



HUMAN BEING IS SWEET
OREN HARMAN

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Some things I learned from good friends this year at Wiko, you know who you are:

That it's best to make fondue with a special kind of fondue cheese. That chocolate-covered maggots are tasty, really they're super tasty, well okay, maybe just almost. That philosophy can be tedious but also strangely musical. That to serve with spin in Ping-Pong will almost always win you points.

I did not know that cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, and broccoli were all bred from the same plant, or that the law of the ocean is in need of revision. That I had a brother out there carrying wine made by the King of Saudi Arabia in Yemen. That the peasant uprising is in question. That Rickettsia is not really the closest living relative of eukaryotic mitochondria. That dignity is petite, metaphor a cheat, or that a favored Twi aphorism is “human being is sweet.”

Thank you. Now my life is more complete.

The year at Wiko brought me still other lessons. Beware of freckles. They might lasso in your heart. Open up. Take a side view. Look long, and hard. Give opera a chance, and walking in a rainy forest. That three-course meals work fine, depending on proportions. Don't ever count out languages – the objective has a way of becoming personal. Have a discussion from time to time with a constitutional law expert, they often have a perspective somewhat unusual.

Once more in life, alas, that a moral compass has little to do with education. That sometimes all that's needed is a furtive smile, or an unexpected hug. A good man reminded me of the power of the rare experience of finding a twin soul, but also how twin souls can be so different. Another clarified that foxes are drawn to people with especially good hearts.

Patience. Memory. Time. A sense of humor. I learned a lot this year about my family and what helps it bind. That we are as good as we are to our children, and not a reprimand less (or red Twizzler more). That we are as good as we are to our parents, that with time both remorse and gratitude soar. Wiko brought a distance that helped see such things glintingly. And the rhythm that made it possible to hear them as a softer tune.

I am grateful for meeting the woman who works on mixed marriages, and the man who studies piety. The gracious couple who forsook children for their love of animals, and the one who shirks sobriety. The heartfelt Italian composer, the chuckling Bulgarian, the brave Turk with a child. Not least the woman who says sabah-el-khir, and always with a smile. The candid diffuse coevolutionist with half a grin, the shy microbial populationist with cute kin, Faust-one-better, the climate setter, the blue-eyed dreamer with a Yiddish mandolin. Thank you, perpetuum mobile dancing bee man, and funny man from Bern. Thank you mutualist lady, Black Sea maybe, blusher, gusher, invisible college. Dear librarians: you provide an example of selfless dedication, but also of love of knowledge. You who took me to pose among butterflies, and you who fixed every matter, big or small: thank you from the bottom of my heart for you helped expand it all the while.

It sometimes takes a new mirror to see oneself more clearly. Another city, peculiar widths of sidewalks, unfamiliar angles of sunrays shining through the bedroom window on a waking morn. Thank you Wiko for providing all this, I really am full of gratitude. It's helped me figure out a new kind of hierarchy of the things that seem worthwhile.

And there was work, too, on a kids' mystery and a book about change and transformation. For this second one, especially, Germany proved a revelation. From week to week, a shape of understanding came, confusion slowly disbanding. And like wayward sands swayed by a clement wind, it began to amass into something rather than nothing. Perhaps the greatest lesson from all this took a form as banal as it is exciting: a great wisdom, won with tears and a wink, is acceptance. This is what there is.

We loved Berlin too much. And *mutatis mutandis*, things happily look slightly different from Bleibtreustraße, down the road. So thank you again for all you have given us, for your kindness, and generosity, and good cheer. I'll always remember this, along with broccoli and Ping-Pong, as a very special year.