always new resources to exploit. Not any more. Welcome to a world where the lack of easily obtainable fossil fuels will change your life. Yea it will.

At least I got my writing. That is good. Something to hold on to. You have to hold on to what you can. At some point I fully expect to be forced to do this using a fountain pen and ink again. Remind me to print this off at some point so I can keep going. 1132 pm. Hannover Germany. Wonder whats happening other places. It ain't happening here. That's for sure.

Maybe its time to pause. A pause is always good.