

It was in early May of 1986 when I was working in Germany in Sindelfingen and Weissach for Porche as a Body designer in the Body in White division on inner and outer door panels that I became aware of an extraordinary phenomenon.

Most weekends in good weather I would go rambling in the black forest nearby, as we were close to Stuttgart which bordered the forest on its north-east end. It was a vast area of delightful woods of flora and fauna with wild flowers and wild creatures in abundance, I would book in to the same small Inn on the outskirts of the forest and spend the weekend there. On this occasion early in the season I found that I was the only guest at this small establishment, and I became quite friendly with the inn keeper Fritz and his wife, Trudy both being able to speak reasonable English. As is usual in Germany I would breakfast on a generous array of sliced German sausages and cheeses with freshly baked bread and butter, washed down with a copious supply of black coffee. The arrangement was that he would supply me with sandwiches and a bottle of beer together with a flask of his coffee, which I would pay extra for, as dinner was also included in the price of occupancy.

So, well nourished by a hearty breakfast and a good lunch to look forward to, I bade farewell to my hosts and set off light of heart and with a spring in my step, to commune with nature in total contentment, with their guard dog's bark ringing in my ears. I followed the path and soon lost sight of the Inn. Some half an hour later I came upon what I thought to be a tributary to the river Neckar, a stream of sparkling water shimmering in the sunlight. On its bank quite oblivious of me lay a young boy luxuriously sunning himself entirely naked. He was lying there drying his wet brown limbs and he was truly brown all over, with wet dank hair almost to his shoulders. To me he appeared to be a gypsy boy of about 14 or 15, I approached him to enquire why he was unclothed as I assumed that he had been bathing so removed his garments but they were nowhere to be seen. "Where are your clothes" I enquired. He turned towards me with a gleam in his pale blue eyes of an animalistic nature, growled in a guttural manner and with one bound dived into the stream, found the opposite bank and disappeared into the undergrowth. How strange and unusual, it was certainly not in the lexicon of my experience. I carried on with my walk and soon forgot the whole incident. I continued on my way, under a cloudless blue sky and a warm sun, I spotted some deer in the distance and there were many red squirrels playing tag with each other through the trees. The air was sweet with bird song, I found a fallen log in a clearing and stopped for a leisurely lunch. Sitting on the log, I contemplated my happy condition. It was certainly good to be alive in such a magnificent setting and after a few more glugs of beer I found it was even more enchanting. Having rested, my lunch nearly digested, I decided to return as the sun was hot and beer always made me drowsy. I returned by way of the same path, through dappled sunlight without further mishaps, immediately went for a shower and prepared myself for dinner.

Dinner was a friendly affair, because i was the only guest. We had dinner in their cosy kitchen sat together and served on an old rustic oak table instead of being formally served in the dining room sitting by myself. Conversation flowed readily, what with a delicious dinner of jugged hare served with apricots and walnuts and an outstandingly tasty gravy, lashings of mashed potatoes, baby carrots, swedes, turnips and a side dish of Savoy cabbage, followed by apple tart with cream. A large jug of red wine accompanied the dinner, which aided and abetted the conversation. During our lively talk I happened to mention the incident with the boy and suggested if Fritz was not too busy, that he could accompany me on the morrow for my ramble. With Trudy's encouragement he agreed. I thought that perhaps the child would understand German.

In the morning after breakfast, Fritz, his dog and I set off on our ramble. It was another beautiful day as often happens at this time of year in Germany. We were gaily chatting along the way until we arrived at the stream. There sure enough, was the boy as naked as the day he was born, but on the opposite bank of the stream, fast asleep. Fritz being German took no notice of his slumber and shouted and hailed him awake. Meanwhile Fritz was beckoning him to come over to our side of the stream; by waving his arms and shouting in German which the lad appeared to understand. He dived into the stream and we saw neither hair nor hide of him for a while until he surfaced with a large fish in his mouth which he seemed to consume with relish once he attained terra firma on our side of the bank. In approaching towards us Fritz's dog gave a loud whelp and hastily ran back on the path we had taken. All the shouting from Fritz to return was to no avail, it was off with its tail between its legs. Another peculiar instance happened at the same time, a deathly hush, an eerie silence pervaded the whole wood, the birds had stopped singing. When he was by our side Fritz asked him his name. No name was the reply, where did he live? Why in these woods. Where did he sleep at night? He did not sleep at night, that being his busiest time, he went hunting on all fours. What did he eat? Flesh, he replied, said in such a way as to send the hairs on the nape of my neck to stand on end. Flesh, what flesh? He would eat anything he could get his hands on, chicken, squirrels, wild fowl, and sometimes lamb if he could find a young one. He said all this with such an evil gleam in his eyes and a smile rather like a snarl, exposing his yellow teeth. Teeth did I say? Did my eyes deceive me but were they more like fangs? When he said he hunted on four feet did he hunt with a dog? "I don't think any dog would be anxious for my company especially at night" said he cryptically. At this stage the boy weary of all the questioning dashed into the undergrowth and was never seen again that day.

After dinner, having packed my car ready for the off early in the morning back to work in Sindelfingen, I sat outside, nursing a stein to watch a glorious sunset. Silhouetted against the red glow of the dying sun stood the boy and as the sun dipped below the horizon it became suddenly dark. Another glance, the boy had disappeared and in his place was a large wolf, on its haunches, a glint in its blue eyes howling at the full moon overhead. So that is why mine host's dog retreated so swiftly. I vowed to myself that I would never walk alone in these woods again.