

➤ STEPHEN F. ANDERSON : *A Cheap Con: Actual Correspondence from a Fink Abroad, as Emailed by This Author for Two Cigarettes and a Pilsner.*

Dear Homefolks,

After your last refusal of financial assistance, your son Gordy has decided not to email you with any more bothersome pleas. Therefore I, as a friend of your Gordy, would like to inform you of his sad and increasingly sordid state since being left to his own means.

Prague

Arriving in this former Communist capitol for the first time, Gordy remarked: "I can't believe how much it's all changed." He resolved to earn money from his juggling, and hooked up with an Australian performer named Wayne. Wayne promised to include Gordy in what Wayne called his "brilliant" routine, most of which consisted of Wayne inhaling amphetamines and Pivo before facing the tourist crowds, then toppling from his unicycle and slamming his cheekbones on the cobblestone, only to jump back up for more despite his hamburgered palms and bloodied mullet mane. As it turned out, Gordy was the straight man: his shocked reactions helped get Wayne laughs -- and girls. As a friend, I advised against a partner all along. Soon, though, Wayne would hop on a night train to points unknown, leaving Gordy a half-empty fifth of Rebel Yell, three polka-dot bean bags and a sickle. Gordy tossed the bean bags from the St. Charles Bridge. He hocked the sickle at an open-air flea market.

Barcelona

I should not let your Gordy out of my sight for one minute. Here he befriended Dakota, a self-described "commune mother" from Montana. Dakota seduced Gordy into helping her with her so-called business, this consisting of squatting on plazas all day crafting natural fiber bracelets, anklets and "hair braids," most of which Dakota traded for other travelers' own natural fiber crap, or hashish, or sex with any man or woman under 20 with an accent (Scottish, preferably). I steered Gordy clear of her and on to the Costa Brava, only to see him nearly beaten up. For on the beach Gordy insisted on wearing his lime-green Speedo swimsuit and Dakota's piquant patchouli oil, a sight and a scent which enraged a group of Irish soccer hooligans playing cards. One of these tattooed and sunburned men called Gordy a "wanker," a "bleedin' green shite" and a "pooffer." Gordy gave this man "the bird." Thereupon the man "head-butted" Gordy, sending him to the cold wet sand and producing on his forehead a bean-shaped red knob that remains to this day.

Krakow / Auschwitz

Staring up at Auschwitz's infamous Gate of Death, Gordy remarked innocently to the man next to him: "Dude, I can't believe they let Spielberg leave all those movie sets up." The man appeared to be a mild-tempered Swede, but turned out to be a sergeant in the Israeli Marines. Back in Krakow Gordy, nursing a tender jaw and bruised ribs, holed up in his pension and read (for the first time, I believe) several back issues of the International Herald Tribune. Soon after he was telling travelers he's the bastard son of noted biographer, historian and lecturer David McCullough. He also boasted of being on a Fulbright scholarship. I spent many delicate minutes arguing against this direction, for the only thing worse would be if it were true.

Munich

At the famed Oktoberfest Gordy, ever drunker, danced on tables with Italian teenagers and did the "Y-M-C-A." Later he was forced to urinate in his liter-size beer and drink from a vast, trough-style urinal after losing a bet with a Finnish businessman -- something about the real-life nationality of the actor who played

Sergeant Schultz on Hogan's Heroes (American, it turns out). Gordy would top off the evening by vomiting in a streetcar all over a seeing-eye dog. It was I who argued for his release from deep within the tall, concrete Munich Central Police Präsidium for Mass Transit Crime and Subversion.

Further Episodes?

After three months with Gordy I can state, as his only real friend, that his condition has not improved. Gordy concocts schemes daily. He has vowed to write a travel book. Just yesterday, in Belgium, he began rolling his own cigarettes and smoking them despite his ghastly asthma. He also filches the most costly liquor in my stock, absinthe (I am an importer of fine liquors, you understand).

Only my good counsel and a humane largesse can save your Gordy. His peculiar injuries and ailments require certain medicines. Therefore I email you in the hope that you'll see fit to send me a serviceable sum which I'll withhold and only disburse to your son in judicious payments based on specific criteria of need and reward as predetermined by me. I'll leave the amount to your discretion. I suggest, say, \$5000 at the very least.

Attached is the relevant bank account information.

Fondest Regards,

Jackie Bachman-Turner, Esq.

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