

My French Family

Because I have always been a little bit psychic, even in my early youth I remembered my future. This phenomenon is generally called: ESP, specifically: precognition. For instance, I had always felt that, when I grow up, I will have a French wife. When I did grow up and married a Hungarian girl, I was quite astonished and began doubting my psychic powers. Some years later, however, I divorced Hungary, then I emigrated from my first wife and re-married a young French girl, called Janine.

In my youth, I loved only my friends because I chose them and disliked my relatives because they were given. There was only one exception: my 24-year old cousin Elizabeth with whom I was in love when I was 17, and even dared to confess it to her with the following words: "Elizabeth, I love you as much as though you weren't my relative!" As it appeared, the only problem was that she deeply loved her relatives, with one exception: me.

By leaving my native land, I succeeded to leave behind my family, but after having married Janine, I inherited her family (that is her father, her mother, her older sister with a husband and three children, her younger older sister with two children, her older younger brother with a wife and two children and her younger younger brother with a wife and who knows how many children to come.)

I like this new family of mine much more than my own in the old country, firstly because I did choose my wife and there is a strong resemblance between her and her family; secondly because they speak French fluently and I don't, therefore we have no disagreements for we can't communicate; and thirdly because we live in Canada and they live in France, and it's a well-known fact that distance helps people to like and miss each other (or, perhaps, to like missing each other).

Janine visits her family every year. I like to visit them every ten years. Therefore, we compromise and I go with her to France every five years. During the month we usually spend there, each member of the family kisses both of my cheeks every morning in French and

I kiss them back in Hungarian. Or, they speak to me in English with a broken French accent, and I try to answer them in French, with a Hungarian accent broken by English. In high school I learnt

German; my father-in-law knows that, so he speaks to me in German which I don't understand because I have long forgotten German, but my father-in-law doesn't know that, so I answer him in Latin or Italian which I still remember, and he pretends to understand it because he thinks it is German.

When we all sit around (or rather asquare) the long table in the garden, according to my last census a year ago, we total 19 souls.

More precisely: 18 French souls and one Hungarian soul. The 18 souls speak French. They speak French – fast. They speak fast French – loud. They speak fast and loud French – all at the same time. While eating breakfast. And lunch. And supper. The one soul is silent in Hungarian.

This summer, my wife is going to visit them again. Of course, she wants me to go with her. But I am not going. She is hurt because she thinks I don't like her family. This isn't true: I like them very much. I try to explain to her my main reason for not going. Last year, something happened at the dinner-table. This is what happened:

One of my nephews told a joke to the family. They laughed. I

turned to my bilingual daughter, Natalie, and asked her: "What are they laughing about?" They laughed again. Natalie told me the French joke in English. I laughed. Now they laughed again because I laughed. Then my father-in-law, who is slightly deaf, turned to his wife and asked her why everybody laughed. Upon hearing his question, a thunderous laughter broke out around the table. My mother-in-law explained to my father-in-law that everybody laughed because I asked why everybody laughed, and she also told him the original joke. My father-in-law laughed. Then everybody laughed again because he laughed.

"This means," I concluded my defense-speech, "that if I go to France with you, I'll have to hear every joke three times, and after every joke I'll have to hear seven laughs. A single joke takes about 15 minutes away from my life. We'd stay there for 30 days, they'd tell approximately five jokes every day, so all together I would hear 150 jokes 450 times, accompanied by 1,050 laughs during my summer holidays. In Toronto in 15 minutes I can hear 15 jokes and laugh 15 times. In France I would spend 37 1/2 hours listening to 150

jokes.

During 37 1/2 hours in Toronto I can hear 2,250 jokes, including laughing-time. It is simply more economical for me to stay here," I

said and put away the calculator.

How did my wife react to my reasoning? She laughed. For the eighth time at the same old joke, although we couldn't even remember what it was. But, at last, she accepted my reasoning for not going with her. It is becoming a good marriage. From now on we are going to share. She goes to France. And I'll have a holiday.

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