

## **A short story about intercultural misunderstandings**

Tobias wanted to go to the bakery like every Sunday, so he took his bike and rode. He turned around a corner and had to brake hard because a boy walked on the left side of the sidewalk, although everybody knows that this is the bikeway.

Tobias rang and shouted: “Kannst du nicht aufpassen, ey?”

The boy jumped out of his skin and said: “I’m really sorry, but I can’t understand you!”

Tobias brought his bike to a stop and asked him: “What the hell are you doing in Germany at ten o’clock on a Sunday morning without being able to speak any German word?”

“That’s a long story and I haven’t any time. I’m hungry and thirsty, therefore I’m in search for a MC Donald’s. Do you know one nearby?”

“I have to disappoint you. In our city isn’t any MC Donald’s. But come with me, I know a nice bakery where you can eat fresh and warm Brezeln every time.”

After the boy got over his little shock, they set off. While walking, Tobias asked him for his name and heard that he’s called Chris and came from Arizona, more precisely from Phoenix. When they arrived at the bakery, Chris laughed out and said: “I would never notice this little shop. Are you sure that we are right?”

“Don’t laugh, you will be surprised after eating some Brezeln. It’s the best thing in the world.”

Both, Tobias and Chris, went into the bakery and took a seat on the only table...

Tobias welcomed the salesperson and ordered two Brezeln and Hot Chocolates. The following answer got Tobias when he asked Chris for his age: “I’m seventeen years old, the same like you are, right?”

“Yes, good guess. Please, now tell me your reasons why you’re here without any relation and navigation. I’m so curious.”

“Okay, but it takes a long time and you already know the reason. I’m seventeen, that’s the problem in Germany.” He sighed.

“Are you kidding me? There’s no problem to be seventeen in Germany!”

“Not for you, that’s right. I told you that I’m from Phoenix and there are different laws to them in Germany. And I don’t know all of these differences.”

“Chris, I really like you but it’s a kind of silly to visit a foreign country without read up on it.”

“No, you don’t understand. I will tell you the whole story and I hope you can understand me better... A half year ago, I applied for an exchange program and I was really happy because they made it possible for me to go to Island for five months. Nobody could understand my decision but it was my dream since a few years to see all these geysers. The next weeks I got ready for my exchange to Island. But first, all the exchange students met in New York, where the organisation told us a lot about the rules and other things. This was last week. It was fun, I met two guys who wanted to go to Island too.

But then the big surprise came!

The organisation confounded me with another boy. His name is Jeremy Parker and he should go to Germany. They couldn’t change this fault anymore due to the affirmations and flight bookings. At the beginning, I refused, but one day later I realized that I only had two possibilities:

To go home or to visit Germany.

Now, I don’t regret my decision to go to Germany, mainly due to my nice host family with their beautiful daughter... but I’m scared to go there anymore.”

“You’re scared? I thought they’re so nice, what’s the problem?”

“This morning I had trouble with the police. I’ve heard that it’s allowed to drive by car at the age of seventeen in Germany. When I arrived my host mother said that I had to behave as it would be my home and I should take what I need. This morning I woke up after dreaming of the famous Autobahn. I think it’s a great feeling to drive as fast as you want. So I got dressed, took the car key und started! Just ten minutes later I reached at a police control and showed them my permission...I think YOU can imagine what happened! “

“Oh dear, where’s the car now?”

“It’s on the next police station, my host family has to collect it.”

“I think you don’t have to be scared, it’s just a really bad misunderstanding. Your host family will be worried sick, if you don’t come at home on time. And they will be appreciative, I’m sure. If you want, I would go with you. Perhaps I can help you to tell the story.”

“I count me really lucky that I met you. It would be helpful, if you attend me.

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