

Lets wear burlap sacks forever. S.U.Hodges

It was 1987. a Swiss boy named Simon knocked on our door. He was 5. His family just moved to the neighborhood. his mom and dad were both newly appointed foreign correspondents to the Zuerchner Allgemeine. My mother met Simon's mother at an embassy party and told her not to worry: i have 3 horrible boys who will take care of your little one.

I remember looking out of the window from my bedroom and seeing him looking really small, Swiss and neutral, as he timidly introduced himself to my 6'2 mom the Saturday before Easter Sunday.

He looked clean and nice - and I spotted a painted egg in his hands.

Rather than throw him to her wolf boys, my mother decided that Simon would be mine. Hearing her call my name, I ran down four flights, past my mean brothers and found him outside waiting for me.

We spent the following 2555 days (that's approx. 7 years) together.

Most weekends, I slept at his house on the floor next to his bed. He couldn't read because he went the Waldorf School (they teach the important skill of knitting first). so, I'd read to him. Our favorite: "The Adventures of Globi"

For those who don't know Globi is a clever blue bird with a yellow beak who wears red and black checkered pants and just blends in to Swiss society. he does things like pretend he has a limp so he gets a seat on the bus or he paints himself white so he can hide in the snow and scare people. He has a partner friend Globina who joined him in later editions.

To repay me for reading, Simon tickled my back and arms very softly. Its not really ticking, its called "kraulen". it sounds Germanic and

harsh, but its softer and slower and excites the skin into Goosebumps.

for some reasons (as i have learned over the years), Americans don't know how to play tender game.

At 8, Simon and I founded and trademarked the Spy Club. My brothers Philip and Eliot both had Chief titles but they were really a hindrance. It was really about Simon and me and honing our spying skills.

One standard Spy Club prank (inspired by globi adventures) was poking a hole through a dollar bill and attaching it to a fishing line. We'd then hide in the bush and when someone picked up the vagrant dollar we would move the line and the dollar would move, surprising the greedy person. Another signature Spy Club move, was dressing like mideval homeless people in burlap sacks and asking for money on the streets of Georgetown. Our mothers encouraged this.

Every day of my life was about Simon. Everyone else was a side note. I now know it was true love.

Sometimes, we kissed. Once when we were waiting for my dad to tie up the Christmas tree to the car. Another time, when i was shaking of cold and chlorine under my towel after a swim. And another time when I was sick and Simon crawled under my covers and kissed fevery skin - my elbows and chin and awkwardly my upper lip.

And then he left. His family was stationed back in Zurich after 7 years of adventures. I wasn't completely devastated because when we were 12 things started falling apart. We both didn't know why but the burlap sacks were less appealing and we started feeling distant and hating each other a little. a lot.

We didn't see each other until we were 19. I was in Spain and I received an email from

Simons mom inviting me to Zurich. And so, I went. I was scared. Mostly, I was scared that he would still be shorter than me. Thankfully, he wasn't.

We spent the week, in tension. watching each other move and talk. We were teetering between childhood and randy, horny i dont know what to call it games. we smoked up a lot to take of the edge. Finally, one night, we were in his room. i was reading Globi to him for old times sake. knowing of course, that he would kraul me in exchange. i read about the blue bird as he worked his way under my dress up my back.

and then we kissed - as semi-adults- once. and, of course, the spell broke. we just lay there breathing heavily, staring at each other in confused sadness.