

# Future Today

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## **HOW BAD LUCK TURNS INTO SATISFACTION**

It was a late afternoon in August. Julia and Peter from Hamburg were on a mountain tour in the Swiss Alps. Both had recently been very busy and now they wanted to take some time for themselves. Peter had just sold his company after none of their three children had shown an interest in succeeding him and it had become a bit lonely with just himself and Julia in the big house after the youngest daughter moved out. The children and the office had been such a large part of their routines that without them they felt their lives had lost direction. Despite their age, both were still healthy, full of drive and too young to put their feet up. So, **with the intention of finding a new goal and perhaps a new challenge for themselves, they decided to hike the Swiss mountains.**

After visiting the famous Reichenbach waterfall (Sherlock Holmes), they planned to take a tour to the Rosenlauri-Glacier south of Meiringen. They had made good progress when the misfortune happened. Peter slipped and lost his balance. He was still trying to find a foothold, but his kick went nowhere.

In front of Julia's eyes, he fell down the steep boulder field and came to rest on a narrow rocky outcrop. Before Julia fully understood what had happened, she heard Peter screaming and she felt herself falling to her knees. Peter!

Suddenly two strong arms pulled her gently, but firmly, away and as she turned around, she saw a group of four climbers who had actually been planning to climb to the Dossenhorn-Summit when they witnessed Peter's accident. One immediately took care of Julia and calmed her down, whilst the others began to abseil down to Peter.

It seemed like an eternity to Julia, but eventually when one of the climbers came

back with a smile on his face, her relief was enormous. "Peter is conscious and breathing normally", he said after sitting down next to Julia. "But it seems he has broken both legs and has a severe laceration to his head" he continued "although, the real problem is his location", he added softly.

It quickly became clear to the experienced mountaineers that the injuries were too severe and the location too steep to carry out the rescue themselves. But Peter had to be taken to a hospital as soon as possible. What was to be done? Julia began to cry so she didn't realize that one of the climbers was speaking loud into his phone. Julia lost all sense of time until the moment a much louder noise made her sit up and take notice. Above her, she saw a red and white painted helicopter circling with a long rope hanging from it. At the end of the rope was a man and a basket. After a few minutes, the basket disappeared with the man into the deep ravine where Peter was trapped, only to reappear a little later with Peter in the basket. Julia realized that emergency call from the climber had been to the Swiss Air Rescue team, **REGA**, who took over the task of rescuing Peter and flying him and Julia to the hospital.

Julia, who had never been in a helicopter before, was happy, exhausted and insecure at the same time. "What will it all cost?", she whispered to Peter who was holding her hand whilst lying safely secured next to her. "Will our insurance cover all this?"

But when she spoke to the paramedic, she learned that REGA was a **charitable Swiss foundation** and that the rescue was available to everyone, often without charging. Julia was really impressed. After a short flight, they arrived at the hospital in Bern where Peter was operated on shortly afterwards. A friendly nurse told Julia that it would probably take some time, so she began to look around and as she did her gaze fell on a large picture hanging on the wall.

It showed a computer rendered design of a new building, which the hospital planned to build in the next few years. It was a beautiful, modern, bright and quite futuristic building.

She stood for a long time in front of the picture, while her thoughts were with Peter. How would he feel? Would he fully recover? How will it affect their future? She was so deep in her thoughts that she didn't notice that an elderly lady had stood next to her so she was a little startled when the lady began to speak. "Isn't it great that **Anna Seiler's legacy** is still doing so well after so many years?" Julia turned around. "What do you mean by that? Who is Anna Seiler?" The elderly lady smiled and began to tell: "Anna Seiler lived here in Bern more than 650 years ago. It was the time of the late middle ages and the plague raged in Europe." Julia listened attentively and the lady continued: "Anna Seiler was the daughter of a Bernese councilor and her husband was in charge of a hospital. So, she knew of the terrible conditions that prevailed in hospitals at that time and when the plague appeared in Bern there was little help for the people. Anna Seiler saw how hopeless people were and helped wherever she could.

And when she died childless in 1354, she donated her entire inheritance to a foundation for a hospital which, according to her bylaws, would be "always and eternal". It was first called the Seilerin-Hospital and later the St. Michael's Island. Today it is better known as "**Island-Hospital**" and **the foundation is still alive, just as Anna Seiler wanted it to be in 1354.**"

Julia was amazed at what she had just learned. "There is a small statue in the Marktgasse at the Temperantia-Fountain, which today is called the Anna-Seiler-Fountain. You should visit it." The elderly lady said before she left Julia alone with her thoughts. Until that morning, she had never heard of the REGA Foundation nor the Anna Seiler's Island Hospital, and in the last few

hours both foundations saved Peter's life! She was deeply impressed.

Peter's operation went well and when he was awake again, **Julia told him about the charitable REGA Foundation, the story of Anna Seiler and that her Foundation-Hospital still existed after more than 667 years.** Peter smiled and when Julia came to the end of her story, he said: "This really only exists in Switzerland. Only here in such a safe and stable country can a foundation continue to do good for so long! Everywhere else in the world, the property would have been lost in a war or expropriated long ago! Maybe we should also start a foundation ourselves in Switzerland... **Wouldn't it be a good idea to use our money and newfound freedom to do something good for others?**" "Yes, you're right," said Julia with a large smile in her face. "And when you are healthy again, we will visit Seiler's statue at the fountain in Marktgasse and pay our respects to her. And when we set up our own foundation, maybe someone else will think of us in 667 years."

In contrast to many other countries, charitable and private foundations in Switzerland can be set up indefinitely. A foundation under Swiss law opens up numerous possibilities to achieve the diverse goals of individuals or families. And Switzerland's liberal foundation and tax system is very conducive to this development.

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