

A midsummer night's dream...

Autor(en): **[s.n.]**

Objektyp: **Article**

Zeitschrift: **Der Kreis : eine Monatsschrift = Le Cercle : revue mensuelle**

Band (Jahr): **28 (1960)**

Heft 7

PDF erstellt am: **06.08.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-570258>

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responsible for Ramon's precarious existence. How easy it would be for Ramon to turn down that one way street that leads only to crime and prison. Who, actually, was the guilty party? After all, would the youth have chosen this path if there were not so many who were willing to line his pockets for doing so?

By Christian Graf.

Translation: H. H.

A Midsummer Night's Dream . . .

by Edo

I was furious with the weather-god. To play tricks on me like this! If only I had known that Saturday would turn into such a lovely day I would have made plans. Now here I was, on my own and with not even any schemes at all. But no, this must on no account spoil my happy mood.

I rushed into the bedroom, turned the contents of my cupboard upside down, took everything needed for camping out, and finally loaded my bicycle with it. It wasn't so much, after all. A tent, two air-mattresses, and a double-sleeping bag. But why two mattresses and a double sleeping bag? Well, even when cycling on my own I like to think: «You never can tell . . .» And a double-sleeping bag is—let's be frank about it, gentlemen—something wonderful. You will have to be spared a list of its advantages. Try one out for yourself.

I left Zurich shortly after noon and cycled through the valley of the Sihl towards the Lake of Zug. I was riding along comfortably, in no hurry, and my heart was easy and carefree. What a treat—to be able to put the town and all its eternal noise behind me for two whole days. I inhaled the scented air deeply. A thousand little things pleased my eyes, and I thought the world was more beautiful than ever before.

Half an hour later I passed a village where I had worked and lived two years ago. I liked to remember that pleasant time. The charming scenery, the quiet lanes—I lost myself in reveries. Suddenly I was forced back to reality. Someone had called my name.

I looked back. For a moment my heart was beating wildly. I wanted to get off my bicycle but the other person had a bicycle too and had come abreast before I had had time to collect my thoughts.

«Hello, Peter. Where have you been all this time? Nothing heard of you for ages. Did you forget us all so quickly?»

Well, this was Ernest from the local sports' club. The same lock of blond hair fell over his forehead—just as I remembered it. The same silky sheen of his hair; the same light blue eyes full of questions, and the very same full red lips—exactly as he had looked two years ago, a country lad, good-natured and quiet. He knew neither hurry nor haste. No cares shadowed his brows.

How did it come about that I knew him? At the time I had been living in the small village I had just passed. It had been a problem to know how to spend the long frosty winter evenings. Though I heartily disliked clubs of any kind, I had finally made up my mind to join the local sports' club. When I timidly entered the premises on the first night, I expected to be shown the usual cold shoulder from the local members; there is always that slight hostility towards strangers and new members. But I had been wrong. People were very friendly, right from the start.

It was a custom around there that the first-born son always had the same Christian name as his father and grandfather had before him. It may be a nice old

custom but it certainly lacked imagination. Of the nineteen members of the club, seventeen were called either Hans or Ernest. There was one Paul and one Werner each.

Good heavens, what a problem—especially for one like me who is so bad in remembering faces and is even worse in recalling the names attached to them. How would I ever find out who was Hans and who was Ernest? If I called someone Hans he turned out to be an Ernest. But if I called out «Ernest» there were at least eight boys looking at me. What a problem it all was!

But of one of these eight Ernest boys I had made a special note. And that was the boy now cycling and chatting at my side. He had been the friendliest of the lot. He had lovely skin. His gym shorts were the most tight-fitting ones, and the legs they enclosed were real beauties. Waiting with him for our turn to exercise I glanced furtively at his tender thighs with their slight golden fleece. When later in the evening the hot water from the showers made our bodies send forth steam and made our limbs relax, he kept his shorts on. He was one of the youngest, and probably too shy to undress completely.

When I had to return to town many months later, he shook hands with me firmly and looked me straight into the face. «Hope to see you again,» he said. But I never returned. My world was miles and miles away from his world. And memory is sweetest when there are no clouds to remember.

«What are you thinking about?»

«Of times past.»

«What are you carrying on your bike?»

«My tent.»

«You going camping? That must be lovely. I've never had a chance to camp.»

His eyes were bright. I could read in them his longing to camp anywhere unrestrictedly and freely—on some distant shore.

«Where are you camping for the night?»

«At Lake Zug.»

«How wonderful.» (How I longed to ask him to come along, but I held myself firmly in check.)

«We can go part of the way together,» he continued. «I'm on my way to Küssnacht to visit a pal of mine. The weather was so lovely today, I just had to go out. Maybe my pal will not be at home. In that case I'll have to return tonight . . .» One could see he didn't like the idea of returning right away.

«Were you going to stay with him?» — «Yes. — Does he know you're coming?» — «No.» — «Do you have to see him?» — «Not necessarily.» — «Would you like to come camping with me?» — «With only my shirt and trousers? I would be cold. I have neither a coat nor a blanket with me.»

«Don't worry. I have everything. Air-mattress, sleeping bag . . .»

«One sleeping bag wouldn't be much use . . .»

«I have a double one.»

«Is there such a thing?»

«Certainly. If we sleep close we shan't be cold.»

Ernest fell to thinking. Finally the matter seemed to be all right with him and he said. «Let's try it. And if I'm cold after all, I'll throw you out of the bag and you can sleep under the stars.» He grinned broadly.

The sun was setting when we reached a suitable camping site, quiet and lonely. The tent was quickly erected. Ernest assisted me as best as he could. Not that he

was much of a help. The strings of the tent got constantly in his way until one of them tripped him. From then on he was more careful.

A cold supper, a walk through the forest, and then it was time to turn in. But the moonbeams were glittering on a thousand little waves of the lake, and the branches of the trees were hanging dark and mysteriously into the water. Temptation was too great—for a swim.

A dive—and many concentric rings were spreading over the surface. They caught the moonbeams and pushed them on to yet further rings. Another dive—and now the rings were cutting wildly into each other. We swam like mad. We dived deeply into the dark waters and came up again breathless. Finally we swam back to the shore. I got a towel, dried Ernest and then myself, pushed my wet bathing slip down, and crawled into the double-sleeping bag.

«You're going to sleep that way?» Ernest asked, puzzled. «Don't you put anything on? Won't you be freezing?»

«I never freeze,» I said calmly, through my chattering teeth. It was rather a risky thing I was bent on doing to do and I could easily burn my fingers. Expectation was drying up my throat. Lord, I wished I had an idea about what was going to happen.

His body made a shadow in front of the tent. I saw him push down his wet bathing slip slowly, get into his tight fitting shorts, and grope for his shirt. He hesitated for a moment or two, then let it fall down, and I heard him say in a matter-of-fact voice,

«I shan' put on my shirt because it'll be all crumpled up tomorrow. If I'm cold I can still put it on.» And on hands and knees he crawled into the tent, shut the flap of it, lifted the cover of the sleeping bag, first put his feet and then pushed his body in. I could feel his heel along my body. A shiver went through me. I did not move an inch.

«My, it's cold—» and he shook.

«It's only because of our swim. Get closer. Then it'll be warmer.» I pushed my body towards him. My chest was touching his back. My breath rebounded warmly from his throat. He felt my tension. I was too close. A long time passed. Finally he said softly,

«Are you asleep?»

«No. Are you still cold?»

«Not much.»

«I'll give you a massage. That'll do you good.»

«All right.»

I pushed myself close to him, put my arms round him, drew his tall body near and started to massage his chest. I went down his flanks, met his shorts, lifted in a quick decision his velvety body and pushed them down. You can't wear shorts when being given a thorough massage, can you?

I went on massaging him. His skin was tighter, his muscles better developed than at the time I had first met him two years ago. Was there a tension in the air? Now—this lovely body was mine.

A long time later I bent over him to kiss him goodnight. His lips were waiting, half parted—relaxed. He put his hand lightly on my leg; our bodies had become one.

With short pleasant intervals we slept the whole night — and we did not feel the cold.

Sunday passed on happy wings. Only too soon it was time to move on. Once again we dived into the water; one more walk through the unexplored forest, and then it was time to get the tent down.

On our way back he cycled like a mad puppy. Completely changed! He was in front of me, and then behind me—he did the maddest zig-zags, and all the car-drivers swore violently at him. Then he was at my side again and asked unexpectedly and yet matter-of-factly, «What are we going to do next Sunday?»

«Go camping,» I answered, with pounding heart.

«Where?»

«At the Aegeri Lake.»

«Just the thing.» He paused a moment, and grinned. «Be sure to bring the bag along,» he said, and was off in a flash.

(From the German original, published in «The Circle», May 1952.)

Translation by Rudolf Burkhardt

NEWS FROM ENGLAND

WOLFENDEN REPORT FOR DEBATE

Part two of the Wolfenden Report, which recommended that homosexual behaviour between consenting adults in private should no longer be a criminal offence, will be debated in the Commons on June 29.

This subject has been chosen by Mr. Kenneth Robinson, the Labour member for St. Pancras North, who yesterday drew first place in the ballot for private members motions.

From: The Times

OSCAR WILDE AS A MOVIE SUBJECT

When you do get the opportunity to see *The Trials of Oscar Wilde*, I urge you to go.

Peter Finch, the one-time Australian hobo and sheephander, gives a performance as Wilde which lifts him right up into the Olivier class.

He plays the brilliant, beloved, yet arrogantly self-destructive playwright who was ruined by «*the love that dare not speak its name*» with a subtlety, a breadth, and a panache which make Wilde credible as a literary legend and yet, without sympathy-mongering in any way, deeply moving as a human being.

This is acting of magnificent stature. It is the re-creation of a character from the inside; the building up of a personality in layers: honest in its conception, fascinating to watch.

As Lord Alfred Douglas, the glittering, vicious, bewitching youth who uses Wilde's love of him without mercy and who ultimately, horribly, brings Wilde to disaster, John Fraser is brilliant.

The relationship between *this* Wilde and *this* «Bosie» is precise, understandable. The fascination may be unnatural but it is hypnotic. The mesh they weave around one another is bound to end in tragedy.